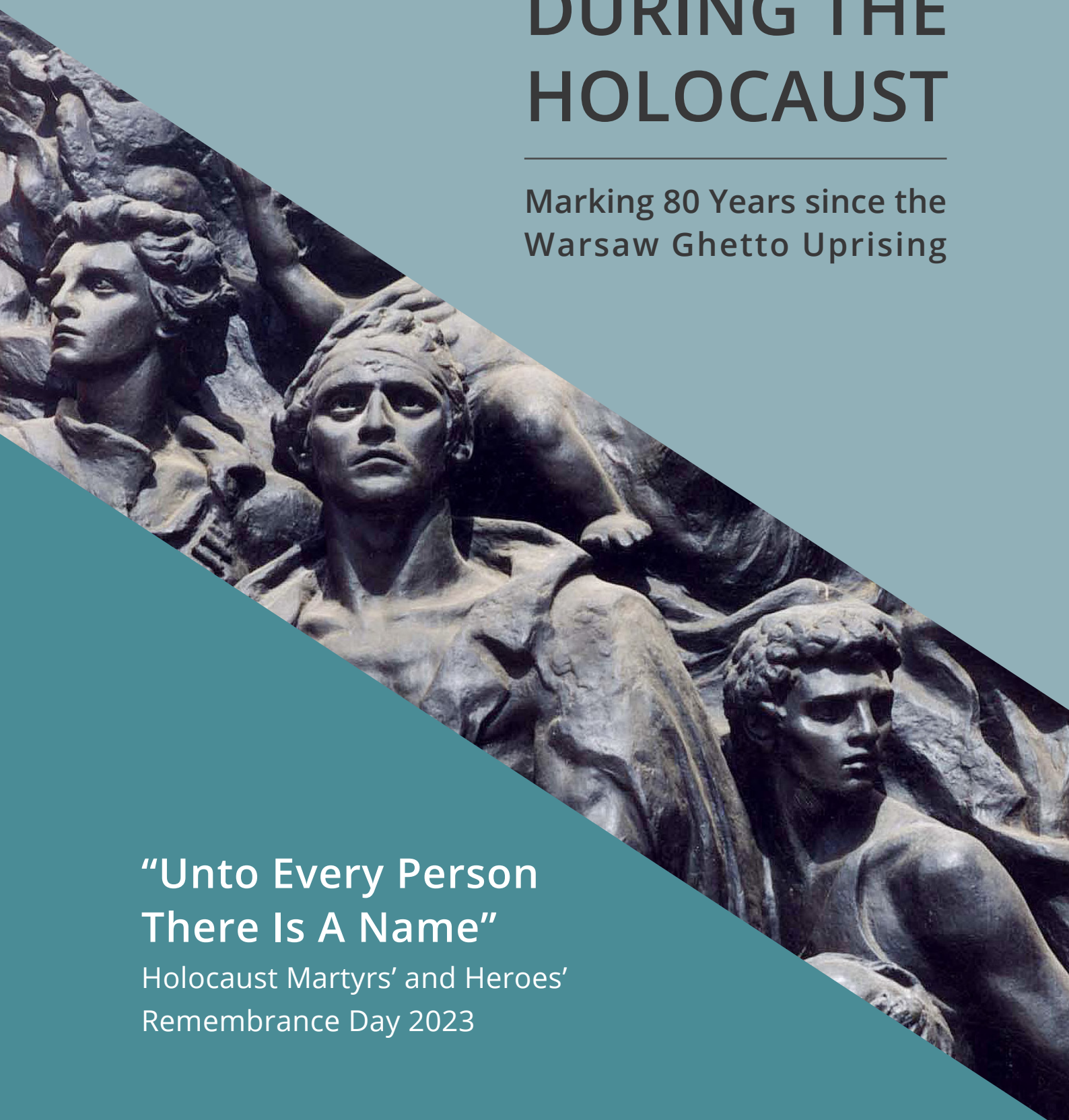


# JEWISH RESISTANCE DURING THE HOLOCAUST

Marking 80 Years since the  
Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

**"Unto Every Person  
There Is A Name"**

Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes'  
Remembrance Day 2023





נשיא המדינה

رئيس الدولة

THE PRESIDENT

Jerusalem, March 08, 2023

Dear Friends,

As we prepare solemnly for Yom HaShoah, and for the duties of memory that accompany it, like every year, organizations across the world are marshalling their communities around “Every Person Has a Name” ceremonies, which take place annually around the globe.

It is a moral imperative of the highest order, the “sacred duty of all people of goodwill,” in the words of Elie Wiesel, to remember those darkest moment in our people’s history and to remain vigilant in our commitment to recall the searing lessons of the past - not only out of ethical duty to the victims, but out of moral obligation to the very world we inhabit.

In so many ways, the decision to engage in a name-reading ceremony is precisely the reverse gesture of the brutal force of the evil Nazi regime; it is, as such, a particularly compelling act of memory. The Nazis sought to erase the individual as a bearer of life and of value, lumping millions of people into an un-nameable, unknowable and unreal ‘other,’ whose erasure was of no consequence.

In the smallest of symbolic gestures - gathering to publicly read out the names of real people who perished in agony, robbed of their dignity and of their lives - there is a measure of reclamation of life, a symbolic act of restoring their humanity, their dignity, their unique,

irreplaceable, and tragic story on Earth.

This year, we mark 80 years since the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which is the theme of this year’s ceremonies. A profound symbol of Jewish heroism during the Holocaust, the Uprising is also eternal testament to the potential heights of human courage. The bravery of those who resisted touches us so deeply, not only because of the ways they were extraordinary; but because of the ways that ordinary human beings refused to allow what is most basic, most human, and at the same time, most sublime, to be erased, even in the face of unfathomable cruelty.

It is a legacy without which the world could not bear to exist. And one which is our imperative to carry and transmit.

Friends, I thank you for your commitment to intentioned acts of memory, which add to the voices of future generations who know the perils of hatred and prejudice, and which help build a world of fraternity and peace.

Sincerely Yours,

Isaac Herzog

President of the State of Israel

Jerusalem, February 2023

Adar 5783

### **Unto Every Person There Is A Name**

Public Recitation of Names of Holocaust Victims in Israel and Abroad  
on Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day

**"Unto every person there is a name, given to him by God and by his parents",** wrote the Israeli poetess Zelda. Every single victim of the Holocaust had a name. The vast number of Jews who were murdered in the Holocaust – some six million men, women and children - is beyond human comprehension. We are therefore liable to lose sight of the fact that each life that was brutally ended belonged to an individual, a human being endowed with feelings, thoughts, ideas and dreams, whose entire world was destroyed, and whose future was erased. The annual recitation of names of victims on Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day is one way of posthumously restoring the victims' names, of commemorating them as individuals. We seek in this manner to honor the memory of the victims, to grapple with the enormity of the murder, and to combat Holocaust denial and distortion.

This year marks the 34th anniversary of the global *Shoah* memorial initiative "Unto Every Person There Is A Name", held annually under the auspices of the President of the State of Israel. The project aims to reach out to as many communities and institutions as possible, in Israel and elsewhere. **With this in mind, we are sending you the attached materials, in the hope that you will join us in this essential mission, and hold a name-reading recitation on Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day.**

The theme of this year's observances is:

### **Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust Marking 80 Years since the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising**

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was one of many acts of armed and unarmed Jewish resistance during the Holocaust, in response to the persecution, oppression and

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humiliation the Jews were suffering at the hands of Nazi Germany and its allies. Jewish resistance took many forms: spiritual, cultural, clandestine-political, educational or religious resistance; underground documentation of the events; forging identity cards and protection papers; hiding Jews; smuggling thousands of Jews across borders to safer places; escape from camps and ghettos; armed uprisings and joining national resistance movements; aiding the Allies; and more. Many of these actions were an expression of defiance by the Jews against the extreme persecution of the Germans and their accomplices, and were performed in an attempt to preserve both body and soul.

The attached materials include texts and readings on this year's theme that can be incorporated into your online recitation.

