

ZADIG PRODUCTIONS PRESENTS

CYWIA & RACHELA

THEY RESISTED IN THE WARSAW GHETTO

A MOVIE BY RAFAEL LEWANDOWSKI

NARRATED BY MATHIEU AMALRIC

PRODUCED BY CÉLINE NUSSE PAUL ROZENBERG AND RUTH ZYLBERMAN PICTURE MATEUSZ SKALSKI SOUND JAN BOGUSZEWSKI AMIR BOVERMAN EDITING PIERRE HABERER ORIGINAL SCORE RONAN MAILLARD
SOUND EDITING OLGA PASTERNAK SOUND MIXING YOHAN BOISGONTIER ASSISTANT DIRECTOR YONATAN COHEN ZAGURI PRODUCTION MANAGER FLORENCE GUINAUDEAU
ASSISTED BY MAUD RAMOS-GUERRERO ANNA MICHALAK A COPRODUCTION ZADIG PRODUCTIONS KATYUSHA PRODUCTIONS ETHAN PRODUCTIONS IN COLLABORATION WITH THE EMANUEL RINGELBLUM JEWISH HISTORICAL INSTITUTE
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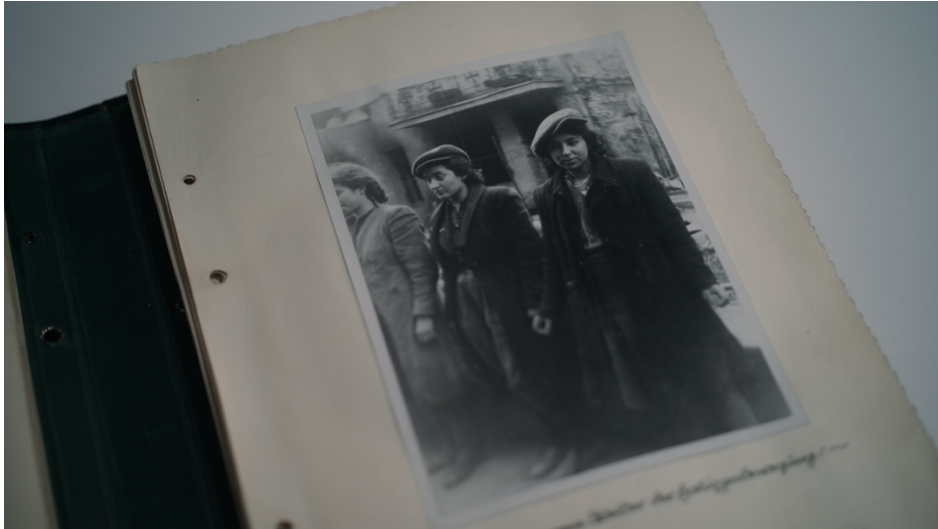
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de la
Shoah



The few images and reports of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising are legendary. We sometimes forget that the uprising was an act of resistance prepared over a long period by thousands of young Jewish activists whose whereabouts have often been lost, and that women played a vital role. The story of two of them, Cywia Lubetkin and Rachela Auerbach, revives the memory of this incredible struggle eighty years after the facts.



CYWIA & RACHELA
They resisted in the Warsaw Ghetto

A film by Rafael Lewandowski

Original title INSURGÉES ! Les résistantes du Ghetto de Varsovie

Coproduction Zadig Productions, Katyusha productions,
Ethan productions

Co-financed by France Télévisions & Histoire TV

Director of photography Mateusz Skalski

Editing Pierre Haberer

Voice-over Mathieu Amalric

Sound Jan Boguszewski, Amir Boverman
Olga Pasternak, Yohan Boisgontier

Music Ronan Maillard

Producers Céline Nusse, Ruth Zylberman, Paul Rozenberg

Lenght 90' & 2x50'

Master copy ProRes

Sound Stereo 5.1

Sutitles Français, Anglais, Polonais, Hébreu

Distribution CLPB Rights

Premiere Avril 2024

In partnership with:
The Jewish Historical Institute of Warsaw

With the support of:
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CNC – Centre national du cinéma et de l'image animée



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In April of 1943, one of the first armed revolt against the Nazis in occupied Europe broke out in Warsaw. It was a heroic endeavor with very limited means, carried out by the very people that the Third Reich deemed inferior and destined for extermination. Born out of desperation, at the center of the very territories most brutally touched by Hitlerian barbarity, the uprising erupted with extraordinary ferocity. Though destined to fail, the rebellion has come to be seen as one of World War II's central events.



