



Sendler, Irena

(b. 1916), Nicknamed "Jolanta," one of the most active members of the Council for Aid to Jews (*Zegota*), a Polish underground organization that provided assistance for Jews.

From the beginning of the German occupation of Poland, Sendler assisted her many Jewish friends and acquaintances. She worked for the social welfare department of the Warsaw municipality, and so was able to obtain a permit that allowed her to visit the city's ghetto at all hours. Thus, she managed to supply many Jews with clothing, money, and medicine. Sendler wore an armband with the Star of David while working in the ghetto, both to show her support for the Jews and so as not to call attention to herself.

During the summer of 1942, Sendler was asked to join a new organization called the Council for Aid to Jews; she became one of its most important members. She brought with her a large group of people who already assisted her in her work. Sendler repeatedly snuck Jewish children out of the ghetto and placed them in the care of non-Jewish families in the Warsaw area. The families were funded by the *Zegota*. Each of her colleagues was put in charge of several apartment blocks where Jewish children were hidden, and she herself took responsibility for 8-10 apartments where Jews were hiding.

In October 1943, Sendler was arrested by the Gestapo. She was taken to the notorious Pawiak Prison, where she was interrogated and brutally tortured. Sendler did not reveal any details of her activity, and was told by her interrogators that she would be executed. However, her underground comrades bribed a *Gestapo* agent, and on the day she was to be executed, Sendler was released from imprisonment. She was officially listed as executed and thus was forced to remain hidden until the withdrawal of German troops. She continued working behind the scenes for *Zegota*. In 1965, she was designated as Righteous Among the Nations by Yad Vashem.