



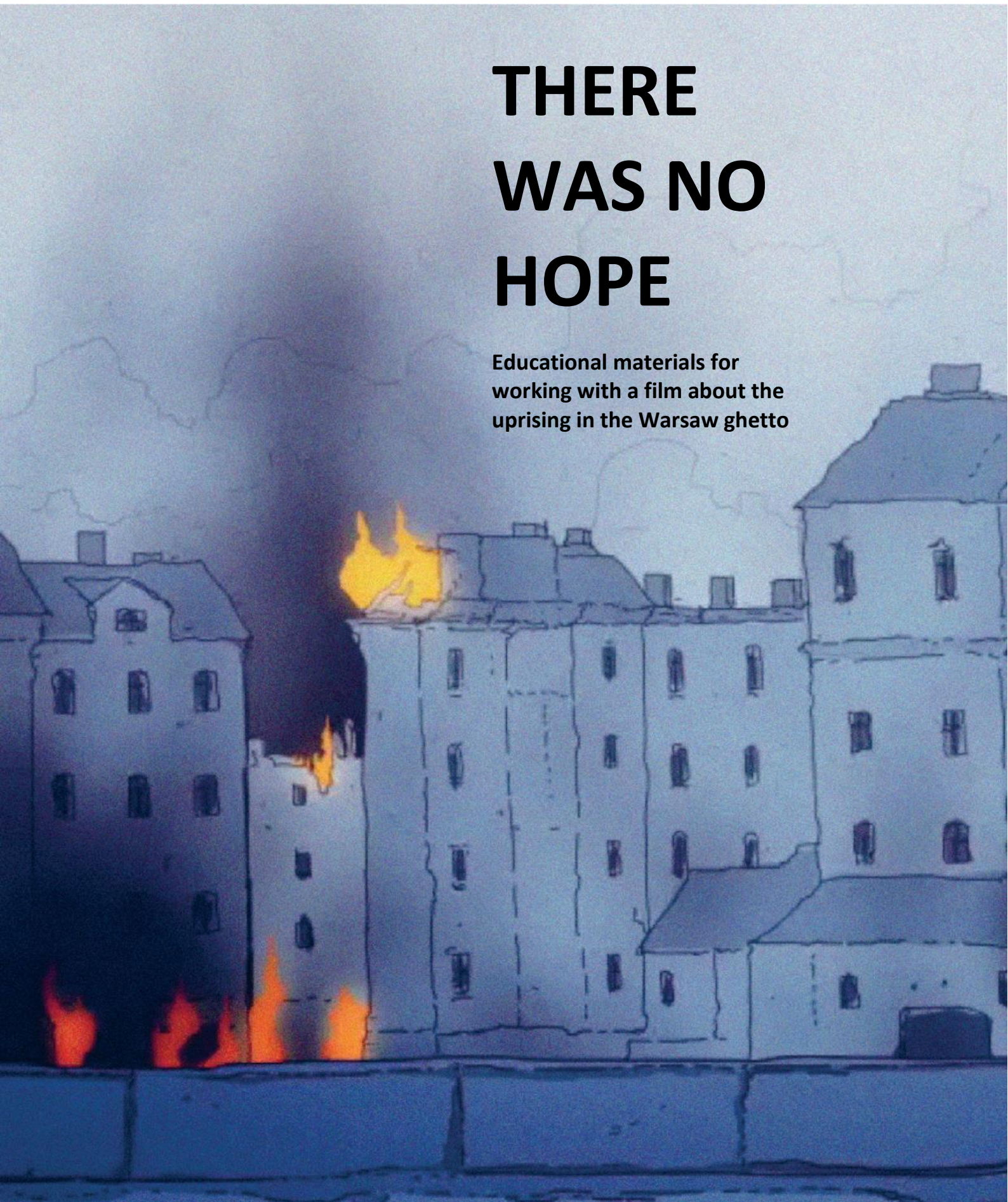
April 19, 1943
WARSAW GHETTO
UPRISING

COLIN

Muzeum
Historii
Żydów
Polskich

THERE WAS NO HOPE

Educational materials for
working with a film about the
uprising in the Warsaw ghetto



The Education Centre at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews has prepared for you and your students an educational film devoted to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. The film is accompanied by educational materials that will help prepare and conduct classes about this event.

During a meeting with Łódź high school students, when asked about the chances of this uprising, Marek Edelman replied: "There was no hope that something would be won, that someone would be saved and that something would change..." We used Marek Edelman's words for the title of the film, because it seems to us that they best describe the situation of Jewish insurgents fighting in the Warsaw ghetto in the spring of 1943.

We want to recall these events, talk about their heroes and encourage you to undertake the effort of facing the dilemmas that young people who were often at the age of your students had to face seventy-three years ago. Jewish insurgents had to act and make decisions in an extreme situation. Today we are finding it very hard to imagine, a situation when we would have to confront the choices that Jews locked up in the ghetto had to face at that time, but we can and should commemorate them and show our respect. We believe that remembering those events and dilemmas may contribute to shaping the students' sensitivity, sense of responsibility and ordinary human solidarity with those who need support or help.

* * *

In the spring of 1943, most Polish Jews were already dead. The systematic liquidation of ghettos and murdering of their inhabitants in the places they inhabited or in the extermination camps in Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka and at Majdanek in Lublin, that had been going on for a year, conducted by Germans and their helpers, inevitably headed towards the end. The vast majority of the Jewish community in Warsaw of nearly half-million people died of starvation or disease, or were deported to Treblinka and murdered there in the gas chambers. The largest ghetto in the occupied Polish territories, in Warsaw, was still inhabited by about 50-60 thousand Jews. Among them were young people, members of Jewish youth organizations. These teenagers and boys and girls in their twenties were without their loved ones and were aware of their situation. The murder of Polish and European Jews took place in front of a world that remained silent. Despite the deep sense of loneliness, the young fighters did not remain passive. They were preparing themselves for the fight, aware that they could not win. They trained hastily to gain some military skills, weapons were being sought, self-defence plans were being prepared. When Germans decided to liquidate the remnants of the Warsaw ghetto and with such intent entered it on January 18, 1943, they were welcomed by bullets from Jewish fighters. The four-day clashes in the ghetto ended with the

victory of the Jews – Germans withdrew from the ghetto, temporarily renouncing its liquidation and deportation of its last inhabitants to Treblinka gas chamber. However, the battle that took place in January 1943 was not the end of the fighting. On April 19, German troops undertook another attempt to liquidate the ghetto. This time, 22 groups of Jewish fighters, representing the following armed organisations: Jewish Combat Organization, the Jewish Military Union and the armed groups of the Polish Workers' Party, put up resistance against the German army units entering the ghetto.

