

1943

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

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)

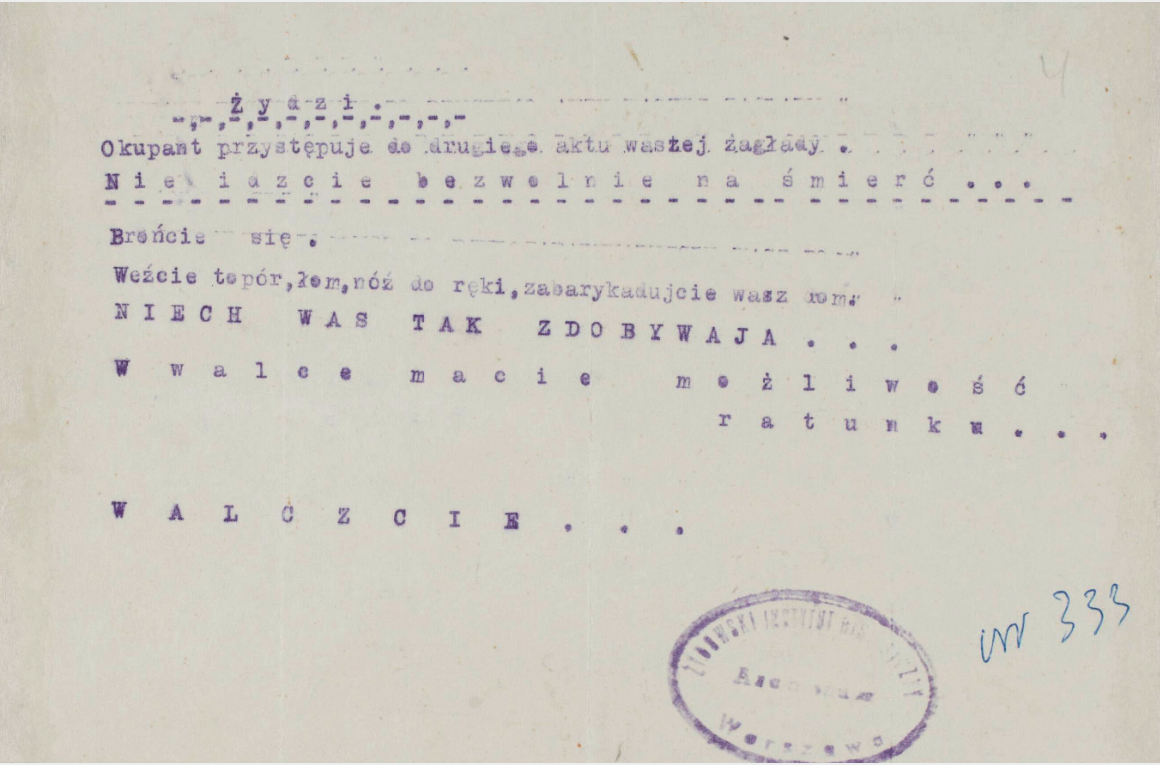
JEWISH MILITARY UNION

(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, ref. no. 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)

Organisation politically affiliated with right-wing movements

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 Mordechai 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

