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# Hotel Exile by Jane Rogoyska: Moving account of ordinary folk caught in second World War

Rogoyska's Hotel Exile opens in 1933 as German undesirables flee west from the Nazi scourge



Jane Rogoyska details of the plight of ordinary folk buffeted by the tides of history in Hotel Exile.  
Photograph: Hal Howe

Pat Carty

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## Hotel Exile: Paris In The Shadow Of War

**Author:** Jane Rogoyska

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In order to tell the story of Paris before, during and after the [second World War](#), British writer and film-maker Jane Rogoyska concentrates on the Hotel Lutetia, located on the city's Left Bank. Her book opens in 1933 as German undesirables flee west from the Nazi scourge. Once in the city, many of them became "unwilling flâneurs with too much time on their hands" while others would meet at the hotel and form the Lutetia executive committee "to promote anti-fascist unity". Ultimately, like the French Popular Front coalition which dissolved before the occupation, their efforts would come to naught.

Several famous names drift through the lobby during this period. The threat of war had diverted the world's attention from the publication of [James Joyce's](#) *Finnegans Wake* in May 1939 but Nora Barnacle was more concerned with the lack of heating in their rue des Vignes apartment. The Joyces and their grandson Stephen moved into the Lutetia that winter.

[Samuel Beckett](#) was also present, helping the now nearly blind Joyce to retrieve books from the old apartment. Beckett would later play an active resistance role, "typing and translating information reports from French to English", transcripts which would be transferred to microfilm by a man known as Jimmy The Greek before being printed on to cigarette paper for clandestine transport into the unoccupied zone.

After the German forces went around the border-length fortification of the Maginot Line which the French thought of as "a magic amulet that will preserve the wearer from harm" and invaded France in May 1940, freshly promoted Brigadier General Charles de Gaulle checked in to the same hotel where he had spent his wedding night in 1921. He was there "to convince the French government not to conclude an armistice with Hitler".

The German infantry entered Paris on June 14th, 1940 and the Lutetia was commandeered by the Abwehr, the German intelligence service, as the Left Bank was associated with that "reliably anti-Nazi group", the intellectuals and artists. Following Germany's defeat, and General Choltitz's famous refusal to follow Hitler's destructive orders, the hotel became, under de Gaulle's order, a processing point for returning prisoners of war.

While *Hotel Exile* covers similar ground to Patrick Bishop's recent *Paris '44*, Rogoyska's use of the present tense throughout and her intricate detailing of the plight of ordinary folk buffeted by the tides of history makes for a more personalising, and ultimately moving account.

*Pat Carty is a freelance arts journalist*

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