What was the purpose of the battle taken by a handful of Jews? Let us remember that they could not count on support from the state authority in exile or its underground representatives in the occupied country. The Jews did not have an efficient, well-armed, seasoned in battle troops, educated commanders, they did not have adequate forces and means of war that could enable them to put up an effective resistance against Germans. The Warsaw Jews did not fight aiming at ending the German occupation, regaining independence, or even freedom. Referring to the words of Marek Edelman - it was a struggle to choose the way of dying. This is confirmed by the memories and reports of the participants of those events, who then and there started fighting the Germans with the conviction that they could not win. This is what makes the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising an event of an exceptional nature, not fitting into the Polish tradition of struggles for national liberation. It's worth talking about this uniqueness, it's worth asking questions and looking for answers.

The film about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising There was no hope is intended for students of the upper middle and high school grades. It is suitable for use in history, knowledge about society, the Polish language lessons and in a general education classroom. The educational content included in the film corresponds to the core curriculum of these subjects. The duration of the film (20 min) has been adapted to the length of the subject lesson - 45 minutes. It gives the opportunity to conduct a summary discussion with the students.

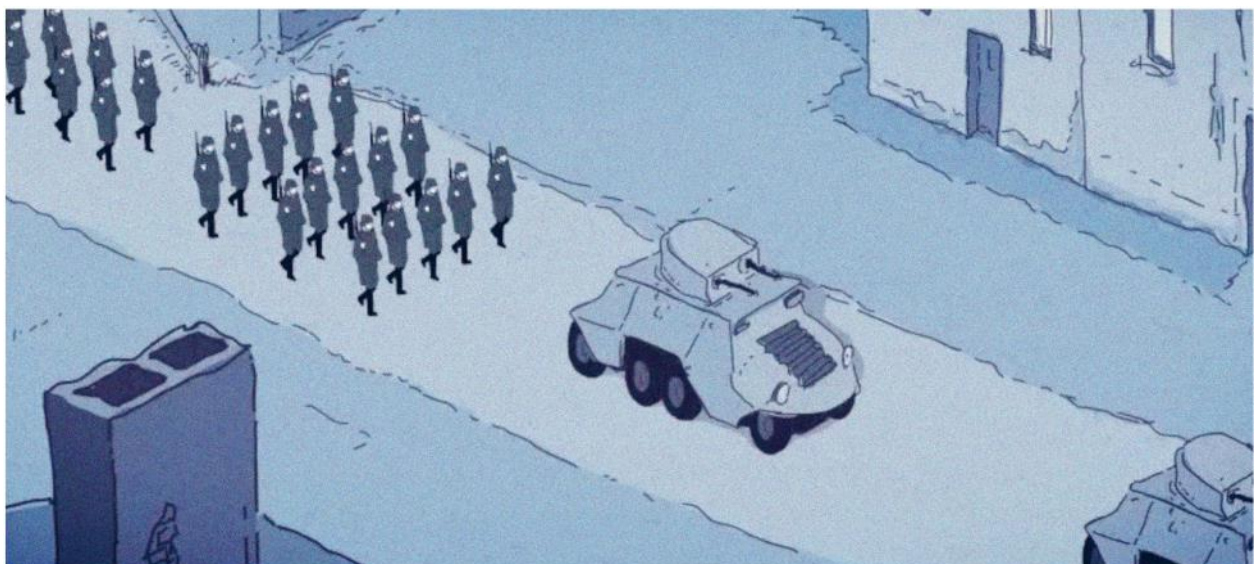
We also propose to use the film during preparations for school observance of the Day of Holocaust Remembrance and Prevention of the Crimes against Humanity, which, by the decision of the Minister of National Education, is commemorated in the Polish school on April 19 - the anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. On that day, we encourage students to reflect on the dark side of human nature and the negative effects of human actions: wars and genocide. On that day, we not only encourage students to look for answers to the questions: "what, how and why?", but above all "what can I do so that it never happens again?"

The film consists of three parts. In the first one, we present the life of the Jewish community of Warsaw just before the outbreak of war, the circumstances of the creation of the ghetto and the everyday life in it until the outbreak of the uprising in April 1943. The unpublished archival photographs and fragments of films from the Holocaust Museum in Washington, USC Shoah Foundation and

National Film Archives were used in making this film.

The film's core is an animation showing the course of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. This is the key part of the picture, which focuses on the motives and reasons determining the behaviour of individual heroes. They are authentic characters taking part in the battles: Mordechaj Anielewicz, Kazik Symcha Rotem, Marek Edelman, Cywia Lubetkin, and Tosia Altman. Thanks to the animation, we can show the uprising with all its emotional load and dramatic potential. In this part, we do not use film footage shot in the ghetto by the Nazis. In this way, we want to avoid perpetuating German propaganda image of the Warsaw Ghetto, reinforcing the negative clichés about the Jews. While deciding on the animated form of the message, we were guided by the preferences of the students themselves. It seems to us that this form of expression draws student's attention more effectively than traditional methods. Animated heroes are faithfully reproduced on the basis of archival photographs, and the verbal narrative content refers directly to the words spoken by them in the ghetto.

The last part is a material showing the commemoration of the uprising in the contemporary city space and the building of the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. Focusing students' attention on the Museum is quite deliberate. Symbolically, the history of the Warsaw ghetto and the Jews fighting in it ends precisely in the place where the museum building is located, near the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes - a place of remembrance about the Warsaw Ghetto, in which the events shown in the film took place.



The main purpose of the film is to pay tribute to insurgents and civilians taking part in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in 1943.

The film can be analysed and interpreted on the level of historical facts (characters, events, dates) or universal dilemmas defining human condition in the face of extreme events, such as: exclusion, threat to life, war. In this context, after screening the film, students can be asked the following questions:

- What motivated the insurgents in making the decision to participate in the armed struggle?
- What are the limits of the individual's responsibility towards the group in extreme situations?
- When considering the problem of resistance, should we pay attention only to its effectiveness?
- What is the role of each of us in the face of the suffering of others?

Detailed suggestions for working with the film can be found below. To facilitate the work, a dictionary of historical concepts and terms as well as the calendar of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising were added.

We include a set of exercises that you can use while discussing with students issues related to:

- persons (heroes of the uprising),
- dilemmas facing ghetto insurgents,
- the memory of the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto

We propose to carry out exercises with the students watching the film. These exercises will help in remembering and better understanding the message of the film. They will also help to better understand the content discussed in the lesson or to more deeply explore the meaning of the Day of Holocaust Remembrance and Prevention of the Crimes against Humanity, and the memory of past events and their heroes.



1

Before the screening, hand out to each student a sheet of, for example, A4 paper. Ask everyone to divide their paper sheet into three columns and enter information into them according to the following scheme:

Students fill the third column after the screening of the film.

What do I know about the Warsaw ghetto uprising?	What do I want to learn about the Warsaw ghetto uprising?	What have I learn about the Warsaw ghetto uprising from the film that I have just watched?

Summarize the screening of the film with a short discussion. Ask students what interested them the most in the film they watched and what they learned from it about the Warsaw ghetto uprising.

2

Before the screening, present to the students a few quotes from the film. Ask them to choose one of the quotes and to write a short comment / their own reflection.

Exemplary quotes:

If you do not shoot, you are not a living person. You shoot and you are on par with the one who oppresses you.

