

# 1943 Uprising

WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

19 APRIL – 16 MAY 1943

1939 1940 1941 1942 1943 1944 1945

## CORE INFORMATION

16.11.1940

When the Germans established the Warsaw Ghetto in 1940, their initial aim was to separate the Jews from the city's other inhabitants. They eventually confined 450,000 people within the walls; almost a quarter of them died of disease and starvation. The ghetto was created in northern Warsaw (today's Muranów district). It comprised two parts, the so-called 'small ghetto' and the 'large ghetto'.

## PRECEDING EVENTS

22.07.1942

On 22 July 1942 the Germans began the *Grossaktion*, or mass extermination. Over the course of 43 days they deported 300,000 Jews from the Warsaw Ghetto to Treblinka extermination camp and murdered them.

10.1942

In October 1942 the ghetto inhabitants decided they would rise up in arms if the deportations continued. By early 1943, before the uprising broke out, there were around 50,000 people still living in the ghetto, that is less than 10% of ghetto population at its peak in 1941.

## OUTCOME

16.05.1943

The fighters were defeated by the German soldiers, who were well-armed and trained, and the ghetto area was reduced to a sea of rubble. The fighters' resistance demonstrated their heroism, bravery and desperation. They decided on armed combat knowing that they would soon die, driven by a desire to avenge their loved ones.

# 1944 Rising

WARSAW RISING

1 AUGUST – 2 OCTOBER 1944

1939 1940 1941 1942 1943 1944 1945

## CORE INFORMATION

27.09.1939  
19.01.1945

The uprising was the culmination of the actions of the Polish Underground State, whose constituent structures were formed after Poland's occupation by the Germans and Soviets in September 1939. The Underground State organized the country's resistance and its fight for a free Poland. It encompassed both military and civilian sections. Its military arm, established from 1942 by the underground Union of Armed Struggle (Pol. Związek Walki Zbrojnej, ZWZ), was known as the Home Army. The civilian section arranged aid for the victims of the German occupation (incl. Jews), organized underground educational and justice systems and laid foundations for the country's administration after the war.

## PRECEDING EVENTS

LAST DAYS OF JULY 1944

In July 1944, as the Soviets advanced towards German-occupied Warsaw, the Poles in the underground Home Army launched their fight for independence, believing the Red Army would offer military support. For the Home Army soldiers the insurrection demonstrated the Poles' aspirations to form a sovereign state after the war. Despite having fought the Germans alongside the Western Allies since 1941, the USSR's leader Joseph Stalin was not prepared to support the Poles, as he was planning to turn Poland into a communist state dependent on the Soviet Union. He therefore withheld military assistance to the insurgents.

## OUTCOME

2.10.1944

The uprising ended in the Poles' military defeat and failed to prevent the introduction of communist rule in Poland. Still, it instantly became both a symbol of the Poles' determination to gain independence and proof of the treacherous and inhuman attitude of the Soviets, who refused to help Poland's capital city as it perished. Today the uprising plays an important part in the collective consciousness of Poles as an example of defiance against the evil propagated by totalitarian regimes.



# ORGANIZATIONS INVOLVED IN THE FIGHTING



## JEWISH FIGHTING ORGANIZATION

(Pol. Żydowska Organizacja Bojowa, ŻOB)

Formed by Zionist organizations – Hashomer Hatzair, Dror, Akiba, Gordonia, Poalej Zion Left, Poalej Zion Right, Hanoar Hatzioni – as well as Bund and the Polish Workers' Party (PPR)