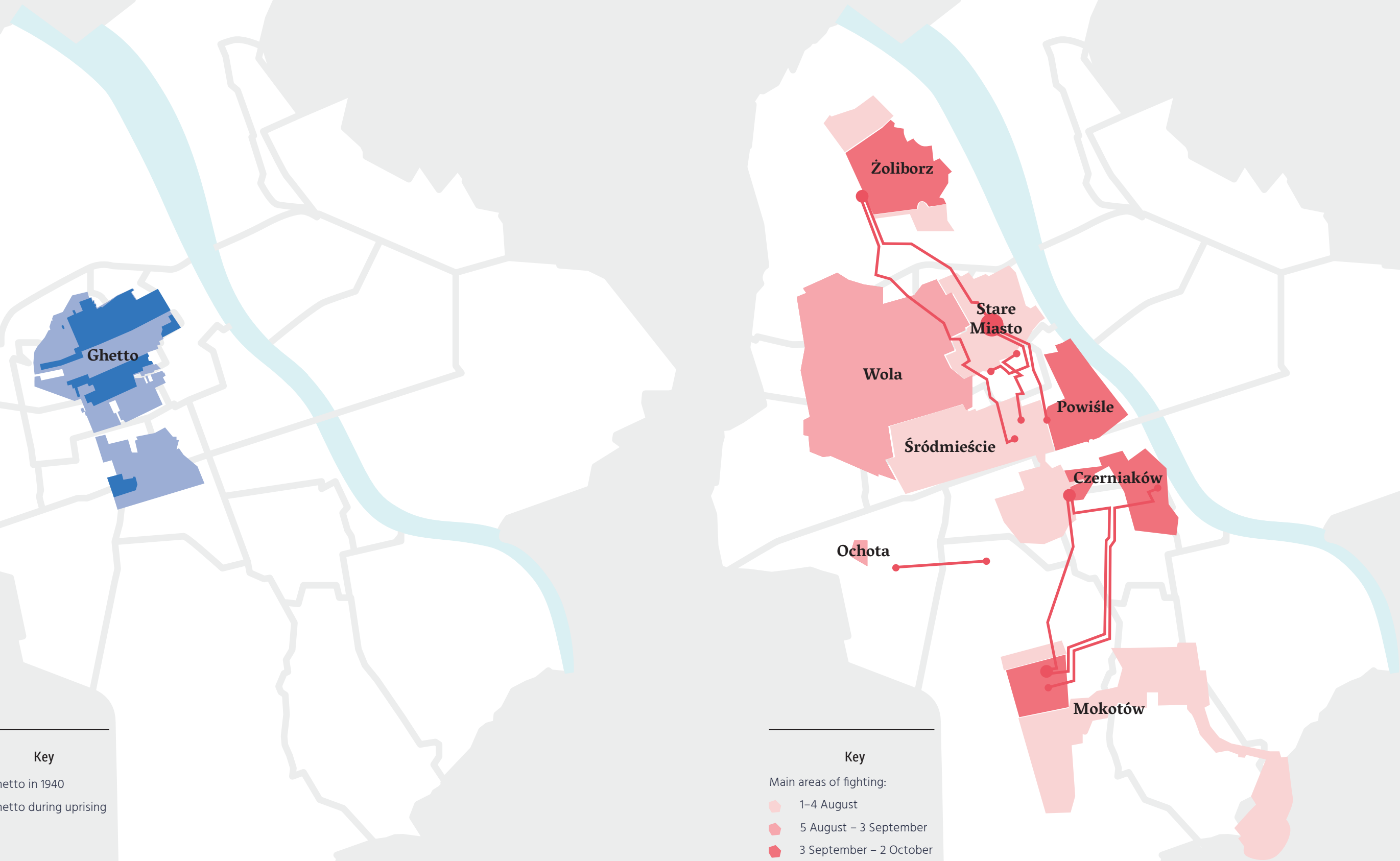
- ghetto in 1940
- ghetto during uprising

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

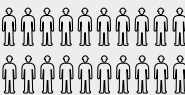


GERMAN FORCES

c. 2000

mechanized infantry and cavalry; police units; artillery and combat engineers; auxiliary Ukrainian units