- *I wonder who will survive?*
- *You will, you won, you won't...*
- *Well, let's go on with it. Anyway, no one will come out of it alive.*

It's easier to fall in a fight, it's simply faster. All their talk, that the uprising is for the history of the Jewish nation, for its honour and so forth – I didn't find it very convincing...

My attention was drawn by a beautiful young woman sitting, or rather half lying against the wall. She seemed completely uninterested in what was happening around her. I wondered: how is it possible that she is here, does she also have to perish here, even though she is so young and so beautiful?...

We have to defend every still standing house against arson. Remember, there are still civilians out there. We are responsible for them.

I saw people sitting there on the roofs watching the fire. They watched us more or less like the Romans from the time of Nero saw "live torches" made of Christians burned alive.

To summarize the movie watched by students, ask if and how their comment to the earlier chosen quote has changed.

The exercise aims at presenting to the students the main heroes of the Warsaw ghetto fights in April 1943. The students analyse the motivations and determinants of the insurgents' actions and the decisions they make.

1

Divide the class into 5 groups. Give each of the groups biographies of the characters appearing in the film (one group receives a biography of one hero).

Heroes' biographies are inserted at the end of the material.

2

Ask students in groups - after analysing the biographies - to write information about the hero according to the following scheme:

First name and surname / age	Upbringing / education	Language spoken at home	Parents' worldview	Membership in an organization

3

Ask students to provide information about the hero in the group forum. It can be written on the board in the form of a common table.

To summarize the students' presentations, ask what kind of differences and what common traces are in the biographies of individual characters.

When discussing the exercise, turn students' attention to the common elements in the biographies:

- membership in youth organization
- the importance of communal life

4

Lead a discussion summarizing the lesson
Think about the life situation of the insurgents on the eve of the outbreak of the uprising.

Pay attention to the lonesomeness of young people in the ghetto after the deportation action carried out in the summer of 1942. At the beginning of 1943, the insurgents no longer had immediate family members for whom they could feel responsible, neither any illusions about the German plans for the final liquidation of the ghetto.

The exercise is a form of film interpretation. It can be included in Polish language classes concerning the analysis and interpretation of the book on the school reading list, *Shielding the Flame* by Hanna Krall - as an introduction to text analysis.

The civilians in the film are modelled on people described by Symcha Binem Motyl in his diary *Do moich ewentualnych czytelników. Wspomnienia z czasów wojny* (*To my potential readers. Memories from the wartime*).

1

Convey to students the most important information about the film - its subject matter and production technique (animation). You can, at the beginning, link the film to the currently discussed topics and readings or to the anniversary commemorated on the 19th of April.

2

Watching the film together (20 min)

3

After the screening of the film, ask students to share their first thoughts about the film.

1. What is the mood of the film?
2. How are the heroes shown?
3. How is the city space presented in the film?

Then divide the class into groups and give them task cards and quotes.

Task cards 1-6 are placed at the end of the material.

4

Ask students to present their conclusions from group work. Students may write on the board the dilemmas they have indicated.

While summarizing the work of individual groups, you can raise the following themes:

group 1: acceptance of death and simultaneous hope of survival;

group 2: very diverse values justifying the fight; doubts about the way of describing the uprising;

group 3: the dilemma, whether to be to the very end with friends, family or to fight for one's own individual survival;

group 4: contemplations of the Jewish Combat Organisation insurgents on the choice of death;

group 5: emotional relationship between fear and determination in battle and the joy of taking it up; lack of influence of civilian population on the course of events;

group 6: an alternative of further fighting, surrendering to Germans, committing suicide or attempting to escape; attempts to maintain dignity.

The exercise aim is to discuss the subject of commemoration and its various forms. It can be used while discussing the book *Zdążyć przed Panem Bogiem* (English title: *Shielding the Flames*). The two sides of the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes - the front and the back - fit into a discussion about heroism conducted by Marek Edelman and Hanna Krall about Pola Lifszyc who went with her mother to the Umschlagplatz.

1

Show to students the photos of the Ghetto Heroes Monument by sculptor Natan Rappaport and architect Marek Suzin.

Photos of both sides of the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes are placed at the end of the material.

The artist showed two faces of Jewish fate during the war – martyrdom and heroism. Both categories can also be considered also in a universal perspective as metaphors of human attitudes in the face of evil.

Questions for discussion:

- What was the image of the past the sculptor wanted to convey to future generations?
- Do you know any other commemorations of the Holocaust and World War II? What do you think of them? How do you rate them?
- Which monuments associated with commemorating events of World War II are located in your area?

2

Read to the students a fragment of Julian Tuwim's text, *My Żydzi polscy...* (*We Polish Jews...*).

There will stand – in Warsaw, and in every other Polish city, a remaining, permanent and conserved fragment of the ghetto in an unchanged form, just as we find it in all its horror of smouldering embers and destruction. We will surround this monument to the infamy of our enemies, and the glory of our martyred heroes with chains, chains cast from captured Hitlerite artillery, and each day we shall plait fresh, living flower into the iron links, so that future generations shall have a memory of the massacred nation that remains fresh and alive for all eternity, and as a sign that our anguish over it remains always living and fresh.

The Church and the Nations shall gain yet another memorial. We will bring children there and tell them of the most horrible martyrdom in the annals of history. In the centre of this memorial, whose tragedy shall be underscored, God willing, by the surrounding and newly constructed Glass Houses of the rebuilt city, there will burn an eternal flame. Passers-by will bow their heads before it. And those who are Christian – will make the sign of the cross...

3

Ask students to envisage another form of the Monument to the Ghetto Heroes.

You can ask students to create their own design for a monument commemorating the uprising in the Warsaw ghetto.

Mordechai Anielewicz, alias Marian, Malachi (hebr. "Little Angel")



Born in Wyszaków in 1919, he grew up in Warsaw. Father Abram and mother Cyrla ran a shop at Tamka. He attended schools run in Hebrew and matriculated in 1938. In junior high school, he sympathized for a short while with the Zionist and extreme right-wing group Beitar, but at the age of 15, he joined the left-Zionist youth organization Hashomer Hatzair (Hebrew: The Young Guard). He quickly became a known activist of this movement.

During the war he continued in the underground his involvement in Hashomer Hatzair, conducting, among other activities, classes with young people, he edited the newsletter *Neged Hazerem* (hebr. Against the Current). In

1942 he visited Będzin and Sosnowiec - he organized Jewish self-defence groups in the local ghettos. He returned to Warsaw in September 1942 - after the great deportation action.

In December 1942, Anielewicz became the leader of the Jewish Combat Organization (ŻOB). On January 18, 1943, in the so-called January action, he led the first armed self-defence, which for several months suspended German plans for the final liquidation of the ghetto. During the uprising he was the commander-in-chief of the fighting ŻOB groups.

And afterwards?

