

Resistance, Rescue and the End of the Holocaust



OBSTACLES TO RESISTANCE

- Superior, armed power of the Germans against a largely unarmed population.
- German tactic of “Collective Responsibility” (usually 50 to 100 people were killed in retaliation for every German soldier killed)
- Isolation of Jews and lack of weapons (even the local population wouldn't help if you escaped—Jews looked different and the penalty for helping them was death)
- Secrecy and deception of deportations (many people were forced to write postcards before they were gassed saying “Arrived safely. I am well.”)



Simone Schloss, a Jewish member of the French resistance, under guard after a German military tribunal in Paris sentenced her to death. She was executed on July 2, 1942. Paris, France, April 14, 1942.

SPIRITUAL RESISTANCE

- **“Attempts made by individuals to maintain their humanity, personal integrity, dignity, and sense of civilization in the face of Nazi attempts to dehumanize and degrade them”**
- **“The refusal to have one’s spirit broken in the midst of the most horrible degradation.”**
- **They held secret schools, established underground libraries, and held concerts.**
- **They documented what was happening to them and hid them for the world to find.**
- **They held their own religious services in spite of the law against it. “Many orthodox Jews who opposed the use of physical force viewed prayer and religious observances as the truest form of resistance.”**

PHYSICAL RESISTANCE BY THE JEWS: PARTISAN GROUPS



A group of Jewish partisans in the Rudninkai Forest, near Vilna,
between 1942 and 1944

PHYSICAL RESISTANCE BY THE JEWS: PARTISAN GROUPS



Group portrait of a Jewish French underground group named “Compagnie Reiman.”

✓ **Some Jews who managed to escape from ghettos and camps formed partisan groups based in forests.**

✓ **One group in a Soviet forest managed to derail hundreds of trains and kill over 3,000 German soldiers**

✓ **They did not receive much help from local populations because of the rampant anti-Semitism**

✓ **The British dropped 32 Palestinian Jews behind German lines to organize resistance and warn the Jews of their fate in 1944**

