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“AT HOME, WE CALLED HER HANKA.” THE ISSUE OF POLES  
SHELTERING JEWISH CHILDREN ON THE ARYAN SIDE IN THE  
DISTRIKT KRAKAU (CRACOW PROVINCE)

“I am a pre-war anti-Semite, but my soul turned over when I saw the bestiality of the Germans towards Jews, because it was beneath the dignity of the nation, something that one could not directly imagine was possible,”<sup>1</sup> – Dr. Franciszek Kowalski wrote in a letter to the Voivodeship Jewish Historical Commission in Cracow in January 1947. From his correspondence, we learn that during the German occupation, this Polish lawyer together with his wife took care of the Anisfelds’ family 12-year-old daughter. Using forged documents with the name “Anna Dąbska,” the girl stayed in the care of the Kowalski family in Niepołomice near Cracow until November 1943, and then, thanks to their help, she left with her parents for Hungary. Dr. Kowalski added that when she stayed with them, they addressed her as “Hanka.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw (hereinafter: AŻIH), 301/3389, Letter of Dr. Franciszek Kowalski to the Voivodeship Jewish Historical Commission in Cracow, Zakopane, 25 January 1947, n.p.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

The recent research confirm that, despite many publications appearing since the early post-war years, the scale of aid provided to the Jewish population in the occupied Polish territories has still not been fully studied. It is necessary to agree with Tomasz Domański and Alicja Gontarek that

historians and scholars in related fields, above all social sciences, face a serious challenge of a multifaceted, multidimensional and multidirectional analysis of the phenomenon of rescuing Jews from the Holocaust, taking into account the realities of the war, the context of the German occupation and the regional specificity.<sup>3</sup>

I would like to point out selected aspects of the problem of sheltering<sup>4</sup> Jewish children by Poles (individuals and families) on the so-called Aryan side<sup>5</sup> in the wartime Krakau Distrikt (Cracow province). Basing on the data on the fate of several dozen children, I want to discuss the nature of the help given to them, together with presenting the wider context of the issue. In addition to indicating the ways in which the children were transferred to their new guardians, and a brief characteristics of their stay on the “Aryan” side, I will also attempt to present some of the challenges, problems and dangers their new guardians faced.

Although we have a considerable amount of literature concerning the fate of Jewish children during the Holocaust,<sup>6</sup> the above-mentioned topic has not yet been

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<sup>3</sup> T. Domański, A. Gontarek, “Wstęp” [Introduction], in *Stan badań nad pomocą Żydom na ziemiach polskich pod okupacją niemiecką – przegląd piśmiennictwa*, ed. T. Domański, A. Gontarek (Warsaw–Kielce 2022), p. 25.

<sup>4</sup> In the existing literature in the field, we know that one of the forms of helping the Jews was giving shelter; cf. M. Uryniewicz, “Zorganizowana i indywidualna pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej eksterminowanej przez okupanta niemieckiego w okresie drugiej wojny światowej,” in *Polacy i Żydzi pod okupacją niemiecką 1939–1945. Studia i materiały*, ed. A. Żbikowski (Warsaw, 2006), p. 253.

<sup>5</sup> For definitions of the so-called “Aryan side,” see M. Melchior, *Zagłada a tożsamość. Polscy Żydzi ocaleni „na aryjskich papierach”. Analiza doświadczenia biograficznego* (Warsaw, 2004), pp. 13–15; J. Nalewajko-Kulikov, *Strategie przetrwania Żydów po aryjskiej stronie Warszawy* (Warsaw, 2004), p. 8; G. Berendt, “Cena życia – ekonomiczne uwarunkowania egzystencji Żydów po ‘aryjskiej stronie,’” *Zagłada Żydów. Studia i Materiały* 4 (2008), p. 110. In this article I adopted the definition accepted by Małgorzata Melchior.

<sup>6</sup> It is worth referring to works presenting and analysing the early testimonies of children and older people who survived the Holocaust as children. See *Dzieci oskarżają*, ed. M. Hochberg-Mariańska, N. Grüss (Cracow, 1947); J. Kowalska-Leder, *Doświadczenie Zagłady z perspektywy dziecka w polskiej literaturze dokumentu osobistego* (Wrocław, 2009); *Dzieci żydowskie w czasach Zagłady. Wczesne świadectwa*

comprehensively covered on a province-wide basis.<sup>7</sup> I would like to add that I will not address the topic of organised (institutional) aid – provided by the Cracow branch of the Council for Aid to Jews<sup>8</sup> and the clergy (diocesan and religious) – nor with emergency (one-off) aid.<sup>9</sup> I have used the Jewish survivors post-war testimonies (mainly children, but also their parents), as well as the accounts of those who helped them and other eyewitnesses. The records used are kept in the Archives of

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1944–1948. *Relacje dziecięce ze zbiorów Centralnej Żydowskiej Komisji Historycznej*, ed. O. Orzeł, (Warsaw, 2014); K. Sokołowska, „I dziś jestem widzem”. *Narracje dzieci Holocaustu* (Warsaw, 2013); *Dzieci Holocaustu mówią*, vol. 1, ed. W. Śliwowska (Warsaw, 1993), vol. 2, ed. J. Gutenbaum, A. Latała (Warsaw, 1993), vol. 3, ed. K. Meloch, H. Szostkiewicz (Warsaw, 2008), vol. 4, ed. K. Meloch, H. Szostkiewicz (Warsaw, 2012), vol. 5, ed. A. Kołacińska-Gałązka (Warsaw, 2014); J. Iwaszkiewicz, *Wtedy kwitły forsycje. Pamiątniki dzieci – ofiar Holocaustu* (Warsaw, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> For information ‘on the fate of Jewish children in this area, see among others M. Grądzka, *Przerwane dzieciństwo. Losy dzieci Żydowskiego Domu Sierot przy ul. Dietla 64 w Krakowie podczas okupacji niemieckiej* (Cracow, 2012); M. Grądzka-Rejak, “‘Chrońmy dziecko przed ulicą!’ Miesiąc Dziecka w getcie krakowskim w świetle publikacji ‘Gazety Żydowskiej’”, in *Zdeptane dzieciństwo. II wojna światowa i jej wpływ na losy dzieci*, ed. A. Bartuś, P. Trojański (Oświęcim, 2017), pp. 229–243; G. Siwior, “Koniec drogi. Losy Dawida Kurzmana i zagłada żydowskiego sierocińca w Krakowie”, in *ibid.*, pp. 261–275; A. Jarkowska-Natkaniec, “Losy dzieci policjantów żydowskich w okupowanym Krakowie”, in *ibid.*, pp. 277–291. In addition, the work of Joanna Sliwa is worth noting: J. Sliwa, *Jewish Childhood in Kraków: A Microhistory of the Holocaust* (New Brunswick, 2021); *eadem*, “Coping with Distorted Reality: Children in the Kraków Ghetto,” *Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History* 16 (2010), pp. 177–202; *eadem*, “The Forced Relocation to the Kraków Ghetto as Remembered by Child Survivors,” in *The Young Victims of the Nazi Regime: Migration, the Holocaust and Postwar Displacement*, ed. S. Gigliotti, M. Tempian (London, 2016), pp. 153–169; *eadem*, “Cladestine Activities and Concealed Presence: A Case Study of Children in the Kraków Ghetto,” in *Jewish Families in Europe, 1939 – Present: History, Representation, and Memory*, ed. J.B. Michlic (Waltham, 2017), pp. 26–45; *eadem*, “‘Ma’am, do you know that a Jew lives here?’ The Betrayal of Polish Women and the Jewish Children They Hid During the Holocaust – the Case of Cracow,” in *If This Is a Woman: Studies on Women and Gender in the Holocaust*, ed. D. Nešáková, K. Grosse-Sommer, B. Klacsmann, J. Drábik (Boston, 2021), pp. 163–180. Information on the hiding of Jewish children by Polish families in the region discussed can also be found in the following works: E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków dla ludności żydowskiej na Rzeszowszczyźnie 1939–1945* (Rzeszów, 2008), pp. 116–119; B. Heksel, “Życie w ukryciu. Historie indywidualne z terenu Krakowa i województwa małopolskiego,” in K. Kocik, B. Heksel, *Żegota. Ukryta pomoc* (Cracow, 2017), pp. 209–215.

<sup>8</sup> For the most recent findings, see B. Heksel, “Krakowska Rada Pomocy Żydom,” in K. Kocik, B. Heksel, *Żegota*, pp. 111–190.

<sup>9</sup> On the aid activities of the clergy in Cracow, see M. Grądzka, “Kościół katolicki w okupowanym Krakowie w pomocy Żydom. Zarys problematyki badawczej,” in *Kościół krakowski 1939–1945*, ed. Ł. Klimek (Cracow, 2014), pp. 125–154; J. Sliwa, “Jewish Children Seeking Help in Catholic Institutions in Kraków During the Holocaust,” *Polin: Studies in Polish Jewry* 36 (2024), pp. 327–341. For more, see among others N. Bogner, *At the Mercy of Strangers: The Rescue of Hidden Jewish Children with Assumed Identities in Poland* (Jerusalem, 2009); E. Kurek, *Dzieci żydowskie w klasztorach. Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Zakrzewo, 2012); *eadem*, *Gdy klasztor znaczył życie. Udział żeńskich zgromadzeń zakonnych w akcji ratowania dzieci żydowskich w Polsce w latach 1939–1945* (Cracow, 1992); *Wartime Rescue of Jews by the Polish Catholic Clergy: The Testimony of Survivors and Rescuers*, vols. 1–2, ed. R. Tyndorf, Z. Zieliński (Lublin, 2023).

the Institute of National Remembrance,<sup>10</sup> the Yad Vashem Archives in Jerusalem,<sup>11</sup> Archives of the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, and in the IPN's Branch Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation in Cracow.

## Regulatory Environment

Decisions to support or hide Jewish children were made under conditions created by the German occupier. One of the cornerstones of the German system in the occupied Polish territories was the laws enacted by representatives of the Third Reich. This was also the tool the Germans used in their anti-Jewish activities. In No. 99 of the *Dziennik Rozporządzeń dla Generalnego Gubernatorstwa* (Journal of Regulations for the General Governorate), published on 25 October 1941, a legal act imposing the death penalty on Jews who left without a permission the residential district designated for them was published.<sup>12</sup> The same punishment was also to be imposed on those who gave them shelter. The signing of this legislation, commonly known as the Third General Governorate Residence Restriction Regulation of 15 October 1941 by Governor-General Hans Frank, was an important caesura in German anti-Jewish activities. As time went by, the local German police and civilian authorities extended the use of the death penalty by means of orders and announcements (notices). In order to put the legal situation arranged in organised manner, in November 1942 the higher SS and police commander in General Governorate Friedrich Wilhelm Krüger issued regulations stipulating that any form of aid provided to the Jewish population would be punishable by death.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Some of the records kept in the Archives of the Institute of National Remembrance (hereinafter AIPN) in the record group No. 392 used in this article, commonly referred to as the "Bielawski investigation," were published in *Relacje o pomocy udzielanej Żydom przez Polaków w latach 1939–1945*, vol. 2: *Dystrykt krakowski Generalnego Gubernatorstwa*, selected and edited by S. Piątkowski (Lublin–Warsaw, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> Many thanks to Magdalena Palka for her help in arranging the photocopies of archival records I made during my study visit at the Yad Vashem Institute Archives in Jerusalem.

