

■ The Wars of the Jews—Siege of Jotapata

Date: 75 CE

Author: Titus Flavius Josephus

Genre: history

Summary Overview

The Roman Empire was vast, sprawling, and powerful. But it was not without its struggles. At various times, some of those peoples under the control of the Empire would rise up in revolt and—as was Roman policy—be crushed mercilessly. One of the most tenacious rebellions was that of the Jewish people in the Roman province of Judea. This document describes the eventual Roman victory over the city of Jotapata, which had held out against a Roman siege and would—in the end—suffer a horrible fate.

Defining Moment

The Siege of Jotapata (which is also known as the Siege of Yodfat) happened in 67 CE and was a significant moment in the First Jewish-Roman War of 66–73 CE, which was also known as the Great Jewish Revolt, the first of three stages of the Jewish uprising. Beginning with conflicts over taxation between Jewish rebels and Roman authorities, the rebellion experienced initial success in driving Roman leaders from the key city of Jerusalem. Roman Emperor Nero assigned a general named Vespasian (who had participated in the Roman conquest of Britain) to eliminate the rebellion, with Vespasian's son Titus as his second-in-command. In 67 CE, Roman forces attacked Jewish-held cities throughout the region of Galilee. While some cities capitulated immediately, others resisted fiercely. This was the case in May, 67 CE, when Vespasian's forces reached the city of Jotapata and besieged it.

In July, the Romans sent 1000 cavalry troops, archers, and three legions of infantry to surround the city of Jotapata. The Roman siege involved the building of siege ramps, to allow troops to breach the walls of a city. Because of the vigorous defense of the city, the Romans had to continually build these ramps higher and higher.

Vespasian also made use of a battering ram to attack the wall, but despite these measures, the Jewish defenders of Jotapata held for over forty days until someone escaping from the city informed the Romans that Jotapata was close to falling. The following excerpt from Josephus's *Wars of the Jews* describes the fall of the city.

Author Biography

Titus Flavius Josephus, writer of perhaps the most preeminent ancient history of the Jewish people outside of the Hebrew Bible, was born in 37 CE as Yosef ben Matityahu in Jerusalem to a prominent Jewish family. Jerusalem, at that time, was the Roman province of Judea. Early in his career he advocated on behalf of Jewish interests with Roman authorities, but upon the beginning of open hostilities between Jewish insurgents and Roman forces he took on the role of leading troops against the Romans. He led the Jewish resistance to the Roman siege of Jotapata but, following the Jewish defeat, the Romans took him prisoner. Eventually, Josephus defected to the Romans' cause, having claimed a divine vision that Vespasian (who had defeated the Jews at Jotapata) would become Roman Emperor. When this, eventually, came to pass, Yosef

The increase in the number of abductions since mid-2013 appears to mark a change of strategy by Boko Haram. From 2009 through early 2013, the group did not appear to target women and girls specifically. Instead, it primarily launched assaults against those it considered part of an unjust and corrupt system: members of the security services, politicians, civil servants, and other symbols of authority. By early 2012 schools and students became increasingly targeted for attacks, worsening already dire education indices in the Northeast, which has the lowest primary and secondary school net attendance ratio in the country.

From 2009 to early 2013, according to Human Rights Watch’s research and monitoring of abuses, Boko Haram abducted individual women and girls from their homes or from the street during attacks on their communities. These abductions took place most often in Boko Haram’s then-strongholds of Maiduguri, the Borno State capital, or Damaturu, the capital of neighboring Yobe State. In most of the documented cases, married women were abducted as punishment for not supporting the group’s ideology, while unmarried women and girls were taken as brides after insurgents hastily offered a dowry to the families, who feared to resist.

The abduction of 276 schoolgirls from in Chibok is the biggest single incident of abduction by Boko Haram at time of writing. The relative ease with which it carried out the Chibok abductions appears to have emboldened Boko Haram to carry out more abductions elsewhere.