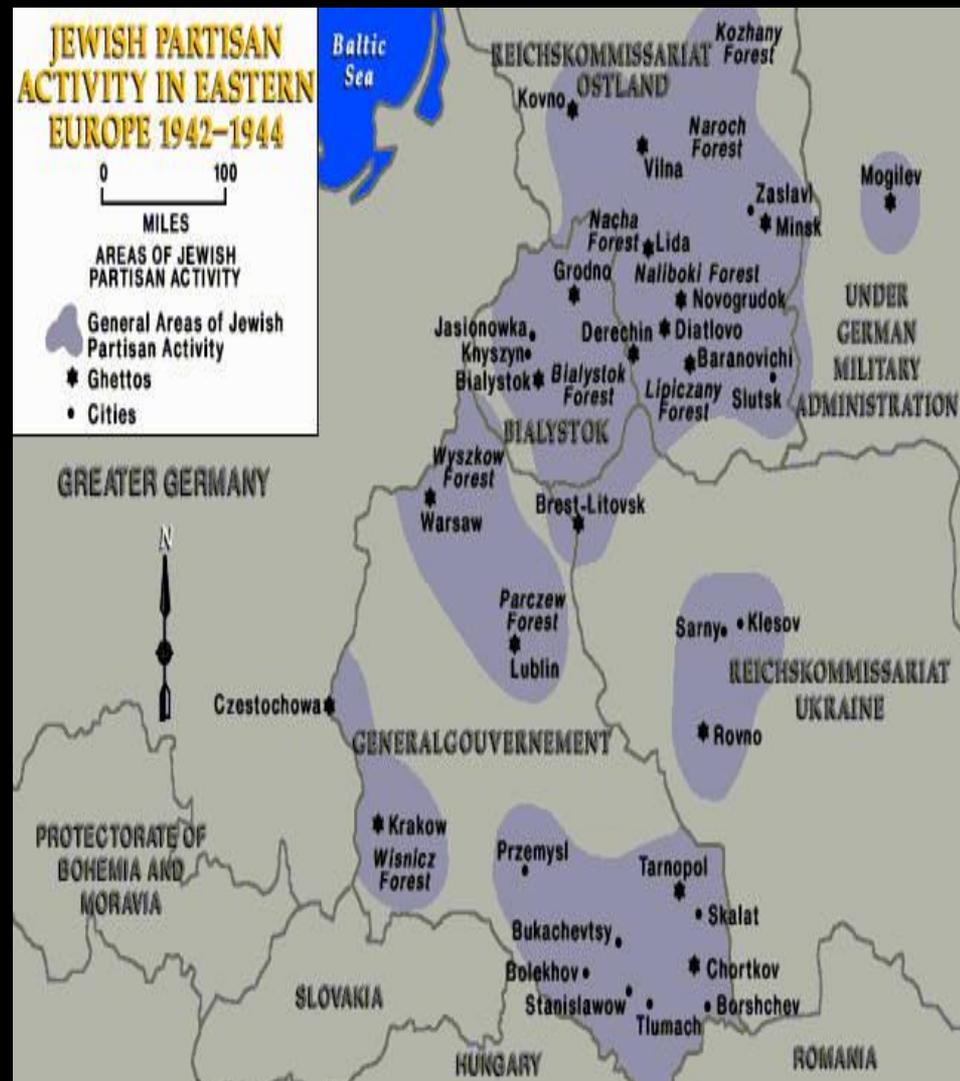
PHYSICAL RESISTANCE BY THE JEWS: PARTISAN GROUPS

✓The map to the right shows the active cells of Jewish Partisan groups acting from forests in Eastern Europe.

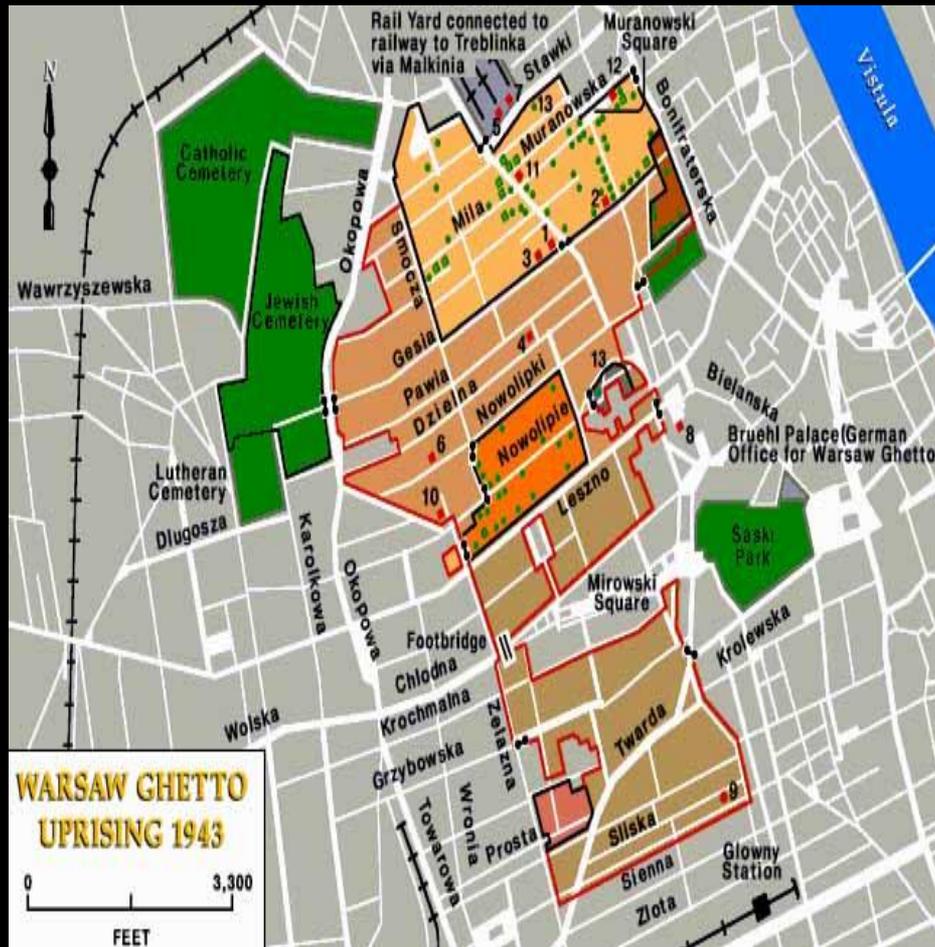
✓As many as 20,000 Jews fought the Germans in these groups alone.

✓Most of this resistance did not start until 1943 after the Jews realized what was going on with their families.

✓Many of these groups also saved and harbored Jewish families—as many as 10,000 Jews were saved by these groups.



PHYSICAL RESISTANCE BY THE JEWS: WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING



➤ Warsaw is the capital of Poland and was the center of Jewish life and culture before WWII, with over 350,000 Jews.

➤ By Nov. 1940, all of the Jews were enclosed in the ghetto and surrounded by a wall that was over ten feet high, topped with barbed wire.