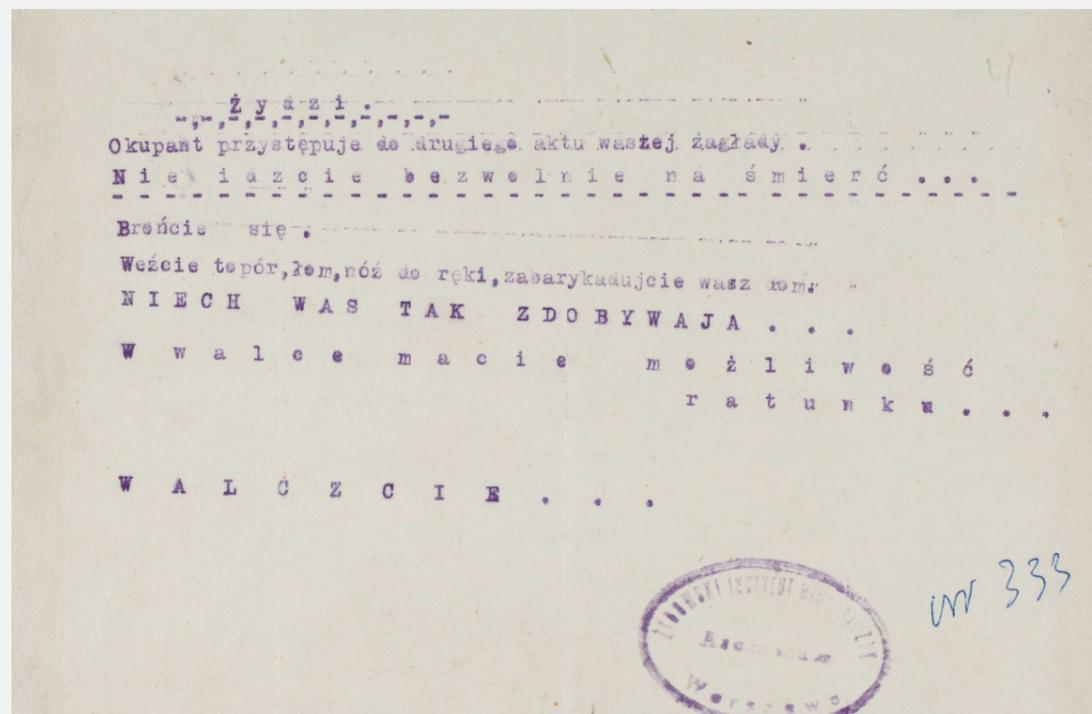
## JEWISH MILITARY UNION

(Pol. Żydowski Związek Wojskowy, ŻZW)

Formed by Revisionist Zionists of the New Zionist Organization and Betar

↓ Jews. The occupying power is commencing the second stage of Your annihilation. Don't go to your deaths passively. Defend yourselves. Take an axe, crowbar, knife in hand, barricade your home. Let them conquer you like that... Fighting gives you a chance to survive... Fight...

Jewish Historical Institute, Ringelblum Archive, sygn. ARG II 426 b.



## HOME ARMY

(Pol. Armia Krajowa, AK)

The Underground State's military organization; it accounted for c. 90 per cent of the insurrectionary forces

## NATIONAL ARMED FORCES

(Pol. Narodowe Siły Zbrojne, NSZ)

Right-wing military units

## PEOPLE'S ARMY

(Pol. Armia Ludowa, AL)

Military force formed by Polish communists and allied with the Soviet Union

↑ Army courier Bożena Grabowska, *nom de guerre* 'Magda', outside apartment building at 7 Moniuszki Street, north Śródmieście, mid-August 1944. Insurgency posters on wall: 'One bullet, one German' by Henryk Chmielewski, 'Our road to freedom 1939–1944' and 'We are fighting for Unity, Freedom, Independence'. Photograph by Eugeniusz Lokajski, *nom de guerre* 'Brok'. MPW-IN/407

← Poster on wall in Śródmieście during Warsaw Rising: 'Call to Arms in the Home Army's ranks', 9 August 1944. Photograph by Joachim Joachimczyk, *nom de guerre* 'Joachim'. MPW-IP/789



# COURSE OF EVENTS

APRIL 1943

MAY 1943

AUGUST 1944

SEPTEMBER 1944

OCTOBER 1944

## STAGE I (19–21 APRIL)

On 19 April ŻOB units under the command of Mordechaj Anielewicz and ŻZW units led by Paweł Frenkel attacked armed German soldiers who had entered the ghetto. On the second or third day of combat the fighters raised two flags, one Polish and the other Jewish, in pl. Muranowski. The Germans were surprised by the scale of the resistance. When after three days the fighters ran out of ammunition, the ŻOB fighters went into hiding within the ghetto area, while those from ŻZW crossed to the so-called Aryan side, where virtually almost all of them perished.

The Polish underground observed the fighting in the ghetto. The Home Army and the Peoples' Guard (Polish military underground forces) made an unsuccessful attempt to support the fighters from outside the ghetto by breaching the wall in a number of places.

