

20th Century
PERSPECTIVES

The Holocaust



Susan Willoughby

For Dixie,

With many thanks
& in profound admiration.

Lusan Willoughby.

June 2001.



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First published in Great Britain by Heinemann Library,
Halley Court, Jordan Hill, Oxford OX2 8EJ,
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OXFORD MELBOURNE AUCKLAND
JOHANNESBURG BLANTYRE GABORONE
IBADAN PORTSMOUTH (NH) USA CHICAGO

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Designed by AMR
Illustrated by Art Construction
Originated by Dot Gradations
Printed by Wing King Tong in Hong Kong.

ISBN 0431 11983 X
05 04 03 02 01
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Willoughby, Susan

The Holocaust. – (20th century perspectives)

1. Holocaust, Jewish (1939–1945) – Juvenile literature

I.Title

940.5'318

Acknowledgements

The publishers would like to thank the following for permission to reproduce photographs: Associated press, p.4; Author's photograph, p.42; Corbis, p.26; Dina Gottlieb, pp. 23, 24; Doris Fogel, pp. 16, 41; Hana Greenfield, p.5b; Hulton Getty, pp. 5a, 8, 9, 11, 12, 15, 36; Margit Korestzova/The Jewish Museum, Prague, p.21; Ullstein Bilderdienst, p.30; USHMM Photo Archives/William Blye, p.13; USHMM Photo Archives, pp. 14, 17, 19, 25, 28, 29, 31, 33, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 43.

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Our thanks to Christopher Gibb for his comments in the preparation of this book.

The author would like to thank the following for their information and help: Doris Fogel, Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA, Jeff Gubitza and the Fort Wayne Jewish Federation, Indiana, USA.

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Any words appearing in the text in bold, **like this**, are explained in the glossary.

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Escape to freedom

After the *Kristallnacht*, it is estimated that half of the German Jewish population and two-thirds of Austrian Jews left their homes, to escape persecution. It was a movement that the **Nazis** encouraged, having first taken most of their wealth and possessions from them. They emigrated to Palestine (modern-day Israel), the USA, Latin America, Canada and China. This was not entirely successful for all of them. The United States, Canada, Britain and France, where there were still economic problems and high unemployment, were reluctant to accept large numbers of refugees, and eventually closed their doors to them. No one at that point in time could have imagined what Hitler had in store for those who remained. Many who made their way to the Netherlands, France and eastern Europe found themselves caught up again in the Nazi net after 1939, as Hitler overran these countries and extended his policy of **exterminating** the Jews.

Julius Hermann (pictured below with his family) was a passenger on the *St Louis*. He eventually reached France, where he was put in a dreadful **internment camp**. In 1942 he was sent to Auschwitz, where he died.

The voyage of the *St Louis*

On 13 May 1939, the *St Louis* set sail from the port of Hamburg in Germany bound for Havana, Cuba carrying more than 900 Jewish refugees. Many had bought landing permits. They intended to wait in Cuba until they could enter the USA. At the time, the USA only allowed a certain number of immigrants each year. In the days before the ship's departure there had been demonstrations in Havana opposing Jewish immigration. When the ship arrived at the port on 27 May, its passengers were refused entry. For the next five days, the ship sailed backwards and forwards, in intense heat, between Havana and Miami on the east coast of the USA whilst negotiations took place between the Cuban and American immigration authorities and Jewish

representatives. Efforts to persuade either country to accept all of the refugees failed. Finally, on 6 June, the *St Louis* headed back for Europe. Its passengers were frightened to return to Germany and pleaded with other European nations to give them a safe haven. By the time the ship docked at Antwerp in Belgium, Britain had agreed to receive 287 of her Jewish passengers, France 224, Belgium 214 and the Netherlands 181. The ship had been at sea for a month.