Videos released by Boko Haram’s leaders in January and May 2013 suggest three key motives for the initial abductions: to retaliate against the government for its alleged detention of family members, including the wives of the group’s leaders; to punish students for attending Western schools; and to forcefully convert Christian women and girls to Islam. Some of the victims and analysts interviewed by Human Rights Watch have suggested women and girls are also being used for tactical reasons, such as to lure security forces to an ambush, force payment of a ransom, or for a prisoner exchange.

Residents of villages and towns ravaged by Boko Haram attacks during which women and girls were abducted complained about inadequate government response to prevent attacks and protect victims, often in imminent danger, and to provide adequate medical and psychological support for victims.

Many of the victims and witnesses who spoke to Human Rights Watch recounted instances when the security forces had been overwhelmed because insufficient troops had been deployed to a given town or because they appeared to have run out of ammunition during the course of an attack. Others described how members of their community had informed authorities about impending attacks, but were met with a feeble response.

Many of the victims and their family members expressed the ongoing anguish resulting from their ordeal, including deep fears of re-abduction, sleeplessness, and frustration for insufficient support from the government. However, of the victims

ity in the genocide and crimes against humanity. Victims claimed that French troops helped the Interahamwe locate victims and perpetrate atrocities. The cofounder of the RPF and former Rwandan ambassador to France asserted that the aim of Operation Turquoise was to protect the perpetrators of genocide, for the genocide, he stated, continued in the Turquoise zone.

The issue, however, did not go away after the genocide stopped. In the years that followed, allegations were made that France played a significant role in “enabling” the Rwandan genocide—that the genocide was foreseeable and that the French did nothing to stop it. In April 2021, a report commissioned by the Rwandan government was released. The 600-plus-page report, *A Foreseeable Genocide*, was based on government reports, videos, documentaries, and interviews with more than 250 witnesses. It was created by the Washington, DC, law firm of Levy Firestone Muse and is usually referred to as the Muse report. It provided evidence that the French, who were in a position to rein in the Hutu, did nothing to stop the slaughter of at least 800,000 Tutsis. The report states that the French government was “neither blind nor unconscious” about the imminent genocide, yet its support for the Rwandan president was “unwavering.” The report further alleges that the administration of the French president at the time, François Mitterrand, wanted to shore up and advance French interests and influence in the country. It states that “French officials armed, advised, trained, equipped, and protected the Rwandan government, heedless of the Habyarimana regime’s commitment to the dehumanization and, ultimately, the destruction and death of Tutsi in Rwanda.” The report further states that France covered up its role in the genocide by protecting those who took part in

the killings and by withholding documents and testimony that would have exposed French actions. It should be noted, however, that the report found “no evidence that French officials or personnel participated directly in the killing of Tutsi during that period.”

In response to the ongoing controversy, the French made the decision to open its archives on the matter to the public on April 7, 2021, the anniversary of the day the genocide began. Further, President Emmanuel Macron commissioned France’s own report, which was released by the Duclert Commission, headed by historian Vincent Duclert, in March 2021. The Duclert report concluded that the French government bore “overwhelming responsibilities” for the genocide, for it retained its alliance with a Hutu government that was “racist, corrupt and violent.” The genocide, the report states, was “a French political, institutional and moral failure.”

Author Biography

Vincent Duclert, who is extensively quoted in the article, was born in 1961. From 1999 to 2013 he was an associate professor of higher education at the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris. Beginning in 2013, he served as the inspector general of education in France. A historian, he is a specialist in the Dreyfus Affair and has written a biography of Alfred Dreyfus. In 2016 he chaired a commission that studied research and teaching about genocide and submitted the commission’s report in 2018. In 2019 he was appointed to lead the commission of historians responsible for analyzing the role of France in the genocide against the Tutsi. The Duclert Commission released its report in 2021.

commerce, agriculture, and industry will be opened with the goal of developing the resources of the country.

Steps shall also be taken for the formation of roads and railways and canals to increase the facilities of communication and increase the sources of the wealth of the country. Everything that can impede commerce or agriculture shall be abolished.

