



# When the World Closed Its Doors: Struggling to Escape Nazi-occupied Europe

*Ida Piller-Greenspan, Susan M. Branting*

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At the beginning of World War II, the United States and other countries erected a "paper wall" - a bureaucratic maze that prevented all but a small number of Jewish refugees from emigrating from Nazi-occupied Europe. *When the World Closed Its Doors* tells the true story of a young couple who, like many European Jews, were caught between the Nazis and the "paper wall".

Ida Piller-Greenspan was married in Belgium on May 9, 1940. That night the Nazis invaded Belgium. She and her new husband survived the next four months hitchhiking through occupied territory, hiding in barns and tunnels, dodging bombs near Dunkirk, crossing the Pyrenees on foot, and enduring weeks with little food and no money. Ultimately they arrived in Portugal, certain they would find sanctuary somewhere in the world beyond Europe's borders. But their trials were not over. It took nine anxious months for them to find a country that would let them in - months spent watching in horror as most refugees were forced back to uncertain lives in their home countries.

Forty years later, Ida, an accomplished artist, created a pictorial diary of their journey. Her prints, lyrical, haunting, and compelling, are accompanied by a page-turning narrative that bears witness to this treacherous and largely forgotten chapter of World War II history.

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