

The Uprising

At dawn on 19 April 1943, the Germans launched a major offensive action.

The German army (Wehrmacht), SS and police units, together with their Ukrainian and Latvian auxiliaries, were headed by Oberführer **Ferdinand von Sammern-Frankenegg**, the SS and police commander for the Warsaw district. Armed with rifles, machine pistols, light and heavy machine guns, flame throwers and even armoured vehicles and tanks, they entered the ghetto from the south, through Nalewki Street, and simultaneously from the intersection of Gęsia Street (present-day Anielewiczka Street) and Zamenhofa Street, quickly setting about its liquidation. Although they had concentrated considerable forces and weaponry, the assumption was that the action would last no longer than three days. It was intended as a gift of sorts for the Führer's birthday. However, the assault group encountered strong resistance from Jewish fighters. The largest armed rebellion of the Jewish population to take place during the Second World War, which was at once the first municipal uprising of the entire global conflict, had begun.

The surprise attack caused forced the enemy to withdraw from the ghetto. The Germans returned the same day in the afternoon, but already under a new commander – SS-Gruppenführer **Jürgen Stroop**, who was to lead the pacification action in the ghetto until the very end.

The fighting lasted a number of weeks. The insurgents attacked the Germans from concealment, lobbing grenades and Molotov cocktails.

Although the Nazis concluded that the uprising ended on 16 May 1943 – on which day, following several unsuccessful attempts, Stroop blew up the Great Synagogue at Tłomackie Street (the present-day location of the Blue Skyscraper) – armed skirmishes continued to take place throughout the following weeks. Most of the ghetto's buildings were blown up or burned down, and the whole area was razed to the ground. According to Jürgen Stroop's report, meaningfully

titled “Es gibt keinen jüdischen Wohnbezirk in Warschau mehr!” (“The Jewish Quarter of Warsaw is No More!”), there had been approximately 56,000 Jews living in the Warsaw Ghetto during the uprising. Nearly 7,000 were murdered on the spot, almost another 7,000 were transported to the extermination camp of Treblinka, and around 6,000 perished in the fighting. All of the almost 36,000 people who survived were sent to various labour and concentration camps in the General Government.

See also:

[“Three Days, not Longer.” The Warsaw Ghetto Uprising](#)

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