<sup>12</sup> The regulation had been signed by Governor-General Hans Frank a few days earlier, on 15 October 1941, but did not come into force until the day it was promulgated.

<sup>13</sup> On 1 November 1942, in the issue no. 94 of the Journal of Regulations for the General Governorate the Police regulation concerning the establishment of a Jewish residential quarter in the Warschau and Lublin Distrikts of 29 October 1942 was published. The Cracow Distrikt came under the Police regulation concerning the establishment of Jewish residential quarters in the Radom, Krakau and Galizien Distrikts of 10 November 1942, which was published on 14 November 1942 in issue no. 98 of the Journal of Regulations... and came into force on 20 November 1942.

Moreover, all General Governorate residents were required to report any Jewish fugitives, with the threat of police security measures being enforced against those who failed to comply.<sup>14</sup>

These acts were not ineffective laws. In the area researched, e.g. Wojciech Gicala was murdered for hiding a Jewish child. This nearly fifty-year-old man was shot dead by a German gendarme near the town hall in Nowy Wiśnicz in August 1942. On the same day, a boy who had stayed with him for only about two days was murdered in the Jewish cemetery.<sup>15</sup> By these acts, German authorities sought to portray Jewish fugitives, including children, as threats to local communities. Despite the imposed sanctions, some individuals still offered them aid and care. The cases examined in this article demonstrate that their motivations were influenced by a variety of factors.

### Motives for Providing Aid

Why did Dr. Franciszek Kowalski, mentioned above, decide to hide a Jewish girl despite the harsh penalties introduced by the German occupiers and did so for almost a year? In his letter he stated that, while staying in Cracow as a “displaced person from Zakopane,” in September 1942, he received a very unusual proposal. Through Jewish acquaintances, he was approached by “a certain Anisfeld (Jew), a Cracow feather merchant, living in Józefa Street,” with the proposal that he would

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<sup>14</sup> B. Musiał, *Kto dopomoże Żydowi...* (Poznań, 2019), pp. 127–131.

<sup>15</sup> Institute of National Remembrance, Branch Commission for the Prosecution of Crimes against the Polish Nation in Cracow, (hereinafter: OKŚZpNP Kr), S 23.2004.Zn, vol. 1, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Edward Bachula, Bochnia, of 16 February 1967, pp. 66–66v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Teofil Trojanowski, Bochnia, of 16 February 1967, p. 68; OKŚZpNP Kr, S 23.2004.Zn, vol. 2, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stanisław Banaś, Bochnia, of 16 June 1970, p. 249; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Julian Trzaska, Gliwice, of 29 July 1970, pp. 289–290; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Apolonia Górniewicz née Kasińska, Cracow, of 23 April 1975, pp. 351–352; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Edward Bachula, Cracow, of 23 April 1975, pp. 353–355; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Teofil Trojanowski, Bochnia, of 8 May 1975, pp. 365–367; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Karol Trzaska, Cracow of 16 May 1975, pp. 375–376; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Anna Widelko, Cracow, 27 May 1975, pp. 381–382. According to Dagmara Swałtek-Niewińska, the name of the gendarme who shot the Jewish boy and Wojciech Gicala was Franck (D. Swałtek-Niewińska, “Powiat bocheński,” in *Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski*, vol. 2, ed. B. Engelking, J. Grabowski, Warsaw 2018, pp. 574–575). However, according to the testimony given by the above-mentioned witnesses, Gicala was shot by a gendarme named Bogusch. Furthermore, Swałtek-Niewińska erroneously uses the name “Gicała.” The man’s name was “Gicala” (see for instance OKŚZpNP Kr, S 23.2004.Zn, vol. 2, Summary copy of the death certificate of Wojciech Gicala, Nowy Wiśnicz, 19 April 1975, n.p.).

recommend Kowalski for a position to “a German–sPrussian acquaintance, Otto Görsch,” who managed a large goose farm in Niepołomice near Cracow. At the time, Görsch was said to be looking for a “lawyer, bookkeeper and cashier who spoke German,” and Kowalski was most likely in a difficult financial situation. Anisfeld made one condition: Kowalski would take care of his twelve-year-old daughter. At first, the man was afraid to hide the Jewish girl and felt reluctant to take a job with a German supervisor. Eventually, however, Kowalski agreed.<sup>16</sup>

This event took place three months after the first deportations from the Cracow ghetto. It is estimated that in June 1942, between five thousand and seven thousand Jews were sent from there to the extermination camp in Bełżec.<sup>17</sup> Scholars noted that during the *Aktion Reinhardt*, the German operation aiming at exterminating the Jews in the General Governorate, the search for refuge on the so-called ‘Aryan side’ became widespread among Jews.<sup>18</sup> Those who had the suitable contacts, opportunities and resources, and made efforts to save their own lives or those of their next of kin, tried above all to save the children – handing them over to the care of others, friends or strangers, in the hope that in this way the children would survive. The lack of sources, as well as the fact that most of the Jewish inhabitants of the Distrikt Krakau died during the Holocaust, makes it impossible to give a precise answer to the question of how large this group was. With regard to the Distrikt Krakau, it seems that a small number of people is in question here. They tended to be polonised people and were often relatively wealthy (or had adequate funds at their disposal), so that they could, for example, allocate a certain amount of money for the upkeep of their charge on the “Aryan” side. For instance, in 1943, Gusta Goldberger, an employee at the Optima factory in Cracow, asked Wiktor Węgrzyn, a chimney sweep at the same factory, to hide her young son Stefan. She also provided him with ten thousand zlotys to cover the expenses.<sup>19</sup> Born in 1935,

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<sup>16</sup> AŻIH, 301/3389, Letter of Dr. Franciszek Kowalski to the Voivodeship Jewish Historical Commission in Cracow, Zakopane, 25 January 1947, n.p.

<sup>17</sup> E. Rączy, *Zagłada Żydów w dystrykcie krakowskim w latach 1939–1945* (Rzeszów, 2014), p. 282.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, “Relacje polsko-żydowskie w okresie II wojny światowej. Kontekst i uwarunkowania,” in *Represje za pomoc Żydom na okupowanych ziemiach polskich w czasie II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło (Warsaw, 2019), p. 36.

<sup>19</sup> AIPN Kr, 502/584, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Wiktor Węgrzyn, Cracow, of 23 June 1945, pp. 20–21; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Gusta Goldberger, Cracow, of 23 June 1945, pp. 26–26v.

Sulamit Korn was entrusted to Poles living in the nearby village of Sławkowice even before Jews were deported from Wieliczka, and her parents were expected to provide one thousand zlotys a month for her upkeep.<sup>20</sup>

Accepting a new person into someone's care involved additional maintenance costs, primarily for food, but also for other expenses. Grzegorz Berendt stated: "Due to the economic policies imposed by the Germans, millions in occupied Poland were reduced to mere subsistence, with little capacity to offer sustained, altruistic help."<sup>21</sup> The increasing impoverishment of the Poles meant that the co-financing of childcare was often an indispensable term.<sup>22</sup> Cases, where children were taken in exchange for money or for a promise to receive something in return, are known, however, there were also cases of help given selflessly. For example, Antonina Czuba testified that her parents Hieronim and Barbara Mikłarz agreed to take care of the approximately two-year-old Elza Rozeman at the request of her grandmother. The girl came from a "poor family, she didn't have any property."<sup>23</sup> Nevertheless, she was hidden on the Mikłarzes' farm in Pruchnik from mid-1942 until the end of the German occupation. "Elza Rozeman, who came from a Jewish family, was given complete sustenance, underwear and clothing at our house and slept with us in the chamber,"<sup>24</sup> – recalled the daughter of Hieronim and Barbara. Tomasz Domański was right when he noted that for those who rescued Jews "lacking resources or being from the Jewish poor," it was "an extra sacrifice and an economic challenge."<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> It is unclear how long the girl stayed in Sławkowice. According to Sulamit Korn's post-war testimony, when it "began to be talked about" in that village that she was Jewish, the farmer hiding her sent her to Bieżanów, where her aunt prepared for her a new hiding place. On her subsequent fate, see AŻIH, 301/1112, Testimony of Sulamit Korn.

<sup>21</sup> G. Berendt, "Cena życia," p. 141.

<sup>22</sup> For more on this, see *ibid.*, pp. 110–143.

<sup>23</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Antonina Czuba on the aid provided by her, her parents Barbara and Hieronim Mikłarz and other family members to Elza Rozeman in Pruchnik (Jarosław district), Rzeszów, 30 April 1971, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 351. See also AIPN, 392/1576, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józef Lewandowski, Jarosław, 9 September 1970, p. 3; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józef Folta, Jarosław, 15 October 1970, p. 4; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Elżbieta Pałys, Rzeszów, 11 May 1971, pp. 18–19.

<sup>24</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Antonina Czuba on the aid provided by her, her parents Barbara and Hieronim Mikłarz and other family members to Elza Rozeman in Pruchnik (Jarosław district), Rzeszów, 30 April 1971 in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 351.

<sup>25</sup> T. Domański, *Korekta obrazu? Refleksje źródłoznawcze wokół książki „Dalej jest noc. Losy Żydów w wybranych powiatach okupowanej Polski”, t. 1–2*, red. Barbara Engelking, Jan Grabowski, Warszawa 2018 (Warsaw, 2019), p. 52.



It is often difficult to assess the motivation of those who decided to take care of Jewish children. Sometimes this decision must have been taken by the future guardians under the impact of unexpected course of events. For example, in June 1942, a ten-year-old Maks Weissberg was brought to Justyna and Janina Gośławski, who lived in Cracow, by his older brother Józef, who had already stayed with them for some time.<sup>26</sup> Unfortunately, Józef was soon arrested. Despite this, the Gośławski sisters continued to take care of Maks. In Maks Weissberg's statement filed in Paris in 1950 at the notary's public office concerning the aforementioned women, he noted that they have treated him as their own son: "they risked their lives, not only did they keep me as their son and I bore their name, but they also kept me without any compensation."<sup>27</sup>

According to Bartosz Heksel, who has researched the cases of Jews hiding in Cracow and nearby towns, the fragmentary remaining source material does not allow "to draw even general conclusions about the motivations of those who rescued persons of Jewish origin."<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, according to Joanna Michlic, people making the decision to hide a child were motivated by a variety of reasons of a "practical or emotional, noble or shameful" nature.<sup>29</sup> What mattered was "affection and attachment to a vulnerable child, unconditional love for children or the desire to have children [...] but also emotional ties and loyalty to Jewish members of mixed Christian-Jewish families."<sup>30</sup> The researcher identified several types of rescuers: altruists driven by patriotic and moral reasons, pre-war friends or acquaintances of Jews, and those who provided help in exchange for money, viewing it either as financial support for the child's care or an opportunity to enrich themselves.<sup>31</sup>

Assessing the issue of taking money requires a broader view of the carers' behaviour. In some cases person sheltering the child, after losing contact with the person donating the funds for care, or after the funds received ran out, decided to

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<sup>26</sup> See R. Gieroń, "Zarys problematyki pomocy udzielanej Żydom podczas okupacji niemieckiej w aktach postępowań karnych wszczętych na podstawie dekretu PKWN z 31 sierpnia 1944 r. na obszarze powojennego województwa krakowskiego," *Polish-Jewish Studies* 2 (2021), pp. 228–230.

<sup>27</sup> AIPN Kr, 502/2508, Declaration filed at the notary public's office concerning Ms Gośławska and Ms Tomczyk (a certified translation from the French), Paris, 16 May 1950, p. 70v.