To date more than 4,800,000 names of Holocaust victims have been recorded in Yad Vashem's online Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names, with over 2,750,000 names registered on Pages of Testimony.

You can assist in our ongoing names collection campaign by downloading and distributing Pages of Testimony, or by submitting them online through our website: [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org).

Sadly, the generation of Shoah survivors is dwindling rapidly. As the bearers of their legacy, we must do everything possible to perpetuate the memory of the Holocaust's victims. By reciting their names, ages and places of death, we keep their memory alive, and remind ourselves that each man, woman and child was, and is, an entire world.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Dani Dayan'.

Dani Dayan  
Yad Vashem Chairman



## Yom Hashoah – Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day 18 April 2023 – 27 Nissan 5783

### Letter from the International Committee “Unto Every Person There Is A Name”

#### Introduction

The worldwide Holocaust memorial project “Unto Every Person There is a Name”, now in its 34th consecutive year, is a unique project designed to perpetuate the memory of the Six Million - among them one-and-a-half million Jewish children – murdered while the world remained silent. The project offers the opportunity to memorialize them not only as a collective, but as individuals – one at a time - through the recitation of their names on Yom Hashoah – Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day. You can help to restore the identity and dignity of the victims of the Holocaust by organizing a name-recitation ceremony on Holocaust Martyrs’ and Heroes’ Remembrance Day – 18 April 2023 – 27 Nissan. Links to lists of names taken from Yad Vashem’s Central Database of Shoah Victims’ Names, and planning recommendations are included below.

The Unto Every Person There Is A Name project focuses attention on the urgent need to retrieve additional names of Holocaust victims, before they recede into oblivion.

The “Unto Every Person There Is A Name” project is conducted around the world through the efforts of four major Jewish organizations: B’nai B’rith International, Nativ, the World Jewish Congress and the World Zionist Organization.

The project is coordinated by Yad Vashem, the World Holocaust Remembrance Center, in consultation with the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs and enjoys the official auspices of President of the State of Israel, the Hon. Isaac Herzog.

#### Personalizing the Holocaust

The most fundamental feature of the Shoah is the systematic murder of six million innocent Jews by the Nazis and their collaborators for the sole reason that they were Jewish. Each of their deaths was a separate, distinct tragedy that together has caused indelible lasting trauma to the Jewish people. As time passes and fewer witnesses remain, it is imperative to create a personal link between the Jewish people today and those who perished under the Nazi genocidal regime. Recitation of names of Holocaust victims - together with such information as their age, place of birth and place of murder - personalizes the tragedy of the Holocaust.

Emphasis is thus put on the millions of individuals – men, women and children - who were lost to the Jewish people, and not solely on the cold intangibility embodied in the term “The Six Million”.

“Unto Every Person There is a Name” rests on the success of Yad Vashem’s Shoah Victims’ Names Recovery Project that to date has identified more than 4.8 million names of Shoah victims and that continues its [quest to recover all the six million names](#).

# The Central Theme for Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2023:

## JEWISH RESISTANCE DURING THE HOLOCAUST: MARKING 80 YEARS SINCE THE WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which broke out on the eve of Passover, 19 April 1943, was the first urban rebellion against Nazi Germany in all the territories it occupied. Of all the Jewish uprisings during the Holocaust, this was the longest-running, and had the largest number of participants. For a month, the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto fought for their lives. Many died in traps of fire and smoke. News of the revolt spread quickly and even reached the free world, and it became a symbol of the battle of the few against the many, and of the freedom and power of the human spirit.

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was one of many acts of armed and unarmed Jewish resistance, in response to the persecution, oppression and humiliation the Jews were suffering at the hands of Nazi Germany and its allies. Jewish defiance during the Holocaust was also reflected in spiritual and cultural resistance. Jews risked their lives and continued openly and demonstratively, or secretly and underground, to keep mitzvot (Jewish commandments), to preserve their spirituality and faith, to operate educational networks, to maintain support systems and to preserve Jewish culture.

**Scroll down to see the complete rationale and a collection of texts and readings for your use.**

Yad Vashem's **online exhibition, "Voices From the Inferno": Holocaust Survivors Describe the Last Months in the Warsaw Ghetto** brings together excerpts from many hours of video testimony given by the survivors of the Warsaw Ghetto and former combatants in the uprising, and is available for incorporation into your ceremony.

For other aspects of Jewish resistance, Yad Vashem's extensive collection of **video testimonies by Holocaust survivors** is available for your use.

In addition to this collection of texts and readings, Yad Vashem has created several **Ready2Print exhibitions** on a range of subjects that can be printed locally, free of charge.

For more information about the different exhibitions available, and to order the exhibition files, [click here](#)

## Recover Names of Shoah Victims

"Unto Every Person There is a Name" events provide a unique opportunity to gather heretofore unknown names of all the Jewish victims of the Holocaust.

Since its inception, one of Yad Vashem's central missions has been the recovery of the names and personal stories of all victims of the Shoah. While the Nazis sought not only to physically destroy the Jews but also to obliterate any memory of them, The Shoah Victims' Names Recovery Project realizes our moral imperative to memorialize each victim as a human being, and not merely a single collective number. (To learn more about the project [click here](#))

The relentless endeavor has to date identified more than four million eight hundred thousand names of Shoah victims, documented in the Central Database of Shoah Victims' Names online at: [www.yadvashem.org](http://www.yadvashem.org) with over 2,750,000 names registered on **"Pages of Testimony"** submitted by relatives and others who knew of the victims. The remainder of the victims' names in the database were derived from various archival sources and postwar commemoration projects. The outstanding universal value of the Pages of Testimony Memorial Collection has been recognized by UNESCO, which in 2013 inscribed it in its prestigious Memory of the World Register.

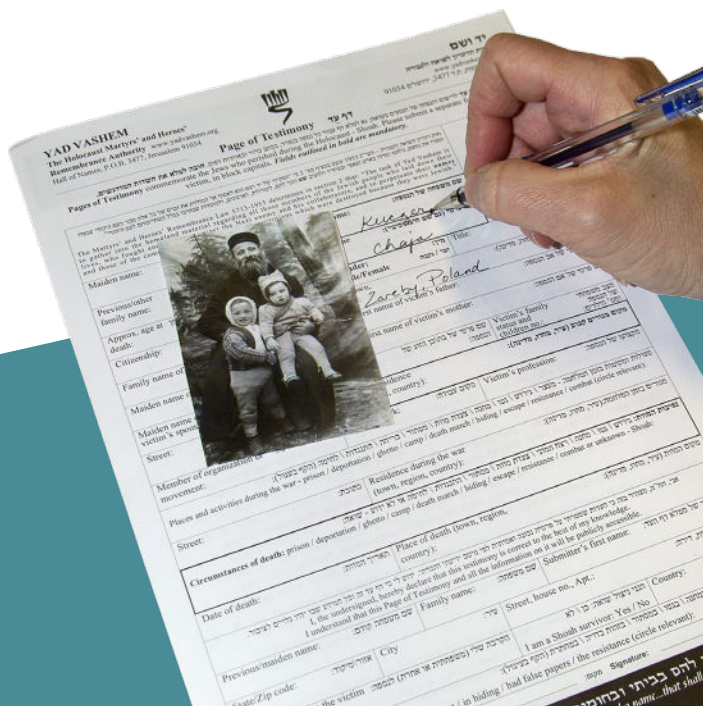
The Names Database, uploaded to the Internet in 2004, marked a pioneering use of technology in the service of memory, documenting and commemorating nearly three million names of Holocaust victims. To continue to meet the needs of an expanding worldwide community of users, Yad Vashem has upgraded and re-designed the database, making use of an innovative platform that allows the accessibility of online information in a fast and user-friendly format.

Names recitations may be utilized to call upon members of your community to complete a "Page of Testimony" for each unregistered victim, or to volunteer to assist others with this urgent task.

The Book of Names was on display at UN Headquarters in New York through 17 February 2023 and will open to the public in Yad Vashem's Museum Complex on the Mount of Remembrance in time for Israel's Holocaust Remembrance Day.

