

Call for Resistance by the Jewish Military Organization in the Warsaw Ghetto (January 1943)

Abstract

After the deportation of 300,000 Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka killing center in July 1942, a feeling spread throughout the ghetto's community that the final round-up of the remaining 60,000 people was inevitable. In response, the network of Jewish underground resistance in Warsaw formed two organizations, the Jewish Combat Organization (*Zydowska Organizacja Bojowa*, ZOB) and the Jewish Military Union (*Zydowski Zwiazek Wojskowy*, ZZW). On April 19, 1943, German military and SS forces entered the Warsaw Ghetto to begin the final liquidation of the city's remaining Jews. The forces were initially met with strong resistance from the ZOB and ZZW who pushed the troops outside the walls of the ghetto. Over the course of the next few weeks, the German military was forced to engage in guerilla-like warfare with the underground resistance. The SS razed the ghetto and forced nearly 56,000 Jews out of hiding. It is estimated that 7,000 men and women died in the resistance, with 42,000 captured Jews being deported to labor camps throughout the General Government. Another 7,000 Jews were also deported to Treblinka and murdered.

This document, a call to resistance by the ZOB, reveals the motivations and emotions of those Jews who chose to revolt. The call to arms presents the true desperation felt by the resisters: there was no other option but to fight, for "walking to your death passively" was a shame. Their language plays on Nazi propaganda which famously called for Germany to awaken (*Deutschland, erwache!*). There is little confusion as to what lies ahead and their declarations that not one more Jew shall find death in Treblinka further shows the widespread knowledge of the Final Solution, particularly among the Jewish community.

Source

We are rising up for war!

We are of those who have set themselves the aim of awakening the people.

Our wish is to take this watchword to our people:

Awake and fight!

Do not despair of the road to escape!

Know that escape is not to be found by walking to your death passively, like sheep

To the slaughter. It is to be found in something much greater: in war!

Whoever defends himself has a chance of being saved! Whoever gives up self-defense

from the outset – he has lost already! Nothing awaits him except only a

hideous death in the suffocation-machine of Treblinka.

Let the people awaken to war!

Find the courage in your soul for desperate action!

Put an end to our terrible acceptance of such phrases as: We are all under sentence of death!

It is a lie!!!

We also were destined to live! We too have a right to life!

One only needs to know how to fight for it!

It is no great art to live when life is given to you *willingly!*

But there is an art to life just when they are trying to rob you of this life.

Let the people awaken and fight for its life!

Let every mother be a lioness defending her young!
Let no father stand by and see the blood of his children in silence!
Let not the first act of our destruction be repeated!
An end to despair and lack of faith!
An end to the spirit of slavery amongst us!
Let the tyrant pay with the blood of his body for every soul in Israel!
Let every house become a fortress for us!
Let the people awaken to war!
In war lies your salvation!
Whoever defends himself has a hope of escape!
We are rising in the name of the war for the lives of the helpless masses whom
we seek to save, whom we must arouse to action. It is not for ourselves alone that we
wish to fight. We will be entitled to save ourselves only when we have completed our
duty! *As long as the life of a Jew is still in danger, even one, single life, we have to be
ready to fight!!!*
Our watchword is:
Not even one more Jew is to find his end in Treblinka!
Out with the traitors to the people!
War for life or death on the conqueror to our last breath!
Be prepared to act!
Be ready!

Source: "Call for Resistance by the Jewish Military Organization in the Warsaw Ghetto, January 1943," *Documents on the Holocaust: Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland, and the Soviet Union*. Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, Abraham Margalit, eds., Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1981, pp. 303-304.

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