➤ In the summer of 1942, 300,000 Jews were deported to Treblinka. When the Jews learned what happened there, the young people formed an organization called the Z.O.B. (Jewish Fighting Organization)

PHYSICAL RESISTANCE BY THE JEWS: WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING

✓The Z.O.B. was led by 23 year old Mordecai Anielewicz.

✓In Jan. 1943, he issued a proclamation for the Jews to resist going to the cattle cars, and his small force attacked the Germans when they entered the ghetto. After a few days, the Germans retreated.

✓They continued to stockpile weapons and in April 1943, the major uprising began as the Germans entered the ghetto to deport the remaining inhabitants.



One of the most famous pictures of the Holocaust. German stormtroopers force Warsaw ghetto dwellers of all ages to move, hands up, during the Jewish Ghetto Uprising in April-May 1943. Photo credit: Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi War Crimes, courtesy of USHMM Photo Archives.

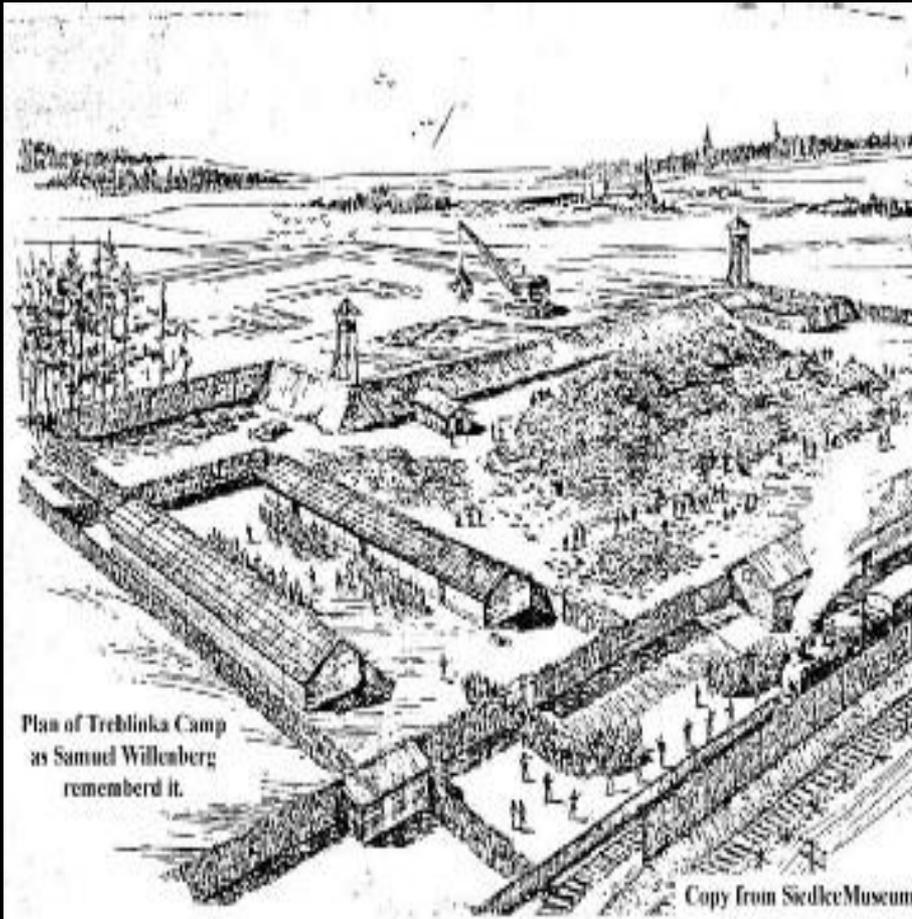
PHYSICAL RESISTANCE BY THE JEWS: WARSAW GHETTO UPRISING



Juergen Stroop (third from the left), SS commander who crushed the Warsaw Ghetto uprising. Warsaw, Poland, between April 19 and May 16, 1943. National Archives and Records Administration: USHMM #34138

- ✓ **750 ghetto fighters fought the heavily armed and well trained Germans and held them off for almost a month.**
- ✓ **Of the more than 56,000 Jews captured, about 7,000 were shot, and the remainder were sent to killing centers or concentration camps.**

PHYSICAL RESISTANCE BY THE JEWS: TREBLINKA



➤ On August 12, 1943, the underground fighters in the camp heard of the Warsaw ghetto uprising from the last transport to the camp and put their own plan into action.

➤ They stole weapons, destroyed the extermination area, eliminated the guards on duty set the camp on fire and then escaped.