- > Lists of names
- > Pages of Testimony
- > Video testimonies

The ceremony will be broadcast on Israel's television and radio channels accessible via the internet, and in six languages on Yad Vashem's websites, seven languages on Yad Vashem's youtube channels, and on Yad Vashem's Facebook page.



We are available to answer any questions that might arise and provide additional material as necessary.

Sincerely,

Members of the "Unto Every Person There Is A Name" International Committee: **Inbal Kvity Ben Dov**, **Dr. Alexander Avram** (Yad Vashem); **Alan Schneider** (B'nai B'rith International); World Jewish Congress; **Sarit Handknopf** (World Zionist Organization); **Ms. Ruth Cohen-Dar** (Israel Foreign Ministry); **Masha Novikov** (Nativ).

Project Initiator: **Haim Roet**

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## **Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust**

### **Marking 80 Years since the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising**

The Central Theme for Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2023

*"What happened exceeded our boldest dreams. The Germans ran twice from the ghetto... I feel that great things are happening, and what we dared to do is of great, enormous importance."*

From the last letter of Mordechai Anielewicz, Warsaw ghetto, 21 April 1943<sup>1</sup>

The words of Mordechai Anielewicz, commander of the Jewish Fighting Organization (*Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, ŻOB), in a letter he wrote as the battle raged, sum up the unique power of this revolt. The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which broke out on the eve of Passover, 19 April 1943, was the first urban rebellion against Nazi Germany in all the territories it occupied. Of all the Jewish uprisings during the Holocaust, this was the longest-running, and had the largest number of participants. It was a popular insurrection: While the combatants of ŻOB and ŻZW (*Żydowski Związek Wojskowy*, the Jewish Military Union) were fighting in the streets of the ghetto, the Jews barricaded themselves in bunkers. After a few days of fighting, the Germans began to systematically torch and blow up the ghetto houses in order to overcome the fighters and force the fugitives out of their hiding places. For a month, the Jews of the Warsaw ghetto fought for their lives. Many died in traps of fire and smoke. News of the revolt spread quickly and even reached the free world, and it became a symbol of the battle of the few against the many, and of the freedom and power of the human spirit.

### **Characteristics of Jewish Resistance**

The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising was one of many acts of armed and unarmed Jewish resistance, in response to the persecution, oppression and humiliation the Jews were suffering at the hands of Nazi Germany and its allies. Jewish resistance took many forms: spiritual, cultural, clandestine-political, educational or religious resistance;

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<sup>1</sup> Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman and Abraham Margalio, eds., *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union* (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem and University of Nebraska Press, 1981), p. 315.

underground documentation of the events; forging identity cards and protection papers; hiding Jews; smuggling thousands of Jews across borders to safer places; escape from camps and ghettos; armed uprisings and joining national resistance movements; aiding the Allies; and more. Many of these actions were an expression of defiance by the Jews against the extreme persecution of the Germans and their accomplices, and were executed in an attempt to preserve both body and soul.

The Jews in the German-occupied territories were a small, multigenerational and divided minority of civilians living among largely indifferent and often even hostile populations. Facing them was the most powerful state in Europe, which turned all its force against them. Under these conditions, they were presented with agonizing and desperate dilemmas, and those who planned to fight and defend themselves did so knowing that they could not save the majority. At a discussion that took place in Vilna in December 1941, Abba Kovner said: "Is there any chance of rescue? We must give the true answer, cruel though it may be. No. There is no rescue. Our answer must be clearer still – perhaps there is a possibility that tens or hundreds of Jews will be saved: But for our people as a whole, the millions of Jews in the area of German occupation, there is no chance."<sup>2</sup> Any decision or action of an individual Jew or an underground group endangered the lives of many. Some realized that because Germany's overarching goal was to murder all Jews, resistance would not be able to change the fate of the masses: "Our activity may bring the end closer – but that end will come in any case," said Kovner.<sup>3</sup>

### **Revolts, Escapes, Border Running and Concealment**

Jews in dozens of communities tried to organize uprisings: In Vilnius, Bialystok, Krakow and elsewhere, desperate attempts were made to commit an act of insurgence that was usually not intended for rescue, but rather as a symbolic gesture for the dignity of the people. In the camps, too, Jewish prisoners organized armed uprisings. This was the case in Treblinka and Sobibor, as well as the *Sonderkommando* uprising in Auschwitz-Birkenau, in which a group of prisoners – most of them from Greece, Poland and Hungary – blew up one of the crematoria buildings in October 1944. Sometimes, the fighting lasted only a number of hours or a few days. There were cases, such as in the Łachwa ghetto, where the purpose of the revolt was to enable a mass escape to the surrounding forests.

Hundreds of thousands of Jews fled alone or in groups from dozens of localities, deportation trains, camps, and even extermination camps in an attempt to save their lives and those of others. The timing, topography and attitude of the local population to the Jews were among the factors that influenced the outcome of these escape

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<sup>2</sup> Ruzska Korczak, *The Massacre of European Jewry: An Anthology* (Israel: World Hashomer Hatzair, 1963), pp. 264-265.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 268.

attempts. Only a handful of the escapees from the summer of 1941 until the end of the war survived. Thus, for example, only 20 of the 2,000 fugitives from the Tuczyn ghetto lived to see liberation.

One form of resistance was the rescue of Jews by Jews who were themselves suffering from persecution. Thus, for example, members of the "Working Group" in Slovakia and the Zionist underground in Hungary organized the smuggling of thousands of Jews across the border. In Romania, in violation of government directives, the Union of Jewish Communities endeavored to assist as many deportees to Transnistria in order for them to endure in unspeakable living conditions for as long as possible.

Rescue of children was at the forefront of the minds of Jewish resistance activists. To this end, Jewish underground networks cooperated with their non-Jewish counterparts, and even with official Jewish organizations that also carried out illegal activities for the sake of saving the children. In this way, thousands of Jewish children were rescued in Belgium, the Netherlands, France and Hungary.

### **Opposition of Jews Within the War Efforts Against Germany and Its Collaborators**

Jewish underground activists contributed to the war against Nazi Germany, and to its and its collaborators' defeat. The thousands of Jewish partisans who fought in the forests of Eastern Europe were an important factor in battling the Germans and rescuing thousands of Jews who had fled to the forests. The Jewish partisans established Jewish units or joined general partisan groups, and fought in the partisan ranks not only in Eastern Europe, but also in many other European countries, such as Yugoslavia, Greece and Bulgaria. In Algeria, members of the Jewish underground helped the Allied forces land and occupy the country.

### **Defiance: Preservation of Identity and Society**

Jewish defiance during the Holocaust was also reflected in spiritual and cultural resistance. Jews risked their lives and continued openly and demonstratively, or secretly and underground, to keep *mitzvot* (Jewish commandments), to preserve their spirituality and faith, to operate educational networks, to maintain support systems and to preserve Jewish culture. Elie Wiesel wrote: "The Jewish soul was a target of the enemy. He sought to corrupt it, even as he strove to destroy us physically. But despite his destructive force, despite his corrupting power, the Jewish soul remained beyond his reach."<sup>4</sup>

While persecuted to the hilt, many Jews violated the orders of the Germans and their associates, disobeying their commands and maintaining as far as possible a rooted way of life as an expression of non-submission, preserving their identity and dignity.

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<sup>4</sup> Elie Wiesel, *Memoirs: All Rivers Run to the Sea* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1995), p. 87.

Prominent in this context is the safeguarding of their religious traditions and the Jewish circle of life. Many celebrated holidays secretly, some held prayer quorums, and a number tried to keep *kashrut* and purity laws. Another significant, existential effort was manifested in ghettos, where plays and concerts were staged, underground libraries operated, poems and underground newspapers were printed and circulated, and a bustling cultural life was secretly practiced. In the hope, albeit desperate, that they would see the end of the war and unite with relatives and community members, the resisters sought to maintain vitality and at the same time give expression to the grim reality of subsistence and persecution. Educational activities took place in flagrant opposition to the Germans, in the full knowledge of the mortal risk being taken, out of a sense of mission and responsibility for the children's souls. Teacher and educator Chaim Aharon Kaplan expressed this particularly well in his diary, written in Warsaw in August 1940: "In these days of our misfortune, we live the life of Marranos. Everything is forbidden to us, and yet we do everything."<sup>5</sup>

Wherever the Germans and their allies ruled, the persecuted Jews worked alone, within groups and as a part of communities for their physical survival, but also for the preservation of the cultural, religious and educational life of the Jewish people.

