Irena Sendler named Honorary Member of the Polish Women’s Alliance of America

A woman of peace…

Irena Sendler now joins a distinguished list of Honorary Members of the Polish Women’s Alliance such as Madame Sklodowska Curie, Helena Modrzejewska (Shakespearean actress), Helena Paderewska (Political activist and wife of President of Poland, Ignacy Paderewski), Maria Konopnicka (Author), Eliza Orzeszkowa (Author), Helen Sikorska (Children’s Advocate and wife of General Sikorski) Maria Rodziewiczowna (Author), and U.S. Senator Barbara Mikulsk all of whom the Polish Women’s Alliance has honored in their 109 year history.

At the PWA Convention held in Cleveland, Ohio in August, Irena Sendler was nominated and unanimously elected as an Honorary Member. In the nomination, it was pointed out that Irena represents in a markedly heroic manner the highest ideals of the Polish people and the Polish Women’s Alliance of America. She personifies the mission of the Polish Women’s Alliance of America to promote and preserve the high ideals of the members of the Polish Women’s Alliance of America and to develop our youth.

Irena Sendler was one of the most powerful voices on behalf of tolerance and peace during World War II and afterward. Irena Sendler or Irena Sendlerowa was born February 15, 1910 in Warsaw. During the World War II German occupation of Poland, she lived in Warsaw while working for the city’s Social Welfare Department as a social worker. She became an activist of the Polish Underground and the Polish anti-Holocaust resistance in Warsaw, where she helped save about 2,500 Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto by providing them with false documents and finding hiding places. She organized the smuggling of the children from the Ghetto carrying them out, and placing them with either Polish families, the Warsaw orphanage of the Sisters of the Family of Mary, or Catholic convents such as the Sisters Little Servants of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Mary at Turkowice and Chotomowo. She kept
lists of the names, hidden in jars, in order to keep track of original and new identities of each child.

In October of 1943, eleven Gestapo agents surrounded **Irena Sendler** in her apartment in Warsaw. Why were the Nazis so intent on capturing her? What did they want from this petite Polish Catholic social worker?

The answer: **Irena Sendler** was in charge of a vast underground conspiracy to rescue Jewish children from the Warsaw ghetto. Her work extended from the city’s social services department to whole neighborhoods in Warsaw to convents and shelters all over Poland, to the Polish government in exile in London. The Nazis suspected her of underground activities and they wanted the names of her co-conspirators. But Irena refused to betray any of her associates or the children in hiding. She was rescued from her death sentence after her legs and feet had been broken. The active underground railroad, which **Irena Sendler** developed to rescue Jewish children, continued. It was comprised primarily of women and they were, all of them, extraordinarily brave. They inspired hundreds of other Poles to do their part. There are times when compassion is the hardest thing in the world to defend. For **Irena Sendler** and her conspiracy of women, it was the only thing worth doing.

In 1965 **Irena Sendler** has been recognized as “Righteous Among the Nations” and she has received the Order of the White Eagle, Poland’s highest civilian decoration. She was also awarded the Commander’s Cross-. 

In October of 2003 Sendler was honored with the Jan Karski Freedom Award for Valor and Compassion by Freedom House and the American Center of Polish Culture. She has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Mission of the Polish Women’s Alliance is to preserve and promote the high ideals of the Polish people. **Irena Sendler** represents these high ideals and it is for this reason that she has been designated as Honorary Member of the Polish Women’s Alliance of America.

The Polish Women’s Alliance of America is a fraternal benefit society offering life insurance and annuities. The national headquarters of this 109-year-old organization is in Chicago, Illinois and membership has now reached 50,000 members all over the United States. For further information call: (888)522-1898.