➤ Many were killed, but 300 escaped through the fences. About 100 managed to avoid being recaptured. They would have had better success if the signal to attack had not been given a half hour early.

➤ A few months later, the Germans leveled the camp and planted pine trees to cover the mass murders there. At least 750,000 Jews died at the camp between July 1942 and Nov. 1943

PHYSICAL RESISTANCE BY THE JEWS: SOBIBOR



The train tracks leading into Sobibor

✓When Soviet Lieutenant Alexandr “Sasha” Aronovish Pechersky came to Sobibor in Sept. 1943, the Jewish underground resistance made him their leader. They sensed the end was near

✓His plan was to lure SS officers into storehouses and beat them to death, seize their weapons, and set the camp on fire. Then, they would storm the gate and get away.

✓This occurred on Oct. 14, 1943. Nearly 300 prisoners escaped but not many survived the harsh winter and the local population hunting them down since it was rumored that they had stolen gold.

✓By the end of 1943, the Germans had plowed the death camp under and planted crops to cover the place where they had murdered more than 250,000 Jews

PHYSICAL RESISTANCE BY THE JEWS: AUSCHWITZ

- On Oct. 23, 1943, an unidentified Jewish woman drew a pistol and shot to SS guards as she was being led to the gas chamber. All of the other women with her resisted and they were all shot by the SS.
- On Oct. 7, 1944, a group of Sonderkommando blew up the number four crematoria using dynamite that the underground resistance had smuggled to them. Though the group of 600 tried to escape, they all died.
- On January 6, 1945, four women accused of supplying the dynamite were hanged in front of the camp. As the trap door opened, one of them shouted “Be strong; have courage!” Three weeks later, Auschwitz was liberated.
- Overall, 667 prisoners escaped from Auschwitz and 297 of them were able to find refuge in neutral countries.



Ella Gärtner
Auschwitz Revolt
*United States Holocaust Memorial
Museum #08518*

RESISTANCE BY NON-JEWS: THE WHITE ROSE MOVEMENT



Hans Scholl (left), Sophie Scholl (center), and Christoph Probst (right), leaders of the White Rose resistance organization. Munich, Germany, 1942.

✓The White Rose movement took its name as a symbol of something that stand for purity and innocence in the face of evil.

✓Founded in June 1942 by Hans Scholl, a 24 year old medical student, he was joined by his sister and another friend as seen to the left.

✓They distributed leaflets against Hitler and even painted graffiti on buildings.

✓They were captured in Feb. 1943 and executed four days later. Hans' last words were "Long live freedom!"

Liberation

- Liberation began in July of 1944 when the Soviet Army moved into Majdanek, near Lublin, Poland. Majdanek was the first concentration camp to be liberated.



A Soviet soldier stands on a pile of victims shoes in Majdanek.

The Camps

Survivors found in barracks in Mauthausen and Buchenwald



April 15, 1945

Approximately 40,000 prisoners freed at Bergen-Belsen by the British, who report "both inside and outside the huts was a carpet of dead bodies, human excreta, rags and filth."

A mass grave in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.



Survivors in Dachau on the day of liberation.



Inmates, Dachau

Liberation

- At Auschwitz, Soviet troops found overwhelming evidence of the mass murders committed. In the warehouses that remained standing, soldiers found the belongings of the hundreds of thousands of prisoners sent to Auschwitz, including 800,000 women's suits, hundreds of thousands of shoes, eyeglasses, prayer shawls, suitcases, and 14,000 pounds



Clothing belonging to female victims at Auschwitz.

Liberation

- The Western Allies also liberated a number of camps, including Buchenwald, Dachau, and Bergen Belsen, all in 1945. The last camp was liberated by the Soviet Army on May 9, 1945.
- General Eisenhower made sure these camps were documented in video and film
- He would bring the local populace of Germans in to see what their government had been doing.

Liberation



- As the troops moved into the camps, they discovered the gruesome conditions. Corpses covered the grounds, survivors were too weak to move and were infested with lice and disease.

CLIP

Liberation

- The Allied soldiers were shocked, horrified, and outraged at what they found in the camps. The soldiers forced the German civilians to tour the camps and view the appalling conditions.



CLIP

Aftermath

- Not all survivors wanted to return to their former homes, creating a need for new homes for those who had been displaced by the Holocaust.
- Some who tried to return home still faced anti-semitic opposition and discrimination. Anti-semitism had been around for centuries in Europe, and it did not end with liberation. There were random violent actions against surviving Jews in Europe, some of which resulted in death.

