

## From the Memoirs of Emanuel Ringelblum on the Fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto

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

The April “action” broke out. O.B. [Jewish Combat Organization] patrols circulated in the Ghetto streets on the night between Sunday the 17<sup>th</sup> and Monday the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, calling on the population to take to their hideouts. The hopeless struggle began. A German army of six thousand soldiers appeared in the streets of the Ghetto, armed with modern motorised equipment. This modern army was opposed by a handful of desperate young men, armed with poor-quality revolvers, who knew that extermination awaited them...

...We shall not describe here in detail the course of the fighting with the Germans in April 1943. Separate groups were fighting in the Ghetto, in the bristle workshops on Świętojerska Street, on the terrain of the Schultz and Toebbens workshops, etc. There was fighting on the roofs of blocks where Polish and Zionist (blue-white) flags were fluttering. From the fourth floor of 32 Nalewki Street I was an eye witness of fighting like this at Muranowska Street during the afternoon hours of Monday the 19<sup>th</sup> of April. In the headquarters of

the Order Service the Germans proudly displayed their trophies – captured flags – and gloried in their seizure. The combatants were shooting at passing S.S. and Ukrainian detachments – for example, from the block at 76 Leszno Street, where the K.G. Schultz workshop was situated. Revolvers, machine guns, hand grenades and bombs were thrown at the enemy. General Stroop, who commanded the army operating in the Ghetto, proved to be a second Suvorov, with the difference that the slaughter in the Praga suburb<sup>1</sup> was child’s play compared to what was done by these Teutons. The Cossacks’ “football game” of tossing Jewish children from one to another on pikes in Praga was indeed a game compared to the deeds of German soldiers in the Ghetto in the year of grace 1943.

**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. 600-601.**

---

<sup>1</sup> After the capture of Praga (a suburb of Warsaw) on 4 November, 1794, the Russians were “in a great fury against the Jews, on account of their setting up a special troop to defend the town” (referring to the Jewish brigade of Berek Joselewicz, numbering 500 men, which took an active part in the defence of Praga, where the greater part of the Polish Army was concentrated), and they maltreated the Jewish population with particular cruelty. An eyewitness, not a Jew, wrote that he was incapable of describing the appalling and barbaric spectacles that were to be seen when the Russians penetrated into Praga after the general attack and set it alight with a fire that quickly swept through the wooden houses of the quarter. The Commissioner of Prussia relates that the Cossacks cruelly murdered 16 Jews and that he succeeded in redeeming 35 children out of Cossack captivity by giving a zloty per head and thus saved them from the danger of being killed. Shmuel Jakobowitz Zwikower, a member of the Jewish plutocracy of Warsaw, who had fled immediately on the outbreak of the revolt against the Russians in the capital on 17 and 18 April 1794, now appeared at the time of the bloodshed in Praga and in his suffering and sorrow over the victims of fire and sword he proclaimed that for every inhabitant of Praga, without distinction of religion, that was brought to him alive he would pay a golden dinar and for every one that was brought to him dead a silver dinar. Two casks, one full of gold and the other silver, stood in the middle of the courtyard of Shmuel Zwikower: both were emptied. (J. Kermish, *Warsaw Jewry in the Kościuszko Revolt* (Hebrew), in: Israel Klotzner (Editor), “Sefer Hayovel mugash likhvod Dr. Natan Michael Gelber, Tel-Aviv, 1963, p. 228.)