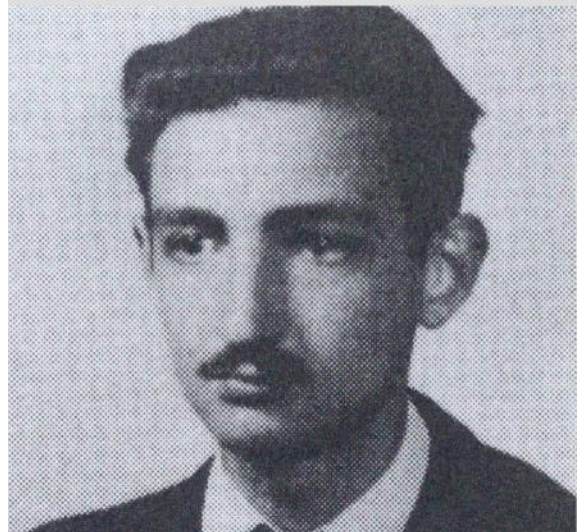
At the beginning of May 1943, Anielewicz found himself in a bunker at 18 Miła Street. 80 ŻOB insurgents and over 100 civilians were sheltering there. On May 8, Germans surrounded the shelter, blocked five of the six entrances and threw tear gas grenades into the shelter. Most of the fighters probably committed suicide, rather than surrender to their enemies. Anielewicz was one of them.

For some, he was the personification of a charismatic leader, for others an unpredictable man. The main character on the monument to the Heroes of the Warsaw Ghetto by Natan Rappaport was modelled on the figure of Anielewicz.

Marek Edelman



Born in 1919 or 1922 in Gomel, Belarus. Soon after Marek Edelman's parents moved to Warsaw, where he spent his childhood. The home language was Russian. His parents sympathized with Bund, the Jewish socialist party whose aim was to fight for a democratic Poland, guaranteeing the rights of minorities. His mother, Cecylia, was an active member of the women's branch of that organization – Yidisher Arbeter Froy.



It is the milieu of this organization that had largely shaped the character of the future insurgent.

Already as a child, Marek Edelman joined the children's section of Bund: Sotsyalistishe Kinder-Farband (SKIF - Socialist Children's Union), and later, as an adult, he joined the Bund. He was a co-founder of the Jewish Combat Organization.

After the death of Mordechaj Anielewicz, he became the last commander of the Jewish Combat Organization in the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Together with a small group of fighters, he managed to get through the sewers to the "Aryan side".

And afterwards?

After the war he settled in Łódź. He got married and finished his medical studies. In 1966 he was discharged from the S. Sterling hospital, two years later - from a military hospital. For political reasons, his PhD dissertation work was not accepted.

He was an outstanding cardiologist. In the early 1970s, he introduced a revolutionary method of treating heart diseases in Poland, saving the lives of many patients. He was an opposition activist: he cooperated with the Workers' Defence Committee and Solidarity. He was interned during martial law.

In 1998, after the fall of communism in Poland, he was awarded the Order of the White Eagle. Ten years later, French President Nicolas Sarkozy awarded him the Order of the Commander of the Legion of Honour.

He died in Warsaw on October 2, 2009.

Celina (Cywia) Lubetkin



Born in 1914 in Byten, Polesie region. Her father was the owner of a small grocery store. Celina and her five siblings (four brothers and a sister) attended a Polish elementary school. They also learned Hebrew. Celina's father was a member of the Mizrachi religious party while Celina was a member of the Zionist youth organization. In 1938 she came to Warsaw, where she became the coordinator of courses preparing for emigration to Palestine. In August 1939 she attended the Zionist Congress in Geneva.

In September 1939 she broke through to Kowel, but her companions sent her back to Warsaw, where she was to organize party activities in the territories occupied by Germans. In January 1943 she participated in the January action. She later recalled that for the first time Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto killed German soldiers, captured a few rifles and grenades, for the first time they came to believe in their strength.

In the uprising in April 1943, Cywia fought without a weapon in the so-called central ghetto. She was an informal commander of young Jewish soldiers. On May 10, together with a group of other insurgents, she left the ghetto.

And afterwards?

Between May 1943 and August 1944, she was hiding with Antek Cukierman and Marek Edelman at various Warsaw addresses. In the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, Cywia participated as a soldier of the People's Army.

After the war, together with Antek Cukierman, they went to Israel. They got married there and set up the Ghetto's Insurgents (Hebrew: Lohamei HaGeta'ot) kibbutz. In 1961, she testified as a witness in the trial of Adolf Eichmann.

Cywia died in Israel in 1978, after a critical illness. Her granddaughter Roni Zuckerman is the first female combat pilot in the Israeli air force.

Tosia Altman

Born in Lipno near Włocławek in 1918. Father Gustaw was a jeweller and watchmaker, mother Anka took care of the house. They spoke Polish at home. The parents supported Zionism, and sent their daughter to the Hebrew middle school. At the age of 11, Tosia enrolled in the Zionist youth organization Hashomer Hatzair (Hebrew: The Young Guard). In 1935 she was elected as a Polish delegate to the Fourth World Convention of this movement.

During the war she travelled as a liaison between the ghettos - she visited, among others, Białystok, Vilnius, Będzin. She met with young people, informed about the

situation in other ghettos, she exhorted her listeners to rebel. Just before the April Uprising, she lived in Warsaw on the Polish side, organising weapons for the Jewish Combat Organization. She went to the ghetto just before the outbreak of the April fights.

At the beginning of May, Tosia was in a bunker at 18 Miła Street. Along with a handful of other fighters, she left the bunker through the only passage undiscovered by Germans. On May 10, Tosia along with forty fighters got out through the sewers thanks to the help of Kazik Ratajzer.

And afterwards?

After leaving the ghetto, Tosia was hiding with other fighters in the Łomiankowskie forests near Warsaw. She got wounded and was transported to the celluloid materials factory in Praga (part of Warsaw on the right side of Vistula). A fire broke out there. Severely burned, she escaped from the flames. On the street, she was stopped by Polish policemen and handed over to Germans. Tosia died in the hospital because Germans forbade giving her any medical help.

Symcha Ratajzer, alias Kazik



Born in 1924. He grew up in Warsaw's Czerniaków district. His parents ran a soap shop. His father was a Hasid. Ratajzer's first language was Polish, he spoke it better than Yiddish. At the age of 12, he joined the Zionist youth organization, HaNoar HaTzioni (Hebrew for Zionist Youth).

After the outbreak of the war, he found a shelter in a village near Radom, where he stayed until August 1942, working for a peasant. After the great deportation action he returned to Warsaw, to Czerniaków. Thanks to the knowledge of the Polish language, the so-called good (Aryan) appearance and contacts outside the walls of the ghetto, he was designated as the main liaison between the



Jewish Combat Organization and the Polish Underground.

At the outbreak of the uprising, Symcha fought in a group of insurgents located in the area of the brush makers shed. On April 20, he detonated a mine at the gate on Wałowa Street when an SS column was passing through it, which temporarily stopped the attackers.

On May 1, at the behest of Marek Edelman, Symcha left the ghetto to organize help for insurgents. He returned the night after the suicide of Anielewicz's group in the bunker at 18 Miła Street. The ghetto was completely destroyed. It seemed that no one survived.

And afterwards?

