The Holocaust: Maps

Martin Gilbert

In these maps, I have tried to tell something of the story of those whose lives were destroyed. . . . The terrible story outlined in these maps took place within the last fifty years. It has recently become the subject of efforts to deny that it ever took place. These denials are a cruel travesty of the truth. They are an insult to the memory of the dead, and a danger for the future. . . .

Each map is intended to show what actually happened: the scale of the slaughter—six million Jews murdered—the extraordinarily courageous acts of Jewish resistance, the fate of many millions of non-Jews who were also murdered, the often inadequate response of the world outside Europe, and the rescue of Jews by exceptionally courageous individuals who were themselves under Nazi rule. None of this can be denied without falsifying history.
TWO THOUSAND YEARS OF JEWISH LIFE IN EUROPE

This map shows the age of the principal European Jewish communities in 1939. It was the Jewish communities shown here - their culture, their customs, and their deep local roots - which the Nazis sought utterly to destroy in the second world war.

Most of the Jewish communities of Europe had come into existence hundreds of years before the founding of the States of which they were to become a part. Others had subsequently been destroyed by expulsion and persecution in the middle ages - but had then been refounded a second, a third, and even a fourth time. The Jews of Germany had already been living continuously in different parts of Germany for more than 1,500 years when the German Empire was established in 1870, the year of German unity under Bismarck.

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SOME EARLY RECORDS OF JEWISH TOWN LIFE IN EUROPE BEFORE 1600

Jewish settlements throughout Europe flourished from Roman times. Early local records show different aspects of Jewish town life, from trade and prosperity to persecution and expulsion. This map gives 19 examples of contemporary records mentioning Jews before 1600. By 1937 there were more than 35,000 European towns and villages with Jewish communities. This map shows the European frontiers of that year. The Nazis made it one of their first aims to drive the Jews from their long-established homes, including from each of the towns shown here.

960 AD. Worms. The local Jews send a letter to Palestine asking for verification of a rumour that the Messiah had come.

1310. A Jewish scribe completes a fine illuminated manuscript.

1561. Tallin. Jews, who had lived in the town for at least 200 years, expelled. They were not allowed to return until the town was annexed by Russia in 1710.

1489. Minsk. Jews obtain the lease of all customs dues.

1173. Wrocław. Local coins discovered with Hebrew inscriptions.

1387. Przemyśl. Local records mention a Jewish community in the town.

1117. Jewish houses attacked during a local rebellion.

578 AD. A local document records that the five hundred Jewish citizens in the town and neighbourhood were forced to choose between baptism and expulsion.

839 AD. Local records reveal a Jewish family owning land outside the city walls, and being protected by special order of the Emperor Louis the Pious.

1229. Munich. A Jew appears in court as a witness during a trial.

1188. Strasbourg. Jews flee the town to avoid persecution from the crusaders, but return soon afterwards.

140 BC. A Greek inscription refers to the Jewish community, and to the liberation of a Jewish slave.

388 AD. Bishop Ambrose comments on the destruction of the synagogue "by act of God". It was soon rebuilt.

140 BC. A Greek inscription records the arrival of Jews from Egypt.


1204. Vienna. The existence of a synagogue is recorded.

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PERSECUTION, EXPULSION AND REFUGE, 1050 AD - 1650

In the six hundred years between 1050 AD and 1650 the Jews were frequently uprooted from their homes, and driven out of the lands in which they had lived and traded for many generations, even for centuries. This map shows some of the expulsions, and a few of the towns in which the Jews rebuilt their lives and livelihood. In these same towns, four hundred years later, their descendants were to be uprooted again, when the Nazis sought their total elimination from European life and culture.

Some of the areas from which the Jews were expelled, often with great violence and cruelty, between 1650 AD and 1650

Some of the towns in which Jews found refuge from persecution; towns in which they were to grow and flourish, but from which, in the Nazi era, they were deported to death camps, or murdered in mass-execution sites (see, for example, Map 8 and Map 16).
THE PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS OF GERMANY IN THE FIRST FIVE YEARS OF NAZI RULE 1933 - 1938

9 March 1933. First anti-Jewish riots in Berlin.
1 April 1933. All Jewish shops in Berlin boycotted.
10 May 1933. In Berlin the Nazis hold a public burning of books written by Jewish and other authors.
October 1933. All hospitals in Berlin declared "free" of Jewish doctors. These doctors could find no other hospital work.

10 January 1933. Hitler becomes the Chancellor of Germany. Many Jews arrested, ill-treated, and tortured.
15 September 1935. The Nuremberg Laws make the Jews second class citizens, and lead to their being driven from public and professional life.
9 November 1938. 191 synagogues set on fire throughout Germany. Over 2,000 Jews murdered in the camps.
15 November 1938. All German schools closed to German Jewish children.

13 March 1933. All Jewish lawyers and judges expelled from the law courts.
13 March 1933. Jewish owned shops ransacked and destroyed.