For many of these refugees the ordeal was not over. They had usually been forced to spend or sell almost everything they had to buy their visas and tickets. Although they had been allowed to enter other countries, they were not necessarily welcomed. Often they were treated with suspicion, especially after the outbreak of World War Two in 1939. After all, they were Germans – ‘enemy aliens’. Some were eventually able to emigrate to the USA, especially if they already had family there. Many who settled in mainland Europe found themselves victims again of the Nazi **exterminators** as Germany occupied previously ‘safe’ countries.

Doris Fogel lives today in Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA. She was born in Berlin in 1935. Along with her mother, she was one of the 14,000 German and Austrian Jews who, in 1939 alone, escaped from the Nazi terror and took refuge in Shanghai, China.

I was a refugee in May 1939 when I embarked with my mother on the ship Sharenhorst from Rotterdam. We were outward bound for Shanghai, the only place in the world that required no entry visa ... We had had to sell most of our possessions to obtain passage out of Germany. For a short period during 1939 our exile status was not yet quite apparent. We had valid German passports, even though a red stamped ‘J’ was on the facing page of my mother’s passport along with the red stamped ‘Sara’ above her name, Edith Warschawski. Then Germany passed a new law that invalidated [made them legally useless] our passports and removed citizenship from us. We became ‘stateless’ persons.

I was four years old in 1939. My memories of Germany were non-existent and Shanghai became my home. I attended an English-speaking Jewish school. I made friends, played sports, was active in school activities. I was happy as were my school friends. None of us knew that we were poor nor did we feel deprived... We didn’t know any better. We lived this ghetto life all through the war.

In 1941, the Japanese occupied Shanghai and, being allies of Nazi Germany, ordered that all Jewish refugees live in a poverty-stricken, filthy and unsanitary area of Shanghai called Hongkew. In this one square mile lived 20,000 refugees as prisoners of war. Life in Shanghai was primitive. My mother and I left Shanghai for the United States in April 1947.



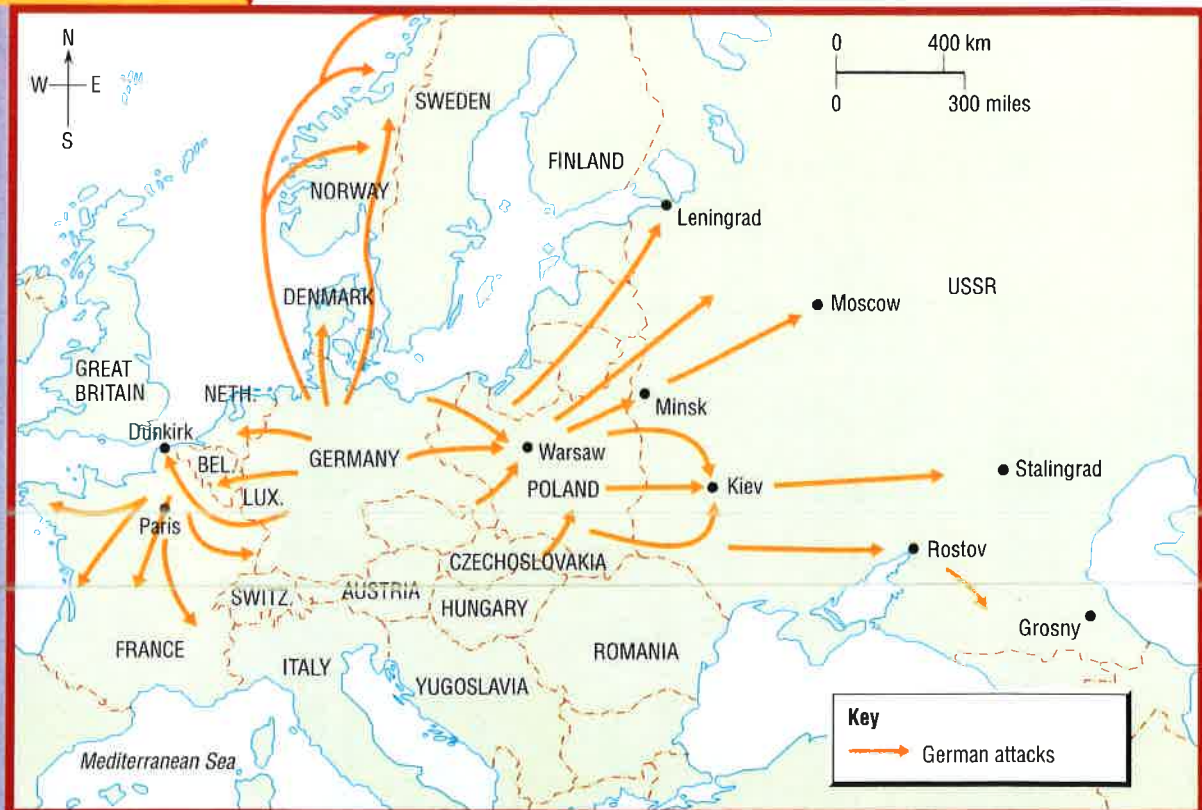
A photograph of Doris Fogel’s class at her English-speaking Jewish school in Shanghai. Doris is third from the right, back row.