On May 10, Kazik returned to the sewer, where he met a group of wandering insurgents. Using this way he led 40 people out of the ghetto. The rest of the group, including his closest friends, perished in the sewers. He fought in the Warsaw Uprising in one of the units of the Home Army, among other actions, he led through the sewers a group of insurgents from the Old Town to Żoliborz district.

Since 1946, he lives in Jerusalem, he has 2 sons and grandchildren. He changed his surname to Rotem.

TASK CARD / GROUP 1

Please read the given texts carefully.
While analysing their content, answer the following questions:

- Were the insurgents expecting to win in their fight against Germans?
- Did they hope to survive?
- Could they count on help from outside?
- Did they plan an evacuation route when the fight began?
- Had the civilian population taken up some form of resistance?

On this basis, try to answer the question as to what dilemma had to be faced by those who were encircled by the Germans in the Warsaw Ghetto.

You have 8 minutes to complete the task.

quotations

I think that he actually believed in some victory.

Of course, he never talked about it before. On the contrary. "We are going to die," he cried, "there is no turning back, we will die for honour, for history ..." – these kinds of things that are said in similar cases.

But today I think to myself that he always had some childish hope.

He had a girlfriend. Such a bright, warm person. Mira was her name.

Marek Edelman (about Anielewicz)

Hanna Krall, *Zdążyć przed Panem Bogiem (Shielding the Flames)*, a5 publishing house, Krakow 2005

I was one of the so-called place-changers who went to work outside the ghetto every day. Thanks to this, I had, so to speak, one foot in the ghetto and the other outside of it. It enabled me to smuggle things, and finally – people, across the wall. More than one parcel that went through my hand contained weapons or ammunition. In this way, my wife was also got to the Aryan side. I found a flat for her, which was located opposite our brush shed, so sometimes I could see her standing at the window on the other side of the wall. I planned to join her soon...

Quotation from the film

We had run out of everything. We did not have ammunition, no grenades or Molotov cocktails. I was left without a single bullet. There was no food and there was almost no water. We had not planned to fight for more than a few days.

I also do not know if anyone [...] had ever planned the escape route.

Boruch Spiegel

Matthew Brzeziński, *Armia Izaaka (Isaac's Army)*, Znak publishing house, Krakow 2013

The bunker is overcrowded, stuffy, there is not enough water, food, not to mention ammunition. The houses are burning. But here, in the centre, there are the remains of a burnt-out tank [...], there is still some tiny hope. But it also quickly evaporates - Germans brought to perfecting their battle tactics without any casualties. They operate unhurriedly and systematically: during the day they move from house to house, the sappers blow them up to bury as many people hiding in the cellars as possible, then the teams with flame throwers come and burn the remains of the walls. After all that, they leave the ghetto as quickly as possible and calmly stand behind the wall, making sure that no one escapes from here.

There is simply no enemy - the insurgents are on their own, with their hunger and flames...

Witold Bereś, Krzysztof Burnetko, *Bohater z cienia (Hero from the Shadow)*. Kazik Ratajzer, Świat Książki, Warsaw 2012

TASK CARD / GROUP 2

Please read the given texts carefully.
While analysing their content, answer the following questions:

- Did the insurgents have any chance to win?
- What values had the insurgents fought for?
- What was their main purpose?
- Does the term 'uprising' in relation to the events of 1943 seem adequate to you?
- What other terms for the uprising appear in the given texts?
- What do these terms show?

On this basis, try to answer the question as to what dilemma had to be faced by those who were encircled by the Germans in the Warsaw Ghetto.

You have 8 minutes to complete the task.

quotations

I looked at this German stalking and thought about how I would die. That I will not choke in the gas chamber. It's easier to fall in a fight, it's simply faster. All their talk, that the uprising is for the history of the Jewish nation, for its honour and so forth – I didn't find it very convincing...

Quotation from the film

*The April uprising in the ghetto quickly turns out to be a real German war.
But is this an uprising?*

Years later, it will be viewed from the perspective shaped by TV series and films about the Warsaw Uprising... Yet, even the first days when fighters from the Jewish Combat Organization and the Jewish Military Union shoot at the Nazis and we can talk about regular fights, it is in fact an organized armed resistance against deportation to extermination camps. Practically without offensive actions. And when the Germans start regular firing of the ghetto and its burning, the fight gets limited to individual skirmishes, constant escapes and hiding during the day in the cellars, because then Germans attack most aggressively...

Witold Bereś, Krzysztof Burnetko, Bohater z cienia (Hero from the Shadow). Kazik Ratajzer, Świat Książki, Warsaw 2012

Of course, the fighters have few weapons. But if they had a hundred machine guns, would they win? Or would they die in a more dignified way? Yes, they are poorly trained and are not good shooters. They usually shoot haphazardly, looking through sights and pressing the trigger when they can. They go better with incendiary bottles. Anyway, Anielewicz himself quickly orders to fight in the manner of urban guerrilla - attack single Germans, kill them, take away their weapons, and wait in hiding for the next ones.

But could better training change anything?

So the fight is limited to individual skirmishes... How unjust it sounds.

They are alone. In the fire, separated by a wall, practically without help.

Witold Bereś, Krzysztof Burnetko, Bohater...

There are 220 insurgents and 2090 Germans.

Germans have aviation, artillery, armoured vehicles, mine throwers, 82 machine guns, 135 submachine guns and 1,358 rifles. Per each insurgent (according to the deputy commander of the uprising) there are: 1 revolver, 5 grenades and 5 incendiary bottles; 3 rifles for each area. There are two mines and one automatic pistol in the entire ghetto.

Marek Edelman

Hanna Krall, Zdążyć przed Panem Bogiem (Shielding the Flames), a5 publishing house, Krakow 2005

TASK CARD / GROUP 3

Please read the given texts carefully.
While analysing their content, answer the following questions:

- Why was Kazik thinking about committing suicide?
- Why did Arie Wilner return to the ghetto despite the chance for rescue by Polish friends?
- What characterizes the choices made by the characters mentioned in the given texts?
- What motivated their actions?
- What values were the most important for the participants of the ghetto events in 1943?

On this basis, try to answer the question as to what dilemma had to be faced by those who were encircled by the Germans in the Warsaw Ghetto.

You have 8 minutes to complete the task.

quotations

I realized that I was late. That my companions fell in battle, and I did not manage to come on time to help them. And here I am the last Jew from the dying ghetto. I wanted to kill myself and I still don't know why I didn't do it then. With the last ounce of effort I went back to the sewer. I did not know why I was doing it: There was no reason and no place to go back to. I shouted our password "Jan" a few more times, without any hope that anyone would answer me. And at some point I heard the voices of my companions...

Quotation from the film

A large group of people, consisting of those who left their homes or hiding places ahead of us, were already placed in the yard. We were positioned in a long row and in a single file escorted through all the courtyards and gates to the street. In the first courtyard, we had to pass through a row of rifle barrels aimed at us. Despite the dangerous situation, I could not fail to notice the blood-stained dark uniforms, rolled-up sleeves, blackened faces and wild expressions of our tormentors. (...) Meanwhile, we were led out to the street and placed facing the wall and with our hands raised up. (...) All the time we could hear groans of those kicked by soldiers' boots or rifle butts. In this mood, it became clear to us that they would shoot us at the wall, and my wife, clutching my hand tightly, was whispering to me goodbye forever...

