

A Story of a House

Attachment 1

The Righteous Among the Nations

Maria née Broczek and Piotr Kwarciak with their sons: Feliks, Anatoliusz and Alfred

Gave help to:

Małka and Jakub Fiszer and their children: Michał i Leja;

Adela i Mosze Fiszer and their daughters: Sima and Ester

Jan Pótorak; Haskiel Grojner; Juliusz Sznajder; Icchak Licman and the Szyndziel family

Maria and Piotr Kwarciak together with their sons Anatoliusz, Alfred and Feliks lived in the suburbs of Dubno (then Wołyń county, today Ukraine). Since 1918 Piotr Kwarciak had served in the Polish Legions, but when World War I ended he was transferred to Dubno, where he worked as a policeman. Maria was a housewife.

Before World War II there were about 12 thousand Jews living in the vicinity of Dubno. They were all to be murdered in the summer of 1942 on Szybna Mountain, the place of the extermination of Jews that was located near Dubno, lying at a distance of only around 30 meters from the house of the Kwarciak family. Alfred Kwarciak was 10 years old at that time. Both he and his older brother Anatoliusz witnessed the death of hundreds of local Jews.

In August 1942, 15 fugitives from Szybna Mountain, including 6 children, came at night to the Kwarciaks' house, asking for help. The Kwarciaks knew them all from before the war: in those days one of the runaways, Mosze Fiszer, who had escaped together with his family and relatives, had run a shop near the Kwarciaks' house. The family decided to rescue the Jews.

Their house comprised a kitchen and three rooms. One of the rooms had not been completed and had no floor. For this reason Piotr Kwarciak decided that it would be a good site to prepare a hiding place under it. With the help of the fugitives, he dug out a shelter of about 4 meters in depth. At the very bottom of the dugout there were three tunnels lined with straw. The hiding place was prepared in secret from the Ukrainian neighbors, who were hostile towards Poles and Jews alike. The fugitives spent around 20 months in the dugout, i.e. until the time when the Soviet Army took over Dubno in March 1944.

The Kwarciaks' sons had to buy and deliver food from the city center located 4 kilometers from the house. Piotr and Maria did not visit the city – the Germans organized round-ups of adults to deport them to forced labor camps in Germany. The boys would carry food in their backpacks. They would also choose different routes to return home to deceive their neighbors. Thinking that the boys carried so many books in their rucksacks, the neighbors concluded that they had to be very diligent students. Nobody knew about the Jews hiding in the Kwarciaks' house. It was not until the end of World War II that the family learnt that Maria Kwarciak's father, Franciszek Broczek, and his son Leonard also hid Jews in their house.

From September 1943 till March 1944 the Kwarciaks' house was inhabited by 12 Germans. In those days, fearing the bombardment and deportation to Germany, the Kwarciak family moved to the hiding place underground. Only Maria would leave the shelter to obtain food for everyone involved. She told the Germans that the whole family had moved to the neighbors' house and that she had to deliver food there. They never learnt about the presence of the Jews.

When the area was taken over by the Soviet Army, for some time the fugitives lived in Dubno in the house of Mr. Groiner – one of the rescued Jews. Later they moved to the area of post-war Poland, from where they departed for Italy. Next, they left for Israel. The Fiszer family maintained contact with the Kwarciaks, but with some of the Rescued they lost touch altogether. Piotr Kwarciak was called up to the Polish Army and killed in 1945 during the liberation of Skierniewice. After World War II, the family was forcibly resettled in the territory of Poland. They finally settled in Bolesławiec.