Ultimately, the widespread resistance did not have the capability of saving masses of Jews. In view of the determination of the Nazis to implement the "Final Solution" and the force they and their accomplices wielded, resistance and fighting was a struggle of the tormented, abandoned to their fate. And yet, the scope and versatility of Jewish resistance during the Holocaust in all of its forms has bequeathed a Jewish legacy for generations, symbolizing the power of the human spirit and humanity's fundamental values.

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<sup>5</sup> Chaim Aron Kaplan, *Scroll of Agony: The Warsaw Diary of Chaim A. Kaplan* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1999), p. 174.





[23-4-1934 (?)]

*...There is a terrible lack of air. People fall down, partly unconscious, on the ground. The enemy bombards [us] with grenades without a break, and sounds of machine-gun fire are heard without end. Constant, nearly deafening thunder in the air. Despite all the dangers, Jews are running through the streets, in order to save [their] bare life. Everything is enveloped by fire. It looks as if the end of the world is [taking place]. Save yourselves if you can. It's terrible... Hell has come to earth. Dante's inferno – unbelievable and indescribable...*

*Terrible night has passed, finally the enemy gives [us] quiet.*

*The enemy begins again his work of destruction...*

*A [new] day has begun. The silence of death began together with the new day.*

*People lay in their corners without food or drink. Burning cemetery. The jingle of breaking glass and the fall of burning wooden beams are heard.*

*Evening, Wednesday, 28.4.1943*

*Today is the 19th day of our stay in the bunker. Ten days of battling our bloodiest enemy who seeks to annihilate us completely. He started with grenades and tanks, and winds up with setting houses on fire. But we have the endurance and we hope that we will survive. We fight for justice and the right to life. Meanwhile the bombardments and shootings eased and the danger turned away from us. People get to wash themselves, coffee is handed out, food is cooked – everything is done in quiet. All the people and the guards work valiantly, everything according to the instructions of the leader of the bunker. The day has passed normally.*

[10.5.43]

*I go out into the street, [it is] burning! Everything around is on fire. [Whole] streets! Mila, Zamenhof, Kurza, Nalewki, Lubeckiego. Shortly put, all the streets are burning. Apartments are burning, workshops, warehouses, stores and entire buildings. The entire ghetto is a sea of flames. There is a strong wind, which blows out sparks from the burning houses to the ones which do not burn yet. The fire immediately destroys everything. A stunning sight. The fire expands so [fast?] that people don't have time to flee the houses and perish inside in a tragic manner.*

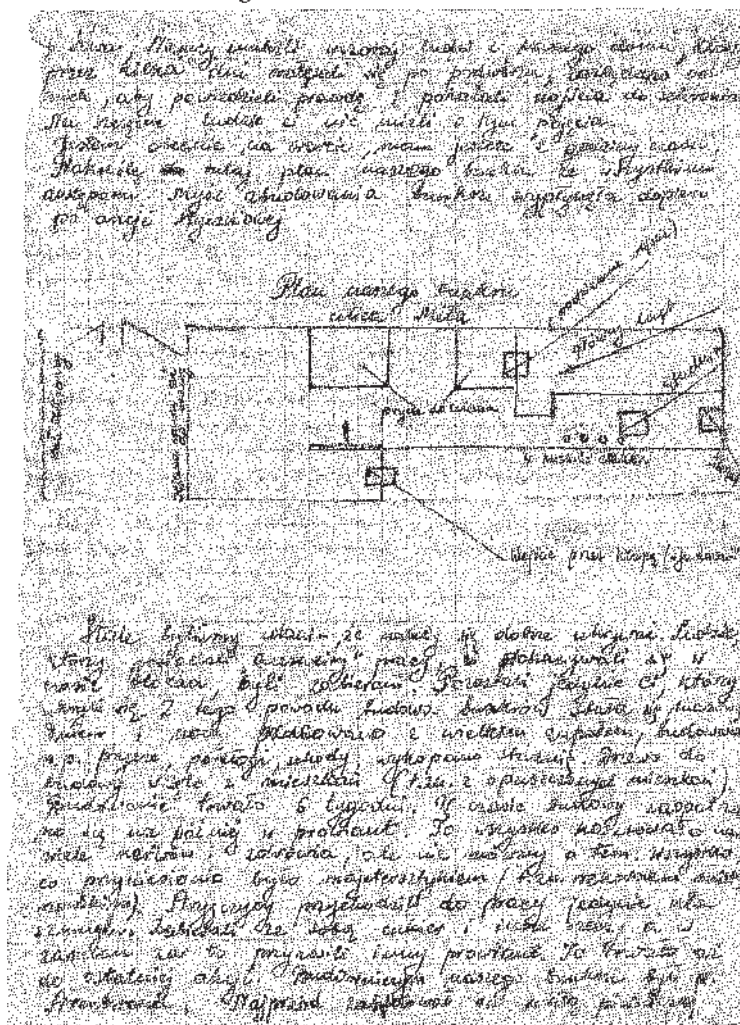
*The fire causes a huge commotion on the street. People with bundles run from house to house, from street to street, there is no rescue, no one knows where to take shelter. They seek desperately, nothing, no rescue, no protection, death prevails everywhere. The ghetto walls are completely surrounded, no one can enter or leave. [The] clothes are burning on people's bodies. Screams of pain and crying, houses and bunkers are burning, everything, everything is in flames. Everyone seeks rescue, everyone wants to save his life.*

*People are suffocating because of the smoke. All shout for help. Many, almost everyone call upon God, "God, show your power, have mercy on us." God is silent as a sphinx and does not reply. And you, the nations, why are you silent, don't you see how [they] seek to destroy us. Why are you silent?*

Excerpts from An Anonymous Woman's Diary from the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, researched and translated by Havi Dreifuss (Ben-Sasson), English version translated by Jerzy Michalowicz, published in Yad Vashem Studies, Vol. 36, Jerusalem 2008

The Anonymous Woman's Diary was written in Polish on five pieces of graph paper. On one of the pages, the young woman sketched the structure of the bunker in which she was hiding. The drawing and the contents of the diary seem to identify the bunker as being in the cellar of the building at 32 Miła Street, not far from the corner of Zamenhof Street. The young woman had gone into hiding in the bunker with her uncle and dozens of other Jews. Eleven are identified by their first or family names. Unfortunately, we have no biographical details about the diarist herself. Today the diary is part of the Berman Collection in the archives of the Ghetto Fighters' House. The importance of the diary lies in the contemporary testimony that it provides about the realities of life in the bunkers of the blazing Warsaw ghetto.