<sup>28</sup> B. Heksel, "Życie w ukryciu," p. 195.

<sup>29</sup> J.B. Michlic, *Piętno Zagłady. Wojenna i powojenna historia oraz pamięć żydowskich dzieci ocalałych w Polsce* (Warsaw, 2020), p. 148.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*



carry on with the care. Anna Poleska, who agreed to take care of a two-year-old Tamara Goldstein, received more than seven thousand zlotys and “certain pieces of clothing” from her parents. Jakub Goldstein and his wife wanted to make their way to Switzerland; they promised Poleska that they would systematically send more money once they got there. According to Anna’s testimony, however, this did not happen: “The payment I received from her parents was enough for only one year; I bore the rest of the costs myself. I had to struggle not only to provide food suitable for the child, but also clothing, which was extremely hard for me, especially as my husband died and I had to earn a living on my own.”<sup>32</sup> The same happened to Katarzyna Matusz (née Dudzik), who, in March 1943, at the request of Roman Poser, took his brother Majer’s son, a two-year-old Izydor, into her care. The boy had been taken out of the Cracow ghetto just before its liquidation. Katarzyna was promised that she would receive “certain payments to cover the child’s upkeep on a monthly basis.”<sup>33</sup> However, the payment “did not happen, as the ghetto was liquidated in a short time and I lost contact with this family,” the Polish woman recalled.<sup>34</sup> Despite this, she and her husband Stanisław took care of the boy until the end of the German occupation.<sup>35</sup>

It is likely that some in a similar situation tried to get rid of the child. We also know of cases of people who initially took in a Jewish child and only after some time demanded or asked for money to support it.<sup>36</sup> There were also those who provided care only for money. Given the limited source material, it is difficult to ascertain the full extent of these phenomena.

### Looking for a Shelter for Children

New homes (and new carers) were sought both before, during and after the German deportation operations. In the area researched, the search seems to have intensified from mid-1942, when direct deportations of the Jews to the Bełżec

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<sup>32</sup> AŻIH, 301/2339, Testimony of Anna Poleska.

<sup>33</sup> AYV, M.31.2/5307, Statement by Katarzyna Matusz, Żary, 30 November 1988, n.p.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>35</sup> AYV, M.31.2/5307, Statement by Rochelle Rose Poser, New York, 19 September 1988, n.p.

<sup>36</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Helena Żurawicz regarding the aid provided by her mother, her husband Waław Żurawicz, and Maria Pietrek to Eta Frymermann in Wieliczka (Cracow district), Warsaw, 29 May 1991, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 458–459.

extermination camp from the Distrikt Krakau began. Despite the lack of sources preventing us from reconstructing many details of these events, the separation of Jewish parents from their children was invariably a dramatic experience.<sup>37</sup>

Finding care for the children on the “Aryan” side was done by the still living parents (or one of them), or by relatives.<sup>38</sup> They sought shelter for children both within their current locality and beyond it. Marian Imerglück hid his daughter Sonia on the farm of the Łosiowski family in the village of Zagórzany near Gdów in February 1943, just before the liquidation of the Cracow ghetto (where he and his family lived). The girl was brought to the village by an acquaintance of the Imerglück family, Zofia Nowak, who was Anna Łosiowska’s sister.<sup>39</sup> Miriam Stern, who was also in Cracow ghetto, also found shelter for her daughter Sara in 1942 in the village of Bystra Podhalańska, a few dozen kilometres from Cracow, in the home of the large Bachul family.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps to parents seeking shelter for their loved ones, the countryside appeared to be a safer place than the “hermetic” Cracow.<sup>41</sup> It should be added, however, that under the conditions of the German occupation, choosing a hiding place did not provide a guarantee that the child would be rescued.<sup>42</sup>

Their future guardians were also involved in smuggling the children to the “Aryan” side and in finding them a safe shelter.<sup>43</sup> Feliks Michalik, at the request of his acquaintance Izrael Reisig, helped his several-year-old daughter, Henryka, to get out of the Rzeszów ghetto. One day, probably at the end of 1942, at a pre-arranged hour, Reisig handed him his daughter over the fence surround-

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<sup>37</sup> Martyna Grądzka-Rejak indicated the dilemmas of Jewish women in moving their children to the so-called Aryan side (*eadem*, “‘Zdobyczyńcze życia’. Wybrane aspekty codzienności dziewcząt i kobiet żydowskich podczas okupacji niemieckiej (1939–1942),” in *Ciemności kryją ziemię. Wybrane aspekty badań i nauczania o Holokauście*, ed. M. Grądzka-Rejak, P. Trojański (Cracow – Nowy Sącz, 2019), pp. 65–66.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. J.B. Michlic, *Piętno Zagłady*, p. 117.

<sup>39</sup> AIPN Kr, 502/2929, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Marian Imerglück, Myślenice, 22 September 1945, pp. 16–17; AIPN Kr, 502/4161, Report by Marian Szczesny Imerglück, Nazareth, 22 December 1960, pp. 5–6; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Anna Łosiowska, Myślenice, 17 March 1961, pp. 10–12.

<sup>40</sup> AYV, M.31.2/4718, Testimony given by Sara Yareach that she was rescued by the Bachul family, no place of statement given, 4 January 1988, n.p.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, “Relacje polsko-żydowskie,” p. 43.

<sup>42</sup> As discussed below, Sara Stern survived the occupation. Sonia Imerglück, on the other hand, did not.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. J.B. Michlic, *Piętno Zagłady*, p. 118.

ing the ghetto.<sup>44</sup> Initially, Henryka stayed with Michalik's mother and also with his sister Zofia. She was then sent to the farm of Mrs. Weis in Gwoźnica Górna. After some time, however, she returned to the care of Zofia and then to Feliks Michalik.<sup>45</sup>

Polish acquaintances of the Jews, including their former employees, such as e.g. their children's nannies, also sought care for the children. Augusta Szemelowska (née Trammer) recalled that she and her mother Elfryda hid Olga Mandel in her flat in Łagiewniki.<sup>46</sup> The girl was led out of the Tarnów ghetto by her former nanny. She then stayed with Augusta and her mother for "a few months, until her mother found a place to stay at in Warsaw."<sup>47</sup>

Among the people arranging shelter for Jewish children were also clergymen. In late 1942 or early 1943, the Kłosowski spouses living in Kocmyrów took in a girl who introduced herself as Rozalia Bochenek. In fact, she was Rozalia Allerhand,<sup>48</sup> who had previously been hiding with her sister Anna in Monasterzyska near Stanisławów. The girl was brought to the Kłosowskis by Fr. Czabański at the request of his nephew, Fr. Alfons Walkiewicz, who was then a priest in the parish of Barysz near Buczacz.<sup>49</sup>

Getting children out of closed ghettos sometimes required being ingenious. Many years after the war, Cracow inhabitant Aniela Nowak recalled that an eight-year-old boy Janek Weber, who was hidden by her, was taken out of the Cracow

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<sup>44</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Feliks Michalik regarding the aid provided by him and other persons of Polish nationality to Henryka Reising in Rzeszów, Gwoźnica Górna (Niebylec commune) and other localities of the region, Rzeszów, 17 October 1970 in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 390.

<sup>45</sup> AIPN, 392/1766, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Zofia Kapala, Rzeszów, 30 October 1970, pp. 14–15.

<sup>46</sup> Olga Kapeliuk (née Mandel), born 10 June 1932 in Cracow, professor emeritus of linguistics and African studies, one of the leading experts on the Amharic language (<https://prabook.com/web/olga.kapeliuk/552462>, accessed 20 March 2024).

<sup>47</sup> AYV, M.31.2/4817, Testimony of Augusta Szemelowska, Cracow, 20 July 1990, n.p.

<sup>48</sup> According to Kunegunda Kłosowska, the girl claimed to be around nine years old. Roman, on the other hand, stated: "The girl told us that she was born in 1929." (AIPN, 392/188, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Roman Kłosowski, Poznań, 13 March 1970, pp. 5–7; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Kunegunda Kłosowska, Poznań, 10 April 1970, pp. 14–18).

<sup>49</sup> AIPN, 392/188, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Romana Kłosowski, Poznań, 13 March 1970, pp. 5–7; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Kunegunda Kłosowska, Poznań, 10 April 1970, pp. 14–18; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Ignacy Czabański, Poznań, 14 April 1970, pp. 29–31; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Alfons Walkiewicz, Poznań, 28 April 1970, pp. 38–40.

ghetto in a suitcase.<sup>50</sup> For success of such activities, the favourable circumstances were also necessary. After the end of the war, Stefania Bilińska recounted that she went to Wieliczka with the intention of taking a ten-year-old Yitzhak Lerner from there, for she had promised this to his mother Klara. However, she did not succeed in taking him “for fear that the Germans, of whom there were many in Wieliczka at the time, would discover this fact.”<sup>51</sup> Eventually, her uncle Władysław Korbas transported the boy in his truck to Cracow, to the home of Stefania’s mother at 10 Chodkiewicza Street.<sup>52</sup>

Ichhak Lerner lived under the care of the Biliński family until the end of the German occupation, first in Cracow and then back in Dobczyce. However, in some cases it happened that the children stayed with their new guardians only for a limited time, and then, if possible, returned to their parents or relatives (who, for example, sought safe shelter on the “Aryan” side or made efforts to arrange a departure to another place).

Just before the next deportation operation, carried out on 28 October 1942, the six-year-old boy Zygmunt Weinreb was led out of the Cracow ghetto by his cousin, who, according to Weinreb’s post-war testimony, “had the protection of the commander of the Blue Police.”<sup>53</sup> Earlier, the boy had been left in the ghetto by his mother Bronisława, who at the time – after selling her jewellery and buying a forged *Kennkarte* – had left for Maków Podhalański in search for accommodation. After leaving the ghetto, Weinreb was taken to the janitor Józef Puchała, who lived with his wife Maria on the premises of the Bonarka brickworks in Łagiewniki, on the outskirts of the city. After some time, Bronisława returned and took her son away.<sup>54</sup>

In some cases Jewish parents requested that their children be hidden for a certain time, but when they couldn’t find a safe hiding place, they left them with their new guardians for an extended duration. This was the case of spouses Lejzor and

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<sup>50</sup> AYV, M.31.2/6222, Statement by Jan Weber, Jerusalem, 12 July 1993, n.p.; *ibid.*, Testimony of Aniela Nowak regarding the aid she provided to Jews during the German occupation, Cracow, 23 June 1994, n.p.

<sup>51</sup> AYV, M.31.2/4756, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stefania Bilińska, Cracow, 21 September 1984, n.p.; AIPN, 392/545, Statement by Ichhak Lerner, [Tel Aviv], [2 April 1989], p. 21.

<sup>52</sup> AYV, M.31.2/4756, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stefania Bilińska, Cracow, 21 September 1984, n.p.; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józefa Głuś, Cracow, 28 September 1984, n.p.

