

## From the Diary of Emanuel Ringelblum on Preparations for Resistance 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

Various other groups and individuals besides the O.B. [Jewish Combat Organization] were also arming themselves.<sup>1</sup> Arms were flowing into the Ghetto in large quantities. Groups of workers in separate workshops were arming themselves together with their foremen; also porters, carters, smugglers, work-post labourers, were arming themselves. In addition to a radio, many hide-outs possessed weapons bought with common hide-out funds. The O.B. was preparing not only arms but a large quantity of bottles filled with explosive liquids, which were to be used to cause panic among the

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<sup>1</sup> The two armed organizations in the Warsaw Ghetto – the Jewish Combat Organization and the Jewish Military Union – had only limited potential and could not take in everyone who wanted to fight. Hundreds of Jews therefore organized themselves on their own in loose groups (sometimes called “wild groups”) and tried by themselves to secure the arms needed in order to fight. During the Warsaw Ghetto rising, these groups, for the most part equipped with small arms only, offered considerable resistance in defence of particular bunkers and hide-outs.

Germans, to set fire to buildings, to storage rooms belonging to the workshops, etc. Bottles of explosive liquids were used successfully in some shops before the April “action”: thus, for example, the O.B. burnt down and destroyed a large storage room full of furniture meant for the German Army in the Hallman workshop at 55-83 Nowolipki Street. Separate hide-outs also prepared bottles like these and substitute weapons as well, such as axes, clubs, etc. The O.B. did not attach much importance to these spontaneous arming activities, assuming the German tactics would paralyse all attempts at defence on the part of individual hide-outs. The O.B. reckoned on the German’s using surprise tactics, and that is why the Combat Groups remained on alert for several months, prepared to step forward at any moment. It was not thought, of course, that the Ghetto would be able to defend itself for long. It was understood that it would be the struggle between the gnat and the elephant, but national pride commanded that Jews offer resistance and not let themselves be led helpless to the slaughter.

**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. 597-598.**