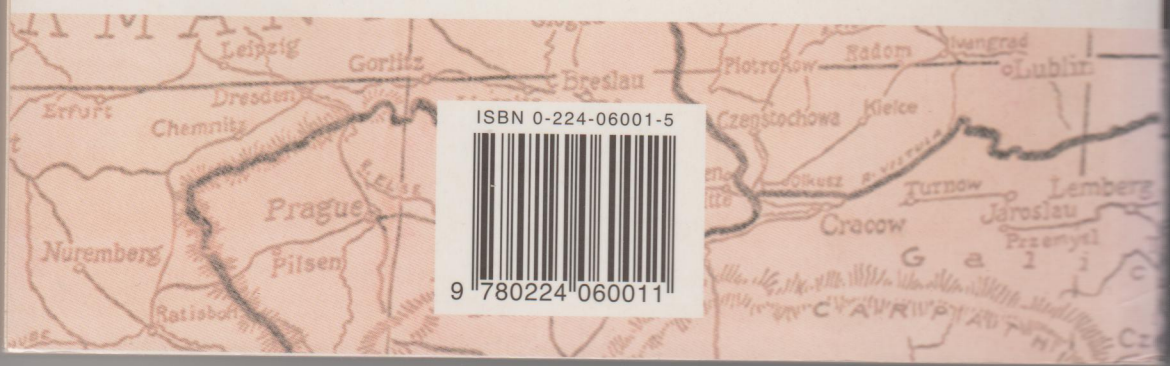
This book tells one of the great untold stories of the Second World War. When they were not yet twenty years old three young Jews, Abba Kovner, Vitka Kempner and Rushka Marle, left their families in Western Poland and came to the Lithuanian ghetto of Vilna. Abba, who had belonged to a Zionist youth brigade, became the leader of the young people in the ghetto; Rushka, the daughter of a cattle merchant, and Vitka, a tall slender girl of nineteen, were his deputies.

Together they organised the first underground movement in Europe. They mapped the sewers and used the tunnels beneath the city to smuggle food and weapons into and out of the ghetto. In 1942, Abba sent Vitka on the group's first mission; she blew up a German train, the first act of sabotage in occupied Europe. In 1943, Abba and Rushka and Vitka escaped the ghetto and led their band of resistance fighters deep into the forests of Poland, where they lived for the remainder of the war. From here, they bombed the occupied city they loved, blowing up its waterworks and its powerplant, plunging Vilna into darkness, and paving the way for the advancing Russian army.

When the war was over Abba, Vitka and Rushka went to Israel, but they did not forget what they had learned in Vilna and in the forest. In 1945 Abba Kovner led his movement in a new direction, not to Palestine, but to Germany, to Nuremberg, to seek revenge.

Rich Cohen's father was Rushka's cousin. He grew up with the protagonists and he tells their story brilliantly, with the momentum of a suspense novel and the moral force of a biblical text.



ISBN 0-224-06001-5
9 780224 060011