<sup>53</sup> AŻIH, 301/406, Testimony of Zygmunt Weinreb.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*

Syma Szajer, about thirty-year-old farmers from the village of Husów, hiding in the forest, who probably in August 1942 approached the Boratyns and asked them to look after their one-year-old son, whose name was Mordek. According to Stanisława Boratyn, the Szajer family promised to return to pick up the boy the next day (since they wanted to find a suitable hiding place for him). However, they did not show up until several weeks later, asking then the Boratyns to continue hiding the child.<sup>55</sup>

Sometimes the parents decided to separate the siblings and hide the children separately up to the moment when the danger would be over. In the summer of 1942, Dawid and Paulina Münzer, along with other Jews from Dobczyce, obtained written order to report to the assembly point in the market square on 22 August 1942. They decided then to go into hiding. On the night before the deportation operation, their eleven-year-old son Aleksander was taken by Franciszek Mróz, a Home Army soldier, to the house of Genowefa Misiorowa in the village of Skrzynka. Münzers' daughter, fourteen-year-old Emilia, on the other hand, was initially hidden by an acquaintance of her father, Twardosz, in the village of Lipnik. However, the farmer was afraid to keep her any longer, which is probably why, after two weeks, she was led to the Kaczmarczyk family, who lived on Górská Street in Dobczyce. Her mother was staying there. Aleksander Münzer, too, had to leave his hiding place after some time; after the war, he recalled that his stay in Skrzynka had become dangerous due to "frequent inspections and manhunts." Probably in November 1942, Franciszek Mróz took the boy to his mother's house in Mierzeń. From there, Aleksander was picked up by his uncle Jan Federgrün and taken to Rajmund and Aniela Ptak, who lived in the same village. His aunt Maria Federgrün was already hiding at their place.<sup>56</sup>

It also happened that after parents decided to hide on the "Aryan" side, they left their children on former neighbours' or strangers' doorstep. Such was a case

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<sup>55</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stanisława Boratyn regarding the aid provided by her and her husband to Mordka Szajer in Husów (Jarosław county), Rzeszów, 15 April 1970 in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 143–144.

<sup>56</sup> OKŚZpNP Kr, S 1/87, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Emilia Bergel née Münzer, Cracow, 15 January 1986, pp. 17–22; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Aleksander Mirecki, Cracow, 12 February 1986, pp. 65–69; E. Polończyk-Moskał, *Świece zgasła wojna... Historia społeczności żydowskiej w Dobczycach / Candles were blown out by the war... History of the Jewish community in Dobczyce* (Dobczyce, 2020), pp. 112–115, 217–222.

of Majer Zalcman, a Jewish fugitive from Dylągówka. Feliks Dziak testified after the war: “Majer left the child on the doorstep of one woman’s house in the hope that she would take care of raising [the child].”<sup>57</sup> Until the end of the occupation the child was looked after by Katarzyna Rożek from Dylągówka.<sup>58</sup> A similarly dramatic decision was made also by spouses Dora and Jakub Künstlich. They were hiding in a dugout under the threshing floor of a pigsty in the farm of Józef and Józefa Gibes in Jadowniki Mokre. When their daughter was born, the father left her on a bench under the window of the house of the childless spouses Maria and Stanisław Szatkowski, who took care of the girl.<sup>59</sup>

I have described various circumstances under which children were handed over to new guardians in the Cracow district. Additionally, it is important to include the situations where much depended on the determination, choices, and actions of the children themselves, particularly those who were older and more self-reliant.

### Children Seeking Help on Their Own

In the early 1990s, Maria Krawczyk, daughter of Dr. Juliusz Feldhorn, born in Cracow on 4 November 1934, recalled:

The moment the Blue Policemen came to our house to arrest my parents – my mother ordered me to run to my aunt – it was unequivocal. It was 11 August 1943 and I managed to escape and reach Łagiewniki by country roads. In Augusta Trammer’s and her mother’s house I found shelter and care.<sup>60</sup>

At the time of the arrest, the Feldhorn family lived in Swoszowice in a house at 35 Chałubińskiego Street: “they used the surname Krawczyk at that time.”<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Feliks Dziak regarding the murder perpetrated by Germans on Jan Ślęp for helping Majer Zalcman in Dylągówka (Rzeszów district), Rzeszów, 7 December 1970, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 105.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>59</sup> A. Brożek, “Losy żydowskiej rodziny Künstlichów z Jadownik Mokrych w latach 1939–1946. Przyczynek do relacji polsko-żydowskich na obszarze przedwojennego powiatu Dąbrowa Tarnowska,” *Zeszyty Historyczne WiN-u* 49/50 (2019), p. 145. See also AYV, M.31.2/6331, Statement by Adam Merc (Adolf Künstlich) for the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw, Copenhagen, 23 August 1991, n.p.

<sup>60</sup> AYV, M.31.2/4817, Statement by Maria Krawczyk (Feldhorn), Warsaw, 7 August 1990, n.p.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

Maria went to Łagiewniki because her parents had instructed her to flee to Augusta and her mother Elfryda in case of “misfortune”: “At the time, these were the only people I had known since early childhood with whom my parents maintained social contacts.”<sup>62</sup> In the ensuing months, the girl remained under their care.

Jewish children sometimes had to seek or make their way to a shelter on their own. On 14 August 1942, during the execution of the Jews gathered in Bobowa, teenager Samuel Oliner, instructed by his stepmother Esther, hid in one of the houses: “In a state of daze and horror I hid on a roof and hide for a number of hours,” he recalled.<sup>63</sup> In the action, German functionaries executed summarily Jews gathered in the nearby Garbacz forest. According to Samuel’s memoirs, his parents and grandparents were murdered there. After leaving his hiding place, the boy went to Balwina Piecuch, who lived in the village of Bystra. Thanks to this decision, he survived.<sup>64</sup>

There are documented instances of children surviving the occupation by finding shelter with individuals who employed them for farm work. We should add that the hosts did not always know about their employees’ Jewish identity. A ten-year-old boy Benedykt Rosenblum had probably already in 1940 escaped from his home in Ispina. Then, through the Atlas spouses, he ended up at Jan and Magdalena Gas’s farm<sup>65</sup> in Żerkowice where he worked for two years. The family initially did not know that “Benek” (as they called him) was Jewish. They only found out from his uncle, who was looking for him. However, the boy did not want to leave. “Benek stayed with us and helped on the farm,” testified Helena Gas, “and we treated him as a household member.”<sup>66</sup> After some time (probably after the start of deportation operations and the liquidation of the ghettos), fearing for the family’s safety, Helena Gas and her brother Sylwester took Rosenblum in the night to Chorążyce, to her sister Genowefa Bochenek. Her house was on

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<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.* See also AYV, M.31.2/4817, Testimony of Augusta Szemelowska, Cracow, 20 July 1990, n.p.

<sup>63</sup> AYV, M.31.2/4691, Testimony of Samuel Oliner, Arcata, 9 November 1989, n.p.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> They were the parents of Ludwik Atlas’s wife.

<sup>66</sup> AIPN, 392/4, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Helena Skalska née Gas, Cracow, 3 October 1984, p. 11.



the outskirts of the village and seemed safe.<sup>67</sup> The boy stayed there until the end of the occupation.<sup>68</sup>

Very similar was the fate of a teenager Michał Pinkas, who, looking for shelter for himself and being completely on his own, arrived in Radgoszcz in 1942 or 1943. "There I told them that I was lost, I didn't know where I was from, when the war broke out I got lost and I had no one,"<sup>69</sup> he testified in September 1945. After spending a few days "as servant" at some woman's household, he was taken in by a farmer "from Gruszów Wielki who was searching for a shepherd and heard about the lost boy."<sup>70</sup> He stayed with him for two years. "I had a very good time there," he assessed, "I mostly grazed two cows and two horses. I ate well and as much as I wanted. He was also very fond of me."<sup>71</sup> Towards the end of the war, the farmer and other villagers found out that Michał was a Jew.<sup>72</sup> Nevertheless, his guardian told him to stay: "Since you have been here until now, just stay further,"<sup>73</sup> he said to Pinkas. Unfortunately, in his post-war testimony, Michał Pinkas did not mention the name of his host.

## A New Child

Taking in a Jewish child presented challenges and risks. In the case of young children who had only just met their new guardians, already an accidental encounter with a German functionary could end in disclosure. One summer day in 1942, Natalia Pyrkowska's husband told his wife after returning from work that he had agreed to look after his colleague Süsskind's son for a few days. Artur Süsskind was two years old. Pyrkowska recalled: "I took him in my arms, he didn't defend himself at all, and I brought him from Żydowska Street to Rzędzin. The child was so terrified that upon seeing a German, it screamed at the top of its voice: 'I['m] afraid, I['m] afraid' ['Ja boję, ja boję']"<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7–11.

<sup>68</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Benedykt Wesołowski regarding the aid he received from the members of the Gas family and Genowefa Bochenek in Chorążyce and Żerkowice (Miechów district), Cracow, 25 September 1984, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 69–70.

<sup>69</sup> AŻIH, 301/767, Testimony of Michał Pinkas.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> In his testimony, Michał Pinkas did not mention why his identity had been compromised (*ibid.*).

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>74</sup> Testimony of Natalia Pyrkowska regarding the aid provided by her and her husband Stanisław Bernal-Olecharski to Artur Süsskind in Rzędzin (Tarnów district), Brzeg, 1 August 1985, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 392.

One of the initial challenges for guardians was helping Jewish children adapt to new living conditions. Caregivers of older children undoubtedly encountered different issues compared to those caring for younger children. A fragmentary picture of the difficulties the latter may have faced was provided by the statement by Pesa Terkieltojb. Her daughter Sabina Kac (born 26 October 1939 in Klimontów) was hidden from June 1942 until January 1945 by Anna Kowalczyk, who lived in Rzeszotary:

“Anna Kowalczyk had a lot of trouble with the child,” wrote Terkieltojb, “because, knowing his real mother, it did not want to stay with her and the separation from his mother was very hard for it. The child’s longing, desperate crying and screaming at night, turning into spasms, adversely affected its mental health and created a situation that threatened the safety of Anna Kowalczyk. The child was frail and needed proper nutrition, and Anna Kowalczyk denied herself everything to provide food for her. She also went to the doctor with the child and she paid him in kind, and even bought medicines as long as she was able to pay for them.”<sup>75</sup>

The new charge had to be cared for, a minimum of hygiene had to be provided in addition to daily food and the necessary medical care.<sup>76</sup>

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When analysing the aid provided to Jewish children, it is essential to consider the social networks in which their new guardians lived. Family members did not always agree to take in a Jewish child. Conflicts were arising against this background. Stanisława Suska worked for a Jewish doctor on Limanowskiego Street in Cracow as a household maid and a nanny for his children. When the German authorities established the ghetto, Suska decided to hide the doctor’s daughter<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> Undated statement by Pesa Terkieltojb regarding the aid provided to her daughter Sabina Kac by Anna and Jan Kowalczyk in Rzeszotary (Cracow district), in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 384–385.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków*, pp. 116–108.

