

From Notes by Hersh Berlinski<sup>(1)</sup> on the Aims of the  
Jewish Fighting Organization

...At the end of October 1942 a meeting was held at the *Ha-Shomer* [Left-wing Zionist] Club in 61 Mila Street. Those present were: *Ha-Shomer* – Mordecai [Anielewicz]; *He-Halutz* – Yitzhak [Cukierman]; and *Po'alei Zion Smol* [Left Labor Zionists] – Pola [Elster], Berlinski, Wasser...agenda...the defense of the Warsaw ghetto. After an exhaustive discussion in which the following members took part – Pola, Berlinski, Wasser, Mordecai and Yitzhak – we reached a joint conclusion: <sup>(1)</sup> That the Jewish Fighting Organization has been established in order to prepare the defense of the Warsaw ghetto; <sup>(2)</sup> In order to teach a lesson to the Jewish Police, the Werkschutz<sup>(2)</sup>, the managers of the "shops"<sup>(3)</sup> and all kinds of informers. When we reached the issue of appointing the leadership, a touchy discussion developed. Should there be one authority or two: military, or military and political? The members of *Ha-Shomer* and *He-Halutz* strongly oppose twofold authority. Twofold authority will lead to arguments that will hamper the work. It will take us back to the days on the eve of the Destruction, when the parties argued and did nothing. The members of *Ha-Shomer* and *He-Halutz* speak with derision and scorn of the political parties. The parties have no right to interfere in our affairs. Apart from the youth, after all, they will do nothing. They will only get in the way. One single military leadership must be established, so we can start on the job.

The members of *Po'alei Zion Smol* point out the faulty assumption of *Ha-Shomer* and *He-Halutz* on what they term the death of honor: "We are fighting for our lives. If a few of us fall in battle we will not make a tragedy of it. Every war claims its victims. If the political parties made certain mistakes it is not you who are entitled to judge them. It was not you who led the political struggle and not you who will lead it in the future... One must not sanction irresponsible acts that are likely to bring about the liquidation of the Warsaw ghetto before its time. A group or organization that carries out weapon training contains within itself the aspiration and expectation of the happy moment when it will use these arms. We consider it to be an essential condition that a second authority be established which can judge clearly, from a political point of view, what the appropriate time is for the use of arms. Why are you so anxious, why

are you so much afraid? Justice will always conquer. And even if we start out from the assumption that the ghetto will be destroyed and that we shall not be accountable to anyone for our actions, as a political party we declare that we are responsible for our actions before the Jewish masses in the world and before our comrades abroad. We do not want anybody to stone our graves because we advised irresponsible action. If you do not agree that the political parties will control the fighting organization then you are creating conditions for us that do not permit us to continue to take part"....

As soon as there is agreement on twofold authority, military and political, the foundation stone will have been laid for the joint Jewish Fighting Organization. We have decided to widen the area of our work and to draw the Bund closer to us....

- (1) Member of the military staff of the Jewish Fighting Organization.
- (2) *Werkschutz* – the guard at places of employment and factories – the "shops".
- (3) "Shop"– Code name for a German enterprise, or an enterprise working by authority, and on behalf of the Germans.

**Source: Yad Vashem Archives, JM/2598**