War and the ghettos

Since coming to power, Hitler had built up Germany's fighting strength. From 1935, he began to extend the boundaries of Germany as part of his policy of creating *lebensraum*. This meant breaking the terms of the Treaty of Versailles (see page 11), which were designed to stop Germany becoming too powerful. First he took back the lands that Germany had lost – the Rhineland (1936). Then he absorbed Austria and Czechoslovakia into his **Reich** (1938–9). At each stage, the **Allies** did nothing to stop him, refusing to believe that he intended total domination. Suddenly, on 1 September 1939, he launched a massive attack on Poland. This was a new tactic called *blitzkrieg*. Hitler used it again and again between 1939 and 1941 to occupy Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, France, Yugoslavia and Greece. The English Channel helped to stop his westward expansion. In 1941 Hitler invaded the Soviet Union.

This map shows the path of the Nazi invasion of Europe.

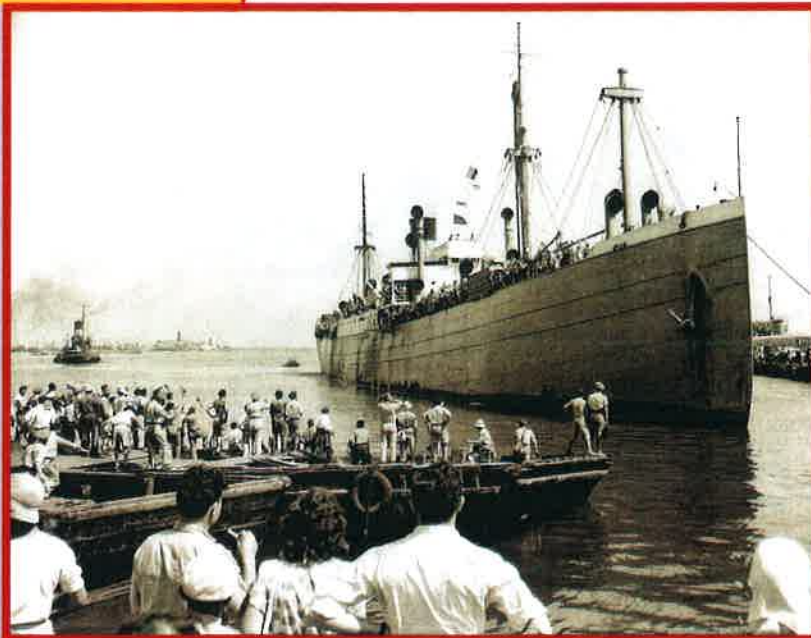
War offered the opportunity for the Nazis to extend their terrible plan to rid the world of Jews and 'inferiors'. No one at the time imagined that any power engaged in such a large-scale war could also have the resources and determination to carry out such a policy. More important, as Hitler overran European countries that had Jewish populations, he had the opportunity to realize his vision of **exterminating** the entire Jewish population.



