

## Jewish Partisans in Vilnius (1943–45)

### Abstract

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Depicted in these images are the Jewish Partisans that staged a fierce resistance in January 1942 in the town of Vilnius in Lithuania, then a part of the Soviet Union. Vilnius was one of the first cities with a sizeable Jewish population in the Soviet Union to be occupied by the Wehrmacht after the beginning of Operation Barbarossa in June of the previous year. 30,000 of Vilnius' Jews were rounded-up and taken to Ponar, a forest located near the edge of the city, where they were shot by the SS with support from Lithuanian collaborators. The remaining Jews, now situated in the city's new Jewish ghetto, were well aware of the fate of their fellow Jews.

Under the leadership of Yitzhak Wittenberg (1907–1943), Zionist youth leaders in the city formed the *Fareynegte Partizaner Organizatsye* (United Partisan Organization, FPO). At the initial meeting of the FPO, Abba Kovner (1918–1987), another partisan leader, proclaimed famously, “Hitler plans to destroy all the Jews of Europe, and the Jews of Lithuania have been chosen as first in line. We will not be led like sheep to the slaughter! True, we are weak and defenseless, but the only reply to the murderer is revolt!” The FPO launched a series of attacks against the occupying forces. From blowing up supply trains to tampering with military equipment, the FPO mounted an effective resistance. The organization also established a network of communication with Soviet partisans and with other Jewish ghettos throughout the East, thereby spreading the news of the mass shootings and deportations of Jews across Europe.

### Source

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Source: Jewish partisans after the liberation of Vilna Standing from left: Elchanan Magid, Jacob Prener, Bluma Markowicz, Abba Kovner, Ruzka Korczak, Leib Szapirstein, Vitka Kempner

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Below from left: unidentified, Pesach Mizerecz, Motl Szames. Yad Vashem photo archives CO5/121

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