

E4 Victim und rescuer

After the invasion of Poland by the German Wehrmacht in 1939, Alfreda ("Nocia") Markowska's family went into hiding - as Roma, they were persecuted as so-called "Zigeuner". In 1941, German soldiers discovered the family's hiding place and murdered everyone present. Only fifteen-year-old Alfreda escaped the massacre. She had gone outside the hiding place to get food. When she was later caught, she managed to escape. With a forged ID, she found work on the railroad, where she had to maintain the tracks and carry the dead out of the deportation trains. One day, a woman on a train to Auschwitz secretly gave her her four-year-old son, Karol Parno Gierlinski, asking her to save him. Alfreda managed to place him with a family. Karol survived and later became a famous artist. Alfreda Markowska rescued many other persecuted children by organizing hiding places and forged papers for them. The number of people she rescued is uncertain, but there are estimates of up to 50 children.



1910

1951

1939-45

💡 Did you know

... that Alfreda "Nocia" Markowska received one of the highest awards of the Polish state for her courage and humanity on October 17, 2006, the rarely awarded Order of Polonia Restituta. She became an honorary citizen of her community and a short film was also made about her. She remained a humble, deeply religious woman until her death in 2021.

✎ For you to do

An article about Alfreda Markowska is entitled "A Saint in Hell". Think about what the author of the article wants to express with this title. Which people do you know who could also be described in this way?

📷 The photo

Still from an animated short film about Alfreda Markowska on the website of the Memorial to the Sinti and Roma of Europe Murdered under National Socialism © Foundation Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe & RomaTrial e.V. 2022



<https://romasintigenocide.eu/en/e>