1933. The first Province to eliminate Jews from all official and professional positions.

1935. 100,000 German children swear "eternal enmity" to the Jews.
9 June 1938. Synagogue destroyed.

10 August 1938. The synagogue destroyed.
The borders of Germany, 1919 - 1937.
Other European borders.

From 1933, "Jews not wanted" signs were put up throughout Germany on shops, cafes, sports stadiums, and on roads leading into towns and villages. In some towns, all Jewish names were scratched off war memorials of the first world war. The savage anti-Jewish propaganda of the "Stürmer" magazine was in public display cases, and within six years, the 2,000 year old Jewish community was turned into a community of outlaws who could expect nothing but harassment and persecution.

Concentration camps set up on German soil by 1938.

Among the many indignities forced upon the Jews was a revival of the medieval practice of making all Jews wear a yellow "Star of David" on their clothing.

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GERMAN OFFICIAL PLANS FOR THE "FINAL SOLUTION", 20 JANUARY 1942

The number of Jews mentioned at the Wannsee Conference, country by country and area by area, for eventual deportation, and subsequent death. More than 14 million people were thus marked out for death.

One of the macabre features of the numerical list of the Jews submitted to the Wannsee Conference was the fact that no figure was given for the Jews of Estonia, merely a brief note that Estonia was 'Free of Jews'. This was true; the 1,000 Estonian Jews who had come under German rule in October 1941 had all been murdered during the three months before the Wannsee Conference.

In December 1941, a month before the Wannsee Conference, the first Nazi extermination camp had already come into operation, at Chelmno, responsible for the mass murder of Jews, Gypsies, and Soviet prisoners-of-war. After passing through corridors marked 'To the showers' and 'To the doctor', the victims were forced into a large truck which was in fact a gas-chamber, where they were killed within a few minutes. By the end of 1944 more than 360,000 Jews had been murdered in Chelmno alone.

The Wannsee Conference also specified the number of Jews in unconquered countries for eventual destruction, including 330,000 from Britain, 18,000 from Switzerland, 6,000 from Spain and 4,000 from Ireland.

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Between 1939 and 1945, six million unarmed and innocent Jewish civilians—men, women, children, and babies—were murdered in Nazi-controlled Europe, as part of a deliberate policy to destroy all traces of Jewish life and culture. As many as two million of these were killed in their own towns and villages, some confined in ghettos where death by slow starvation was a deliberate Nazi policy, others taken to be shot at mass-murder sites near where they lived. The remaining four million Jews were forced from their homes and taken by train to distant concentration camps, where they were murdered by being worked to death, starved to death, beaten to death, shot, or gassed.

Among the hundreds of thousands of non-Jews sent by the Nazis to concentration camps were anti-Nazis, Jehovah’s Witnesses, homosexuals, the mentally ill, and the chronically sick. In addition, more than 250,000 Gypsies were murdered, in a Nazi attempt to eliminate Gypsies as well as Jews from the map of Europe.

In many of the camps shown here so-called “medical” experiments were carried out, without anaesthetics, solely to satisfy the curiosity and sadism of the doctors. Hundreds of otherwise healthy “patients” were tortured and murdered during these experiments.
NON-JEWISH VICTIMS OF NAZI RULE

In all occupied lands, the Nazis carried out large-scale reprisals against completely innocent and unarmed civilians, whenever a single German soldier was killed by partisans, or even when German property was attacked. In mass-murder actions against non-Jews, they also massacred 4 million unarmed Soviet prisoners-of-war, 1 million Soviet civilians, more than 1 million Polish civilians, and 1½ million Yugoslav civilians. In May 1940, at two villages near Dunkirk, a total of 170 disarmed British prisoners-of-war were murdered in cold blood. In June 1944, at three villages near Caen, 70 disarmed Canadian prisoners-of-war were likewise murdered, by German SS troops.

In each of the actions shown here, unarmed men, women and children, almost all non-Jews, were chosen as the victims of Nazi hatred and vengeance. Many of those killed were beaten to death by blows of rifle butts, burned to death after petrol had been poured over them and ignited while they were still alive, or stripped naked and then shot. Those murdered at Klissur included 50 children under ten years of age. At Mikulino, all those killed were women patients in a mental hospital. In the Ardeatine caves in Rome, 253 Catholics and 70 Jews were murdered, among them many shopkeepers, students, lawyers and peddlers.

Twenty-six of many thousands of Nazi reprisal and murder actions against unarmed non-Jews, with the approximate number murdered in each massacre.

Countries in each of which more than a million non-Jewish civilians died as a result of deliberate Nazi brutality.

An estimated 32,000 German civilians were executed between 1933 and 1945 for so-called "political" offences. Those killed included Conservatives, Socialists, Communists, Catholics, Protestants, writers, journalists and teachers. All over Europe, non-Jews who were discovered sheltering Jews were also shot.
THE DEPORTATION OF JEWS FROM HOLLAND, BELGIUM, FRANCE, ITALY AND GREECE

Driven from their homes and deprived of their possessions, more than four million of the six million Jews of Europe who were murdered by the Nazis were sent in cattle trucks to Nazi death camps in the east. Up to a thousand people were forced into each train, deprived of food or water, and shunted eastwards. Many died during the journey. On arrival at the death camps, the majority, weakened, sick and bewildered, were sent straight to the gas-chambers.

