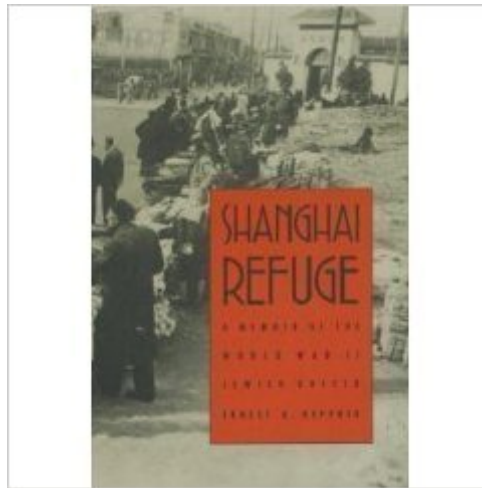


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Shanghai Refuge: A Memoir Of The World War II Jewish Ghetto



Synopsis

The unlikely refuge of Shanghai, the only city in the world that did not require a visa, was buffeted by the struggle between European imperialism, Japanese aggression, and Chinese nationalism. Ernest G. Heppner's compelling testimony is a brilliant account of this little-known haven. Although Heppner was a member of a privileged middle-class Jewish family, he suffered from the constant anti-Semitic undercurrent in his surroundings. The devastation of "Crystal Night" in November 1938, however, introduced a new level of Nazi horror and ended his comfortable world overnight. Heppner and his mother used the family's resources to escape to Shanghai. Heppner was taken aback by experiences on the ocean liner that transported the refugees to Shanghai: he was embarrassed and confounded when Egyptian Jews offered worn clothing to the Jewish passengers, he resented the edicts against Jewish passengers disembarking in any ports on the way, and he was unprepared for the poverty and cultural dislocation of the great city of Shanghai. Nevertheless, Heppner was self-reliant, energetic, and clever, and his story of finding niches for his skills that enabled him to survive in a precarious fashion is a tribute to human endurance. In 1945, after the liberation of China, Heppner found a responsible position with the American forces there. He and his wife, whom he had met and married in the ghetto, arrived in the United States in 1947 with only eleven dollars but boundless hope and energy. Heppner's account of the Shanghai ghetto is as vivid to him now as it was then. His admiration for his new country and his later success in business do not, however, obscure for him the shameful failure of the Allies to furnish a refuge for Jews before, during, and after the war.

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Customer Reviews

We tend to think that the Jewish ghettos of World War II were in Europe, but Heppner's eloquent memoir of this little-known event in Holocaust history is set in Shanghai, China. The author was the youngest child of a matzoth factory owner in Breslau, Germany. In 1939, with the rise of anti-Semitism, Heppner and his mother sailed to Shanghai. In 1943, Japanese soldiers confined the 18,000 Jewish refugees in Shanghai to an area less than one mile square. The book begins with Heppner's account of life in Germany and the harassment and beatings he suffered because he was a Jew; it goes on to describe the Nuremberg laws restricting Jews and the infamous Kristallnacht. Heppner continues with a day-to-day account of what he calls the three h's--hunger, heat, and humidity--in the Shanghai ghetto, where he married, and he ends with his family's voyage to America in 1945 after the liberation of China. George Cohen

"A fascinating and moving memoir that begins with [Heppner's] childhood in Nazi Germany and moves briskly from one compelling scene to the next." "Forward (Forward)"The author describes in detail the sights and sounds of his adopted environment, the mingling of Jews and many nationalities, the choking stench and the humidity, the decadent, exotic underworld of criminals and beggars, the terror of air raids and Japanese guards, the rampant poverty and disease. The general tone, however, is positive, even inspiring, and behind all the experiences lurks a sense of adventure and simple good luck." "Association of Jewish Libraries Newsletter (Association of Jewish Libraries Newsletter)"An important addition to the historical record of World War II, an autobiography of a remarkable man's formative years, and a testimony to the power of community and human perseverance." "Indianapolis Star (Indianapolis Star)"Ernest G. Heppner's Shanghai Refuge fills in the fragments . . . of this little-known Jewish community. . . . His story is an odd mixture of defiance, courage, endurance and survival. His experience [is] fascinating." "Michael Berenbaum, Director, U.S. Holocaust Research Institute (Michael Berenbaum)"Heppner's descriptions . . . ring true and carry conviction, especially when he recalls in evocative detail his day-to-day experiences in Nazi Germany. Similarly, his recollection of Shanghai, with its small, telling details of privations, indignities, anxieties, and horrors make maximum impact" "from the rat in the bakery that he lifted up by its tail to the carnage following an American air raid." "Bernard Wasserstein, author of The Secret Lives of Trebitsch Lincoln (Bernard Wasserstein)

My review may be unfair because I am not quite finished with the book. But overall, it is always interesting to read how a person's survives and sometimes thrives in very difficult circumstances

beginning with the Nazis treatment of the Jewish population in Germany, Austria and Poland, the efforts to escape and Heppner's long and trying journey to Shanghai. The mix of many nationalities in the Shanghai Refuge, his survival in Shanghai - managing to work, make friends in close, foreign environment during WW II. He and his mother do their best, even under the control of the Japanese. There are many details that are probably very important to the writer but not so important to this reader. However, I respect Mr. Heppner in his effort to bring his story of resilience to the public.

Every country has slaves, refuge. This book keep remind NO WAR

My father spent 8 years in Shanghai under similar circumstances as the author. As my father has passed away and could not share about his experiences, this is the closest I could get to any detailed experience. I visited Shanghai and found a very well preserved Jewish ghetto and even the house he used to live on Chusan street. There is an excellent Jewish tour available there. More pictures would have gotten five stars.

This book expanded my knowledge after reading Shanghai Diary. They are both excellent accounts of the Jews in Shanghai, China during World War 2. This was all new knowledge for me and I recommend it to readers of history.

Apart of history I did not know. Vivid description of Shanghai.

That's my late father involved.

Having been born in the same city then the author and also lived in Shanghai the same time I found the book to be accurate and true to life.

"Shanghai Refuge" by Ernest Heppner is the story of two Jewish refugees who manage to escape Nazi Germany for Shanghai--as one of the only places left open to refugees at the time. It is their story of loss, mistreatment, inhumanity, and occasional bits of happiness during the long years of World War Two. Anyone who had relatives in Shanghai's Jewish community during those years might find this book interesting as a depiction of everyday life there and what the refugees endured.

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