Symcha Binem Motyl, *Do moich ewentualnych czytelników. Wspomnienia z czasów wojny* (To my potential readers. Memories from the wartime), Polish Centre for Holocaust Research Association, Warsaw 2011

Jurek [Arie Wilner] had his nails, kidneys and feet battered, he was tortured every day and one day he joined the group destined for execution, hoping that they will kill him faster.

It turned out that the group was taken to work in Grochów - and that's where Grabowski found him.

Everyone was nursing him - Mr Grabowski, his mother, his wife [...]. Jurek regained strength and said he wanted to go back to the ghetto. [...]

From one of the last reports of the Jewish Combat Organization you can find out that he was the one who gave the signal for suicide in the bunker at 18 Miła Street, on May 8, 1943.

"In view of the hopeless situation, so as not to get alive into the hands of the Germans, Arie Wilner called on insurgents to commit suicide. The first was Lutek Rotblat who shot his mother and then himself. Most of the members of the Combat Organization with its commander Mordechai Anielewicz ended their lives in the shelter."

Hanna Krall, *Zdążyć przed Panem Bogiem* (Shielding the Flames), a5 publishing house, Krakow 2005

TASK CARD / GROUP 4

Please read the given texts carefully.
While analysing their content, answer the following questions:

- What events influenced the decision to take up arms in April 1943?
- What kind of death did the insurgents consider undignified?

- Why the majority of ŻOB insurgents were for the uprising?

- What other alternatives were considered by the members of ŻOB?

On this basis, try to answer the question as to what dilemma had to be faced by those who were encircled by the Germans in the Warsaw Ghetto.

You have 8 minutes to complete the task.

quotations

Sixty thousand Jews remained in the ghetto. Those who stayed now understood everything: what does it mean "deportation" and that waiting was out of the question. We decided to create one military organization for the whole ghetto [...], ŻOB, the Jewish Combat Organization.

There were five hundred of us. In January, there was another action and of the five hundred, eighty remained. In this January action, for the first time people did not go to death passively. We shot a few Germans [...], these were the first shots in the ghetto and they made a great impression on the Aryan side: it happened before the great armed actions of the Polish resistance movement.

Hanna Krall, *Zdążyć przed Panem Bogiem (Shielding the Flames)*, a5 publishing house, Krakow 2005

Death in a gas chamber is not worse than death in battle [...] an undignified death is only when one tried to survive at the cost of someone else's life [...]. These people went quietly and with dignity. This is a terrible thing when you walk so calmly to death. This is much harder than shooting. After all, it is much easier to die when shooting, we had much easier deaths than a man who goes to the wagon, and then is driven in the wagon, then digs himself a pit and then undresses himself naked...

Marek Edelman

Hanna Krall, *Zdążyć...*

Władysław Szlengel, a poet who wrote poems in the ghetto and had a complex of docile death, managed to write a poem about these shots. It was entitled Kontratak (Counterattack)

*... Hear, O German God,
The squatter-house Jews at Prayers,
Clutching a crowbar or a scarp of wood.
We ask you, God, for a bloody battle,
We beg you for a violent death.
Spare us, before we die,
the sight of slow-receding rails,
But give us, O Lord, a steady hand...*

Hanna Krall, *Zdążyć...*

*Like blood soaked purple flowers
from Niska and Miła, from Muranów,
blooms the flame of our barrels,
this is our spring, this is counterattack,
this wine of battle gets to heads,
these are our partisan forests –
backstreets of Dzika and Ostrowska...*

We knew that we would have to die publicly, in front of the world.

We had various ideas. David said to throw ourselves at the walls – all of us, all still living in the ghetto, to break through to the Aryan side, sit in rows on the Citadel ramparts, one above the other, and wait for the Gestapo to surround us with machine guns and shoot us, row by row.

Esther wanted to set fire to the ghetto so that we would all burn with it. 'Let the wind spread our ashes', she said, but at the time it did not sound pathetically, but matter-of-factly.

Most were for the uprising. After all, humanity has agreed that dying with a weapon is more beautiful than without a weapon. There were only two hundred and twenty of us in ŻOB at that time. Could it be in fact called an uprising? The point was not to get slaughtered when they would come for us.

It was only about choosing the way of dying.

Marek Edelman

Hanna Krall, *Zdążyć...*

TASK CARD / GROUP 5

Please read the given texts carefully.
While analysing their content, answer the following questions:

- What were the goals for ŻOB insurgents when they made the decision about the uprising?
- What does the talk of leaders indicate?
- The first moments of the fight - what emotions they caused among the insurgents?

- Did the civilian population have any influence on the events of the uprising?

- What emotions were experienced by the people trapped in bunkers?

On this basis, try to answer the question as to what dilemma had to be faced by those who were encircled by the Germans in the Warsaw Ghetto.

You have 8 minutes to complete the task.

quotations

- *They go as if they were going to a war.*
- *I can't wait any longer.*

Quotation from the film

"Now!" - shouted one of the fighters and in a moment Nalewki Street was shaken by a dozen or so explosions. Paving blocks flew in all directions, a fountain of earth and debris shot up towards the buildings at the street. [...] German helmets hit the walls, rifles flew up to the height of the third floor, pieces of bodies laid everywhere. "We saw with our own eyes torn off hands and legs flying in the air."

Lubetkin remembers that the insurgents greeted them with cheers.

Matthew Brzeziński, *Armia Izaaka (Isaac's Army)*, Znak publishing house, Krakow 2013

The factory gate was mined.

When the Germans came up the next day, we turned on the plug, maybe one hundred were blown apart, anyway, I do not remember exactly [...].

After the mine exploded, they began conquering us with an extended line of troopers. We liked it very much. Forty of us, and the whole column of them, in battle formation, they were creeping, one could see that they took us seriously.

Marek Edelman

Hanna Krall, *Zdążyć przed Panem Bogiem (Shielding the Flames)*, a5 publishing house, Krakow 2005

"Look Hans, a woman!", Szymon [Kazik] heard a surprised German shouting, seeing a ŻOB female soldier throwing a Molotov cocktail towards the approaching SS men. There were four women in his 10-person unit. They quickly proved that they were among the boldest fighters of the Jewish Combat Organization.

Matthew Brzeziński, *Armia...*

We pricked up our ears to envisage the course of this uneven fight. We listened to the sounds of detonation from firecrackers and hand grenades, then shots - single from rifles and revolvers, or multiple ones. My attention was drawn by a beautiful young woman sitting, or rather half lying against the wall. She seemed completely uninterested in what was happening around her. I wondered: how is it possible that she is here, does she also have to perish here, even though she is so young and so beautiful?...