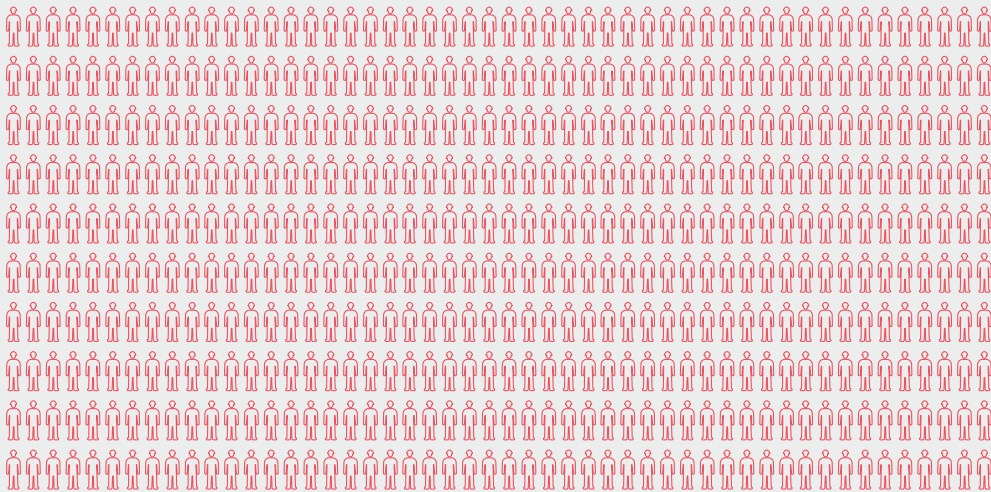
 = 100 soldiers



INSURGENTS

c. 50,000

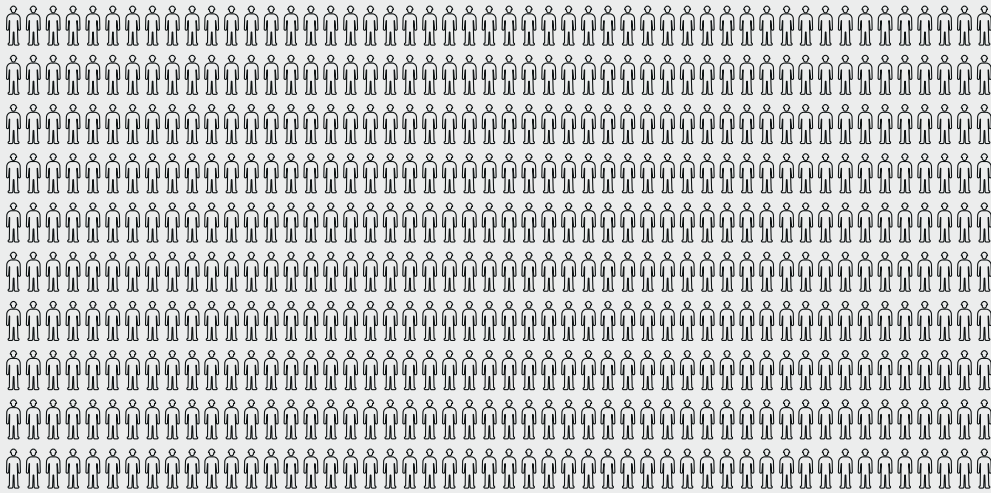
 = 100 soldiers



GERMAN FORCES

c. 50,000
well-armed

 = 100 soldiers






WEAPONS EMPLOYED

GERMAN FORCES

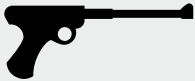
FIGHTERS

GERMAN FORCES


INSURGENTS




1,174
rifles




135
semi-automatic guns



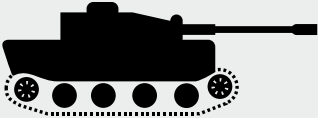
69
light machine guns



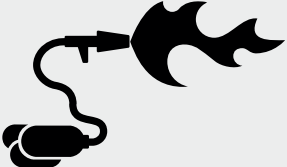
13
heavy machine guns



3
self-propelled artillery guns



unknown number of artillery, tanks



unknown number of flame throwers

each fighter armed with a hand gun

2,000
hand grenades

10
rifles

1
machine gun (ŻZW)

2
landmines deployed

unknown number of Molotov cocktails

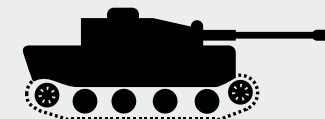
unknown number of handmade hand grenades



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



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



more than **100**
tanks



more than **120**
armoured vehicles

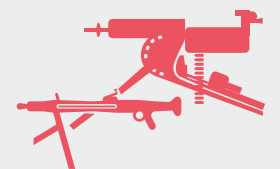


more than **140**
artillery guns



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

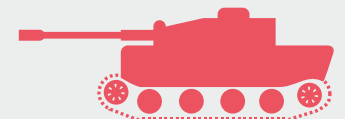
181
light and heavy machine guns



5,754
semi-automatic guns, rifles, hand guns



2
captured German tanks



3
armoured vehicles



1
captured German self-propelled assault gun




lack of own air support





CASUALTIES AND LOSSES

 = 100 dead

 = 100 deported

 = 100 dead

 = 100 dead

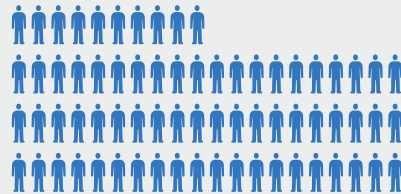
 = 100 dead

JEWS

(The numbers below represent both civilians and fighters)