The diagram of our bunker: Miła Street



“

Warsaw Ghetto, April 23, 1943

*It is impossible to describe in words what we have gone through. What has happened is beyond our boldest dreams. The Germans fled the ghetto twice. One of our companies held out for 40 minutes and the other – for over 6 hours. The mine planted in the area of the brush manufacturers exploded. Some of our companies attacked the Germans who fled. Our losses in manpower are very few. This too is an achievement. Y [Yechiel] fell. He fell as a heroic soldier from machine-gun fire. I feel that great things are happening and what we dared to do is of great and tremendous worth...*

*Beginning today we are changing over to the partisan method. Tonight three combat units are going out to the field, and they have two aims: to scout and to obtain weapons. Short weapons are of no worth to us. We rarely use these weapons. We urgently need: grenades, rifles, machine-guns and explosives. I cannot describe to you the conditions under which the Jews in the ghetto currently live. Only a few will endure. The rest will perish sooner or later. Their fate is decreed. In nearly all the hiding places, where thousands are hiding, it is impossible to light a candle because of a lack of air.*

*We heard through our transmitter a wonderful broadcast of the "Schweitz" broadcasting station. The fact that they mention us beyond the ghetto walls encourages us in our struggle. Farewell my dears! Perhaps we will meet again! The dream of my life has become a reality. Self-defense in the ghetto has turned into a fact. Armed Jewish resistance and revenge have become a fact. I have witnessed the wonderful courage-filled fighting of the Jewish fighters.*

M[ordechai] Anielewicz

(written to Yitzchak Zukerman)

***Last Letters from the Shoah***, edited by Walter Zwi Bachrach, Yad Vashem 2013, pp.352-3





### ***To the Memory of a Fighter***

*[by] Hirsh Berlinski*

*It happened on April 20th, 1943, at 3 p.m.*

*The mine exploded, thus giving the signal for battle.*

*Abram Diamant kept watch at his position, camouflaged by a few mattresses, on no. 32, Swietojerska Street, his battle post. ...*

*...Some leaders at his job thought him too old for battle. We, his ideological companions, knew him well and were convinced that he would be peerless in battle and would better ten younger comrades.*

*We sensed his burning desire to give battle in each of his words, in each of his movements. He used to say, "May the moment come, when instead of words the gun speaks, then we shall see who is old and who young."*

*Now the moment has come, here I stand admiring his exemplary stature, his exemplary attitude and tactics in battle.*

*Facing a heavy machine-gun and a field -piece which spew incessant fire on his barricade, he stands there alone, in battle.*

*The barricade destroyed, he leaps like a tiger, with his fiery eyes, from one point to another, leaps and keeps shooting at the Germans....*

*...The Germans found our bunker. Germans are in our bunker, someone reports from the first entrance. Z. Stolak runs to that entrance with a few fighters. They shoot salvos, Germans respond with grenades. The dugout-entry is blocked with debris, the command is given to slip through the other dugout and give battle in the yard. Among the first three out is Diamant. We fight tooth to tooth, eye to eye; two Germans are wounded, a third escapes. We – Jelen, Diamant, Abramek – take up position among the debris, our purpose being not to let the Germans break through to the second entrance. This is partly achieved, most of the fighters are out in the yard and the battle goes on. As Diamant is hit, his hand grabs close to the heart, he struggles to hand me his gun, fails, falls down into the burning cellar with this rifle, disappears in the smoke and flames.*

*When we were burying our dead in the evening, his body was missing in that common grave.*

*Only his body was missing. His name survives. It shall remain as a symbol of a fighting spirit and readiness for sacrifice.*

*A companion in battle*





*I was one of the last to remain in the Warsaw Ghetto; a member of a Zionist youth movement. Heavy doubts and rumors of the liquidation of the ghetto spread through the ghetto. And despite that, we prepared for Passover. Rut Heiman, Mordechai Anielewicz's courier and a commander in the Jewish Fighting Organization in the ghetto told me, "You have to leave the ghetto and go to the Polish side and try to survive. You are too young to fight... Go, tell how we fought and died here, in the ghetto."*

*Three times I was caught on the Aryan side; I escaped thanks to audacity, bribery and self-confidence.*

*I acted as a courier between the two sections of the divided ghetto. In the winter nights, after the Great Deportation, I climbed onto the roofs and went from house to house with packets of posters from the Jewish Fighting Organization. The posters called for active resistance, "We will no longer allow our blood to be spilt for naught. We will not go according to the German's orders. We will escape and fight..." I had to stick the posters on the walls of the houses very carefully lest anyone see me and betray me.*

*My loyalty and solidarity to my movement overcame all fear and all my parents' prohibitions. I was only fourteen and a half...*

*...Young men and women from all the pioneering youth movements – from every stream of the Jewish population, from extreme left to right, who had faith in a new life in Eretz Israel, ideals of honor and love of the Jewish people – fell as free individuals because they chose to fight against all the odds. Perhaps they also wanted to restore their people's downtrodden honor.*

*Were we naïve? Absolutely not. We believed that we had to take responsibility for the whole of the Jewish population.*

*As the spring of 1943 approached they paid more attention to us.*

*Everyone knew that the end was nigh and an air of battle was apparent in the ghetto.*

*The words of Mordechai Anielewicz, the adored leader, at the final gathering accompanied me wherever I went:*

*"Do not forget that the hardest thing in war is the battle within ourselves. Not to become accustomed to the degrading conditions that our enemies force upon us. One who becomes accustomed stops discriminating between good and evil, he becomes a slave both in body and soul to the degrading conditions. Whatever happens to you, remember: Don't accept, fight against this reality."*

Excerpt from the address on behalf of Holocaust survivors given by Aliza Shomron at the State Opening Ceremony of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2013



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*On 19 April, 1943 - Passover eve - members of the Jewish Fighting Organization went from house to house in the Warsaw ghetto and informed the last surviving inmates who had escaped the two previous deportations that armed policemen were surrounding the ghetto wall, and that in the morning the final deportation of the tens of thousands of remaining Jews would begin.*

*This was probably the first time that Jews inside a ghetto had prior information regarding what was to befall them and when. Hundreds of fighters armed with inadequate weapons took up pre-arranged battle positions, and the tormented, determined ghetto inmates packed up their small bundles of belongings and some crumbs of matzo - that symbol of the Festival of Freedom - and went down into the secret bunkers and cellars that had been dug over many nights. At dawn, when the German armed units came through the ghetto gates, they found empty streets and houses, and were then showered with bullets and grenades.*

*Hundreds of thousands of Jews fought in the Allied armies' anti-Nazi front in World War II. Many thousands joined the fighting units in the forests and mountains as partisans. In the death camps, and in the shadow of the crematorium at Birkenau, Jews were the only ones in the multinational prisoner population who rebelled.*

*We know from totalitarian regimes in general, and above all from the Nazi German Reich, that even individuals who were once impressive public figures, and the millions of prisoners and camp inmates of many nationalities, sentenced to oppression and systematic annihilation, did not rise up and did not rebel. The popular uprising in the Warsaw ghetto is a singular and symbolic event, the first revolt in an occupied city, which compelled the German forces to conduct a military campaign against the helpless few, and to quash the desperate uprising house by house, bunker by bunker.*

Excerpt from the address on behalf of Holocaust survivors given by Israel Gutman at the State Opening Ceremony of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 2003



## Proclamation by Jewish Pioneer Youth Group in Vilna, Calling for Resistance, January 1, 1942

*They shall not take us like sheep to the slaughter!*

*Jewish youth, do not be led astray. Of the 80,000 Jews in the "Jerusalem of Lithuania" [Vilna] only 20,000 have remained. Before our eyes they tore from us our parents, our brothers and sisters. Where are the hundreds of men who were taken away for work by the Lithuanian "snatchers"? Where are the naked women and children who were taken from us in the night of terror of the provokatzia?*

*Where are the Jews [who were taken away on] the Day of Atonement?*

*Where are our brothers from the second ghetto?*

*All those who were taken away from the ghetto never came back.*

*All the roads of the Gestapo lead to Ponary.*

*And Ponary is death!*

*Doubters! Cast off all illusions. Your children, your husbands and your wives are no longer alive.*

*Ponary is not a camp – all are shot there.*

*Hitler aims to destroy all the Jews of Europe. The Jews of Lithuania are fated to be the first in line.*

*Let us not go as sheep to slaughter!*

*It is true that we are weak and defenseless, but resistance is the only reply to the enemy!*

*Brothers! It is better to fall as free fighters than to live by the grace of the murderers.*

*Resist! To the last breath.*

*January 1, 1942, Vilna ghetto*

Moreshet Archives, published in Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union, eighth edition, edited by Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman and Abraham Margaliot, translations by Lea Ben Dor, Published by the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, and Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1999 p. 433





*"Ghetto inmates looked at us as if we were lunatics.*

*They were smuggling foodstuffs into the ghetto, in their clothes and boots.*

*We were smuggling books, pieces of paper, occasionally a Torah scroll or mezuzahs."*

*(Szmerke Kacerginski)*



A Nazi Division known as Einsatzstab Rosenberg arrived in Vilna in June 1941 armed with lists of libraries, museums, and other rare collections they intended on looting. Part of their mission was to collect materials for a Nazi "Institute for the Investigation of the Jewish Question," an organization that was to study the Jews after they had been exterminated. Among the places on their list were the famed Strashun Jewish Public Library and the YIVO Institute.

