

## From the Memoirs of Emanuel Ringelblum on German Fear Upon Entering the Warsaw Ghetto and Polish Reactions to Jewish Resistance

The famed Uprising, in April and May, 1943 in the Warsaw Ghetto, is universally regarded as a turning point, an absolutely new departure, not only in the chronicles of Jewish resistance to the German oppressor, but also in the history of the general struggle for the liberation of Warsaw. This was the first time when Jews took part in a major, indeed large-scale battle of that struggle. For the first time, after the defeat in 1939, the thunder of cannon and the echoing clutter of machine-guns were heard again in the capital city of Poland. The Jewish Uprising induced changes in the struggle of the Polish underground movement, which until then had concentrated its efforts mainly on acts of sabotage, and on acquiring arms and ammunition by disarming German soldiers and police. April 19, 1943, became a symbol of the Jewish public's contribution to the fight for freedom from the Nazi regime, and a motivating factor in the war of the Polish underground.

### “Little Stalingrad” Defends Itself

Here we shall not describe the history of the “resettlement action” of January 1943. For the 10,000 persons deported, approximately 1,000 were shot on the spot because of the energetic resistance put up by the population of entire blocks of flats. To the glory of the O.B. [Jewish Combat Organization] it should be stressed that the SS had to go into the Ghetto as if to a battlefield, armed with small tanks, small field guns, hand grenades, light machine guns, machine guns, etc. Army Headquarters were set up in Muranowski Square, with maps of the Ghetto spread out on tables; dispatch riders on bicycles and motorcycles darted to and fro with instructions to the various detachments located in the blocks and squares of the Ghetto. The gendarmes and the S.S.-men operating in the Ghetto were so afraid of the combatants that they would not go into the Jewish flats and instead sent ahead scouting parties consisting of functionaries of the Jewish Order Service. Only after the Jewish Order

Service had made sure that there were no armed Jews in a given flat would the gendarmerie enter in order to conduct a thorough search. Jews who were caught were ordered to put up their hands, like prisoners-of-war at the front. We do not know the exact number of German and Ukrainian victims, but I am sure that there were scores.

Polish public opinion was intensely interested in the defence put up by the Ghetto. The Underground Press spoke of the heroic attitude of the Ghetto with great esteem. January 1943 was compared with July 1942, the passivity of the Warsaw Jews at that time was compared with the active stand they now took after their previous experience. All this, however, brought no change in the attitude of the Government elements towards the defence problems of the Jews. In spite of constant appeals on the part of the Jews, arms were supplied only in very small quantities<sup>1</sup>.

**Source: Joseph Kermish (Ed.), *To Live with Honor and Die with Honor! Selected Documents from the Warsaw Ghetto Underground Archives "O.S" ["Oneg Shabbath"]*, Yad Vashem 1986, pp. 598-599.**

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<sup>1</sup> According to data published by the General Sikorski Historical Institute in London (*"Polskie sily zbrojne w drugiej wojnie swiatowej"*, Vol. III – *"Armia Krajowa"*, p.236), the Home Army supplied the Jewish Combat Organization with the following arms: 90 pistols with two magazines with ammunition; 500 defensive hand grenades; 15 kilograms of explosives with detonating fuses and detonators; 1 light machine gun; 1 automatic pistol; *material* for incendiary bottles; sabotage *material* such as time bombs and safety fuses. These figures are a little higher than those given by Col. Henryk Wolinski (in his report on the activities of his Department for Jewish Affairs at Home Army Headquarters), by Zivia Lubetkin, *Aharonim al hahoma*, Eyn Harod, 1946, p. 31 and by Marek Edelman, *Getto Walczy*, Lodz 1945, pp. 47-48. The leaders of the Jewish resistance movement demanded greater quantities of material, affirming that the supplies received were utterly disproportionate to the needs of the Jewish Combat Organization and to the supplies available to the Home Army. The Home Army High Command admitted that the arms allotted went nowhere near meeting the needs of the Ghetto but argued that it did not possess any considerable quantities of arms.