<sup>77</sup> According to Bronisław Koper, the Jewish girl’s name was Ewa, but in Bieńkówka they called her Marysia (AIPN, 392/970, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Bronisław Koper, Bielsko-Biała, 13 June 1989, p. 1v).

in her family home in Wieprzec. However, her husband was against it. Eventually, Stanisława Suska and the girl found shelter with Bronisław Koper (Suska's cousin) in the nearby Bieńkówka. At first, Koper's father also did not want to agree to take the girl in, but he ultimately left the decision up to his son. Bronisław Koper recalled: "I was over 20 years old and I was the one who ran the farm, and I decided that they should stay with us."<sup>78</sup>

Guardians were not always able to conceal the presence of their Jewish charges, and some consciously decided to have them stay with them openly, pretending they were Christian children. Franciszka Bala recalled that at the request of Henryka Zollman<sup>79</sup> she took in her several-year-old daughter Salomea ("Salusia"). On the evening of 1 September 1942, Franciszka brought the girl to her home in Rabka. At first, she hid her from other people. After some time, however, she added her to the four children of her sister Ludwika Buksa: "The girl was just the right age to fit into the age difference among these children," recalled Franciszka and added: "during the time when this child was kept, various searches by the Germans were frequent. However, they never asked about the child."<sup>80</sup> Jewish children (especially the older ones), in order not to raise suspicions about their origin, had to have a "good appearance," be proficient in Polish, and practice the Christian religion (know prayers, church holidays and traditions). Balbina Piecuch's son, Stanisław Pyrek, remembered: "Oliner lived with us, I remember that my mother taught him how to pray and we went to church together so that no one would suspect that he was a Jew."<sup>81</sup> Some guardians even sent the children staying with them to school.<sup>82</sup>

Jewish children (as well as adults in hiding) had to be vigilant against outsiders, which sometimes did not work. The mere suspicion of a child being Jewish could pose a danger to the child and the guardians. In the case of boys, even despite their "good" looks, suspicions could be very quickly verified by outsiders:

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<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 1–1v.

<sup>79</sup> Henryka Zollman was the owner of a tailor's shop in Rabka, where Franciszka worked from 1938.

<sup>80</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Franciszka Bala regarding the aid provided by her, her parents Aleksander and Aniela Miśkowiec and her sister Ludwika Buksa to Salomea Zollman in Rabka (Nowy Targ district), Rabka, 30 November 1984, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 369–370.

<sup>81</sup> AYV, M.31.2/4691, Testimony of Stanisław Pyrek, Gorlice, 6 March 1990, no page numbering.

<sup>82</sup> AYV, M.31.2/4817, Testimony of Augusta Szemelowska, Cracow, 20 July 1990, no page numbering.

“Artuś did not resemble a Jew at all,” Natalia Pyrkowska recalled, “He had blue eyes, blond hair. It was rather my son Wirgiliusz who was black [i.e. had black hair] and his eyes were black. But Artuś was circumcised. He slept with me, in the yard he played with my sons and my daughter. The neighbours didn’t trust me. Once when he ran out without his panties on, a neighbour grabbed him by his shirt and pulled him towards the fence to have a look at him, but Artur started screaming and she didn’t manage to see him.”<sup>83</sup>

Every effort was made to counteract the compromising of the charges identity.<sup>84</sup> To convince neighbours, friends or relatives, various explanations were invented. The frequent excuse was that it was the extra-marital child of someone in the family. Ryszard Orowski, who was hidden by Józefa and Antoni Lorenc in Cracow, recalled: “when acquaintances asked [the Lorencs – R.G.] where the child had come from, they would sometimes reply that it was the illegitimate child of their daughter Maria.”<sup>85</sup> Older children were learning their new identity, e.g. Zygmunt Weinreb, who was staying with Puchała, had to learn that his name was Czesław Bojdak.<sup>86</sup> Efforts were also made to obtain baptismal certificates from the parish. Anna Poleska, who lived in Cracow, recalled that after she took in Tamara Goldstein, there was a “fear of people taking too much interest in the child and guessing that it was a Jewish child.”<sup>87</sup> So the woman decided to portray Tamara as the illegitimate daughter of her son, “and because she bore a strong resemblance to him, it was believed.”<sup>88</sup> She soon obtained a baptismal certificate for the girl in the Carmelite church under the name of Helena Nowak.<sup>89</sup>

Feliks Michalik, who looked after a several-year-old girl Henryka Reisig, did the same:

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<sup>83</sup> Testimony of Natalia Pyrkowska regarding the aid provided by her and her husband Stanisław Bernal-Olecharki to Artur Süsskind in Rzędzin (Tarnów district), Brzeg, 1 August 1985, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 392. Artur Süsskind stayed with spouses Pyrkowski for several weeks. He was then handed over to his mother, who was in hiding together with her brother-in-law and his daughter. Both Artur and his mother survived, and after the war they emigrated (*ibid.*, p. 393).

<sup>84</sup> Cf. J.B. Michlic, *Piętno Zagłady*, p. 149.

<sup>85</sup> AYV, M.31.2/5365, Statement by Józef Ryszard Orowski, Warsaw, 3 December 1991, n.p.

<sup>86</sup> AŻIH, 301/406, Testimony given by Zygmunt Weinreb.

<sup>87</sup> AŻIH, 301/2339, Testimony given by Anna Poleska.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

I applied for documents for the child. I obtained them in the Gorlice district, because I wanted a surname similar to the original one, so that any potential mistakes made by the child would be as unnoticeable as possible. I obtained documents for Anna Radzik.<sup>90</sup>

Sometimes forged documents were sought by parents of Jewish children even before they were transferred to the “Aryan” side. Legalizing a child (giving them a false identity) enabled their new guardians to receive food ration cards. The following example shows, how important was the authentication of the child’s new identity. On 13 March 1943, Stefania Elsner gave her tiny daughter, about six weeks old, to Helena Osika, who lived then at 24/10 Lubicz Street in Cracow. Elsner emphasised in her testimony that the money she gave Osika were very small sums, barely enough for the baby’s most essential needs. The new guardian reported the child to the Main Guardianship Council (Rada Główna Opiekuńcza, RGO) as the daughter of her killed cousin named Wojsak. However, in 1944 she was arrested on suspicion of hiding Jews. During a search of her flat, one of the officers who arrived, a Blue Policeman, asked her about the child’s mother. Helena assured him that the child was “the daughter of her cousin killed in Sarny, and that the RGO committee in Złoczów had brought the child to her.”<sup>91</sup> Despite these explanations, the Polish woman was detained and interrogated at the Montelupich Street prison in Cracow. Due to the lack of evidence, she was released after two days.<sup>92</sup>

A real threat to the Polish guardians and their charges were various spies who profited from such activity, including Jewish informers. In Cracow, Stefania Brandstätter, among others, was involved in such practices. According to Martyna Grądzka-Rejak’s research, she was seen as one of the most active and dangerous Jewish informers in the General Governorate capital. Her tasks included searching for children hiding with the so-called ‘Aryan papers.’<sup>93</sup> Unfortunately, despite the passage of years, we still do not know the extent of the phenomenon of such

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<sup>90</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Feliks Michalik regarding the aid provided by him and other persons of Polish nationality to Henryka Reisig in Rzeszów, Gwoźnica Górna and other town in the region, Rzeszów, 17 October 1970, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 390.

<sup>91</sup> AŻIH, 301/3409, Testimony of Stefania Elsner.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>93</sup> M. Grądzka-Rejak, *Kobieta żydowska w okupowanym Krakowie (1939–1945)* (Cracow, 2016), p. 401.

collaboration. As Alicja Jarkowska-Natkaniec pointed out, it is difficult “to assess their actual participation in crimes committed against Jews or in activities directed against them.”<sup>94</sup>

The fear of being reported (which all General Governorate residents were obliged to do under the German law from the end of 1942) may have led guardians to decide to move with their charge to another locality.<sup>95</sup> Roman Bachul, whose family hid Miriam Stern in their home in Osielec, recalled that keeping this child put them at great risk:

working as a traffic officer at the Osielec station, I once heard local women I knew telling each other that the Bachul family was keeping a Jewish girl because the child looked very much like a Jewish girl. The conversation I heard made me freeze and I passed it on to my mother.<sup>96</sup>

Prompted by this information, Ludwika Bachul relocated with little Sara to a house in Bystra Podhalańska. During the winter, the girl returned to Osielec, likely remaining in hiding at that time.<sup>97</sup>

In cases of extreme danger, children were placed with friends, trusted neighbours or other family members. This is what Cecylia Korzeniowska of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska did, who hid a twelve-year-old Jewish girl during the German occupation (according to Korzeniowska, she was Danusia Krochmal, bearing the surname Tigerman after the war). “It happened several times that because we feared one of the neighbours, who threatened us that we would all go to Auschwitz [KL Auschwitz – R.G.], the girl was hidden for a short time by friends or other neighbours,” Korzeniowska testified.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> A. Jarkowska-Natkaniec, *Wymuszona współpraca czy zdrada? Wokół przypadków kolaboracji Żydów w okupowanym Krakowie* (Cracow, 2018), p. 380.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. J.B. Michlic, *Piętno Zagłady*, p. 151.

<sup>96</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Roman Bachul regarding the aid provided by him, his parents Stanisław and Ludwika Bachul and his siblings: Anna, Janina, Maria and Władysław Bachul to Sara Stern in Osielec (Nowy Targ district), Cracow, 22 November 1984, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 330.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Cecylia Korzeniowska regarding the aid provided by her and members of the Debicki family to Danuta Krochmal in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (Cracow district), Bielsko-Biała, 13 January 1989, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 165.

In similar situations, children were occasionally taken under the care of clergymen. In August 1942, during the liquidation of the Brzozów ghetto, Ela Zwick came to the home of Zofia Gubernat. Gubernat spouses decided to help her. After some time, when Zofia Gubernat was warned that there was “a lot of talk” in the neighbourhood about her hiding a Jewish child, she decided to find a new guardian for her.<sup>99</sup> Eventually, Fr. Jan Kuźniar, who was based in Chmielnik near Rzeszów, took in the girl. He arranged for her to have a false identity – from then on, Ela Zwick became Zofia Kuźniar.<sup>100</sup>

We know that decisions were also made to hand children over to convents. This is what Józef Suchta from Raciechowice and his wife did. During the occupation, the Suchtas took care of a six-year-old girl<sup>101</sup> they raised with their children. According to Karolina Ścibor’s post-war testimony, “people in the village started pointing fingers at her that this must be a Jewish child because it was different from the rest of the Suchtas’ children. Someone told the Suchtas that they were suspected of keeping a Jewish child.”<sup>102</sup>

In this situation, Suchtas decided to place the girl in the Ursuline convent in Cracow: “They took her there and left her in the corridor, hoping that the nuns would take care of the child,” Karolina Ścibor testified; she added that Józef told her that “after they left the child, both he and his wife cried, but they had to choose

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<sup>99</sup> The information provided by Zofia Gubernat is somewhat inconsistent. In her letter of 10 June 1984, she stated: “the presence of this child was soon noticed. We looked for some accommodation, but to no avail, no one even temporarily agreed to take her in [Ela Zwick – R.G.]. When I could no longer [hide her – R.G.], we left the house and, after walking around all day, we parted and she went by herself to an acquaintance of the parish priest in the parish of Chmielnik near Rzeszów” (AIPN, 392/524, Letter from Zofia Gubernat, Rzeszów, 10 June 1984, p. 3). On the other hand, in a testimony given a year later, Gubernat stated: “I made efforts with my husband to hide Ela in another place. I received help from Fr. Kuźniar, who resided in Chmielnik near Rzeszów at the time. She was taken there by a teacher from Izdebki, whose name I don’t remember today; after all, it was a great secrecy and I didn’t care to know her second name at the time.” Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Zofia Gubernat regarding the aid provided by her, her sister Helena Wiśniowska and other persons of Polish nationality to Ela and Barbara Zwick in Brzozów, (Krosno district), Rzeszów, 14 February 1985, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 58).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>101</sup> According to Sebastian Piątkowski, it was probably a girl using the false name “Ewa Zawadzka,” previously hidden in the Ursuline convent in Kołomyja. According to Karolina Ścibor, she was brought to Suchtów by the Ursuline nun Hiacenta (Franciszka Suchta), Józef Suchta’s cousin. Minutes of the interrogation of Karolina Ścibor regarding the aid provided by her and her husband Jan Ścibor to Zygmunt Dolinger in Nowy Sącz and the aid given by Stanisław and Józef Suchta to a Jewish girl of unknown identity in Raciechowice (Cracow district), Nowy Sącz, 3 May 1985, in *Relacje o pomocy*, pp. 373–374).