## STAGE II: APRIL–MAY

**The Germans set fire to the ghetto to force out the more than 40,000 Jews who were hiding in bunkers.**

The captured Jews were shot on the spot, sent to labour camps or deported to Treblinka.

## STAGE III: MAY

On 8 May the Germans found the bunker at Miła 18 in which the ŻOB command (c. 100 fighters) were hiding together with their commander, Mordechai Anielewicz. A small number managed to escape, but the others, seeing no possibility of further resistance, committed group suicide. On 10 May two groups of fighters (c. 80 in all) tried to leave the burning ghetto via the sewers. Some from the first group managed to reach nearby forests, while the rest hid in Warsaw. All those in the second group perished in combat with the Germans.

The Germans did not sign a capitulation treaty with the fighters as they didn't view them as equals. On 16 May Jürgen Stroop, who was in charge of suppressing the uprising, blew up Warsaw's Great Synagogue on Tłomackie Street to mark the end of Jewish presence in the city.

## STAGE I (1–4 AUGUST)

In the first days of the uprising the Poles took control of large tracts of the city, including the central districts of Śródmieście and the Old Town. In the first few days there was an explosion of euphoria and joy. After five years of humiliation, the Poles could at last raise their flag and sing the national anthem. They quickly started to organize their new state and its institutions. During the uprising there was a fledgling parliament, a postal service, a radio station and even a cinema. A daily newspaper was published, bringing the latest news from the uprising and from around the world, and also featuring debates on the shape of the future independent Poland.

## STAGE II (5 AUGUST – 2 SEPTEMBER)

**On 5 August the Germans launched a concentrated offensive on the city's western districts of Wola and Ochota, enacting Hitler's heinous order to wipe out the civilian population. In Wola they executed close to 40,000 civilians. After capturing both districts, fighting for the Old Town continued to 2 September.** Wola and Ochota both fell to the Germans by 11 August. The fighting then shifted to the Old Town. After fierce battles that involved air support and heavy artillery the German forces took control of the Old Town on 2 September.

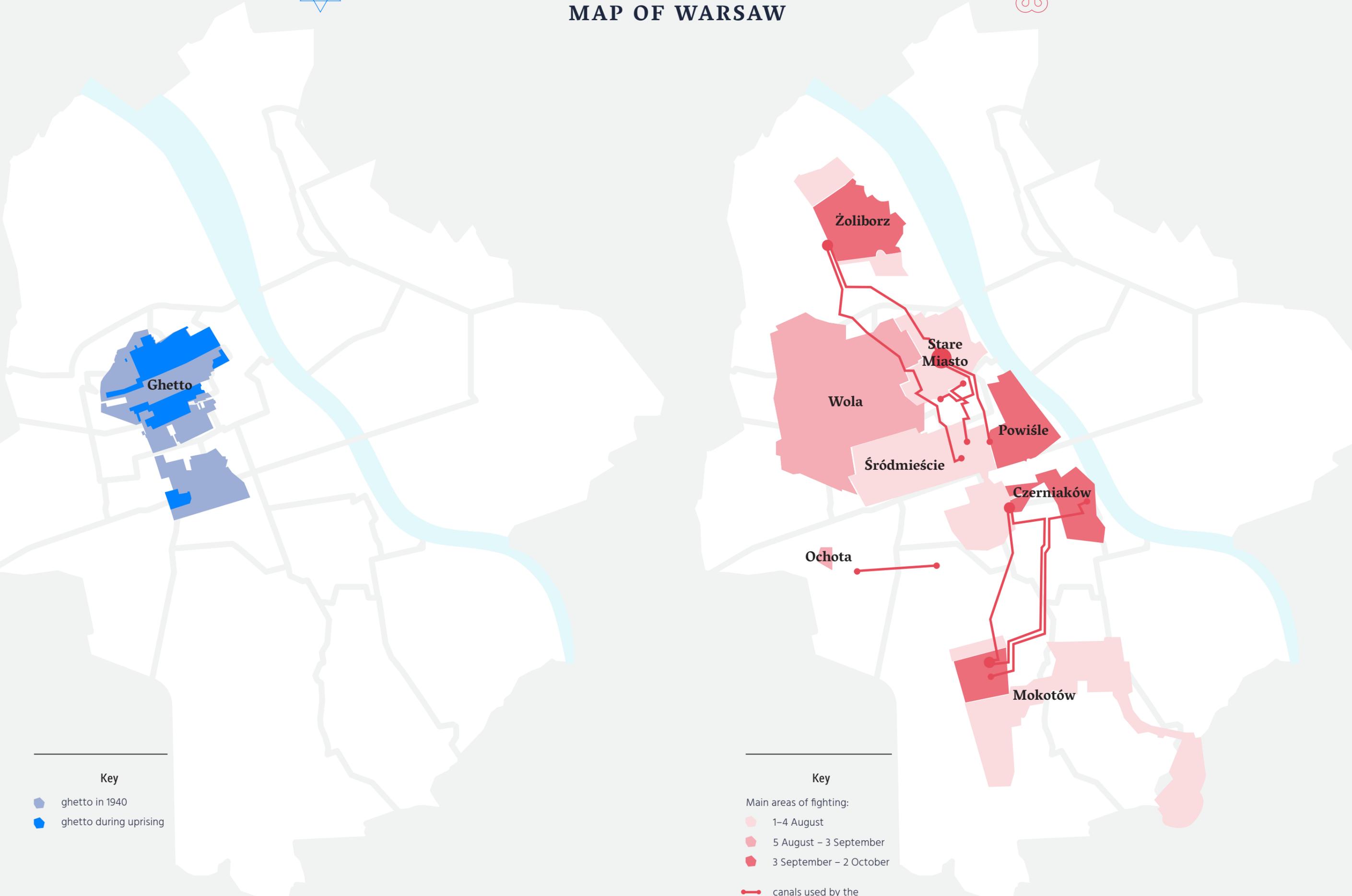
## STAGE III (3 SEPTEMBER – 2 OCTOBER)