GLOSSARY

anno hegira: an Islamic dating system that counts years starting from the pilgrimage of Muhammad in 622; 1293 A.H. is 1876 C.E. (the beginning of the First Constitutional Era)

Chamber: the assembly of parliament

predominance: supremacy, power

Document Themes and Analysis

In their 1908 Proclamation, the Young Turks lay out their vision of a society founded on Ottoman identity and respect for the constitution. The proclamation is influenced by European constitutional monarchies and values, but the authors still hope to retain Ottoman autonomy and cultural identity.

The central tenet of the Proclamation is the establishment of a representative government with “respect for the predominance of the national will.” All citizens of the Ottoman empire will have the right to elect their own officials to parliament. The sultan will directly appoint a third of the parliament, thus retaining a significant amount of power but not the right to completely control the senate. In addition, the government is compelled to respect all its constituents equally. All Ottoman citizens, “being equal before the law as regards rights and duties,” will have the right to vote, hold office, and participate in education.

In addition to creating a citizenry unified by Ottoman identity, the Young Turks value modernization. They plan to organize a state-run school system that will educate youth in Ottoman values. They also expect that the school system will be used to advance the country’s industrial development: they will focus on “commerce, agriculture and industry” in order to bring the country’s economic output to European levels. In addition to developing the country’s material and intellectual resources, they plan to fund infrastructure (“roads and railways and canals”) to carry the goods that the empire will produce. They optimistically foresee that a reorganization of society will put them in the same category as “the other European powers.”

The Young Turks wanted to maintain a separate identity from the European powers while competing with them in wealth and influence. Throughout their Proclamation, they discuss the shared rights that Ottoman citizens have: education, the right to vote and run for office, religious freedom, and state-sponsored education. Though

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plans for genocide. A month later, on December 17, 1942, Allied leaders and the so-called United Nations (not yet a formal international body) had issued a statement condemning “in the strongest possible terms this bestial policy of cold-blooded extermination.” However, they did not take military action to stop the killings or to liberate the victims of the death camps.

By January 1943, several known killing centers were operating in Poland, and reports had been leaked of mass killings in Romania. Riegner and Lichtheim’s report came as added confirmation to a growing pile of evidence. However, the reports would keep coming. Citizens, journalists, and reporters in Europe would keep relaying information on the operations of the Nazi death camps in hopes that the Allies would respond with more than speeches.

Author Biography

Born in Berlin in 1885, Richard Lichtheim became a leader in the German and global Zionist movement. In the early twentieth century, the Zionists promoted Jewish culture and rights and advocated for a return to the Jewish homeland in what was then Palestine (now Israel and the

Israeli-occupied territories). Lichtheim studied at the University of Freiburg before joining the World Zionist Organization in 1909. He became editor of the organization’s main publication, *Die Welt*, and authored Zionist treatises that earned him international notice. During World War II, Lichtheim served as the representative for the Jewish Agency for Palestine in Geneva, Switzerland. Lichtheim died in 1963.

Gerhart Riegner was born a Jew in Germany in 1911. His family weathered World War I, and Riegner went on to study law and political science. As Hitler and the Nazis rose to power, Riegner took notice. In May 1933, just months after Hitler was elected chancellor of Germany, Riegner fled to France, where he finished his law degree before immigrating to Switzerland. In Geneva, Riegner served first as a legal officer and then as director of the World Jewish Congress office. He remained there for the duration of World War II, and afterward worked to provide aid to Jewish refugees. Later in life, he remained involved with the World Jewish Congress, serving as secretary general from 1965 to 1983, and worked closely with the United Nations. Riegner died in 2001.

killings at night by masked men, killings always on the basis of “race,” killings by the Ku Klux Klan, that organization which is chartered by the several states as a semi-official arm of government and even granted the tax exemptions of a benevolent society.

Our evidence concerns the thousands of Negroes who over the years have been beaten to death on chain gangs and in the back rooms of sheriff’s offices, in the cells of county jails, in precinct police stations and on city streets, who have been framed and murdered by sham legal forms and by a legal bureaucracy. It concerns those Negroes who have been killed, allegedly for failure to say “sir” or tip their hats or move aside quickly enough, or, more often, on trumped up charges of “rape,” but in reality for trying to vote or otherwise demanding the legal and inalienable rights and privileges of United States citizenship formally guaranteed them by the Constitution of the United States, rights denied them on the basis of “race,” in violation of the Constitution of the United States, the United Nations Charter, and the Genocide Convention.