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 373.



between their lives and keeping the child. At the same time they were sure that no one would harm the child there.”<sup>103</sup>

The failure to take the necessary precautions was dangerous. According to post-war witnesses’ testimonies, many neighbours knew that Gusta Goldberger’s son was hiding in the Węgrzyn family flat at 41b Emaus Street in Cracow. Some of them pressured the boy to leave the house. Therefore, after a few months, little Stefan Goldberger, through Franciszka Kałuża, a neighbour of the Węgrzyns, was placed with the Stelmach family in the village of Gnojnik. Wiktor Węgrzyn donated one thousand zlotys a month for his care, but apparently only half of this sum reached his new guardians, as Kałuża kept the rest for herself. Stefan stayed in Gnojnik for probably three months, whereafter his guardians requested that he be taken away. Perhaps they were afraid to hide him any longer. Franciszka Kałuża brought Stefan back to Węgrzyn. Most likely as a result of a denunciation in 1944, German police functionaries took the boy away and then arrested Wiktor Węgrzyn. The man left the Montelupich Street prison after a few weeks, while the boy was most likely murdered.<sup>104</sup> After the war, Józefa Gaudyn testified: “Everyone on the street knew that the Węgrzyns were sheltering the little Jewish boy. Even the children playing outside talked about it, which even I heard myself.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 373–374.

<sup>104</sup> AIPN Kr, 502/584, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Maria Węgrzyn, Cracow, 9 April 1945, pp. 3–3v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Wiktor Węgrzyn, Cracow, 10 April 1945, pp. 4–4v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Kamila Biczka, Cracow, 10 April 1945, fol. 5; *ibid.*, Note on the interview with the suspect Franciszka Kałuża, Cracow, 14 April 1945, pp. 6–6v; *ibid.*, Investigation report, Cracow, 16 April 1945, p. 7; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the suspect Franciszka Kałuża, Cracow, 24 May 1945, pp. 14–15v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Janina Węgrzyn, Cracow, 23 June 1945, pp. 19–19v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Wiktor Węgrzyn, Cracow, 23 June 1945, pp. 20–21; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Zofia Borowska, Cracow, 23 June 1945, pp. 22–22v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Janina Mikołajczyk, Cracow, 23 June 1945, pp. 23–23v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józefa Gaudyn, Cracow, 23 June 1945, pp. 24–24v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Maria Węgrzyn, Cracow, 23 June 1945, pp. 25–25v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józefa Gaudyn, Cracow, 28 December 1945, pp. 38–38v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Zofia Borowska, Cracow, 28 December 1945, pp. 40–40v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Janina Kałuża, Cracow, 28 December 1945, pp. 41–41v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Walenty Stelmach, Cracow, 15 January 1946, pp. 51–51v.

<sup>105</sup> AIPN Kr, 502/584, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józefa Gaudyn, Cracow, 28 December 1945, p. 38.

## Staying in Hiding

Sometimes it was only after an attempt to live openly on the 'Aryan' side failed that the guardians of a Jewish child made the decision to hide him. The aforementioned Icchak Lerner was initially placed in the home of Stefania Bilińska's mother in Cracow. To neighbours and acquaintances he was introduced as "the nephew of an uncle from Przemyśl." Unfortunately, continuing to stay "on the surface" could have posed the risk of his true identity being revealed. Stefania recalled:

The reason we had to take him from [my] mother's house was that he had compromised himself to other children with his knowledge of the German language, and when the owner of the coal depot named Bobak, who was an Ukrainian, found out about this, he began to claim that he was definitely a Jewish child. So, fearing for his safety, we took the boy to Dobczyce and from then until the end of the war we hid him in our house in Dobczyce. Fearing that his presence would be detected in our house, he had a hiding place arranged in the attic where he stayed for days.<sup>106</sup>

We know of cases where children lived "near the surface," that is, depending on the circumstances, they used a false identity or stayed in hiding. Aleksander Münzer received false documents with the name Aleksander Burzowski from his guardian, a Home Army soldier, Franciszek Mróz. According to Münzer's post-war testimony, he used those documents almost until the end of the war. In addition, Mróz prepared a hiding place for him in the Misior family's house – a kind of a camouflaged bunker, built under the barn, with an emergency second exit. However, the boy was not completely isolated there; he stayed both in the bunker and in the Misior's flat.<sup>107</sup> On the other hand, abovementioned Bronisław Koper from Bieńkówka, who took Stanisława Suska and the Jewish girl into his farm, and prepared

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<sup>106</sup> AYV, M.31.2/4756, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stefania Bilińska, Cracow, 21 September 1984, n.p.

<sup>107</sup> OKŚZpNP Kr, S 1/87, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Aleksander Mirecki, Cracow, 12 February 1986, pp. 65–69.

a camouflaged hiding place as a precaution – it was a dugout hole, boarded up, with an air supply, but they were only forced to hide there once, because fortunately there was no need to do so. It was a special hiding place for case of extreme danger. In other emergency situations, which occurred several dozen times, the cousin and the girl hid in a camouflaged cellar.<sup>108</sup>

Some children, however, stayed in hiding almost all the time. For example, this was the case of Janek Weber, brought to the Wierzbicki family.<sup>109</sup> “He lived in a locked room, he couldn’t go out,”<sup>110</sup> recalled Wanda Styczeń, a daughter of the couple hiding him. When Janek turned up at their house at 28 Wodociągowa Street in Cracow,<sup>111</sup> Styczeń was in her teens. When her mother brought “a small, petite boy,” Wanda was told: “[He] will live with us [...] but no one can know about it.”<sup>112</sup> Years later, Janek Weber recalled that he had been instructed by his guardians not to make any noise or walk up to the windows. He lived in the room of his grandmother Wanda, who had died a few months earlier. Food was brought to him once a day, usually at night.<sup>113</sup> In the light of the available sources, we know that strict secrecy was kept at home. The Wierzbickis’ youngest child, Marek, who was Weber’s peer, only found out about Janek’s stay when the war ended. Before that, he had been told that no one was allowed to enter his deceased grandmother’s room.<sup>114</sup>

Being constantly in hiding took a mental and physical toll on the person. Health problems were a consequence. This is how Rachela Garfunkel, born in Cracow in 1930, recalled hiding in the Gruca spouses’ house:

I spent most of my time with them standing in a corner, hidden behind a large wardrobe. My physical needs had to wait till late at night, as the only lavatory

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<sup>108</sup> AIPN, 392/970, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Bronisław Koper, Bielsko-Biała, 13 June 1989, p. 1v.

<sup>109</sup> The family consisted of Michał and Anna Wierzbicki, and their three children: Wanda, Krystyna and Marek (AYV, M.31.2/6222, Statement by Jan Weber, Jerusalem, 12 July 1993, n.p.).

<sup>110</sup> *Ibid.*, Testimony given by Wanda Styczeń née Wierzbicka, Cracow, 23 February 1994, no page numbering.

<sup>111</sup> Weber stated that it was “a little isolated villa” (*ibid.*, Statement by Jan Weber, Jerusalem, 12 July 1993, n.p.).

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, Testimony given by Wanda Styczeń née Wierzbicka, Cracow, 23 February 1994, n.p.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid.*, Statement by Jan Weber, Jerusalem, 12 July 1993, n.p..

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*

(for all the tenants) was in the hallway. At times, I had to lie under the bed. Standing for such a length of time caused ulcerations on my legs. Also, at the same time, I was suffering from hepatitis which I contracted in the Ghetto.<sup>115</sup>

Unfortunately, in the available sources we do not always find information about many of the ongoing problems faced by the caregivers and children. Let us also note that remaining silent for long hours required a great deal of discipline from the young charges.

Finding a hiding place was not always a sufficient guarantee of safety. At the turn of 1942 and 1943, Rozalia Paśławska, at the request of the Kardisch spouses (who worked in the Optima factory at the time), hid two children in her flat at 15 Rękawka Street: around five-year-old Romek and around nine-year-old Rena. The Paśławski family lived in difficult conditions, in a small flat (they had only a room and a kitchen). During the day, the Jewish children would hide in a laundry basket, in a made bed, or sometimes under it; according to post-war testimonies from the Paśławski sons, only in the evening and with the lights out could they leave their hiding place.<sup>116</sup> Living in towns was linked to the obligation to report the residents and fixed addresses. The new tenant could have been reported by neighbours or other outsiders. Despite the precautions taken, at the end of October or beginning of November 1944, one of the neighbours, being drunk, reported to Germans (probably gendarmes) that there were Jewish children living with Rozalia Paśławska. As a result, a German patrol arrested Paśławska and Romek Kardisch. The boy was probably murdered, while Paśławska left the Montelupich Street jail in Cracow after a few weeks.<sup>117</sup>

According to Rozalia Paśławska's testimony, while the Germans entered the room where Roman was, his sister Rena was led outside by her daughter Helena Paśławska, owing to which the former survived.<sup>118</sup> This case demonstrates how

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<sup>115</sup> AYV, M.31.2/11179, Testimony given by Rachela Garfunkel, Edmonton, 16 October 2006, pp. 18–19.

<sup>116</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stefan Paśławski regarding the aid provided by his parents Rozalia and Bolesław Paśławski to Renata and Roman Kardisz in Cracow, Cracow, 7 February 1985, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 207; AIPN, 392/474/A, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Jerzy Paśławski, Cracow, 5 March 1985, pp. 12–14.

<sup>117</sup> For more, see R. Gieroń, "Zarys problematyki pomocy," pp. 239–240.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 240.

much of a role, including in extreme situations, was sometimes played by the children of Poles caring for Jewish refugees. Jan Weber had similar experiences. In the summer of 1943 or 1944, when Germans were carrying out searches near the house where he was hiding, the Wierzbickis' youngest daughter Wanda led Janek outside the house. Her father asked her to take him "to the end of the garden, where the dense bushes made a good hiding place."<sup>119</sup> Thanks to this, the boy was not found. Years later, Wanda recalled: "Poor Janek was sitting obediently in a hiding place. Happy, we took him home to feed him and eat something ourselves, as we had had nothing in our mouths since 5 a.m."<sup>120</sup>

As we can see from the above examples (this is also confirmed by the existing literature in the field), during the German occupation, buildings, flats, houses or farms were not enclaves inaccessible to the functionaries of the German administration. They would enter to carry out arrests or searches.<sup>121</sup> Despite taking various precautions, those caring for Jewish children were very often in fear. Ryszard Orowski, who was hiding in a Cracow flat, wrote several decades after the end of the war:

Sometimes during inspections by various authorities, because I was not registered, [the Lorenc family – R.G.] hid me in the attic or in the cellar, which was a great psychological stress for them, and only after the subsequent inspection did they breathe a sigh of relief that no one had found me.<sup>122</sup>

Fear probably affected the relations within the families and behaviour towards the hidden children. Perhaps this is what an excerpt from Jan Weber's post-war testimony, who, while in hiding, came into contact mainly with Mrs Wierzbicka, indicates: "She was quite strict and even unkind to me – I remember being afraid of her, but in hindsight I cannot – of course – hold it against her."<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>119</sup> AYW, M.31.2/6222, Testimony given by Wanda Styczeń née Wierzbicka, Cracow, 23 February 1994, n.p.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>121</sup> Cf. A. Czocher, "Okupacyjne uwarunkowania pomocy ukrywającym się Żydom w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie," in *Kościół, Żydzi, jezuici. Wokół pomocy Żydom w czasie II wojny światowej*, ed. M. Wenklar (Cracow, 2021), p. 56.

