



Until Our Last Breath: A Holocaust Story of Love and Partisan Resistance

Michael Bart, Laurel Corona

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At Leizer Bart's funeral, one of the mourners told his son Michael that the gravestone should include a reference to the Freedom Fighters of Nekamah, to honor his late father's involvement in the Jewish resistance movement in Vilna (now Vilnius), Lithuania, at the end of World War II. Michael had never heard his parents referenced as Freedom Fighters.

Following his father's death, and with his mother in failing health, Michael embarked on a ten-year research project to find out more details about his parents' time in the Vilna ghetto, where they met, fell in love, and married, and about their activities as members of the Jewish resistance. *Until Our Last Breath* is the culmination of his research, and his parents' story of love and survival is seamlessly tied into the collective story of the Vilna ghetto, the partisans of Vilna, and the wider themes of world history.

Zenia, Bart's mother, was born and raised in Vilna. Leizer fled there to escape the Nazi invasion of his hometown of Hrubieshov in Poland. They were married by one of the last remaining rabbis ninety days before the liquidation of the ghetto. Leizer was friends with Zionist leader Abba Kovner and became a member of the Vilna ghetto underground. Shortly before the total liquidation of the ghetto, Zenia and Leizer, along with about 120 members of the underground, were able to escape to the Rudnicki forest, about 25 miles away. They became part of the Jewish partisan fighting group led by Abba Kovner—known as the Avengers—which carried out sabotage missions against the Nazi army and eventually participated in the liberation of Vilna.

Until Our Last Breath is intensely personal and painstakingly researched, a lasting memorial to the Jews of Vilna, including the resistance fighters and the author's family.

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