The images and accounts that remain of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising are now fabled, to such a degree that this revolt is reduced in the collective unconscious to its symbolic importance: an act of suicidal dignity carried out by some mythical fighters, some whom, very few, survived by miracle. We tend to overlook that there was a before and after to the uprising, that it was an act of resistance prepared at length and carried out by thousands of young Jewish militants, of whom we have mostly lost all trace. We also overlook the fact that women played a crucial role in the Uprising.

The story of two of these women, who survived their people's extermination – **Cywia Lubetkin (1914-1978)** and **Rachela Auerbach (1903-1976)** – provides a gateway to revisiting the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, to better understand not just the facts, participants, and events, but also its sources and consequences.

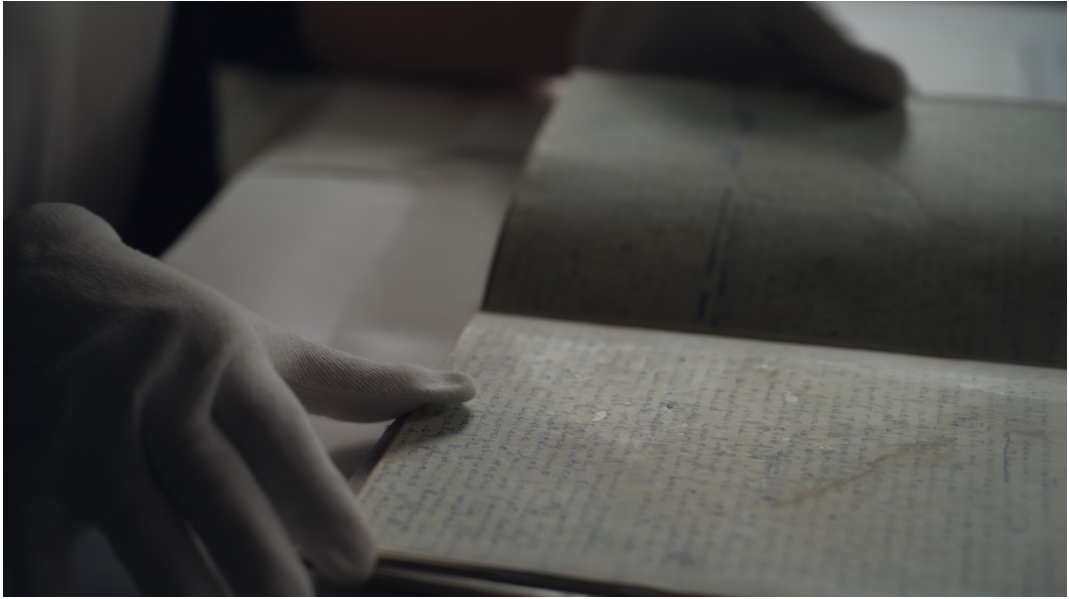
Given the new historical research and findings currently coming to light, 80 years after the events, this double account is a unique way of reviving the memory of a culture whose importance, diversity and richness were the target of an unprecedented destruction.



"In the face of the old people's fear, the pain of the children, the defenseless despair, of men and women in the prime of life - this is perhaps my testament: REVENGE!"
Rachel Auerbach. Warsaw, Summer 1942.



"With our death, we hoped to at least save the honor of our people."
Zivia Lubetkin. Jerusalem, 1946.



CYWIA & RACHELA tells the story of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising from a unique point of view, superimposing the fates of two women who were central to the uprising and whose accounts have never been told before. The film is part of the historiographical trend of shedding light on previously neglected, even unknown, aspects of this historical event.



The film especially makes use of visual, photographic, iconographic, and filmic elements that are never-before-seen or unexploited, allowing us crucially to explore the connections between individual lives and the march of history.