In search of a homeland

Lonely and without the support of families and friends, survivors had to face the challenge of rebuilding their lives. Young people, like Hana Greenfield (see page 5), had spent their teenage years in captivity. They had been deprived of education. They had lost the people they loved most in the world. They had nowhere to go. Ironically, many of them found themselves in displaced persons' camps set up by the **Allies** in western Europe on the sites of former **Nazi concentration camps**. The USA, Britain and many European countries still had immigration policies in place so, for those who wanted to begin a new life in a new land, there was a waiting time. Eventually, survivors were able to emigrate to the USA, South America, South Africa and Australia. Doris Fogel (see page 17) left Shanghai with her mother in April 1947 on board a converted American troop ship, the *SS General Gordon* and arrived in San Francisco on 16 May. Hana Greenfield went to live in the new homeland for the Jews – Israel.

The Jewish refugee ship Pan York docks at Haifa, in the newly established state of Israel, July 1948.



A Jewish homeland

The idea that the Jews should have a homeland – Palestine – gained force at the end of the 19th century. Here they would be finally free from persecution. The plan was that of an Austrian Jew called Theodore Herzl. He started an organization called the Zionists to press for this to happen. After World War One, Palestine became a British protectorate (a country that is officially protected and partly controlled by another

country). Herzl had already persuaded the British government to support his plan. But it was not quite as simple as that. Arab peoples now lived in Palestine. What would happen to them if it was handed over to Jews? During World War One (1914–18), Britain needed the help of the Arabs to fight the Turks. The Arab leaders were promised that they would not lose Palestine and that Jewish immigration would be controlled. The British government of the day had obviously got itself into difficulties. It had made promises to two groups who would not even sit down together to discuss the situation.

In 1939, the British government said that only 77,000 Jews would be allowed to enter Palestine. It was hoped that this would pacify the Arabs. This was, of course, before the Holocaust. In 1946, a ship full of Jewish immigrants tried to enter Palestine illegally. They were turned back and sent to Cyprus where they were put in a British-run **internment camp**. The action of the British towards these survivors of Nazi persecution was severely criticized.



Doris Fogel (right) with two of her friends from her days in Shanghai. Of the original 21 members of her class, 17 have been traced, despite being scattered throughout the USA and other parts of the world. This photograph was taken in 1999, when they held a reunion in Philadelphia USA.

The United Nations tried to resolve the conflict in 1947 by dividing Palestine between Jews and Arabs. On 14 May 1948, David Ben-Gurion, the first prime minister, announced the creation of the state of Israel. For the first time in almost two thousand years, the Jews had their own homeland. However, this was achieved at great cost to the Palestinian Arabs who were dispossessed of their land and condemned to live in **refugee** camps. Hence, the establishment of the state of Israel opened up a new era of controversy and international conflict. The violent hatred that came to exist between Jews and Arabs showed itself in open warfare and terrorist activity during the last decades of the 20th century and the beginning of the next.

New beginnings

In 1962 the trial of Adolf Eichmann was a turning point in the lives of the Holocaust survivors. So many were called to provide evidence of the horrors that they had witnessed and experienced that they finally had the opportunity to speak out, to be heard and so in a sense to free themselves of the nightmare that they had lived through. At last they could move on. In their new homes in Europe, America, Israel or wherever they settled, they married, had families and went on to lead full and productive lives. In their amazing ability to rescue new hope and enthusiasm for life from the depths of despair, they are an example and inspiration to us all.

The Holocaust

- Who were the victims of the Holocaust?
- Where did it take place?
- How many lives were lost?

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ISBN 0-431-11983-X



9 780431 119830

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Dear David,

The long haul! This
is the English version of
the book. I would show
liked it to be much longer

than it is to me all the
valuable information that

I have and to tell you
I am in more detail. However,
I hope that, at least, it is

Powerful enough to reach into
the hearts and minds of young

people. It is certainly written
from my heart!

We are very much looking
forward to our visit to the USA

at the end of next month. I
will send you the details of
our return flight shortly. It
will be wonderful to meet you,
although I think that our passage
through Chicago is at night.

In the meantime, I hope
that you and your family are
well.

With best wishes,

Susan.