**Having gained control of the Old Town, the Germans continued their main offensive along the riverside districts of Powiśle and Czerniaków. Between 10 and 14 September the Red Army occupied Warsaw's eastern district of Praga and the right bank of the Vistula, but offered no help to the insurgents.**

By the beginning of October the Polish fighters still controlled just a fragment of Śródmieście. At this point they decided to capitulate, negotiating the terms. Initially the German command wanted to push the insurgents away from the river, as they were expecting the Soviets to attack from the right bank. In the end, a few hundred soldiers from Polish units serving under Soviet command made it across to the left bank, but they were unable to change the final outcome of the uprising. After the fall of Czerniaków, the Germans suppressed the fighting both in the southern district of Mokotów (27 September) and in Żoliborz to the north (30 September).



# MAP OF WARSAW



- Key**
- ghetto in 1940
  - ghetto during uprising

- Key**
- Main areas of fighting:
- 1-4 August
  - 5 August - 3 September
  - 3 September - 2 October
- canals used by the insurgents



# FIGHTERS ENGAGED



## FIGHTERS

**500** in ŻOB

**260** in ŻZW

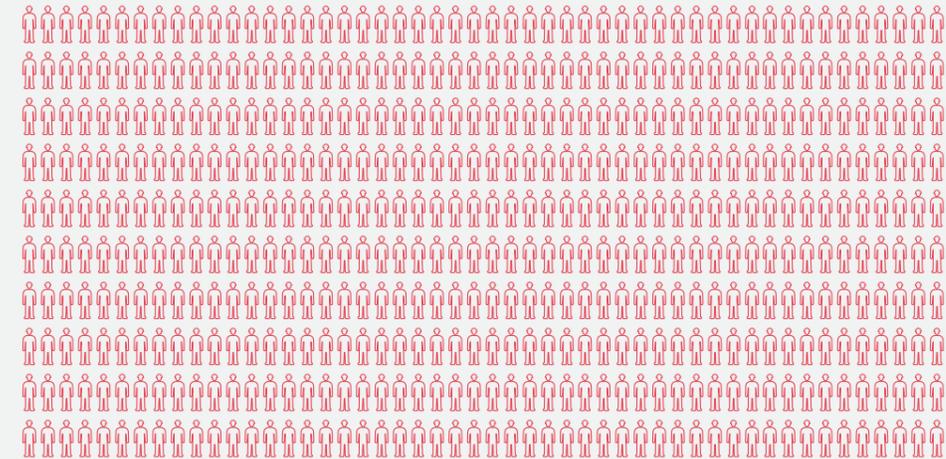
 = 100 soldiers



## INSURGENTS

**c. 50,000**

 = 100 soldiers

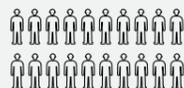


## GERMAN FORCES

**c. 2000**

mechanized infantry and cavalry; police units; artillery and corps of engineers; auxiliary Ukrainian units