Director's Note

Eighty years after the events, the uprising of Jewish resistance fighters in the occupied Polish capital has been acknowledged as a central chapter in World War II. It has even become legendary, almost mythical. To such a point that the insurgents' battle is often reduced to the factual account and desperate heroism. We know that, starting April 19th, 1943, the fighting lasted several weeks. We know that the leaders, at the head a few hundred men and women, were able to pose a real problem to thousands of German soldiers. We can picture some of the moments thanks to the iconic photos. We are gripped with horror thinking of how this uprising was mercilessly crushed by the Nazis. For years now, in Warsaw there have been commemorations with great fanfare to honor the memory of the insurgents.



But what do we really know about them? Who were they before turning into fighters? What was the source and nature of their armed uprising, the elements and steps leading up to it? Beyond an opposition to the Nazis, what ideals brought them together and united them? And what were their dilemmas, the points on which they disagreed?

At the source of this project, there is firstly a desire to not just retell the uprising itself, but also to go back through the earlier lives of those who participated, leading up to the rebellion. I want to show to the viewer how this uprising was the fruit of a political commitment and awareness that far predated the actual conflict; that it was part of a resistance movement against the occupier, with many different aspects, which started in the very first weeks of World War II.



But there is also an “after” to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which CYWIA & RACHELA will reveal. The film thus explores the repercussions as much as the event itself – both its origins and its effect. And this focus on the intention and structure of the narrative led me to the choice of two central figures who resisted and who devoted their survival to bearing witness to the extermination of their people, to speak on behalf of those dead. Cywia Lubetkin and Rachela Auerbach are little known internationally, as their writings in Polish, Hebrew, and Yiddish have yet to be widely translated. CYWIA & RACHELA will go a long way to correcting this oversight.

Behind the heroic image of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising's Jewish fighters – to whom stands Nathan Rapoport's emblematic monument from 1947 – hides an entire generation whose energy and innovation were almost destroyed and condemned to oblivion by the Shoah. It was a generation where women held a central role. Long placed in the background in post-war accounts of the uprising, these women are now being rediscovered by historians and considered as essential parts of a full and comprehensive understanding of the event. In all that both unites and differentiates them, Cywia Lubetkin and Rachela Auerbach are emblematic of their generation, and of the Jewish resistance to the occupying forces.

They survived and, moreover, devoted much of their lives after the war to raising awareness and remembrance of the uprising. These two central characters will allow me to tell the fate of those who were with them. I am thinking not just of the main, male, leaders of the Jewish resistance, but also the famous women who died either during or just after the upheaval, or who miraculously survived it.



I want CYWIA & RACHELA to bring to life and pay homage to all these exceptional individuals. The film will take the time to show their faces and mention their names, and to evoke the hundreds of thousands other victims of their people's extermination. I cannot move around this city, where my ancestors once lived and I do now, without thinking of the ghosts that inhabit its every corner, especially those from the Jewish world of which it was once the bustling capital.





Rafael Lewandowski

French and Polish film director. Graduated from La Sorbonne in film studies and from the Directing department of the French film school **La Fémis**, Rafael Lewandowski directed numerous documentaries and short films widely distributed internationally. His first feature film *La Dette* (original title: *Kret* – international: *The Mole*) was released in Poland, in France and in a few European countries in 2011–2012. The movie won, among others, the Male Interpretation Award at the 35th Montreal International World Film Festival, as well as

the Press and Public Prize at the Arras Film Festival. In 2022, he directed for ARTE of a 6 x 52' documentary series on the Algerian war: *At War(s) for Algeria*. In 2011, he received the Polityka weekly's Passport ("Paszport Polityki"), and in 2015 he was awarded the Knight of the Order Arts and Letters by the French Government.

Selective filmography:

- „At War(s) for Algeria” (2022)
- „Herbert. A barbarian in the garden” (2021)
- „Out of the Limelight” (2017)
- „Minkowski | Saga” (2013)
- „The Mole” (2011)
- „Bye bye Dublin!” (2010)
- „Children of Solidarnosc” (2006)
- „In the Shadow of Don Giovanni (2003)
- „Hearings” (2000)
- „A Shadowed Gaze” (1999)
- „Cela” (1996)



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