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**Summary from Radio Kielce**

**Episode 8: The Szymański family. Rytwiany-Zielonka**

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<https://polacyratujacyzydow.com.pl/en/the-szymanski-family-rytwiany-zielonka/>

### **Stories about Poles**

Michał Szymański (ojciec)

Antonina Szymańska (matka)

Leon Szymański (syn)

Helena Szymańska (córka)

Władysława Szymańska (córka)

### **The people in the hiding**

Dora Schicht z d. Grodzicka

Cypora Lewit z d. Grodzicka

### **The story told by**

Elżbieta Kwiatkowska (córka Heleny Szymańskiej)

Gabriela Miłowska (córka Władysławy Szymańskiej)

Ewa Kołomańska, historian

Tomasz Domański, historian

The Szymański family of Rytwiany helped the two young Jews during the war times. Cypora and Dora were offered shelter and fake documents. That is how they became Stasia and Zosia.

Before the war, Michał and Antonina Szymanski lived in Rytwiany. Michał worked in the Radziwiłłs' estate as a brickyard manager, he was also the head of the local volunteer fire brigade. The couple had 5 children: Leon, Zofia, Irena, Helena and Władysława. When the Rytwiany brickyard went bankrupt, Michał took the managerial position in the Zielonka brickyard. He and his all moved to Zielonka, too. This is where he met Jeszajahu (Szaje) Grodzicki, father of teenage girls Cypora and Dora. After the outbreak of the war Grodzickis found themselves in the ghetto in Wołomin, from where they were able to escape during the deportation of Jews to Treblinka. They reached the only place they would trust and know: the Zielonka brickyard.

Michał and Antonina agreed to hide Cypora and Dora, from then on they used to be Stasia and Zosia in order to avoid suspicions. Once given the new names, the girls also received the new, "Aryan" ID cards arranged for them by Szymański who was a part of the conspiracy movement. "This support in hiding continued for 3 month. Someone must have learnt out about it. There was a navy-uniform policeman who started to inquire whether there were Jews in the hiding. He said that those who help Jews risk death penalty" – says Elżbieta Kwiatkowska, Helena Szymańska's daughter. This is why, having received the documents, Stasia and Zosia swiftly left

for Warsaw. They passed off as Poles and therefore they found employment. However they stayed in touch with the Szymanskis family and would come back whenever in danger. Stasia, it is Cypora made great friends with Władzia and Helena Szymański. "What did they say? That they shared everything they had – their lice, the bad and the good times." –recalls Elżbieta Kwiatkowska.

During one of Stasia's visits at the Szymański family, there was a round-up was in Zielonka. People were deported to a forced labour camp. Władzia, Hela and Stasia were put in one of the trucks together and brought to the train platforms. "Stasia, this Jewess said: we must escape and run away. Mom and Władka sais: impossible, there is an armed German. We cannot do it!" –Elżbieta Kwiatkowska tells us the story. It was Stasia's wit and courage which made it possible for the girls to escape. They were able to hide in the havoc, sneak down the platform to and get on a different passenger train. They all survived the war. They would travel from one village near Sochaczew to another and work in local farms.

"Zosia whose original name was Cypora took care of my mother Władysława. She treated her as if she were her younger sister. She got a nickname – 'dill'. My mother, when they lived in Rytwiany would take a big dill leaf and carry it like an umbrella" – recalls Gabriela Miłowska, whose mother was included among the Righteous Among the Nations.

The Szymanski sisters stayed in touch with Stasia and Zosia until end of their lives. Based upon their testimonies, the Righteous Among the Nations medal was awarded to Antonina, Michał, Władysława and Helena Szymanski."