Members of the Einsatzstab Rosenberg brought the materials they had plundered to the YIVO building in Vilna. 40 Jews worked there, most were members of the intelligentsia and some were members of the FPO, among them Abraham Sutzkever and Szmerke Kacerginski. Their role was to catalogue the materials to conduct scientific reviews and to prepare the materials for transport. It was painful for the Jews to see Torah scrolls used as raw material for boots and the lead stereotypes (letter press plates) of the Romm printing press, etched with the words of holy books, melted down for bullets. At mortal risk, they smuggled valuable manuscripts, certificates and pictures into the ghetto where they hid most of them. Some of the materials were also hidden outside the ghetto. The YIVO workers were known in the ghetto as "The Paper Brigade".





Szmerke Kaczerginski



## The Revolt at the Sobibor Extermination Camp

*....As though in response to an order, several axes that had been hidden under coats appeared and were brought down on his head. At that moment the convoy from the second camp approached. A few women who were frightened by what they saw began to scream, some even fainted. Some began to run crazily, without thinking and without purpose. In that situation there was no question of organizing or maintaining order, and therefore I shouted at the top of my voice: "Forward, comrades!"*

*"Forward!" someone echoed behind me on the right.*

*"For the Fatherland, for Stalin, forward!"*

*The proud cries came like thunder from clear skies in the death camp. In one moment these slogans united the Jews of Russia, Poland, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Germany. Six hundred men who had been abused and exhausted broke into cries of "Hurrah!" for life and freedom.*

*The assault on the arms store failed. Machine-gun fire barred our way.*

*Most of the people who were escaping turned in the direction of the main gate. There, after they finished off the guards, under cover of fire from the rifles that a few of them had, they threw stones and scattered sand in the eyes of the Fascists who stood in their way, broke through the gate and hurried in the direction of the forest.*

*One group of prisoners turned left. I saw how they attacked the barbed-wire fence. But after they had cleared away this obstacle, they still had to cross a minefield that was about 15 meters wide. Many of them surely fell here. I turned towards the Officers' House with a group of prisoners; we cut the barbed wire there and so made an opening. The assumption that the area near the Officers' House would not be mined proved correct.*

*Three of our comrades fell near the barbed wire, but it was not clear whether they stepped on mines or were wounded by bullets, as salvos were fired on us from various directions.*

*We are already on the far side of the fence, and the minefield is behind us. We have already gone 100 meters, then another 100...fast, still faster...we must cross the bare, open area where we are exposed to the bullets of the murderers... fast, still faster, we must get to the forest, get among the trees, get into shelter... and already we are in the shade of the trees.*

*I stopped for a moment to catch my breath and cast a glance backwards. Exhausted, with their last strength, running bent over, forwards..... we were near the forest. Where is Loka? Where is Shlomo?*

\* \* \*

*....It is difficult to say for certain how many people escaped from the camp. In any case, it is clear that the great majority of the prisoners escaped. Many fell in the open space that was between the camp and the forest. We were agreed that we should not linger in the forest, but divide up into small groups and go in different directions. The Polish Jews escaped in the direction of Chelm. They were drawn there by their knowledge of the language and the area. We, the Soviets, turned east. The Jews who had come from Holland, France and Germany were particularly helpless. In all the wide area that surrounded the camp there was none with whom they had a common language.*

*The shots from machine-guns and rifles that rattled behind us from time to time helped us to decide on the direction that we needed. We knew that the shooting came from the camp. The telephone line had been cut, and Franz had no way of calling for help. The echo of the shots became more distant and disappeared. It was already beginning to get dark when we once more heard shots echoing far away. Probably they came from our pursuers...*

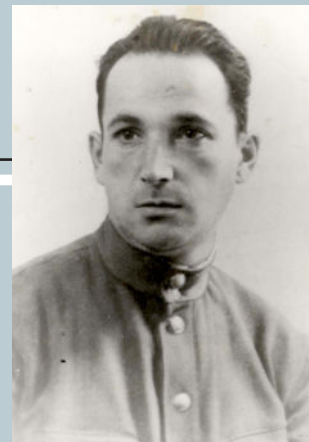
*We began to march.*

*From time to time, from one side or the other, we were joined by new people. I questioned all of them whether they had seen Loka or Shlomo. Nobody had seen them.*

*We emerged from the forest. We walked for 3 kilometers over open fields, until we reached an open canal about 5 or 6 meters wide. The canal was very deep, and it was not possible to cross it on foot. When I tried to walk around it, I observed a group of people at a distance of about 50 meters from us. We dropped flat on the ground and sent out Arkadiosh to reconnoiter. At first he crawled on his stomach, but after a minute, he got to his feet and ran up to the people. A few minutes later he was back.*

*"Sasha, they are some of our people. They found tree trunks by the side of the canal and are crossing on them to the other side. Kalimali is there among them." That is how we crossed the canal...*

*Yalkut Moreshet*, No. 10 (1969) pp. 30-31, published in *Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union*, eighth edition, edited by Yitzhak Arad, Israel Gutman and Abraham Margalio, translations by Lea Ben Dor, Published by the University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, and Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1999 pp. 356-8



The author, **Alexander Peczorski**, a Jewish Soviet prisoner of war, was one of the organizers of the uprising in the Sobibor camp on October 14, 1943.

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## The Treblinka Uprising

*At the organizing committee meeting, held late at night by the light of fires burning the bodies of hundreds of thousands of those dearest to us, we unanimously approved the decision to launch the uprising the next day, August 2. I will never forget the white-haired Ze'ev Korland, the eldest among us all, who, with tears in his eyes, administered to us the oath to fight to our last drop of blood for the honor of the Jewish people. Every man present sensed the tremendous responsibility involved in our decision to eliminate this creation of mad German sadism and bring an end to Treblinka.*

Shmuel Rajzman, as quoted in Yitzhak Arad, *The Operation Reinhard Death Camps -Belzec, Sobibor, Treblinka*, revised and expanded edition, published by Indiana University Press and Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 2018, p. 332







*Shots were being fired at the tower guards. The air shook from an explosion, then a second and a third.... Prisoners were running in every direction....The confusion was indescribable. One of the wooden huts, well dried by the sun and wind, went up in flames. Among the crowd I saw several panic-stricken Germans running about the square, hiding behind trees... Black clouds of smoke covered the sky. Rifles and machine guns cracked from the six guard towers. Scattered single shots from our side replied...*

*From the nearby tower, a machine gun spit out bursts of fire. They hit their mark, thinning out our ranks, the situation in this sector had become critical. Near me a man was holding a rifle but not firing. I grabbed it, aimed it long and carefully, then pulled the trigger once, twice, a third time. The dark silhouette on the tower slumped over the railing, the machine gun was silenced...then again firing commenced. We dodged from tree to tree towards the fence...I reached the fence. The severed wire dangled lazily. Now we had to run across an open area of 50 meters to the next barbed wire and the anti-tank barriers. The machine gun stepped up its bursts. Behind me, at the outer fence, tragedy. The brave ones climbed up the iron and wire complex only to be hit there by a bullet. They fell with screams of despair...More prisoners climbed over the still-quivering bodies, and they, too, were cut down and fell, their crazed eyes staring at the camp, which now looked like a giant torch...I crawled through the open area and reached the barriers. I looked around. The dead had created a sort of bridge over the barbed wire complex across which another escapee moved every moment. Past the barriers began the forest, rescue, freedom.... With a leap, I climbed the bridge of bodies. I heard a shot, felt a blow-but another jump, and I was in the forest. Ahead, to the sides and behind me, men were running...*

