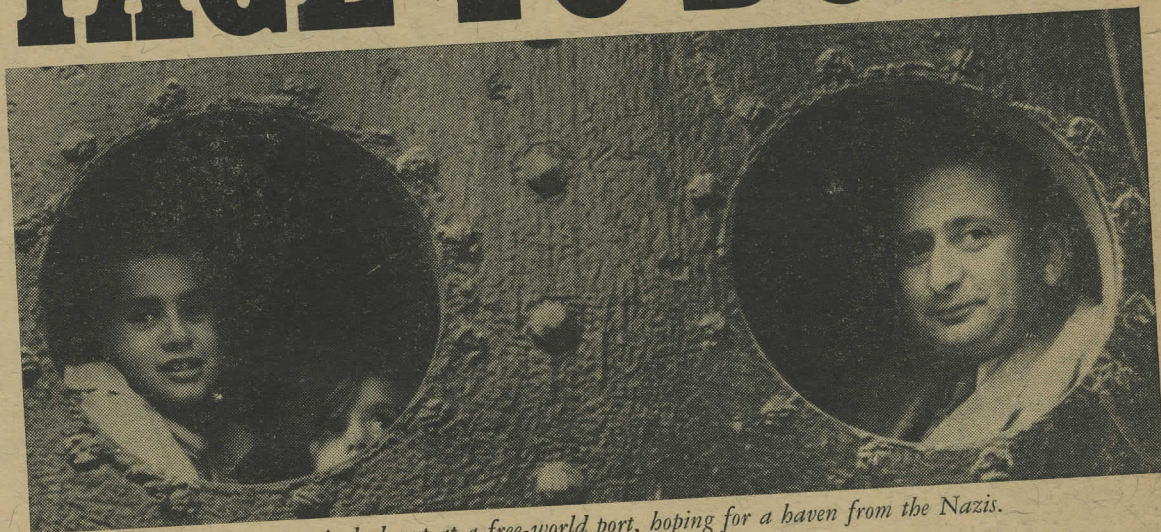


Within sight of freedom,
930 Jewish refugees from Hitler
are turned back—
then begin a harrowing

VOYAGE TO DOOM



Three refugees on the *St. Louis* look out at a free-world port, hoping for a haven from the Nazis.

BY
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ON MAY 13, 1939, the Hamburg-American Line's luxurious *St. Louis* sailed from Germany with 936 passengers—930 of them Jewish refugees, among the last to escape from the Nazis' narrowing vise. Inscribed on each passport was a red "J," and in each mind, the memory of six years of ever-increasing terror.

All of the refugees had managed to scrape together \$262 for passage to Havana plus \$81 as security for return fare in the event Cuba would not accept them. But this was a formality, since they all held official landing certificates signed by Col. Manuel Benites, Cuba's director general of immigration.

For 734 of the refugees, Cuba would be only a temporary sanctuary, a way station en route to their future home—the United States. They had fulfilled U.S. immigration requirements, completed labyrinthine forms and now held quota numbers that would permit them to enter the United States from three months to three years after their arrival in Cuba. Since the refugees could not get into the United States immediately, the Cuban landing certificates were essential. The Hamburg-American Line had bought them from representatives of Colonel Benites and had resold them at an average of \$150 apiece. As the Jews had long since been removed from the economic life of Germany, with all their possessions gone or sequestered, the efforts made to raise these sums had been prodigious. Few of the refugees were left with more than the \$4 in cash they were allowed to take aboard.

But the memory of "the Night of Broken Glass" in November, 1938, was still fresh in their minds, and the afterimage of burning synagogues, shattered shop windows and brown-shirted mobs still clear. That moment of horror passed; but afterward, they had no longer been allowed to walk in the parks, and even their passage through the streets was restricted to prescribed routes. Suddenly, they had been plucked from the shabby streets of their ghettos and, through the alchemy of a Benites landing certificate, ushered into the carpeted public rooms of a luxury liner. Defined as subhuman in their native land, they were now serenaded by a German string quartet, performers and audience responding as though the first six years of the Third Reich had been left on the receding shore.

There was Dr. Max Loewe, a lawyer from Breslau, who at the age of 14 had fought for his Fatherland in World War I and had been decorated for heroism. He was traveling with his mother, his wife Elise and their children Ruth, 17, and Fritz, 12. Dr. Loewe limped when he walked, for the soles of his feet had been beaten in a concentration camp. His whole family looked forward to the new life, except for the elderly grandmother, who cried continuously.

There were the Guttmanns, who had married in Berlin and were honeymooning aboard the *St. Louis*. Eva Broeder, a 21-year-old art student, observed them with special attention, because her fiancé would be waiting on the dock in Havana. So would the wife and small children

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