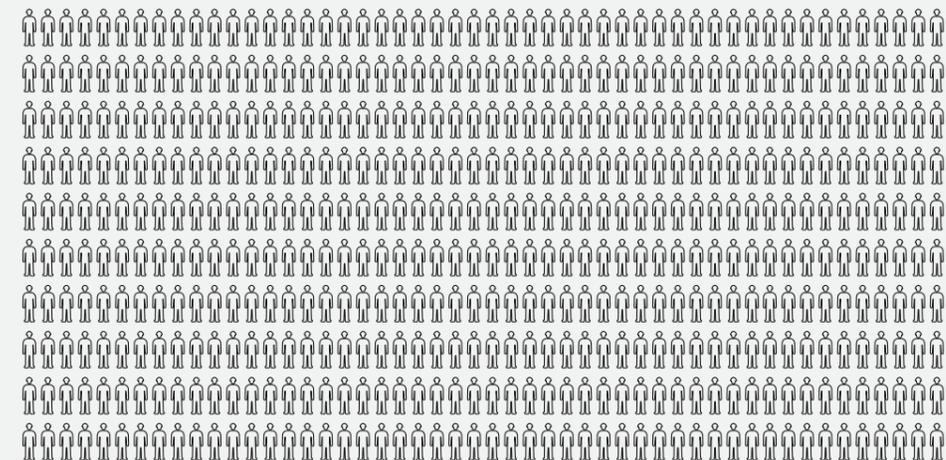
 = 100 soldiers



## GERMAN FORCES

**c. 50,000**  
well-armed

 = 100 soldiers





# WEAPONS EMPLOYED

## GERMAN FORCES

## FIGHTERS

## GERMAN FORCES

## INSURGENTS



**1,174**  
rifles

**760**

each fighter  
armed with  
a hand gun



more than  
**400**  
light and heavy  
machine guns

**181**

light and heavy  
machine guns



**135**  
semi-automatic  
guns

**2,000**

hand grenades



more than  
**10,000**  
semi-automatic guns,  
rifles and pistols

**5,754**

semi-automatic  
guns, rifles, hand  
guns



**69**  
light machine guns

**10**

rifles



more than  
**10,000**  
semi-automatic guns,  
rifles and pistols

**5,754**

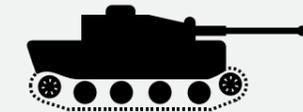
semi-automatic  
guns, rifles, hand  
guns



**13**  
heavy machine guns

**1**

machine gun  
(ZZW)



more than  
**100**  
tanks

**2**

captured  
German tanks



**3**  
self-propelled  
artillery guns

**2**

landmines  
deployed



more than  
**120**  
armoured vehicles

**3**

armoured  
vehicles



unknown  
number of  
artillery, tanks

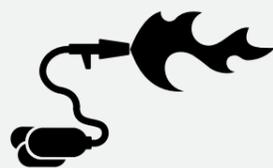
unknown number  
of Molotov  
cocktails



more than  
**140**  
artillery guns

**1**

captured  
German self-propelled  
assault gun



flame  
throwers

unknown number  
of handmade hand  
grenades



more than  
**200**  
aircraft and remote-  
controlled demolition  
vehicles

lack of own  
air support



# CASUALTIES AND LOSSES

= 100 dead

= 100 deported

= 100 dead

= 100 dead

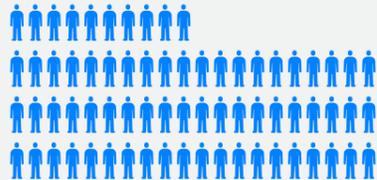
= 100 dead

## JEWS

(The numbers below represent both civilians and fighters)

