

Address by Gens, Head of the Ghetto, at the Meeting of Brigadiers,* Supervisors and Policemen, on the Danger of Bringing Arms into the Vilna Ghetto, May 15, 1943

Ladies and Gentlemen! Today I have called you here because there is something I have to tell you:

A few days ago I went to the Gestapo and spoke to the Commander of the SD there about the revolvers. I may tell you that he is not at all stupid. He said to me: "From an economic point of view the ghetto is very valuable, but if you are going to take foolish risks and if there is any question of security, then I will wipe you out. And even if you get 30, 40 or 50 revolvers, you will not be able to save yourselves and will only bring on your misfortune faster."

Why did I call you together? Because today another Jew has been arrested for buying a revolver. I don't yet know how this case will end. The last case ended fortunately for the ghetto. But I can tell you that if it happens again we shall be very severely punished. Perhaps they will take away those people over 60, or children... Now consider whether that is worthwhile!!! There can be only one answer for those who think soundly and maturely: It is not worthwhile!!!

It is not worthwhile having anything to do with the Poles. I have said it from the first day, and today I say it more than ever. You would do better to take a good look at what goes on among the Poles, how they sell each other out, and how many Jews have gone to Ponary because of the Poles and then consider whether it is worthwhile.

As long as the ghetto remains a ghetto those of us who have the responsibility will do everything we can so that nothing shall happen to the ghetto. Nowadays a Jew's whole family is responsible for him. If that is not enough, then I will make the whole room responsible for him, and if even that is not enough the apartment and even the building.

You will have to watch each other, and if there are any hot-heads then it is your duty to report it to the Police. That is not informing. It would be informing if you were to keep silent and the people were to suffer.

I am saying this for the brigadiers who are responsible for their brigades. I demand of the brigadiers that they should know their people. In an army an officer must know his men well. And the brigadiers do not know their people. They just have their passes, sit in offices and carry in [smuggle foodstuffs] through the gate. Yesterday for the first time I punished brigadiers because the badges** were not worn properly by their brigades. By nature I am a very lazy man. I give an order and then I pay no further attention. I gave an order that the badges were to be worn on all garments. Yesterday I remembered this order and straightaway 35 brigadiers were sitting in the lock-up. Starting tomorrow the brigades will be checked by Levas, and if there is anything that is not in order, then the brigadier will be punished. It is enough that the Police have to act as nursemaids. If the workers do not go to work then the brigadier is trash, he is no use!

Don't cause trouble yourselves. If they do not provoke us, then we must not do it ourselves. Because it is we alone who pay! Look, think, and see where we stand!!!

[I wish you] A good night.

* Leaders of labor units.

** The yellow badge.

Moreshet Archives, D. 1.355.

Source: Y. arad, Y. Gutman, A. Margalio (Eds.), *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. 205.