

Mordechai Anielewicz Letter

Background Information: Below is the last letter written by 24-year-old Mordechai Anielewicz, leader of the ZOB (Jewish Fighting Organization) and commander of the Warsaw ghetto uprising, to his Deputy Commander Yitzhak Zukerman on April 23, 1943. The uprising began on April 19 after German authorities began mass deportations to the Treblinka killing center. On May 8, the ZOB bunker at 18 Mila Street was discovered by the Germans and Anielewicz was killed along with nearly 300 others in hiding. The uprising was suppressed on May 16, 1943.

April 23, 1943

It is impossible to put into words what we have been through. One thing is clear, what happened exceeded our boldest dreams. The Germans ran twice from the ghetto. One of our companies held out for 40 minutes and another for more than 6 hours. The mine set in the "brushmakers" area exploded. Several of our companies attacked the dispersing Germans. Our losses in manpower are minimal. That is also an achievement. Y. [Yechiel] fell. He fell a hero, at the machine-gun. I feel that great things are happening and what we dared do is of great, enormous importance....

Beginning from today we shall shift over to the partisan tactic. Three battle companies will move out tonight, with two tasks: reconnaissance and obtaining arms. Do you remember, short-range weapons are of no use to us. We use such weapons only rarely. What we need urgently: grenades, rifles, machine-guns and explosives.

It is impossible to describe the conditions under which the Jews of the ghetto are now living. Only a few will be able to hold out. The remainder will die sooner or later. Their fate is decided. In almost all the hiding places in which thousands are concealing themselves it is not possible to light a candle for lack of air.

With the aid of our transmitter we heard the marvelous report on our fighting by the "Shavit" radio station. The fact that we are remembered beyond the ghetto walls encourages us in our struggle. Peace go with you, my friend! Perhaps we may still meet again! The dream of my life has risen to become fact. Self-defense in the ghetto will have been a reality. Jewish armed resistance and revenge are facts. I have been a witness to the magnificent, heroic fighting of Jewish men in battle.

M. Anielewicz

Ghetto, April 23, 1943

Source: *Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1981, Document no. 145*