Shmuel Wilenberg (Moreshet), as quoted in Yitzhak Arad, op. cit., p. 340



**Out of approximately 850 prisoners in the camp that day... it can be assumed that about 100 fugitives managed to get clear of the Treblinka region and scatter throughout occupied Poland, or even beyond its borders.**

**Yitzhak Arad, op. cit., p. 347**



## The Revolt in the Lachwa Ghetto

*Our young people, the kind who are born old, had secretly begun to lay the groundwork for an uprising from the very first day of the ghetto's existence. They met throughout under the guidance of Yitskhok Rokhchin. Tasks were assigned and training under military-like discipline continued during the entire stay in the ghetto. All attempts to procure firearms failed, however they were able to arm themselves with axes, hammers and iron bars – and this with great difficulty. One group was assigned to set the ghetto aflame should the end come. Kerosene and nafta were secretly accumulated and stored for this purpose, to be sure that our homes would not be used by the bloodthirsty local peasants after we were no more. Our rabbis and the very pious Jews, in their unwavering faith, opposed an uprising, believing that we must leave ourselves to the Divine.*

*Many young people would have attempted escape during that last ghetto night, but out of their deepest concern for the women, the children and the elderly, they decided to remain. They now dug out their meagre store of weapons and stood ready to take on the might of the German SS force.*

*At eight o'clock in the morning, German troops with machine guns entered the ghetto. They ordered us out of our houses and to line up four abreast. They planned to march us in orderly fashion to prepare open ditches and shoot us there. Dov Lopatin now poured nafta over the house where the Judenrat functioned and set fire to it. Then our boys poured their kerosene over the other ghetto houses, setting them ablaze. This caused panic among the murderers and they began shooting at random into the hysterical mob. As the first victim fell, Yitskhok Rokhchin, axe in hand and with a single blow, split the skull of one of the German soldiers before my very eyes. Pursued by a shower of bullets he ran toward the river where he fell dead and sank to the bottom. The other boys threw themselves at the Germans with their axes, killing at least eight of them. Unspeakable chaos ensued. Flames engulfed the ghetto from end to end, and the orders to line up were not obeyed. Children were knocked down by the crowd and trampled underfoot. People were falling all around, as the flying bullets struck them. The mob, as if with a mind of its own, swayed back and forth, as families struggled to hold on to one another. Finally, under the weight of this solid wall of hysterical humanity, the iron hinges of the ghetto gate gave way and it collapsed with its lock intact. We began spilling out into the open market square, all around which were positioned SS men with their machine guns spouting fire. All who could, ran. Separated from my family, I too was running under the hail of bullets and jumping over bodies as they fell and lay sprawled all about me. I ran with all my might across the market place, through the streets of Lachwa, and into the fields beyond, until I reached the edge of the outlying forest...*

*The Jewish uprising in Lachwa was the first revolt of a Polish ghetto. Facing imminent defeat, our boys fought heroically to the end. In the confusion some 90 people out of the 2,000 Jews in the ghetto escaped. Between six and seven hundred lost their lives during the fighting and the others were led to the open ditches and massacred. All were buried in the mass grave next to the burned ruin of what had once been our town.*



Jewish rebels from Lachwa who joined the partisans



Mass grave, Lachwa, Poland



November 15, 1943

*We are writing you with the blood of tens of thousands of martyred Jews. We are experiencing now in Poland the end of our dreadful tragedy. The Hitlerian barbarians are now butchering the remaining Jewish population, due to their defeat at the front...*

*We want the Jewish people and the entire world to know that like heroes, our youth defended the life and the honor of our people. Following the heroic epic of the Warsaw ghetto, we experienced in the last months a wonderful chapter in the history of the Jews of Bialystok. It took place at the end of August. August 17th was the beginning of the termination of the only large ghetto in Eastern Poland with about 40,000 people. For the first three days seven transports were sent to the Treblinka death camp... On the fourth day, armed battles began with weapons taken. Difficult battles raged on a number of the streets. The Germans used tanks and artillery here, exactly as in Warsaw. They recruited about 1,000 Gendarmes and SS men, and also Ukrainian troops. The Jews mostly used hand grenades, incendiary bombs and rifles. They fought with exceptional resolve, and they also earned the deep respect of the entire municipal population. In these battles, several hundred Germans and Ukrainians were killed and wounded. In order to destroy the Jews' spirit of resistance, the Germans set afire the ghetto from all sides, just as in Warsaw. The difficult battles continued for eight days, but the resistance continued for a longer time, close to a month, until the middle of September. The heroic battles of Bialystok will be recorded in history, like the defense of the Warsaw ghetto....*

*The Jews fought and resisted with armed resistance not only in Warsaw, Bialystok, Treblinka and Sobibor but also in other cities: In Czestochowa, Bendin, Vilna, Tarna and smaller cities. Participating in the battles in these cities were fighters from all sectors and Jewish parties: the Pioneer Youth [Noar Hechalutz], Hashomer Hatzair, Poalei Zion and the Bund. The battle of death for the sake of the Jewish people's honor united them. We helped to organize this battle with the assistance of our Jewish Fighting Organization and we supported it in all ways. In addition to the battle operations, we are focusing our efforts on helping the Jews who are still in the camps or hiding in the Aryan areas. We are trying with all of our forces to rescue people from the camps, and we have succeeded in rescuing some public and scientific figures. We stay in contact with the camps through our emissaries; through whom we provide financial help in the camps, documents and more. We are spending significant sums supporting Jews who are hiding in the Aryan areas, arranging documents for them, housing (this is one of the most difficult tasks) and more. We support a relatively large number of people who belong to the public-cultural sector. We, a small group of activists who remained alive took upon ourselves the role to provide public help for the remnant of the hurting Jewish population – despite the danger and constant difficulties. We are determined to perform this mission until the end, despite all the difficulties.*

*The National Jewish Committee (-) Berman, (-) Kaftor, (-) Zukerman*



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## "Nasza Grupa" – "Hanoar Hazioni" Underground in Zaglembe

*"An extraordinary group of people, whose rescue actions were guided by the principle 'All for one and one for all'. I can't recall coming across another group like this: So focused during all the years of the war, so independent and determined to help others, and to save friends and fight the Germans at risk to their own lives."*

Manus Diamant wrote these words about his friends, members of the "Nasza Grupa" ("our group" in Polish), a group of young Jews, most 16-25 years old from the "Hanoar Hazioni" youth movement, who gathered together in early 1942 in the Zaglembe (Zagłębie) region in northwest Poland. The group sabotaged German property, attempted to prevent the deportation of Jews to Auschwitz, obtained false documents for young Jewish men and women, and smuggled escaping Jews across borders. Approximately 50 members of the group survived, including Manus.



Members of the "Nasza Grupa" together with members of "Hanoar Hazioni" from Hungary, Budapest, 1943

Bottom row, from right: Pinek Trajman, Yaakov-Jozek Rosenberg.

Middle row, from right: Fredka Kozuch (Mazia) née Oxenheindler, Uziel Lichtenberg, Elisheva Ingster (Weiss), Moshe Preminger, Ruth Landau (Hillman).

Top row, from right: Hans Fogel, four individuals whose identity is not known, Tusia Herzberg-Gutman, Siegfried Rot (head of "Hanoar Hazioni" in Hungary), Marisia Skura-Green, Henrik Zimmerman, unidentified, Zelig Bajuk, Iso Green.