- Some of the principal towns from which Jews were deported from the countries shown here.
- Some of the deportation centres, in which Jews were confined before deportation.
- Main deportation routes, mostly operating between July 1942 and August 1944.
- Death camps.

This map shows some of the longest of the deportation journeys, from western Europe and the Balkans. As a result of the journeys shown here more than 320,000 Jews perished.

European frontiers of 1937.

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THE DESPERATE SEARCH FOR A COUNTRY OF REFUGE 1933-1945

1940 U.S. Congress rejects Bill to open Alaska to Jewish refugees.

1943 British Government rejects the appeal by the Archbishop of Canterbury to abandon the quota system.

1938 At Evian the nations of the world failed to agree on even a partial "open door" policy for Jewish refugees. The Australian delegate told the conference: "It will no doubt be appreciated that as we have no racial problem, we are not desirous of importing one."

1944 U.S. State Department rejects Swedish proposal for joint rescue of 20,000 Jewish children from Germany.

In 1917 Britain promised the Jews a "National Home" in Palestine. But in May 1939, following protests from Egypt, Syria, Yemen, Iraq, and from the Muslims of India, the British not only introduced severe restrictions on Jewish immigration, but also put pressure on the German, Greek, Yugoslav, Bulgarian and Turkish Governments not to allow "illegal" immigrants into Palestine. As a result of this policy, tens of thousands of Jews lost the chance to reach Palestine, a land in which the League of Nations had specifically given them the right to buy land, to settle on waste land, to till the soil, and to contribute by their own efforts to its economic prosperity. Many of those who were unable to emigrate persisted during the Nazi holocaust.

Birodian, the "Jewish Autonomous Region" of the Soviet Union, set up in 1934, but closed during the war to refugees from European Russia.

Shanghai accepted more Jewish refugees than those taken in by Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and India combined.

24 February 1942. The ship "Struma", with 769 Jewish refugees on board, having been refused permission by the British to enter Palestine, and being forced back towards Bulgaria by the Turks, sank in the Bosphorus with the loss of all but one passenger.

January 1939 Anglo-American suggestion that Jewish refugees go to Angola not followed up for fear of offending Portugal.

5,000 visas issued by the Dominican Republic enabled many Jews to escape death by using these visas to go elsewhere.
JEWISH REVOLTS 1942 - 1945

Despite the overwhelming military strength of the German forces, many Jews, while weakened by hunger and terrorised by Nazi brutality, nevertheless rose in revolt against their fate, not only in many of the Ghettoes in which they were forcibly confined, but even in the concentration camps themselves, snatching from the very gates of death the slender possibility of survival.

This map shows twenty of the Ghettoes and five of the death camps in which Jews joined together and fought, often almost unarmed, to strike back at their tormentors. These twenty-five uprisings are among the most noble and courageous episodes not only of Jewish, but of world history.

Ghettoes in which Jews rose up in revolt against the Germans, with dates. Many of those who revolted were able to escape to the woods, and to join Jewish, Polish or Soviet partisan groups.

Death camps in which the Jews revolted, with date of the revolt. In almost every instance, those who revolted were later caught and murdered.
On 19 August 1953 the Israeli Parliament passed a law making it the duty of the State of Israel to recognize the work done by non-Jews in saving Jewish lives during the war. An expression of honour was awarded in the name of the Jewish people, to every non-Jewish person or family who had risked their lives to save Jews. Evidence of such action has to come initially from one of those who was actually saved; the evidence is then examined by a committee of eighteen judges and experts.

At the national Holocaust memorial, known as "Yad Vashem", in Jerusalem, an "avenue of the righteous" was begun 1962, where each non-Jew who is honoured plants a tree, or has a tree planted in his or her name. This map shows the number of "righteous gentiles" honoured between 1962, when the first tree was planted, and 31 December 1990; the total number is 8611.

One of the awards for Norway was a collective one for the members of the Norwegian Resistance movement, all of whom helped Jews to escape. The Danish awards include one which was made to the King in honour of the Danish nation.

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THE RIGHTEOUS AMONG THE NATIONS 1939 - 1945

Frontiers of 1937

Numbers of 'righteous gentiles' honoured up to 1990 by the State of Israel for having helped individual Jews to escape deportation and death between 1939 and 1945.

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THE JEWISH DEATH-TOLL 1939-1945

This map shows the number of Jews murdered in Nazi-dominated Europe between 1939 and 1945. All the figures are approximate, but most of them are probably underestimates. In all, more than 5,950,000 deaths are shown even with these minimum figures.

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Approximate Jewish death-toll, country-by-country.

European frontiers of 1937.

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