

PRONOUNCEMENT BY ABBA KOVNER



ECHOES & REFLECTIONS

TEACHING THE HOLOCAUST. INSPIRING THE CLASSROOM.



“Jewish youngster, do not trust those that deceive you. Of the eighty thousand Jews in ‘The Jerusalem of Lithuania’ [Vilna], only twenty thousand have survived. In front of our very eyes, they tore our parents, our brothers, our sisters from us.

Where are the hundreds of men who were abducted for labor by the Lithuanian ‘kidnappers’?

Where are the naked women and the children who were taken away from us on the terrible night of the provocation?

Where are the Jews who were taken away on Yom Kippur [taken on that day]?

Where are our brethren from the second ghetto?

Whoever was taken out of the ghetto gates never returned again.

All the roads of the Gestapo lead to Ponary [the woods in the outskirts of Vilna where Jews were shot by the Einsatzgruppen]

And Ponary is death!...

Hitler is plotting to annihilate all the Jews of Europe. It befell the Jews of Lithuania to be the first in line.

Let us not go like sheep to the slaughter!

It’s true, we are weak and defenseless, but the only response to the enemy is resistance!

Brothers! It is better to die as free fighters than to live at the mercy of murderers.

Resist! To our last breath.”



Reprinted with permission from Yitzhak Arad, Yisrael Gutman, Abraham Margalio, eds., Documents on the Holocaust, Selected Sources on the Destruction of the Jews of Germany and Austria, Poland and the Soviet Union (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 1981), 433. All rights reserved.