

Shanghai

A port city in China occupied by Japan from 1937. Shanghai was a haven for Jewish refugees from Germany, Austria, and Poland during World War II, as it was the only place in the world where one could enter without a visa. By 1941, 17,000 Jews had moved to East Asia.

After the *Kristallnacht* pogrom of November 9--10, 1938, many refugees began to arrive in Shanghai. They were aided by the small, wealthy community of 400--500 Iraqi Jews that had been living in Shanghai since the mid-nineteenth century, and by the American Jewish joint distribution committee. These groups set up five large refugee camps for more than 3,000 people.

Despite their economic constraints, the refugees were able to create an active social, religious, and cultural existence with religious services, schools, cultural productions, and three German-language newspapers. The refugee community included Polish intellectuals, Zionist leaders, and rabbis and students of the Mir Yeshiva.

In February 1943 the Germans forced the Japanese to establish a Jewish ghetto. The conditions there were miserable, but not nearly as bad as those of the European ghettos. At the end of the war, most of the refugees left Shanghai for Palestine and other Western countries. (see also Rescue of Polish Jews via East Asia.)