

From the Diary of Yehiel Gorny on a Conversation in the Warsaw Ghetto Considering the Possibility of 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.

Action No 2

January 28, 1943

... but what good are reflections – let us tell of the emptiness and poverty of those few days and of the heroic courage of the surviving Jewish remnant. First, however, a short anecdote: Yesterday, the 27.1.1943, I overheard the following words in a conversation: “If in July 1942, at the start of the *Umsiedlungs*-/deportations/action, Jews had got hold of arms and tried to put up resistance; if they had killed a few Germans and prevented the Jewish hooligans/police from taking an active part; and if thousands of Jews would have fallen from German bullets, other Jews would have said: ‘your foolhardy heroism brought this about.’ But the fact that such resistance would have had considerable effect in holding back the ‘actions’ never occurred to anyone. Now, that out of almost 6000 deportees there were 1000 Jewish casualties,

but only 12 German ones, the community finally understands the heroism of the ‘foolish lads’.” Thus spoke a common Jew in the course of a conversation.

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, p. 592.