

PACIOREK, Stanisława

Sister Maria Ena – Monastery of The Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception

Polish Witness to the Holocaust Project

Polish

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This is the interview with Stanisława Paciorek born on 21 October 1917 in Szymanów. She attended the primary school in Szymanów, the high school in Warsaw, but the final exam enabling graduation at the high school – **matura** – she passed in Szymanów. She joined the Monastery of The Congregation of the Sisters of the Immaculate Conception on 29 May 1939. She talks about her time at the monastery during the wartime and explains a role that Sister Wanda played in rescuing 36 Jewish children living at that time at the monastery.

[01] 00:28:06 – [01:] 11:09:09

00:00 – 11:37

Sister M.Ena mentions that she spent the first days of II World War in Szymanów, and then in November 1939 she moved to Warsaw; describes the role of Sister Wanda who she met during her time at the high school; highlights that Sister Wanda played a crucial role in her life and says that she is still impressed by her heroism; says that the house (it is unclear if it was school or monastery or both) ruled by nuns was located in **Kazimierzowska street number 59** in Warsaw, mentions that it was facing a school for tailors named after Bratkowska; adds that this building was not destroyed during the war contrary to the house of nuns; describes her regret that her house was destroyed; talks about a book she works on that is devoted to Sister Wanda, her heroism and children who survived thanks to her support (this publication is mentioned here: <http://www.niepokalanki.pl/index.php?op=publikacje&t=tab1>); says that according to her knowledge 36 Jewish people survived thanks to Sister Wanda's help; adds that the school was open in the period of 1933 – 1944; mentions that even before the war the Jewish children attended this school (e.g. **Lara Hilarowicz**); clarifies that once the war started the first Jewish children came in November 1939; explains that all Jewish children had to change their surnames; adds that the only exemption was **Lilly Lambert**; says that before 1939 it was the school only for girls, but during the war boys were also allowed to attend; clarifies that by 1944 there were 300 children at the school; says that after the war broke up, the monastery became very open for all needed people;

[01] 00:11:10:01 – [01:] 19:01:09

11:38 – 19:47

Sister M.Ena says that once the ghetto was set up in Warsaw, the Jewish children were coming to the school to get meals; describe them by saying that they were very hungry, they were usually carrying small bowls and they were very silent; adds that they refused taking food with them; describes that besides the Jewish children, the Jewish adults were also hiding in the monastery (around 13 people); mentions such people as: Ms **Anna Kaliska** and her husband who changed his surname into **Białostocki**; clarifies that Ms Kaliska was living in the house and working as a tailor at Kazimierzowska street, but her husband was living and working as a gardener in another house located in **Wrzosów** (today known as **Buraków**); explains that this home was in charge of Sister Wanda; adds that both of them survived and that Mr Białostocki who was an engineer set up his own office in **Wrocław**; explains that

Sister Wanda often was hiding Jews in private apartments of her friends; says that among other people who were hidden by Sister Wanda were Mr. **Pytowski** – under surname **Pajak, Trzcńska, Clarck [spelling?], Zosia Orłowska, Szymańska (aunt of Jasia Kaniewska)** and **Jasia Kaniewska** (her true surname was **Kohn/Kon**) who is currently employed at the United Nations and her current surname is **Atknis [spelling?]**; talks about Jasia's time in the monastery;

[01] 19:01:10 – [01:] 24:39:08
19:48 – 25:41

Sister M.Ena says that the Nazi were respecting some rules of the monastery i.e.: they did not enter these parts of the monastery reserved for the nuns; explains that it helped to save life of some children; describes that one day 2 German soldiers came and investigated all parts of the monastery; prior to this event the nuns found in a garden a shelter for **Jasia Kaniewska**; says that one of these German soldiers liked the flowers in the chapel, so as ordered by Sister Wanda he was offered some flowers; says that he was standing at the balcony facing the garden, but it was unclear if he saw Jasia; says that the monastery was divided into two section: separate for civil people and nuns; says that the Jewish children had to learn the Christian catholic's priers; says that all nuns were aware of presence of the Jewish children, however, Sister Wanda never said which children was of Jewish origin;