Economic Genocide

We shall offer proof of economic genocide, or in the words of the Convention, proof of “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its destruction in whole or in part.” We shall prove that such conditions so swell the infant and maternal death rate and the death rate from disease, that the American Negro is deprived, when compared with the remainder of the population of the United States, of eight years of life on the average.

Further we shall show a deliberate national oppression of these 15,000,000 Negro Americans on the basis of “race” to perpetuate these “conditions of life.” Negroes are the last hired and the first fired. They are forced into city ghettos or their rural equivalents. They are segregated legally or through sanctioned violence into filthy, disease-bearing housing, and deprived by law of adequate medical care and education. From birth to death, Negro Americans are humiliated and persecuted, in violation of the Charter and Convention. They are forced by threat of violence and imprisonment into inferior, segregated accommodations, into jim crow busses, jim crow trains, jim crow hospitals, jim crow schools, jim crow theaters, jim crow restaurants, jim crow housing, and finally into jim crow cemeteries.

We shall prove that the object of this genocide, as of all genocide, is the perpetuation of economic and political power by the few through the destruction of political protest by the many. Its method is to demoralize and divide an entire nation; its end is to increase the profits and unchallenged control by a reactionary clique. We shall show that those responsible for this crime are not the humble but the so-called great, not the American people but their misleaders, not the convict but the robed judge, not the criminal but the police, not the spontaneous mob but organized terrorists licensed and approved by the state to incite to a Roman holiday.

■ International Military Tribunal for the Far East: Judgment of 4 November 1948

Date: November 4, 1948

Author: United Nations

Genre: Legal judgment (excerpts)

Summary Overview

In 1946 the United Nations established a procedure for putting Japanese leaders on trial for war crimes committed during World War II. The result was the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (IMTFE), established by a special proclamation of General Douglas MacArthur. After a trial that lasted two and a half years, the tribunal issued its judgment on November 4, 1948. The excerpts from the judgment presented here document the war crimes and crimes against humanity carried out in particularly brutal fashion by the Japanese military in China, the Philippines, and elsewhere.

Defining Moment

For most students of history, World War II began on September 1, 1939, with the German invasion of Poland; for Americans, the war began on December 7, 1941, with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. From another point of view, however, World War II can be thought to have begun in September 1931, with the Japanese invasion of Manchuria—or possibly in July 1937, with the start of the Second Sino-Japanese War. The Japanese invasion of China was the result of a long-standing Japanese imperialist policy based on domination of the Pacific region politically and militarily to secure access to raw materials, food, and labor.

In the process of expanding its reach throughout the region, the Japanese military was guilty of horrific atrocities. Noteworthy among them was what came to be known as the Rape of Nanking (or Rape of Nanjing, or the Nanjing Massacre). At the time Nanjing was the capital of China. In the wake of their invasion of Nanjing in December 1937, the Japanese slaughtered an estimated 150,000 male “prisoners of war” and

an additional 50,000 male civilians—although some estimates of the total number of dead are as high as 300,000. Further, troops raped at least 20,000 women and girls, many of whom were mutilated or killed in the process. Among the victims were the Hui Muslims; after the war, mosques in Nanjing were found to be filled with the bodies of Hui Muslims. As war in the Pacific raged on, the Japanese were guilty of murder, torture, human experimentation, starvation of prisoners, forced marches, and similar atrocities. Estimates vary as to the number of civilians killed by the Japanese military during the war, but some estimates are as high as 10 million, including as many as six million Chinese, Koreans, Malaysians, Indonesians, Filipinos, and Indochinese, as well as American, European, and Australian prisoners of war.

The war ended with the Japanese surrender on September 2, 1945. Just as the perpetrators of the Nazi genocide in Europe were brought to justice at the Nuremberg trials, which began on November 20, 1945, so too the perpetrators of Japanese atrocities were tried by the IMTFE, which convened on April 29, 1946, and which