Aftermath



The defendants during the Nuremberg Trials.

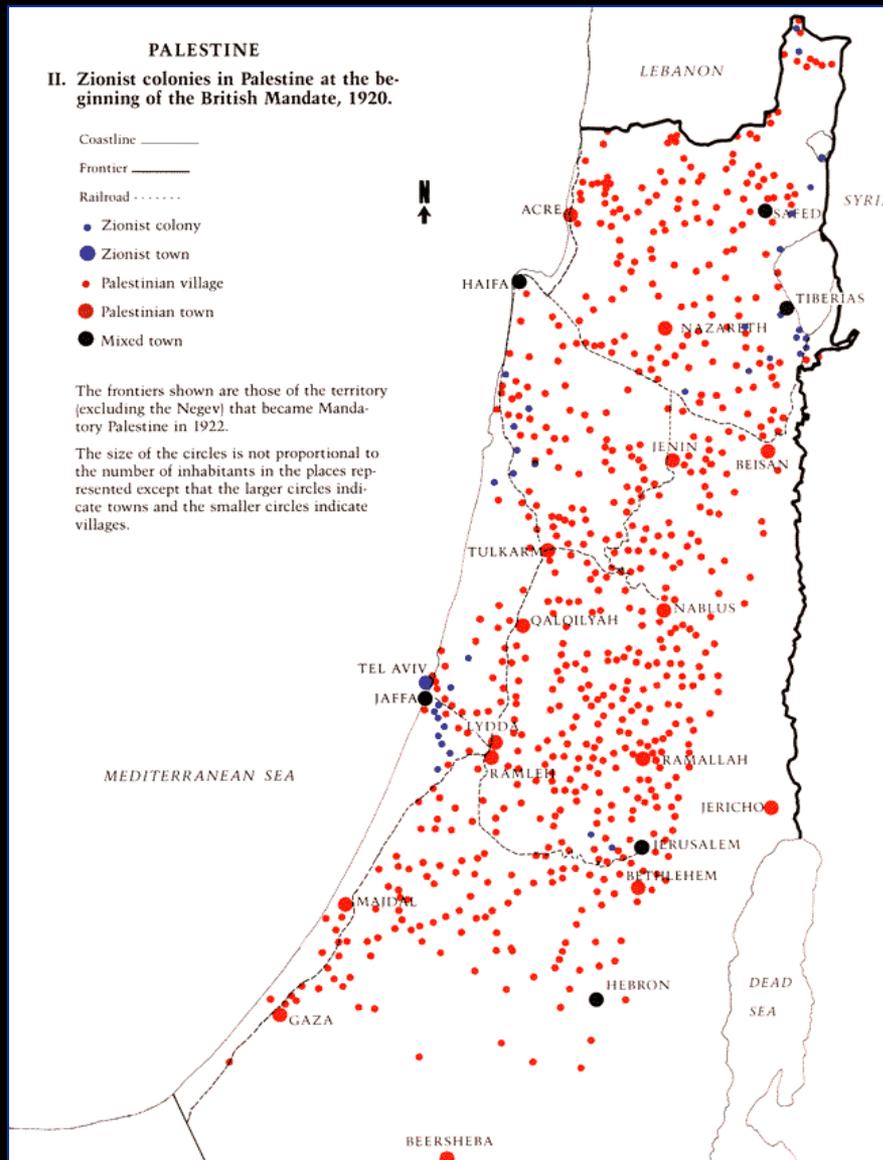
- From October 18th, 1945, to October 1, 1946, the International Military Tribunal tried twenty two major war criminals. They were charged with crimes against humanity, crimes against peace, war crimes, and conspiracy to commit such crimes. Twelve of the convicted were sentenced to death, three to life

Israel and Arab States in Conflict

- In 1917, Britain issued the Balfour Declaration, which pledged to support a Jewish homeland.
- However, this deepened tensions in the Middle East.
- There was a migration of Jews to Palestine, especially after the horrors of the Holocaust.



Jews & Arabs in Palestine,



➤ In 1920, there was 1 Jew to every 10 Arabs in Palestine.

➤ By 1947, the ratio was 2 Arabs for every Jew.

↓

The Arabs felt that they were losing control of their country!

The Birth of Israel

- After Britain withdrew in 1948, Jews proclaimed the independent state of Israel.
- The US and Soviet Union both recognized Israel.
- Arab states, however, launched a military attack on the new nation.

PALESTINIAN LOSS OF LAND 1946 TO 2005



Today Israel and Palestine are at odds.



arab - ISRAELI Conflict