Yad Vashem Photo Archive




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*I was never conscious of doing anything extraordinary during the Holocaust. The challenges simply presented themselves, and I never felt that I could refuse to accomplish them. From my home life, I received as a legacy the love of life and the will to fight for it....*

*Another contributing factor and one that I think played a decisive role in my actions during the Holocaust, in addition to plenty of luck, was my membership in the Hehalutz (pioneering) Zionist youth movement. It enabled me to seek escape routes out of the hell that our native country had become and to find refuge in our homeland. Its ideology was like a small candle burning at the end of a seemingly endless tunnel. It gave hope and strength during these barbaric and hopeless times. The fact that we were part of an organization enabled us to trust each other, go underground to escape our pitiless enemy, forge thousands of identification papers, smuggle ourselves over borders, and rescue ourselves and thousands of other Jews, especially children, from Budapest.*

Peretz Révész, **STANDING UP TO EVIL: A Zionist's Underground Rescue Activities in Hungary**, pp 15-16 Yad Vashem Publishers





At the end of WWII, approximately half of the Jewish population of Budapest had survived the onslaught of Nazi occupation and the fierce fighting surrounding the Soviet conquest of the city – the largest rescue of a Jewish community in all of Europe. All this had taken place in just under a year – from March 1944 to February 1945 – and while much of the credit for Jewish survival is given to the courageous efforts of neutral diplomats who used their prestigious positions to protect Jewish citizens, none of their efforts could have succeeded without the dedicated work of Jewish rescuers on the streets of Hungary's capital.

One important figure in this praiseworthy group was Peretz Révész, a refugee from Slovakia and a leader of the Maccabi Hatzair Zionist youth group. When deportations from Slovakia began in March 1942, Zionist youth leaders decided to foster flight to Hungary. Forced to flee for his role in this, Révész and his new wife Nonika escaped to Budapest in April. There, he joined forces with local activists to help thousands of incoming Jewish refugees, becoming a member of the *Vaada L'Ezra Vehatsalah* (the Relief and Rescue Committee). Among other activities, Révész became responsible for providing false documents to Jewish refugees. Révész also aided Joel Brand, who led the "Tiyul Committee" to help Jews reach Hungary from Poland, aiding up to 2,000 refugees before the German occupation of Hungary on 19 March 1944.

With the German occupation, Révész and the Zionist youth underground began smuggling Zionist youth out of Hungary, primarily to Romania, with the intent to travel on to Eretz Israel (Mandatory Palestine). Several thousand Jews made their way to Romania until August 1944, when Romania severed its alliance with Germany and the border shut down.

Révész and his comrades forged tens of thousands of protective documents and handed them out. Genuine and false papers alike helped safeguard many Jews. In addition, the International Red Cross established over 50 children's homes under their protection, headed by Otto Komoly. In October, Révész became responsible for one of these homes. International protection was not foolproof but it remained a central cog in the machinery of rescue.

After the Soviet conquest, Révész took over the Department of Child Protection and the Youth Aliyah Office, and then led the Bricha movement guiding Jews out of Hungary towards Israel. He and his family reached Israel in May 1949, and moved to Kibbutz Kfar HaMaccabi, where he remained until his death in 2011.

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*Ultimately, when I asked myself why I was drawing, when I was fighting day and night...*

*[I realized that it was] something similar to biological continuity.*

*Every man, every people wishes to leave this one thing... To be creative during the Holocaust was also a protest.*

*Each man when standing face to face with cruel danger, with death, reacts in his own way.*


*The artist reacts in an artistic way. This is his weapon...*

*This is what shows that the Germans could not break his spirit.*

Alexander Bogen



Alexander Bogen, **Partisan**, 1943.  
Collection of the Yad Vashem Art Museum



After infiltrating the Vilna ghetto on a precarious rescue mission only days before its final liquidation, Alexander Bogen—Jewish artist, partisan, and former ghetto resident—was plagued by a reverberating question: “What motivates someone at the precipice of death to engage in artistic creation?” An artist and a native of Vilna, Bogen neither forsook his artistry nor ceased to sketch the people, places, and events he encountered following the Nazi occupation of Lithuania. However, it was only after returning to the ghetto in September 1943 that he began considering the wartime function of innovation: to transform pen into sword, transcend the finite parameters of time and space, and retain a spark of humanity in the face of despair.

These artistic objectives crystallized in his mind through encounters with ghetto residents, former friends, and colleagues: the fellow-artist who stood by his easel—bedraggled and starving — yet oblivious to his condition having captured the elusive smile of his model on canvas; the all-around genius who wandered through the streets heedless of his personal fate having solved an elaborate mathematics equation; the young orphan abandoned on a street corner with but a doll in her arms, who Bogen could not save, so sketched “out of helplessness, passivity, and the inability to offer up salvation.” Aside from reinforcing his personal devotion to art, Bogen’s return to the ghetto helped facilitate the successful rescue of members of the United Partisan Organization (FPO) — a Jewish underground movement active in the ghetto. After breaching the ghetto walls armed with a pistol and two hand grenades, Bogen reached FPO head Abba Kovner’s headquarters.

Bogen presented him with a letter from Fyodor Markov, commander of the partisan division in Belarussia’s Narocz Forest. “From the beginning, Kovner’s intention had been to launch a full-scale armed revolt in the ghetto to sanctify God’s name and foster pride in the Jews even in their moment of defeat,” recalls Bogen. “It was a noble conception, but not practical in my opinion. We couldn’t fight the Nazis in the narrow alleyways of the ghetto with our few, primitive weapons. We would have zero chance.” With the end in sight, Kovner did not abandon his plans for revolt, however acceded to the partisans’ request to smuggle ghetto residents (including members of the FPO) to the forests.

One hundred and fifty Jewish underground members were assembled and divided into five units which Bogen helped train: “I distributed primitive weapons and copies of my map of the forest. I taught them how to prepare for and fight the enemy, find food, read a compass, where to hide, and where and when to walk—all the tactical information one needs to know to become a partisan,” says Bogen. He assumed command of one unit, which included his wife, Rachel, and his mother-in-law. In the late night hours he helped secure the groups’ escape from the ghetto; a few days later, all five units arrived safely in the forests where they joined the non-Jewish partisan ranks. With Markov’s permission, Bogen retained command of his 30-person unit, which became the only all-Jewish partisan brigade—“Vengeance.” The unit achieved many successes and was responsible for missions such as: mining railroad tracks and



derailing trains, sabotaging German weapons banks and food rations that were being sent to the front, and disseminating information about the mass extermination and active resistance in the nearby ghettos, villages, and towns. Partisan life was stark and grueling. Aside from risky reconnaissance missions and clashes with the enemy, fighters suffered from exposure to the elements, insufficient food, and much illness. For Jewish partisans the conditions were even more dire; they had to face the residual "tragedy, mental torment, longing, and worry about the fate of loved ones left behind in the ghetto," notes Bogen, as well as antisemitic treatment from non-Jewish partisans.

"Jewish partisans—especially those who served in mixed units with Russians, Letts, and Belarussians—always had to prove they were willing to volunteer first for missions and risk the most," says Bogen. "They were often sent poorly armed on hopeless operations that had little chance of success." Even the "Vengeance Unit" became problematic to the Soviet partisan leadership due to its all-Jewish character despite its many achievements. The unit was disbanded after several months and Bogen (after a few other appointments in mixed units) joined a group of historians commissioned to document partisan activities. Bogen captured his brothers-in-arms through the medium of art, sketching scenes of partisan battle, rest, ambush, dress, and diversion on random scraps of paper using charcoal made from burnt branches.

*"I would try to capture the typical situations that we would encounter—a unit returning from its operation... its members sitting around a bonfire, playing cards, drinking vodka, recounting the tales of what befell them..."* recounts Bogen. *"In battle, at partisan headquarters... I would pull out my paper and sketch these things as they were happening, as a reaction to the events taking place."*



Alexander Bogen  
(1916-2010)  
**Partisans**, 1981-1984  
Collection of the Yad  
Vashem Art Museum



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**EACH OF US HAS A NAME / Zelda**

*Each of us has a name  
given by God  
and given by our parents*

*Each of us has a name  
given by our stature and our smile  
and given by what we wear*

*Each of us has a name  
given by the mountains  
and given by our walls*

*Each of us has a name  
given by the stars  
and given by our neighbors*

*Each of us has a name  
given by our sins  
and given by our longing*

*Each of us has a name  
given by our enemies  
and given by our love*

*Each of us has a name  
given by our celebrations  
and given by our work*

*Each of us has a name  
given by the seasons  
and given by our blindness*

*Each of us has a name  
given by the sea  
and given by  
our death.*