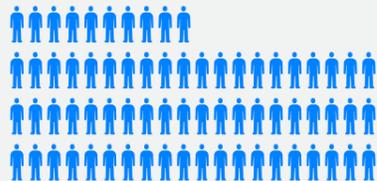
**c. 7,000**

executed in the ghetto



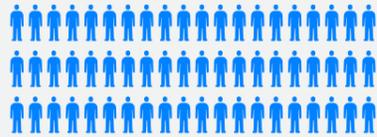
**c. 7,000**

transported to Treblinka extermination camp



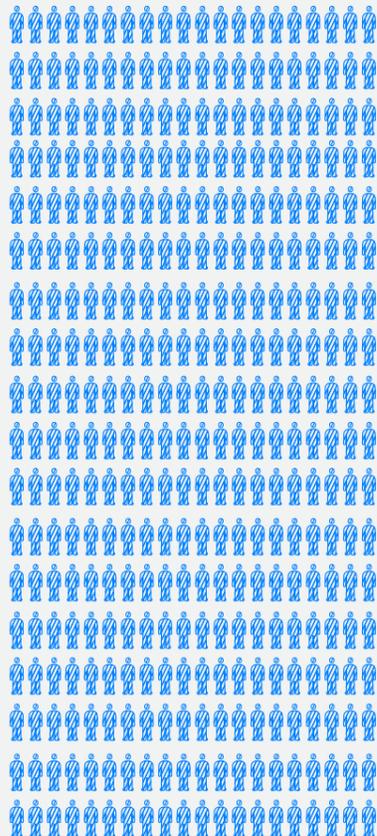
**c. 6,000**

killed in combat or in the bunkers



**c. 36,000**

deported to labour camps



## GERMAN FORCES

**16** dead



**85** wounded

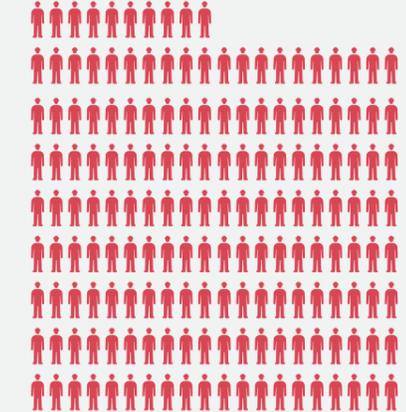
## CIVILIANS

**130,000–150,000** civilians



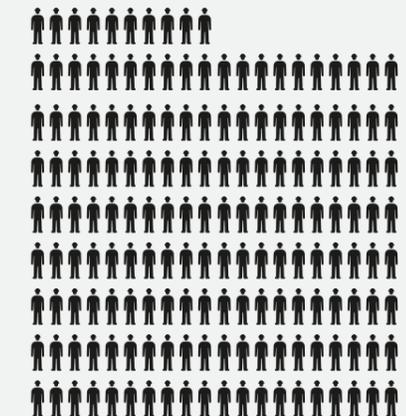
## INSURGENTS

incl. c. **17,000** soldiers dead



## GERMAN FORCES

incl. c. **17,000** soldiers dead and missing in combat





## KEY FIGURES



### **Mordechai Anielewicz**

**(1919-1943)**

member of Hashomer Hatzair, leader of the Ghetto Uprising, member of ŻOB (Jewish Fighting Organisation)



### **Zivia Lubetkin**

**(1914-1978)**

co-foundress of ŻOB (Jewish Fighting Organisation), escaped the ghetto through the sewers on 10 May; fought in the Warsaw Rising



### **Marek Edelman**

**(1919-2009)**

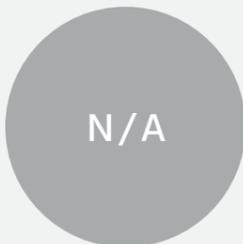
member of Bund, the last leader of the Ghetto Uprising; fought in the Warsaw Rising



### **Simcha Rotem, nom de guerre 'Kazik'**

**(1924)**

masterminded an escape from the ghetto through the sewers on 10 May; fought in the Warsaw Rising



### **Paweł Frenkel**

**(1920-1943)**

member of Betar, commander of ŻZW (Jewish Military Union)



### **Gen. Tadeusz Komorowski, nom de guerre 'Bór'**

**(1895-1966)**

Home Army commander



### **Col. Antoni Chruściel, nom de guerre 'Monter'**

**(1895-1960)**

commander of the Warsaw Rising



### **Jan Stanisław Jankowski, nom de guerre 'Soból'**

**(1882-1953)**

delegate of the Polish government-in-exile in the rank of deputy prime minister, civilian leader of the uprising