<sup>122</sup> AYW, M.31.2/5365, Statement by Józef Ryszard Orowski, Warsaw, 3 December 1991, n.p.

<sup>123</sup> AYW, M.31.2/6222, Statement by Jan Weber, Jerusalem, 12 July 1993, n.p.

Fear was rooted in the nature of the occupation policy. “The terror of the occupier creating a permanent sense of fear in Polish society was one of the decisive factors in Polish-Jewish relations at that time,” note Martyna Grądzka-Rejak and Aleksandra Namysło.<sup>124</sup> From the moment the ghettos were liquidated and its inhabitants deported to extermination camps, one of the aims of the system set up by the German authorities was to catch Jewish fugitives. This also applied to children in hiding. After a few months of sheltering Sonia Imerglück in their home in Zagórzany, the Łosiowski family also agreed to take care of the Liebers’ two-year-old son. The Łosiowski farm might have seemed like a safe haven. It was placed close to the forest, away from the other houses in Zagórzany. However, we know from post-war testimonies that the Łosiowskis feared denunciation. It soon turned out that their fear was not unfounded. In September 1943, most probably as a result of a denunciation, the children were murdered by a Blue Police officer, and Michał Łosiowski, his wife Maria and daughter Anna were beaten up.<sup>125</sup>

Unfortunately, we do not know how many hidden Jewish children were captured during the third stage of the Holocaust. We do not know these figures neither for the whole occupied Polish territories nor for the Cracow province (Distrikt Krakau). It is possible that we will never know this number due to absent sources. The attitude of the neighbours was undoubtedly important; they could, for example,

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<sup>124</sup> M. Grądzka-Rejak, A. Namysło, “Relacje polsko-żydowskie,” p. 45.

<sup>125</sup> A Blue Police officer, Wincenty Pałka, who was on duty at the Polnische Polizei station in Gdów at the time, was suspected of murdering the Jewish children (Sonia Imerglück and the Liebers’ son). Although he was wanted by law enforcement authorities after the end of the war, he was not tried. He continued to live under the alias Władysław Barański until his death in the late 1960s. (AIPN Kr, 010/1655, vol. 2, Memo, Myślenice, 16 April 1961, pp. 25–26; *ibid.*, Memo, Myślenice, 8 May 1961, p. 27; *ibid.*, Memo, Myślenice, 19 May 1961, pp. 28–29; *ibid.*, Full copy of the death certificate of Władysław Barański, Milicz, 15 March 1968, pp. 158–159; *ibid.*, Memo, Cracow, 4 December 1969, pp. 161–162; AIPN Kr, 502/2929, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Michał Łosiowski, Myślenice, 25 September 1945, p. 9; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Anna Łosiowska, Myślenice, 22 September 1945, pp. 12–13; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Józef Nawalaniec, Myślenice, 22 September 1945, pp. 14–14v; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Marian Imerglück, Myślenice, 22 September 1945, pp. 16–17; AIPN Kr, 502/4161, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Anna Łosiowska, Myślenice, 17 March 1961, pp. 10–12; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Zofia Nowak, Myślenice, 4 May 1961, pp. 16–17; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Franciszek Maroń, Myślenice, 9 May 1961, pp. 18–19; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Franciszek Rapacz, Myślenice, 12 May 1961, pp. 23–25).

have stayed favourably silent about the presence of those in hiding or reported it according to German laws.<sup>126</sup> In this context, the passivity of those who knew about the hidden Jewish child can be judged positively.

### The Fate of the Hidden Children After the End of the German Occupation

Anna Poleska, who looked after the several-year-old Tamara Goldstein during the German occupation, recalled that after the end of the war she received

two thousand from the Voivodeship Jewish Committee for the child. Then I was told that I had to hand the child over to an orphanage. I was together with the child for four years. I loved the child as my own and found it hard to part with it. But seeing that I had no means of subsistence, that I could not secure her existence, even though I had grown attached to her with all my soul, I decided to give her up because I knew she would be better off there. At the same time, I received a message from her father, Jakub Goldstein, from Belgium, asking me to give the child to the orphanage at 38 Długa Street. After a year, Tamara Goldstein left to join her father and is in an orphanage near Paris.<sup>127</sup>

It is estimated that one in three Holocaust victims was a child at the time of their death. After the end of the war, the surviving community of Polish Jews, through the Central Committee of Jews in Poland and Zionist organisations, made efforts to recover Jewish children hidden by Poles. Parents or other relatives of the children also tried to do so. Sometimes this was not an easy task. Danuta Beer was born in the Cracow ghetto in 1941. After a year, her parents, Felicja and Lazar, entrusted the girl to Veronica and Marian Blicharz. Her new guardians named her Anna, baptised her and most likely adopted her after the war ended. Lazar Beer, a Holocaust survivor, wanted to reclaim his child and,

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<sup>126</sup> Cf. A. Czocher, "Okupacyjne uwarunkowania pomocy," p. 56.

<sup>127</sup> AŻIH, 301/2339, Testimony of Anna Poleska.



through his lawyer Norbert Salpeter, brought a case before the Cracow Municipal Court.<sup>128</sup> However, the court did not decide to take the girl away from the Blicharz family.<sup>129</sup>

Some carers refused to give back their charges, motivated by emotional reasons. There were also those who wanted to be compensated for the costs incurred while providing care or to be rewarded (a specific remuneration).<sup>130</sup> Some asked for financial assistance, citing their difficult financial situation. This is, for example, what Janina Gosławska did, who wrote a letter to the Central Committee of Jews in Poland and received ten thousand zlotys due to the “need to cover debts” incurred while hiding Maks Weissberg and “lack of money for her own treatment.” After the war, Maks was handed over to the Jewish Committee in Cracow;<sup>131</sup> in his written testimony he confirmed the fact of being hidden by Gosławska and added that he was “fine” there.<sup>132</sup>

Cases should also be noted of the children who themselves did not want to leave their guardians. Such situations must have been extremely painful for all parties: parents, children and their wartime guardians alike. In 1945, Pesa Terkieltojb came to Anna Kowalczyk to collect her daughter. However, the girl did not see her for more than two years and did not want to leave her “foster mother.”<sup>133</sup> When she was given to Anna Kowalczyk, she was not yet three years old. Holocaust survivor Pesa Terkieltojb recalled: “The incessant crying, loud shouting, spasms and ‘you’re not my mother’ exclamations made me ask Anna Kowalczyk to bring the child to Klimontów herself.” The Polish woman brought the girl and, in order to accustom her to her new situation, stayed with her for several weeks. Terkieltojb reported:

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<sup>128</sup> AŻIH, 303/IX/722, The letter of Lazar Beer to the Jewish Care Committee in Warsaw, Cracow, 2 July 1947, p. 19; *ibid.*, The letter of Lazar Beer to the Central Committee of Jews in Poland, date of receipt: 2 September 1947, p. 22.

<sup>129</sup> *Księga Sprawiedliwych wśród Narodów Świata. Ratujący Żydów podczas Holocaustu. Polska*, vol. 1, ed. I. Gutman, S. Bender, S. Krakowski (Cracow, 2009), pp. 45–46.

<sup>130</sup> Cf. E. Rączy, *Pomoc Polaków*, pp. 116–118.

<sup>131</sup> AN Kr, 29/749/1319, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Janina Gosławska, Cracow, 14 November 1945, pp. 45–45v (incorrect pagination); AŻIH, 303/VIII/226, Janina Gosławska’s application, 8 August 1945.

<sup>132</sup> AŻIH, 303/VIII/226, Letter of Maks Weissberg.

<sup>133</sup> Undated statement by Pesa Terkieltojb regarding the aid provided to her daughter Sabina Kac by Anna and Jan Kowalczyk in Rzeszotary (Cracow district) in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 384.

As her efforts did not bring any results, at my request she left at night so as not to see the child again, to whom she was also extremely attached. Her departure caused the child profound psychological trauma, leaving lasting scars. Even now, during moments of mental distress, she remembers Anna Kowalczyk. She knows now about the immense dedication Anna showed in stepping into her mother's role at such a challenging time, and she knows she owes her life to Anna's care.<sup>134</sup>

A similar situation was mentioned by Roman Bachul. In 1945, Sara Stern, who was hidden by his family, turned seven years old. The family was then to decide that the girl would be sent to school as Maria Bachul. However, in the summer of that year her mother, Miriam Stern, came to collect her. Roman recalled:

the mother who arrived followed the girl all day and said to her: 'You are mine.' The child, in turn, held my mother by the skirt and grabbed her neck and would not leave. Then the Jewish woman went away, leaving the child with us, but from then on she often came to us and the child slowly got used to her.<sup>135</sup>

After a few months Miriam took the girl away.

Some rescuers looked for relatives of the surviving child on their own initiative. Stefania Bilińska recounted the story of Icchak Lermer: after the end of the war,

no one came forward to claim the boy, and it was then that we found out that the owner of a tannery in Dobczyce, Adolf Pistol, had survived the occupation and my mother approached him to ask what to do with the boy. Adolf Pistol went with my mother to the Jewish community in Cracow, which was based somewhere in the Kazimierz district, and there it was decided that the boy would be taken over by this Jewish community. Indeed, Yitzhak Lermer was taken by a representative of this community and, as far as I know, was sent by

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<sup>134</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 384–385.

<sup>135</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Roman Bachul regarding the aid provided by him, his parents Stanisław and Ludwika, and his siblings: Anna, Janina, Maria i Władysław Bachul to Sara Stern in Osielec (Nowy Targ district), Cracow, 22 November 1984, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 330.

this community to France for treatment. My mother was paid twenty thousand zloty by the Jewish community as compensation for the expenses incurred while hiding the boy.<sup>136</sup>

Some of the hidden children remained with Polish guardians after the war ended. Maria Findysz, daughter of Józefa and Antoni Lorenc, recalled: "After the war ended, we all got so used to the child [Ryszard Orowski] at home, and since he did not have a mother, because, as we found out, she had been executed by the Nazis together with her mother, he remained in our house as a foster child."<sup>137</sup> We also know the stories of children who did not know their true identity for many years because they were handed over to their guardians at a very young age. For example, Jerzy Goldstein, who was born in the Cracow ghetto on 28 July 1941, was handed over to the Pietrukaniec family as a year-old child. After the German occupation ended, Anna and Stanislaw – who had no offspring – adopted him and raised him as their own son. He only learned of his fate when he was an adult.<sup>138</sup>

After the war, Jewish children – Holocaust survivors pursued their education, worked, and built families. While many achieved success in their professional and personal lives, others faced significant challenges, including mental health issues stemming from their traumatic experiences.<sup>139</sup> Some also wanted to forget their wartime experiences. This is probably why they did not uphold contact with their former guardians. Sometimes they simply left Poland. Although there were also those who, despite leaving for another country, maintained contact. Danuta Tigerman, a Holocaust survivor, left for Israel in 1968, but continued to correspond with Cecylia Korzeniowska, and visited her in the late 1980s.<sup>140</sup> It was common for children who stayed in Poland to have their wartime

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<sup>136</sup> AYW, M.31.2/4756, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Stefania Bilińska, Cracow, 21 September 1984, n.p.

