



The Stars Bear Witness: An organizer of Jewish resistance in Warsaw, and one of its few survivors, tells of five years of epic heroism, pursuit, and miraculous escape

Bernard Goldstein

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Bernard Goldstein was a prominent Polish socialist, union organizer, and Bund leader in the pivotal pre-World War II years of 1920 and 1921. He became active as a leader of the Jewish resistance movement in German-occupied Poland, eventually playing a critical role on the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943.

Bernard was born in Shedltze, just three hours from Warsaw, in 1889. His was a generation destined to contribute its best sons to the mounting revolutionary tide in Eastern Europe, and he joined the stream early. At the age of thirteen his imagination was already fired by stories of anti-Czarist agitation in Warsaw brought home by his two older brothers. He began to read forbidden revolutionary literature and attend the meetings of underground youth groups.

Bernard gave much time to trade-union organization and was also active in Bundist party work. He was in charge of all large political demonstrations. During the twenty-year period between the wars there was not a single Warsaw Bund mass meeting or demonstration of which Bernard was not the responsible organizer. Because of his extensive political and trade-union activity, he was constantly in contact with Polish labor leaders and other Poles prominent in public life. In the years 1920-21 the Warsaw Bund found it necessary to set up special defense groups to protect public demonstrations from attacks by Polish hooligans, and to maintain order in the crowded union halls. Shortly after their organization, Bernard was placed at the head of these groups.

The most difficult task of Bernard Goldstein's long political career was setting down the story told in the following pages. For a long time he refused to undertake it. Only after repeated pleadings from his comrades, particularly the late Shloime Mendelsohn, did he agree to attempt it.

His active leadership before the war and his position in the Jewish underground during it qualify him as the chronicler of the last hours of Warsaw's Jews. Out of the tortured memories of those five and a half years he has brought forth the picture with all its shadings—the good with the bad, the cowardly with the heroic, the disgraceful with the glorious. This is his valedictory, his final service to the Jews of Warsaw.

The appeal to Bernard's sense of duty reversed his early stubborn refusal to write this book, but nothing could shake his modesty and he refuses to speak of the bloody encounters in which he was an organizer and active participant. For him, the heroes of the Warsaw ghetto died in battle. Let no one presume to strike a pose upon their ashes.

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