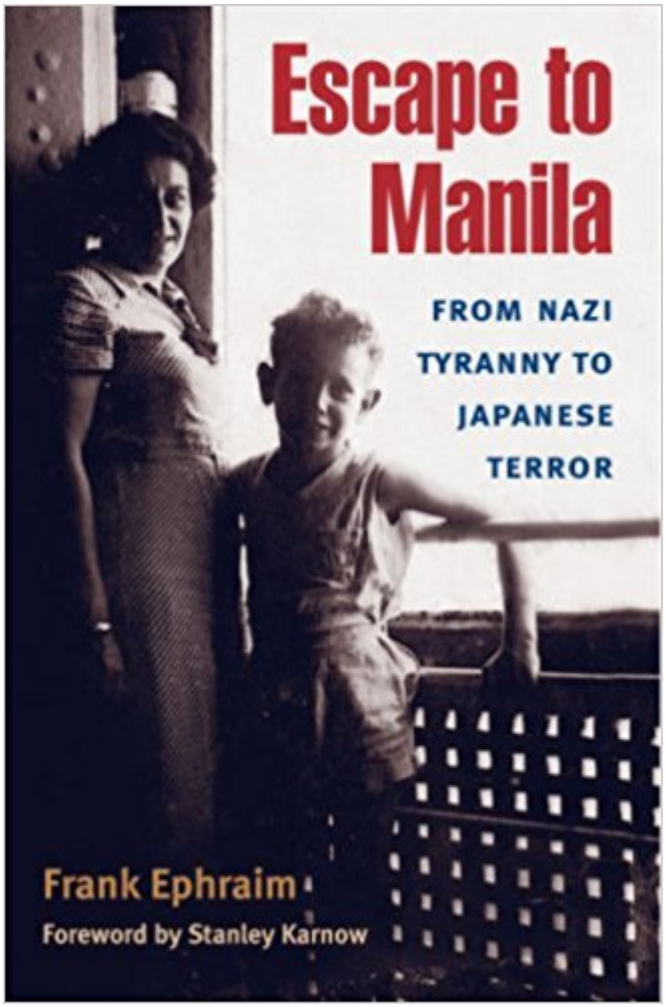
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Escape To Manila: FROM NAZI TYRANNY TO JAPANESE TERROR



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Synopsis

With the rise of Nazism in the 1930s more than a thousand European Jews sought refuge in the Philippines, joining the small Jewish population of Manila. When the Japanese invaded the islands in 1941, the peaceful existence of the barely settled Jews filled with the kinds of uncertainties and oppression they thought they had left behind. Escape to Manila gathers the testimonies of thirty-six refugees, who describe the difficult journey to Manila, the lives they built there, and the events surrounding the Japanese invasion. Combining these accounts with historical and archival records, Manila newspapers, and U.S. government documents, Frank Ephraim constructs a detailed account of this little-known chapter of world history.

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“The bookÃ¢â ¬â„¢s riveting centerpiece combines military history and personal horror to describe the Battle of Manila. . . . Burned out of their homes, Jews roam the streets with other civilians, seeking safe havens, crouching to dodge bullets, hiding in holes dug in the ground covered with corrugated roofing. . . . Escape to Manila . . . enables readers to know and feel the fires.Ã¢â ¬Â•--Hadassah Magazine"Ephraim has constructed a fascinating narrative from a rich mix of archival research, oral history, and autobiographical memoir. He offers us a stirring portrait of a community of resourceful, resilient, courageous, and compassionate individuals."--Michael Shapiro, director, Program in Jewish Culture and Society, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign"The vignettes and first person histories make for very interesting reading."--Jewish Book World

With the rise of Nazism in the 1930s more than a thousand European Jews sought refuge in the Philippines, joining the small Jewish population of Manila. When the Japanese invaded the islands in 1941, the peaceful existence of the barely settled Jews filled with the kinds of uncertainties and oppression they thought they had left behind. Escape to Manila gathers the testimonies of thirty-six refugees, who describe the difficult journey to Manila, the lives they built there, and the events surrounding the Japanese invasion. Combining these accounts with historical and archival records, Manila newspapers, and U.S. government documents, Frank Ephraim constructs a detailed account of this little-known chapter of world history.

