

FLIGHT AND FREEDOM

During the 1930s the plight of German Jews steadily worsened. In November 1938 Nazi persecution erupted into outright violence, with a wave of state-sponsored attacks against Jews and their property throughout Germany. Hundreds of synagogues and Jewish shops and businesses were destroyed in what has since been referred to as *Kristallnacht*, The Night of Broken Glass.

With increasing desperation Jews sought havens in other parts of the world. Both South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, however, had by then imposed severe restrictions on Jewish immigration. Conservative Afrikaner political forces in South Africa aligned themselves with the Germans, partly because of identification with their racial ideology and because of an historical anti-British sentiment engendered by the Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902). The British and their colonial governments were also traditionally anti-Jewish.

Northern Rhodesia was one of the few countries in the region that had no restrictions on Jewish immigration so that those applying for visas for the colony were more fortunate than the hundreds of thousands who sought sanctuary elsewhere. Between 1938 and 1940 about 300 German Jewish refugees who entered the country significantly increased the existing, largely Eastern European, Jewish population of Northern Rhodesia.

NEW ARRIVALS

I have been a stranger in a strange land

- Exodus 2:22

Some of the new immigrants from Germany, such as the Aufochs and Jacoby families, settled in Livingstone. Most, however, went on to the Copperbelt or Lusaka. They included the Caminers, Fraenkels, Wiesenbachers, and Rowelskys, and all have their own stories to tell. Trude Wiesenbacher, who witnessed the burning of the synagogue in Stuttgart on *Kristallnacht*, arrived in Lusaka with her parents at the age of seventeen in 1939. Later that year she married Harry Wulfohn, who had arrived from Latvia in 1930; he became a prominent businessman entering into a partnership with the Susman brothers in 1944 to trade under name Susman Brothers & Wulfohn.

THE SEPHARDI COMMUNITY

While most Jews in Zambia came from Central and Eastern European countries, a number originated from the island of Rhodes in the Aegean Sea between Greece and Turkey. These formed a distinct component of the Jewish community known as 'Sephardim' ('Sephardi' deriving from the Hebrew word for Spain and which has come to refer in general to Jews of Southern European origin). Most Sephardi immigrants to Northern Rhodesia arrived in the late 1930s. They included Ruben Amato, the brothers Boaz Israel and Victor Menashe, and Hanan Elkaim (originally from Gaza). Amato, in partnership with other Sephardi immigrants, established the country's first soap factory while Boaz Israel Menashe founded B.I. Stores in Chingola.



Jewish refugees embarked on boats in Europe and made their way to Cape Town, and ultimately Northern Rhodesia



Lithuanian passport in the name of Samuilis Surdutovitz, stamped with German exit visa in August 1939. Entry into Livingstone 7 September, 1939