[02] 00:41:19 – [02] 11:23:20
00:42 – 11:51

Sister M.Ena recalls how one day **Teresa Kurek** (true forename: **Rachel**) visited the monastery looking for people who could have remembered her; says that since that time they maintain contact and explains that she wants to publish photos of Teresa Kurek's children and grandchildren in her book (Sister M.Ena mentioned her book already above); adds that at some point there was a meeting of survived Jewish children in NY; elaborates on an issue of financial support for Jewish children and says that this support mostly came from the nuns; explains that all Jewish children living in the monastery had faked documents; says that despite the factual situation, these children were considered as orphans; adds that the documents were given to these children priori to their arrival to the monastery; says that the Jewish children did not maintain contact with those who stayed at the ghetto; mentions **Basia – a Polish woman** who was rescuing the children from the Warsaw's ghetto and adds that her photography is in Yad Vashem in the part devoted to the children; says that the Jewish children did not confess their wartime's experiences and not even their names; mentions two Jewish girls – **Toasia and Józia Jabłońskie**; explains that prior to the first communion they confessed their lack of baptism, and finally **Toasia and Józia** asked to be allowed to participate in the first communion;

[02] 11:26:13 – [02] 20:26:16
11:54 – 21:16

Sister M.Ena asked if she knows what has happened with these children after the war, says that:

- 6 girls are in contact with her, but many of them changed their names, so it is very difficult to maintain the contact
- **Maryla Solecka (spelling?)** who lives in Tel Aviv: unsuccessful attempts to contact her

- **Maria Fiszman** (name during her stay at the monastery **Felińska**) lives in Tel Aviv: she used to be in contact with Sister Maria Ena, but then the contact immediately stopped

Says that after the WWII, these Jewish children were being searched, in particular she mentions two situations; in the first situation **Maria Fiszman** was taken by a rabbi from Jerusalem; in the second case sister M. Ena talks about **Teresa** (however, it is unclear if it is Teresa Kurek) who lives in **Pruszków** but she denied her Jewish roots; however Sister M. Ena is not able to explain why Teresa decided so; describes how in 1947/1948 a rabbi from NY came to the monastery looking for Teresa; adds that the nuns hid Teresa because they did not know this man and they did not want Teresa to be kidnapped; says that afterwards she found out that this rabbi was Teresa's uncle; describes his appearance – grey suit, no religious signs, around 50 years old, black hair, round face;

[02] 20:28:00 – [02] 32:07:18
21:17 – 33:27

Sister M. Ena adds that after the WWII **Teresa** was the only Jewish child at the school in Warsaw whereas in Szymanów there was more of them until 50's years; recalls an incident occurred in 1943 in Szymanów; says that at that time the German army was in Szymanów, it stayed in one half of the house, but the second remained with the nuns; clarifies that the children (also Jewish children) were living with in that part of the house together with the nuns; says that one day the German soldiers did in a classroom – in that classroom was also a Jewish girl **Jasia** (it is unclear, but probably Sister talks about Jasia Kaniewska); explains that the sister **Magdalena Zamojska** hid Jasia under her habit; while the German soldiers entered she pretended an elder woman, thanks to her behaviour **Jasia** was not found; once the German soldiers left her classroom, she said "I heard two hearts beating strongly, it was just unclear which was beating stronger"; Sister M. Ena also mentions a similar incident that occurred in the monastery/house in Warsaw; says that the German soldiers came to look for **Joasia Olczak** and **Jasia Kaniewska**; explains that the German soldiers tried to enter a closed part of this house where these two Jewish girls were hidden, but they finally did not enter; talks once more time about **Teresa**; explains that after the nuns found out that this rabbi was Teresa's uncle, they told her about it, but nevertheless Teresa did not want to leave Poland; adds that Teresa's father was an owner of enterprise in **Łódzkiem** (not clear if Sister meant a city or a region) parents were shoot, Teresa survived because her mother gave the jewelry to the car driver who hid Teresa in the forest house; finishes her interview by elaborating on Teresa's life after the WWII.

Time coded notes provided by Sam Ponczak