<sup>137</sup> AYW, M.31.2/5365, Statement by Maria Findysz, no place, n.d., n.p.

<sup>138</sup> AYW, M.31.2/11967, Statement by Jerzy Pietrukaniec (Goldstein), no place, 27 April 2009, n.p.

<sup>139</sup> J.B. Michlic, *Piętno Zagłady*, p. 18.

<sup>140</sup> Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Cecylia Korzeniowska regarding the aid provided by her and members of the Dębicki family to Danuta Krochmal in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska (Cracow district), Bielsko-Biała, 13 January 1989, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 165.

guardians as their only relatives. They often visited them during holidays and festivities.<sup>141</sup>

Many years after the end of the war, some people made statements about the help they had obtained, thanks to which their caregivers received the Righteous Among the Nations titles. For example, Maria Grochowska (née Eibenschütz) in 2001, in a letter to the Department of the Righteous at Yad Vashem, applied for this honour to be awarded posthumously to Katarzyna Kijak. Katarzyna was the nanny of little Maria. Before the deportation operation of 28 October 1942, she took the two-year-old girl out of the Cracow ghetto and looked after her until the end of the German occupation. After the war they continued to live together. Maria wrote:

I remained with my guardian, who did not formally adopt me but kept my name in honour of my parents, whom she respected and valued. She became the best mother to me, loving me as if I were her own child and caring for me to the best of her very modest means.<sup>142</sup>

In the Yad Vashem Archives collections, statements and testimonies given by the parents of the rescued children are also kept.<sup>143</sup>

## Conclusion

I presented selected aspects of the topic of Poles sheltering Jewish children on the so-called Aryan side in the wartime Cracow province (Distrikt Krakau). The cases mentioned in the text show that the decisions of individuals or families were influenced by various conditions; however, taking in Jewish children was always associated with many new challenges and dangers stemming from the terms imposed by the German occupier on the Polish territory during the World War II.

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<sup>141</sup> AIPN Kr, 502/4193, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Kamila Zagórska, Olkusz, 29 March 1951, pp. 22v–23; Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Antonina Czuba regarding the aid provided by her, her parents Barbara and Hieronim Mikłarz and other family members to Elza Roze-man in Pruchnik (Jarosław district), Rzeszów, 30 April 1971, in *Relacje o pomocy*, p. 351.

<sup>142</sup> AYW, M.31.2/9662, Maria Grochowska's application for awarding Katarzyna Kijak the Righteous Among the Nations title, Cracow, 18 May 2001, n.p.

<sup>143</sup> AYW, M.31.2/6162, Testimony of Leon Margulies, Montreal, 29 August 1992, n.p.

It seems that the percentage of people taking care of Jewish children was small. However, this issue requires further research.

In this article, I have featured selected cases of hiding of more than forty Jewish children. Almost a hundred people were involved – mostly married couples and in some cases whole extended families. It would be worthwhile to do more in-depth research on the role of other household members, especially younger children in a family hosting a fugitive, e.g. on the issue of sharing tasks or responsibilities related to hiding Jews.<sup>144</sup>

Despite the limited source material originating from the fact that not all cases of children in hiding have been documented, and that not all young fugitives survived till the end of the German occupation,<sup>145</sup> it is worth attempting to estimate the number of the rescued children and those helping them in a specific geographic area. The question of tracing the post-war fates of those who were hidden and their relationships with their former guardians is also an interesting research proposal. It would also be worthwhile to analyse the issue of the failures of aid efforts more broadly, including in-depth research on the local conditions affecting the effectiveness of hiding children (distinguishing between urban and rural specificities). Such survey could point out the differences in the situation of Jewish children in hiding, both in the Cracow province (Distrikt Krakau) itself and in comparison with the other areas of the General Governorate.

**Table 1. Children Mentioned in the Article and Persons who Helped<sup>146</sup>**

Child	Those who helped	Locality	Child's Fate
Aleksander Münzer (aka Aleksander Mirecki)	Genowefa Misior; Franciszek Mróz and his mother; Rajmund and Aniela Ptak	Skrzynka, Mierzeń	survived
Artur Süsskind	Natalia Pyrkowska and Stanisław Bernal-Olechowski	Rzędzin (at present a part of Tarnów)	probably survived

<sup>144</sup> The research in this matter seems to be possible, as there are the memoirs and testimonies of such individuals remaining. See for example A. Radoń, *Lala. Kartki z dziejów Bystrej Podhalańskiej i okolic* (Bystra-Sidzina, 2022).

<sup>145</sup> Cf. B. Heksel, "Życie w ukryciu," p. 212.

<sup>146</sup> Further research may point out other persons who played a role in rescuing the mentioned children.

Child	Those who helped	Locality	Child's Fate
Benedykt Rosenblum	Ludwik Atlas and his wife; Jan, Magdalena, Helena and Sylwester Gas; Rozalia Bochenek	Dobranowice, Żerkowice	survived
daughter of the Anisfelds (aka Anna Dąbska)	Franciszek Kowalski and his wife	Niepołomice	at the end of 1943 she left Poland with her parents for Hungary
daughter of Stefania Elsner	Helena Osika	Cracow	survived
Danuta Beer (aka Anna Blicharz)	Weronika and Marian Blicharz	Cracow	survived
Danuta Krochmal (aka Dina Tigerman)	Cecylia Korzeniowska	Kalwaria Zebrzydowska	survived
child of Majer Zalcman	Katarzyna Rożek	Dylągówka	survived
Ela Zwick	Zofia Gubernat and her husband; Rev. Jan Kuźniar	Brzozów, Chmielnik	survived
Elza Rozeman	Hieronim and Barbara Miklarz	Pruchnik	survived
Emilia Münzer (aka Emilia Bergel)	Twardosz; the Kaczmarczyk family	Lipnik, Dobrzyce	survived
Ewa (daughter of a Jewish doctor)	Stanisława Suska; Bronisław Koper	Bieńkówka	survived
Henryka Reisig	Feliks Michalik and his mother; Zofia Kapala; Mrs Weis; a woman from Sanok <sup>147</sup>	Rzeszów, Gwoźnica Górna, Sanok	survived
Icchak Lerner	Stefania Bilińska (née Orzechowska); Józefa Głuś (née Orzechowska); Józefa Orzechowska	Cracow, Dobczyce	survived
Isidor Poser	Stanisław Matusz and his wife Katarzyna (née Dudzik)	Cracow	survived
Jan Weber	Aniela and Ludwik Nowak; Michał and Anna Wierzbicki	Cracow	survived

<sup>147</sup> She was probably a cousin or sister of Feliks Michalik's wife (AIPN, 392/1766, Minutes of the interrogation of Feliks Michalik, Rzeszów, 17 October 1970, p. 3; *ibid.*, Minutes of the interrogation of Zofia Kapala, Rzeszów, 30 October 1970, p. 15).

Child	Those who helped	Locality	Child's Fate
Jerzy Goldstein	Anna and Stanisław Pietrukaniec	Cracow	survived
Maks (aka Maciej) Weissberg	Justyna and Janina Gosławska	Cracow <sup>148</sup>	survived
Maria Eibenschütz (aka Maria Grochowska)	Katarzyna Kijak	Cracow	survived
Maria Krawczyk	Augusta Szemelowska (née Trammer) with her mother Elfryda Trammer	Łagiewniki (Cracow)	survived
Michał Pinkas	N.N.	Gruszów Wielki	survived
Mordek (Mordechaj) Szajer	Stanisława Boratyn and her husband	Husów	was probably shot together with his parents in 1943
Olga Mandel (aka Olga Kapeliuk)	Augusta Szemelowska (née Trammer) with her mother Elfryda Trammer	Łagiewniki (Cracow)	survived
Rachela Garfunkel	Marian and Maria Gruca	Cracow	survived
Rena Kardisch	Rozalia and Bolesław Paślawski	Cracow	survived
Roman Kardisch	Rozalia and Bolesław Paślawski	Cracow	was most probably murdered in 1944
Rozalia Allerhand	Roman and Kunegunda Kłosowski	Kocmyrzów (Cracow)	survived
Ryszard Orowski	Józefa and Antoni Lorenc with their daughter Maria	Cracow	survived
Sabina Kac	Anna Kowalczyk	Rzeszotary	survived
Salomea Zollman	Franciszka Bala; Ludwika Buksa	Rabka	survived
Samuel Oliner	Balwina Piecuch; Stanisław Pyrek	Bystra	survived
Sara Stern	Stanisław and Ludwika Bachul, and their children: Roman, Władysław, Anna Maria and Janina	Bystra Podhalańska, Osielec	survived
Sonia Imerglück	Michał Łosiowski with his wife Maria (née Foszczyńska) and daughter Anna	Zagórzany	shot by a Blue Policeman in September 1943

<sup>148</sup> At certain times Maks was sent to the countryside, for example to Michałowice (AIPN Kr, 502/2508, Notarial declaration concerning Ms Gosławska and Ms Tomczyk, a certified translation from French, Paris, 16 May 1950, p. 70v.)



Child	Those who helped	Locality	Child's Fate
Stefan Goldberg	Wiktor Węgrzyn with his family; Walenty Stelmach with his wife	Cracow, Gnojnik	most probably murdered in 1944 in Cracow
Sulamit Korn	Poles (no names available)	Sławkowice	survived
Liebers' son	Michał Łosiowski, his wife Maria (née Foszczyńska) and daughter Anna	Zagórzany	shot by a Blue Policeman in September 1943
Tamara Goldstein	Anna Poleska	Cracow	survived
Weronika (daughter of Dora and Jakub Künstlich)	Maria and Stanisław Szatkowski	Jadowniki Mokre	survived
Zygmunt Weinreb	Józef and Maria Puchała	Łagiewniki (Cracow)	survived
Jewish girl (aka Ewa Zawadzka)	Józef Suchta with his wife	Raciechowice	handed over to the Congregation of the Ursuline Sisters in Cracow
a Jewish boy <sup>149</sup>	Wojciech and Anna Gicala	Stary Wiśnicz	the boy and Wojciech Gicala were shot in Nowy Wiśnicz in August 1942

Source: the author's own research.

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<sup>149</sup> According to the post-war testimony given by Anna Widelko (wife of Wojciech Gicala), he was the son of Pinkes from Nowy Wiśnicz (OKŚZpNP Kr, S 23.2004.Zn, vol. 2, Main Files of the Prosecution concerning the criminal activity of German gendarmerie officers in Bochnia, Minutes of the interrogation of the witness Anna Widelko, Cracow, 27 May 1975, pp. 381–382; see also D. Swałtek-Niewińska, "Powiat bocheński," pp. 574–575).

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## SUMMARY

The article explores various aspects of providing shelter to Jewish children by Poles on the so-called Aryan side in the Cracow province (Distrikt Krakau) during the German occupation. It delves into the experiences of several dozen Jewish children, highlighting the nature of the aid received within a broader context of the events. The article also describes how these children found their new guardians and briefly characterises their lives on the “Aryan” side. The experiences of the children illustrate that the decision to help depended on various circumstances. However, taking Jewish children into care invariably brought new challenges and dangers due to the harsh terms imposed by the German occupiers in Poland during the World War II.

## KEYWORDS

Cracow province • Distrikt Krakau • Jewish children • helping Jews •  
providing shelter • Holocaust