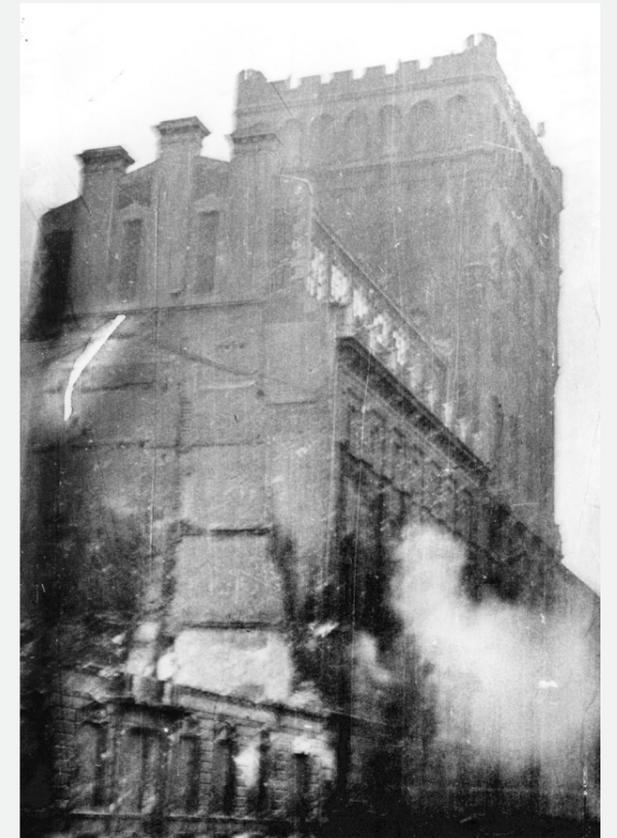
### **Rotmistrz (cavalry captain) Witold Pilecki, nom de guerre 'Witold'**

**(1901-1948)**

one of the Warsaw Rising's most outstanding company commanders



# PHOTOGRAPHY



Burning PAST (telephone operator) buildings at 37/39 Zielna Street, 20 August 1944. Photograph by Eugeniusz Lokajski, *nom de guerre* 'Brok'. MPW-IN/551  
<https://www.1944.pl/szukaj-zdjec,strona,1.html/szukaj/PAST#673>

Emerging from sewer in Warecka Street, north Śródmieście, 1 September 1944. Photograph by Joachim Joachimczyk, *nom de guerre* 'Joachim'. MPW-IH/4102  
<https://www.1944.pl/fototeka/kanaly,64.html#7154>

Photograph taken during Warsaw Rising. View of roofs between Widok Street and Jerozolimskie Avenue, taken from building at 8 Widok Street, looking south, 24 August 1944. Photograph by Joachim Joachimczyk, *nom de guerre* 'Joachim'. MPW-IP/1208  
<https://www.1944.pl/fototeka/warszawa-zniszczona,99.html#1706>

Stroop Report – Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Apartment building burns during suppression of Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.  
[https://pl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Stroop\\_Report\\_-\\_Warsaw\\_Ghetto\\_Uprising\\_-\\_26552.jpg](https://pl.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plik:Stroop_Report_-_Warsaw_Ghetto_Uprising_-_26552.jpg)

Stroop Report – Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Captured Jews led by German Waffen-SS soldiers to gathering point for deportation.  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Getto\\_warszawskie#/media/File:Stroop\\_Report\\_-\\_Warsaw\\_Ghetto\\_Uprising\\_11.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Getto_warszawskie#/media/File:Stroop_Report_-_Warsaw_Ghetto_Uprising_11.jpg)

Warsaw Ghetto destroyed by Germans, 1945. Photograph by Zbyszko Siemaszko of Central Photographic Agency (CAF) in Warsaw.  
[https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Warsaw\\_Ghetto\\_destroyed\\_by\\_Germans,\\_1945.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Warsaw_Ghetto_destroyed_by_Germans,_1945.jpg)



**European Network  
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**Warsaw  
Rising  
Museum**

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Authors

**Justyna Majewska**  
Research Department  
Jewish Historical Institute

**Karol Mazur**  
Head of Education Department  
Warsaw Rising Museum

---

Substantive editing

**Prof. Jan Rydel**

---

Graphic design

 **RZECZYOBRAZKOWE**

---

Translation

**Lidia Polubiec**

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