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**Summary from Radio Kielce**

**Episode 22: Everybody has a will to live ... – The Lech family, Wólka, Kije commune**

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<https://polacyratujacyzydow.com.pl/en/everybody-has-a-will-to-live-the-lech-family-wolka-kije-commune/>

### **Stories about Poles**

Franciszek Lech

Katarzyna Lech

Jan Lech, son

### **The people who stayed in the hiding**

Wiśliński with his wife and children

Markowiecki with two sons

Szulim Markowiecki with his family

a family from Jędrzejów

### **The story told by**

Jan Lech - Katarzyna and Franciszek's son

Franciszek and Katarzyna Lech and their children – Stanisława and Jan lived in the Wólka hamlet, near Gołuchów village, Kije commune. The family farm was located at a distance from others, surround by forests. Uncle Władysław Lech lived nearby.

It was Franciszek Lech's initiative to help Jews. His home was always open to those who were seeking shelter. Many people used his this hospitality, including a group of Jews from Kije. Wiśliński and his wife and children and Markowiecki with two sons were among those. The Szulim Markowiecki's family also called inn from time to time. A group of Jews from Jędrzejów also used the hideout, but it is now difficult to determine their identity. Probably the Lech family offered a permanent or temporary shelter for up to 30 people in total. Jan Lech was born in 1929. He remembers that some of the Jews stayed with them just for a few days or a week and then they left. Others stayed on more permanent basis . Everyone has a will to live. They all sought help. . They were all poor, they had no money. My father did not want money from them – adds Katarzyna and Franciszek's son.

The Lech family provided shelter for the Jews since the beginning of 1943. It was June 11, 1943, at about 5 pm. The German military police, probably from Nowy Korczyn accompanied by the blue police from Chmielnik surrounded the Lechs' farm. Today, it is difficult to establish who informed the Germans. Was it one of those who had stayed in the hiding and revealed the secret when captured and tortured by the Germans. Was it one of partisans? The buildings, under the machine guns shots were set on fire. The Jews in the hiding and the 14-year-old Jan-Lech's son were in the farm then. His father, Franciszek, was working in the field. His mother and sister had been warned by other women before the Germans arrived and managed to escape to the neighbouring village. It was a miracle – Jan miraculously managed to escape from

the burning house. He was sure that the Germans who saw him escape and they would start chasing him. The only thing they did was to shoot machine guns at him. . God saved me ... God only . As the proverb goes: soldiers shoot, God directs the bullets. God directs bullets and he spares the lives of those He wishes to spare ... He spared my life – Jan Lech is deeply touched when recollecting the past events. He was running through the field towards the forest. He fell on the ground after each machine gun round. The bullets whistled around his head. It's like someone hit with a hammer. He ran 300 meters. Then started spitting blood ... A kilometre on I reached by the skin of my teeth – says Jan Lech. He had problems with his hearing then. The 4 of the Jews hidden in the Lechs' house were killed: Wiśliński's wife, Berek – a carpenter from Chmielnik, Chyl and his sister Hanka. Jan Lech still remembers where their bodies were buried in the farm yard.

The Germans were cruising nearby looking for Jews who managed to escape and for the Lech family who helped the Jews. One day they spotted Franciszek's brother Władysław at the farm's ashes. He had a long beard, the Germans took him for a Jew and shot to death. Rumours spread in the neighbourhood had it that the Germans shot Franciszek, the main organizer of the aid scheme. This put an end to the search after the Lech family. for the whole summer the family lived in the forest. I slept in the forest, under a bush. Nobody wanted to take us in, nobody wanted to give us food. They were afraid. Because of the death penalty. As late as the n autumn we had our Kennkarte arranged by the village administrator Kasza. We stayed with him until the end of the war – says Jan Lech.x. Jan's uncle Bolesław Lasak and the Pawłowski family also got helped the Lech family.

The Jedynaks family have never received the "Righteous Among the Nations" medal."