

Rosel Siev

When Hitler came to power in 1933, Rosel Siev was 12 years old. A sensitive and emotional child, she was deeply affected by the antisemitic oppression that followed in her native Germany. After the horror of *Kristallnacht* in 1938, Rosel's parents decided to send her away to Britain.



Rosel aged sixteen

She arrived in Cardiff, where she stayed with friends, then made her way to Manchester. When war broke out she was unable to return to Germany and she trained as a nurse. Like so many others at the time, Rosel was officially considered an 'enemy alien'.

The only contact with her family during this time was a Red Cross letter from her mother, reading: *We are on our way. Don't forget us.* Rosel's mother was on her way to a ghetto in Weimar, near the Polish border, before being deported to Auschwitz. She and Rosel's two young brothers were murdered in Auschwitz. Her father had already died of pneumonia in Dachau.

One of Rosel's sisters, Laura, was saved by Oskar Schindler. She survived seven concentration camps and was emotionally and physically ravaged by the experience. After liberation she married a fellow prisoner, who had helped save her life by surreptitiously handing her crusts of bread.

Another sister, Hilda, was on board the *Patria*, a ship carrying hundreds of illegal refugees to Palestine. For nine months it remained off the Palestinian coast, the British authorities preventing it from entering harbour. The refugees were due to be deported to Mauritius but, in order to destabilise the ship, Zionist paramilitaries planted a bomb on board. They miscalculated its effects, however, and the ship sank with the loss of over 250 lives. Hilda managed to survive and swim across Haifa harbour. She reached land and was helped to safety by the man whom she eventually married.

After the war, Rosel married Arthur Goldstein, with whom she had two children, Carolyn and Sharon. After her husband's death she married again, to a widowed Irish

solicitor, Stanley Siev, and became stepmother to his four young children. She now lives in the Rathgar area of Dublin.

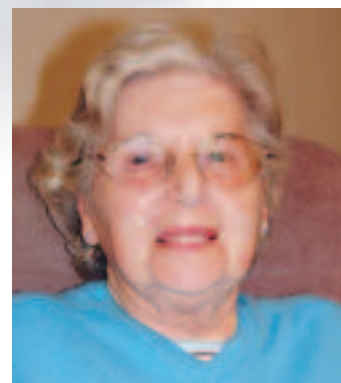
It is impossible to expect any young person to fully understand the terrible times I and hundreds of thousands of others had to live through. Deprived of my entire family – 63 persons in all, who perished in the concentration camps between 1941 and 1945 – and deprived of my youth, I went to England at the age of 17 to get out of Germany and visit friends of the family.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, I was trapped in England and at that time I had the feeling that I would never see my parents again. That proved to be the case. After the war, an American soldier, who was involved in the massive rescue operation from the camps, came across one of my sisters, Laura, who had gone through seven different concentration camps and had survived.

She told him that she had a sister who was somewhere in England and, with the help of the Jewish Refugee Committee they succeeded in finding me in a hospital in Manchester, where I had become a fully qualified nurse. Consequently, my sister, Laura, who was in a rehabilitation camp in Germany, was reunited with me again. It was the saddest day of my life when I was told that my dear parents, siblings, grandparents and so many of my family had perished in the camps.

I have had much time to think about what has happened, but to rationalise this terrible tragedy is an impossibility. However, I will never cease to believe in God, who has now richly rewarded me with beloved children, many adorable grandchildren and great-grandchildren, who have brought great pleasure into my life.

One of the lessons is that although Hitler and the Nazis were determined to extinguish Jews and Judaism from the world stage, Hitler and his cohorts have been wiped out, whilst the Jews and Judaism are becoming stronger.



Rosel Siev today

Photograph: Alicia McAuley