Quotation from the film

- *We'll kill as many of them as possible. And then...*
- *I wonder who will survive?*
- *You will, you won't, you won't...*
- *Well, let's go on with it. Anyway, no one will come out of it alive.*

Quotation from the film

TASK CARD / GROUP 6

Please read the given texts carefully. While analysing their content, answer the following questions:

- Why does Motyl refer the situation of the ghetto to the era of persecution of Christians in the times of Nero?
- What are the insurgents fighting for in the burning ghetto?
- Why do they want to prevent setting fire to other

houses?

- Who do the insurgents feel responsible for?
- Awareness of what threats determines the decisions of insurgents?

On this basis, try to answer the question as to what dilemma had to be faced by those who were encircled by the Germans in the Warsaw Ghetto.

You have 8 minutes to complete the task.

quotations

I did not immediately realize that the Germans set fire to our house. But the smoke penetrating the interior of the shelter left no doubt. Our hideout became a trap and the only thing left was to get outside as soon as possible. At the last moment I looked out of the window of the shelter, overlooking the Aryan side. I saw people sitting there on the roofs watching the fire. They watched us more or less like the Romans from the time of Nero saw "live torches" made of Christians burned alive.

Quotation from the film

- We no longer have any mines or grenades. We are turning to a guerilla war - we only go out in twos.

Remember that they will want to get us out of here.

- Rather to get us fried alive.

- They throw gas into the bunkers, and set fire to the houses.

We have to defend every still standing house against arson. Remember, there are still civilians out there. We are responsible for them.

Quotation from the film

To burn here is not a metaphor. So everyone has wet rags on their heads. As if it would protect from the scorching heat which in a fraction of a second turns a small puddles into vapour, and glass into melted sugar.

Witold Bereś, Krzysztof Burnetko, Bohater z cienia (Hero from the Shadow). Kazik Ratajzer, Świat Książki, Warsaw 2012

From the Jurek Wilner's notebook:

So once more a little bit,

but always someone spoils it,

cuts off the noose.

Yesterday I felt death in my bones,

I already had eternity completely

in my entrails.

They give me a teaspoon,

Hanna Krall, *Zdążyć przed Panem Bogiem (Shielding the Flames)*, a5 publishing house, Krakow 2005

A teaspoon of life.

I do not want it anymore, I do not want this drink, let me vomit.

I know that life is a full pot,

that world is good and healthy,

but life does not enter my blood,

it just fuddles my brain.

It feeds others, but for me it's hurtful.

Antek, I remember, was the first who said then, at the meeting of the Command, that Germans would set fire to the ghetto. We were wondering what to do, how to die - whether to go for the walls, or let them shoot us at the Citadel, or to set fire to the ghetto and burn with it, and Antek said: "And if they themselves set us on fire?"

We said: "Don't talk rubbish, they will not burn the city". And on the second day of the uprising they actually set houses on fire. We were in the shelter at that time.

Hanna Krall, *Zdążyć...*

January action – (January self-defence) - action carried out in response to the deportation action organized by German police forces on January 18-21, 1943. It aimed at deporting the remnants of the Warsaw ghetto residents to extermination camps. It triggered the armed resistance of the Jewish Combat Organization: a group led by Mordechaj Anielewicz joined a crowd of Jews led to the Umschlagplatz and at the corner of Zamenhof and Niska Streets attacked German escorts. As a result of four-day fights, Germans stopped the deportation action, earlier taking away about 5,000 people to Treblinka. The January action was the first armed action in occupied Warsaw since the fighting in September 1939. It had a significant impact on Polish armed underground when it decided to take up action at the Arsenal on March 26, 1943.

Reinhardt action [German: Aktion Reinhardt]

– the name of the German plan to liquidate ghettos and deport Jews to extermination camps (Bełżec, Sobibór, Treblinka and Majdanek in Lublin), and to steal their property. It was implemented under the so-called final solution of the Jewish question (German: Endlösung) within the General Government. From spring 1942 to autumn 1943, it was led by staff (92 people) under the command of the head of the SS and police of the Lublin district, Odilo Globocnik. In the Reinhardt Action, about 2 million people were murdered, mainly Polish Jews, but also German, Austrian, Czech, Slovak, Dutch and French Jews deported to the General Government. The name of the action was given in honour of Reinhard Heinrich, high-ranking NSDAP officer, from January 1942 responsible for the implementation of the 'final solution'. Heinrich died in a hospital after the attack organized in Prague by the Czech resistance at the end of May 1943.

"Aryan side" - the colloquial term for the non-Jewish part of the city, outside the borders of the ghetto. From November 15, 1941, Jews were forbidden to be there under the penalty of death.

BUND (Bund) - The General Jewish Labour Union in Lithuania, Poland and Russia, founded in 1897 in Vilnius, operated until 1948. A socialist Jewish party that voiced the idea of equality for Jews as a national minority. It advocated for Yiddish as a national language of Jews, and promoted education, culture and literature in this language. It opposed Zionist ideas, claiming that Jews could have autonomy in all the countries in which they lived. During the anti-Jewish pogroms in Russia at the turn of the 19th and 20th century, it organized Jewish self-defence groups. In the interwar period, the Bund was one of the largest and strongest Jewish parties in Poland.

bunkers – premises hidden in the underground parts of buildings. They were used for storing means of survival and

as shelters for people. They were built in the Warsaw ghetto after the end of the Great Action in September 1942, and before the outbreak of fighting with Germans in April 1943. One of them was a bunker at 18 Miła Street, dug by a group of Jewish thieves, where the command of the Jewish Combat Organization moved to during the fighting. After the bunker was detected, perhaps as a result of betrayal, almost all members of the ŻOB command together with the commander, Mordechaj Anielewicz, committed suicide.

Dror [Hebrew for Freedom] – Jewish youth organization operating in Poland in the years 1922-1950, with its policy related to a moderately socialist, Zionist party Poale Zion-Right.

In the interwar period, it was mainly involved in preparing young people for life in Palestine. During the war, its activists were advocating armed struggle, and in 1942, together with members of other youth organizations, co-created the Jewish Combat Organization. Dror combat units participated in the uprisings in the Warsaw and Białystok ghettos, and after their fall, parts of them fought in the partisan units and in the Warsaw Uprising in 1944.

extermination – genocide, crime against humanity - actions aimed at wiping out specific groups of the population due to their different race, religion, nationality, beliefs, social status or even state of health; by killing, maiming or preventing reproduction, as well as destroying cultural heritage of these groups.

ghetto – a separate part of the city (street, district) forcibly or by choice inhabited by a minority, for example ethnic minority. During the Second World War, in the occupied Eastern Europe Germans created districts separated from the rest of the city – ghettos, officially called Jüdische Wohnbezirk [German for Jewish residential district]. They became places of indirect extermination of the Jewish population. About 600 ghettos were created in the areas of occupied Poland. They also existed in the Baltic States, Belarus, Ukraine, Hungary and the Czech Republic. The largest ghetto was created in Warsaw, where approx. 460,000 people were crowded on a small territory. Hunger, overcrowding, lack of food and medicine, poor sanitary conditions and diseases caused huge mortality (from autumn 1940 to July 1942, mainly from hunger, cold and disease, about 92,000 people died in the ghetto). On October 15, 1941, Germans imposed the death penalty for Jews leaving the ghetto without permission. A year later, the liquidation of the ghettos began. Their inhabitants were transported to extermination camps. In the act of self-defence, Jews in several ghettos organized uprisings, which, however, did not stop their final liquidation.