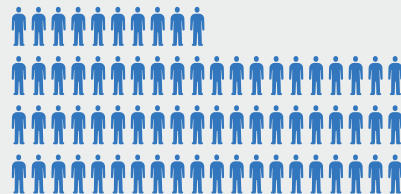
c. 7,000

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



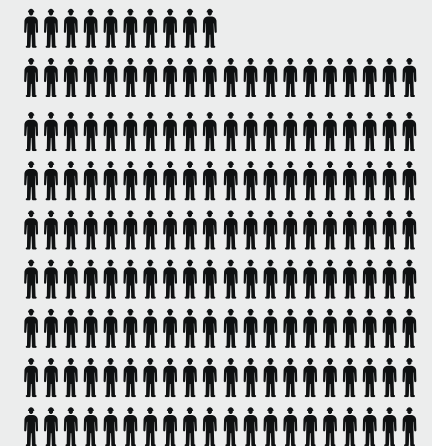
INSURGENTS

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'

(1924-2018)

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



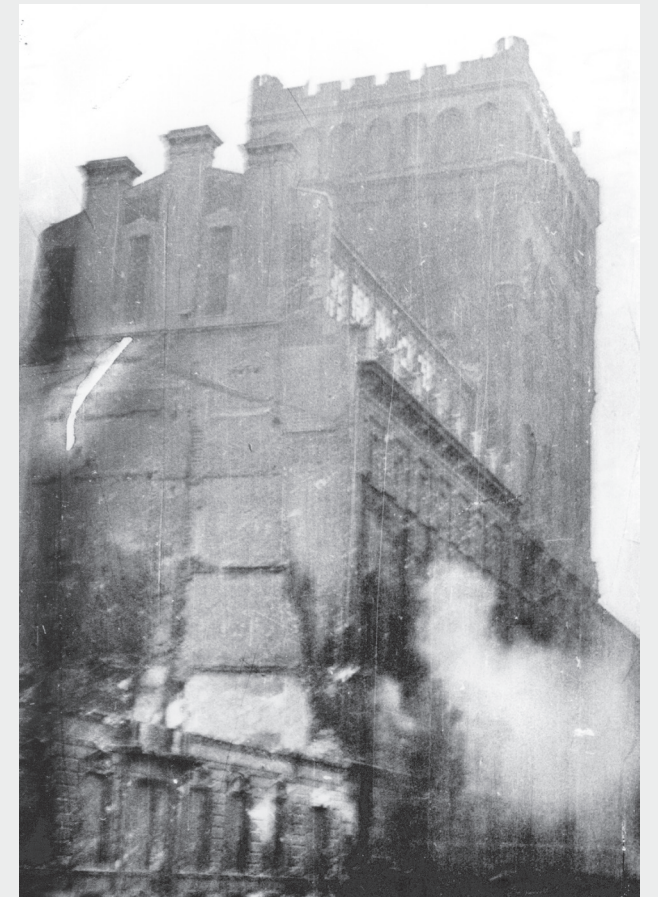
Rotmistrz (cavalry captain) Witold Pilecki, nom de guerre 'Witold'

(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

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

Stroop Report – Warsaw Ghetto Uprising. Jews forced out from a bunker by German Waffen-SS soldiers.

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Getto_warszawskie#/media/File:Stroop_Report_-_Warsaw_Ghetto_Uprising_11.jpg



European Network
Remembrance
and Solidarity



Warsaw
Rising
Museum

יִיִּדיִשֶׁער **JEWISH**
היסטאָרישער **HISTORICAL**
אינסטיטוט **INSTITUTE**

Authors

Justyna Majewska

Research Department
Jewish Historical Institute

Karol Mazur

Head of Education Department
Warsaw Rising Museum

Substantive editing

Prof. Jan Rydel

European Network Remembrance
and Solidarity (ENRS)

Coordination

**Maria Naimska
Zhanna Vrublevska**

ENRS

Graphic design



Translation

Lidia Polubiec

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*Hi-story lessons. Teaching & learning about
20th-century European history*

It is a multilingual web-based educational project designed for high school and college teachers and students. The aim of the Hi-story lessons is to support the process of teaching and developing a better understanding the 20th-century European history using infographics, animations and interactive timelines displaying a list of events from the 20th century. The choice of impactful dates was made by a number of educational history experts from six countries – Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Czech Republic. All proceedings were held in the spirit of mutual respect of the variety of different opinions and national narratives.

www.hi-storylessons.eu
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