

The Importance of Cultural Activity in the Vilna Ghetto

An assembly was held to mark the first anniversary of the theater on January 15, 1943. Jaszunski, who headed the Department of Culture - and who along with his Bundist colleagues had at first opposed the theater - summed up, in his opening address, the importance of having a theater in the ghetto. Gens, in a speech expressing appreciation of ghetto cultural activity, declared:

.... We wanted to give man the opportunity to free himself from the ghetto for several hours, and this we achieved. We are passing through dark and difficult days. Our bodies are in the ghetto, but our spirit has not been enslaved... Before the first concert it was said that concerts should not be held in graveyards. True, the statement is true, but all of life is now a graveyard. Our hands must not falter. We must be strong in body and soul...

Source: Arad, Yitzhak, *Ghetto in Flames*, Jerusalem, 1980, p. 323.