Star of David - a six-pointed star formed of two intertwined equilateral triangles - a symbol of the Jewish nation and

Zionism. From November 1939, all Jews in the area of Poland under German occupation, and from September 1941, Jews from the territories of the German Reich, were forced to wear a star (since then called the 'Jewish star') as the mark of their origin. In the Warsaw Ghetto, the blue Star of David on a white band 10 cm wide was to be worn on the right forearm of the outer garment.

Hashomer Hatzair [Hebrew for The Young Guard]

- a youth Zionist-socialist organization, founded in 1913 in Galicia. It was based on the educational model of the English Scouting. In the interwar period, it was the only officially registered Jewish Scout organization in Poland. The organization was focussing on ideological and professional preparation of future settlers in Palestine, it educated future Jewish activists and leaders. During the war, it conducted underground activities in most ghettos, preparing young people for armed struggle against the occupant. In the Warsaw ghetto, it was one of the most active organizations that co-created the Jewish Combat Organization. One of its instructors was Mordechaj Anielewicz, who headed the ŻOB battle groups fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

Judenrat - Jewish Council, executive body of the German management of ghettos, established in the occupied Polish territories since autumn 1939, and from 1941/42 in the areas of Eastern Europe. In practice, it was made of appointed by Germans representatives of the local Jewish community. The task of the Judenrats was to implement the decrees and orders of the German authorities, as well as to administer the internal affairs of Jewish communities, such as: providing and distributing food, organizing social and health care, and partly education, ensuring order in the ghetto (Jewish police).

stations - forced labour centres located in Warsaw, e.g. in factories or railway stations. The work in the stations was extremely physically exhausting, the workers were often beaten. Groups of Jewish workers from the ghetto were employed there. They went out every day walking in a column outside the borders of the ghetto, which created the possibility of contact with the so-called "Aryan side", a chance for food smuggling and even escapes.

forced labour - from October 12, 1939, all Jews between 14 and 60 years of age were forced to undertake compulsory work. Under German orders, Judenrat was responsible for providing the workers. On October 19 it created a special unit for this purpose - the Labour Battalion. Initially, Jewish workers were forced to work in stations located in Warsaw, and from summer 1940, also in labour camps. By paying a special tax it was possible to get exempted from this exhausting obligation.

Smuggle (szmugiel) – during the occupation, the colloquial term for illegal trade in food and other goods. The pre-war property of ghetto inhabitants and products manufactured in illegal workshops operating in its territory, were smuggled out for sale. Mainly food and medicine were smuggled into the ghetto. Smuggling took various forms - from organized on a large scale, to food smuggling by individuals, including often begging children on the other side of the wall. "The great smuggling" bringing huge profits, organized together with Germans, Jewish police and Polish smugglers, was widely condemned due to the lavish lifestyle of its organizers, who constituted the financial elite of the ghetto. At the same time, however, the food smuggled into the ghetto was the basis of its existence, saving its inhabitants from starvation.

smuggler – a person who, for profit, smuggles (smuggles) goods into the ghetto.

szmalcownicy (in English spelled: shmaltsowniks) – the colloquial term for people who, for money, blackmailed and denounced Jews hiding on the so called 'Aryan side'. From the introduction of the death penalty for hiding or helping Jews (October 15, 1941), they became conscious assistants of Germans in murdering the Jewish population, as well as Poles providing shelter to Jews. From 1943, civil and military authorities of the Polish Underground State passed and executed death sentences on shmaltsowniks as traitors of the Polish state and nation.

sheds – German enterprises taking over smaller Jewish businesses producing for Germans. The sheds began to be established in the Warsaw Ghetto in the summer of 1941. The largest of them, Walther Többens' shed located at 74 Leszno and 14 Prosta streets, producing clothing (uniforms, hats, underwear, and furs), employed 18 thousand people. Fritz Schultz's shed at 44/46 Nowolipie, specializing in tailoring and furriery, employed 8,000 people; the brush makers shed at 34 Świętojerska Street employed 4,000 people. Others sheds specialized in the production of textiles, carpentry, metal products and other goods. Possibility of working in the sheds gave Jews a chance, often temporary, to keep alive.

Treblinka II – German extermination camp, located in the north-eastern part of the General Government, about 100 km from Warsaw. It operated from July 1942 till October 1943. About 900,000 Jews were murdered in its gas chambers (engine exhausts were used). They were mainly from Poland (including almost 300,000 from Warsaw) as well as from Slovakia, Greece, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria, and about 2 thousand Gypsies. On August 2, 1943, there was a successful rebellion of Jewish prisoners. Of the approximately 600 prisoners who attempted to escape, only 70 survived the war.

Umshlagplatz – railway transshipment yard at Stawki Street in Warsaw, at the northern border of the ghetto. In the summer of 1942 and in January and May 1943, the Jewish population from the ghetto was gathered there before being loaded into freight wagons on the railway siding and then transported to Treblinka or Majdanek.

The Great Action – German term for the action of liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto and deportation of its Jewish inhabitants to the Treblinka extermination camp and plunder of their property. The action was carried out on July 22 - September 21, 1942. About 300,000 Jews were transported to Treblinka.

Jewish Combat Organisation (ŻOB) – an underground armed organization, formed in the autumn of 1942 in the Warsaw Ghetto by activists of youth organizations. It conducted military training, collected weapons, prepared plans for the defence of the ghetto and the escape of Jews from the ghetto. It had about 300 fighters. In January 1942, its members carried out the so-called January (self-defence) action. From April 1943, ŻOB took part in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Most of its members perished, and several dozen who managed to leave the ghetto continued struggle, mainly in partisan units. A ŻOB battle group also participated in the Warsaw Uprising of 1944, in the units of the People's Army.

Jewish Military Union (ŻZW) – an underground organization formed in the Warsaw Ghetto by Jewish soldiers of the Polish Army, participants of the fighting in September 1939, and by members of the youth organization of the right-wing Zionist parties - Betar. It is not possible to precisely determine the date when the organisation was established. ŻZW had approximately 200-250 people, headed by Paweł Frenkel. Despite unsuccessful attempts to merge with the Jewish Combat Organization, both organizations worked closely together during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Its members took part in, among others, fights on the Muranowski Square, where they hoisted two flags on one of the buildings - Polish and Zionist. Most of the ŻZW members were killed in the uprising - the remaining during the escape from the ghetto.

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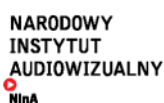
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Authors

exercises: **Katarzyna Łaziuk, Barbara Matusiak, Barbara Subko**

dictionary of historical concepts and terms: **Robert Szuchta**

didactic work: **Monika Koszyńska, Katarzyna Kulińska, Robert Szuchta**

graphic design: **Matosek / Niezgoda**