

Heroism and resistance: 80 years since the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising

Fear ruled the world for an extremely long time, destroying hope, understanding, and empathy. It became an upbringing for humans and was the birthplace of terror that led to genocide. Was it the terror of the unknown, of one's own people, of the Jews, that caused the Second World War, or was it the inability to come to terms with the equality of all ethnicities and religions? Was the war merely an escape from the threat of a wounded ego? How else can so much hatred and evil be born out of human emotion? Those who were allegedly afraid, forced their distress to anger and begged for their lives. They were not stopped by rights, humanity, or reason. They chose the path of lies and blood and thus lost the war before they even started it. They lost, even though they heard the solemn chants or the screams of Jewish families. They lost because love and understanding will always be more powerful than anger and rage. However, no one can undo the years of pain of those who suffered, no one can give life to those who were lost. It is not in our power to eradicate the trauma from Jewish hearts, but it is our duty to spread the testimonies of the Holocaust.

Time is an interesting concept. Sometimes it conveys nothing, not even a glimpse in space; in other cases, it opens up pages of events that are long and historical but yet extremely important. The world is 80 years past a groundbreaking true story that should be spreading through every nation, and yet not everyone knows about it. The first chapter is set in the early days of the birth of anti-Semitism and the so-called "Final Solution to the Jewish Question"; the second is no longer written in ink, but in the blood of the innocent. They say that good cannot exist without evil, so it is also true that heroism does not exist without destruction. It is 80 years since the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, 80 years since ordinary people became our heroes.

Ghettos became the homes of the Jewish people. These were the parts of the city delimited by the Nazis just so that they would not have to meet their fellow Jews. They became an overcrowded mass, fighting for air space, a slice of bread, or even a mattress to sleep on. At least that was the case in Poland's largest ghetto, which was located in Warsaw. A narrow space that had to be shared by thousands of Jews. They were dying of various diseases, filth, hunger, or thirst, and slowly their hope was fading away as they watched their suffering children, mothers, and fathers, when with short and prolonged breaths, the soul started leaving their body. Were the lucky ones those who could have fallen in the arms of their family, unaware of the horrors unfolding in the nearby concentration camps, or the survivors watching them? They were obviously not lucky, but their fighting spirit persisted.

Two years after the creation of the Warsaw Ghetto, deportations to the Treblinka extermination camp took place. The village was painted in a palette of countless shades of green as it hid in the arms of the most mysterious trees which held a mystery in their roots, as the small village was turned into the soil of the extinction of Jewish earthly life. When their eyes were filled with blood, and even the singing of birds or farm machinery could not silence the cries of grief,

the village still stood, and the Nazis continued to smile. The survivors, mainly healthy men capable of work, believed that those chosen for the relocation of their families and friends would meet better conditions in the labour camps, where they would not be left to starve but given a place to rest and one day return back to them. Was this naive thinking or a hopeful perspective of desperate minds? However, the truth is often right in front of our eyes, and sometimes it is the most horrific image that is projected as a movie in our dreams. The hour of cruel reality had passed, during which they realized the truth: that Jewish citizens, their own blood, were sent to be exterminated without warning, without being asked to say goodbye to their loved ones. As a result, they decided that they would resist Nazi orders that led them only to a cloud of gases over the flames of hell. They uncovered their disguised militancy and began to form resistance organizations, in which they developed plans to confront the Nazis and regain their freedom. After all, who is a man without freedom? The moment had come to succumb to anger and determination and make a change, rather than wait for it to happen. If freedom was restored to them, their soul would no longer be imprisoned. Is it better not to succumb to anger and obey inhumane orders? Should one withstand the urge to release a fragile tear, which, however, does not have enough water to be an ocean of sorrow? Should one suffer for mistakes that are supposedly greater than all the mountains, rocks, and wastelands, while their origin is more mysterious than the creation of the world? Or is it wiser to rise and fill one's empty heart once again with passion and courage, to sacrifice one's last breaths for the glory of the Jewish people? And for the last time, to succumb to fear enough to fuel that undying militancy hiding in the genes of one's parents?

Their first conflict was with the Jewish police; later they managed to reduce the number of people sent to the camps thanks to their hideouts and ambushes on German soldiers. However, this was just the beginning. After a gasp of hope, they began to prepare for the actual revenge. Bravery boiled in their blood, but they soon realized that they would not be able to save the world with their imperfect bunkers and inadequate weapons. The momentary thought that they were the redeemers of the Jewish people was enough to keep them from letting the pain turn their bodies into weakness. Through the boldness and the desire for success, there was also fear. Fear that bloomed into determination. The Nazis made them fear, not only for their own lives but for the survival of all Jews. Only memories, songs, and prayers comforted them. They could forget the voice of their wives, and the face of their grandparents, but they would never forget the injustice of the acts inflicted upon them. When the sun rose on the 19th of April 1943, the sky was still unclear and yet blue, not knowing what would happen on the Earth beneath it. On this day the Jews had a holiday, so nothing, indeed nothing, would prevent the Nazis from carrying out their liquidation. Not even the sound of a child's voice would soften the steel core within them. Yet they did not expect the Jews to not kneel before them, but to defend themselves with every bit of strength they had left. They had underestimated Jewish militancy, and now they were the ones who had to resist. If time could have stopped at this very moment, we would have caught the sound of deafening explosions and gunfire. Our eyes would have been blinded by the flamethrowers that the Germans used to burn empty houses and turn the bodies of soldiers, workers, and even peasants into ashes. Fire intensifies fear, but it also brings a breeze of power, which is why the Nazis

succumbed to the desire to burn down every building that stood in their way. Perhaps in the reflection of the flames, they saw their true heartless face. And as if they didn't have enough flames, they would start mixing the air with poisonous gases. They had the upper hand, but they were forced to use even their most desperate weapons. The strained, hopeless Jewish lives were not only losing men but also lacked combat experience and resources. They were drowning in darkness, and their last words were met with the already deceased victims of the Holocaust. However, a spark of light flickered from the awareness that some people had managed to escape from the Warsaw ghetto, and perhaps from other ghettos as well. They suspected that an uprising of this size would serve as a trigger for a larger battle which would hopefully end in the raising of the Star of David flags. The German troops chose a day for the Jewish citizens of the Warsaw Ghetto to meet their death, but also a day to celebrate their glory. The date of this uprising will always be a memory that we will cherish as well as the events that happened after it. Those who managed to escape and defeat death were given a new opportunity to get their revenge against the Nazis. In 1944, the Polish resistance movement led the Warsaw Uprising, and a significant number of those who had survived the Warsaw Ghetto actively participated in this historic event.

The Jews have shown extraordinary bravery, but special thanks also goes to the people who sacrificed their inner peace, food, home, and other resources to help the Jews. Anyone who saved a Jewish life, or perhaps tried to do so, even at the cost of their own life, deserves recognition alongside the Jewish heroes.

Bravery, perseverance, and hope were not lacking in a single Jewish soul through grief and sorrow or inhumanity. Death became the morning's wake-up and the evening's fall asleep, with tears as the only source of water, and trauma gripping the soul so firmly that it would be carried by an entire Jewish generation. They experienced the end but persevered, blinded but still aware of the injustice. They continued to fight until only dust remained. Their memories, names, and messages are eternal, and for this very reason, we will always honor Jews as heroes.

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