Historians have given considerable attention to the plight of Jews attempting to get out of Germany and Austria prior to World War II. The most famous instance is the refusal of the United States and Cuba to admit refugees on the S.S. Saint Louis. Some Jews found refuge in Shanghai; a small number were welcomed in the Dominican Republic, where Rafael Trujillo hoped to get some positive publicity (after he had endorsed a massacre of Haitians). He also thought that admitting white people would bolster his view that his country was a ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“EuropeanÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• nation rather than a country of mixed races. Although some work has been done on Jews who found refuge in the Philippines, the story is little known today, possibly because only about 1,300 Jewish refugees made it there prior to the United States entering World War II. Frank Ephraim, eight years old when his parents fled Germany for the Philippines, has written an important study of the Jews who went ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“from Nazi tyranny to Japanese terror.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• His book is much more than a personal memoir. Its strength comes from his diligent research in telling the stories of many of the families who arrived in the Philippines before September 1939. The Jews who came to the Philippines were a rather special group. Earlier arrivals were sponsored by the Freider brothers who had major business interests in Manila, manufacturing cigars for a U.S. market. Later refugees arrived on their own, aided by a legal quirk that allowed them to obtain travel visas to the Philippines, a U.S. territory at the time, when the mainland United States had closed its doors to refugees. President Manuel Quezon, a friend of the Freiders, welcomed the arrival of the Jews and would have admitted many more, but the door slammed shut after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. Ephraim relates how Jewish families came to the Philippines, mainly by ship, a few by such transport as the Trans-Siberian Railway. Once in Manila (where most of the Jews resided), the refugees faced the challenges of finding employment in a land with a limited economy. The Japanese takeover of the Philippines escalated the hardshipÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â •lack of food, Japanese misconceptions about the German Jews, Germany

being an Axis ally. The tiny Jewish community managed to construct a synagogue (destroyed in the Battle of Manila), observe Jewish holidays, and even keep kosher. When the Americans drew closer to the Philippines in late 1944, the Japanese Naval Forces took control of defense and became very suspicious of the Jews, accusing some of spying, locking them in prison, and torturing them. Ephraim describes in graphic detail the Battle of Manila in February 1945, a month-long period of terror when the Japanese indiscriminately murdered civilian men, women, and children. An estimated hundred thousand Filipinos were killed. The Jewish community lost 67, including women and children, and a hundred more were seriously wounded. The small numbers donÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t take away the fact that those who died were from a population of only 1,300. After the war the Jewish community in the Philippines essentially ended. Many came to the United States and rebuilt their lives. Some stayed in Manila; a few went to Europe. Ephraim prospered in the United States, serving for many years as the director of program evaluation for the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Readers will find it difficult to put the book aside; its compelling narrative is both inspiring and heart-breaking.

Escape to Manila is the only history of the Jewish story in the Philippines that I know of. Many of these Jews eventually migrated to America, but some decided to stay and become Filipino citizens. It’s an amazing story of survival amidst those odds. If you think the Japanese treated the Jews with kid gloves, this book corrects that misconception. Honest and heartrending, this book is an excellent addition to the historical tableau of the Jewish people.

I have been collecting books of this genre - Manila during the Japanese occupation and subsequent liberation for a number of years and was pleased to add this to my collection. My mother’s family was in Manila and like the author they suffered and struggled. To the reviewer who noted that he doesn’t care since he doesn’t know the people, I say "so what" -- I don’t give his review any credibility. One does not read books of this genre and expect to know the people involved. However, as one reviewer has already pointed out, the author made the egregious error of referring to the "Jesuits" at DeLaSalle. My grandfather was president of the DeLaSalle Alumni Association in 1944-45, all of my Uncles attended DeLaSalle and were the author’s classmates. To link Jesuits to De La Salle totally negates the credibility of the book in it’s entirety to any De La Salle or Ateneo (the Jesuit School)alumni. I am giving it three stars because of the subject but this book should have been edited for accuracy before publication.

So little has been written about the Philippines in WWII, that I was very interested. The book was well researched and also gave me a much better insight into Judaism and what the Jewish people have had to go through forever.Anyone interested in history should read it.

Very well researched with detailed description. I love it. I was not able to put the book down.

Good

I thought the topic seemed interesting. The writing is hard to follow, tons of names which probably mean a lot to the author but not to the reader. It reminded me of memoirs written by family members, great if you know them, but only if you do. Too few facts, too many personal experiences which are of little interest to people outside the family circle.

In this book Mr. Frank Ephraim not only tells us about the history of "Manilaners", Jews who fled Europe and headed to the Philippines, but also tells us about the Jewish community already there. His book is detailed, with both the facts of history AND the emotions and actions of the people themselves. We never feel that the Jews, Filipinos, Americans and Japanese are faceless puppets.He starts off giving us a very complete history of the Philippines, then focusing on Europe and the problems that Jews had living under the growing power of the Third Reich. Soon we are following the resourceful refugees to Manila. We watch them start a new life, with the help of those around them, showing us the support and empathy that the Jews and Filipinos had for the newcomers.Then the Japanese invaded and he shows us how everyone came even closer together, doing everything to live a normal life. We learn about daily life, the struggle for food and trying to understand how to deal with the Japanese while they also deal with the big long term problems, like trying to find schools for their children and continuing their form of worship under the paranoid eyes of the Japanese.Of course, the book ends with the American invasion, the bloody fight for Manila and the aftermath. The author does nothing to hide the tragic results of the battle or the fact that even when peace came the Jews still had problems just making ends meet.This is a book for anybody into Asian history, Jewish history, the history of the Philippines, World War Two and Japanese history. A must for any history library, really, touching on many subjects.

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