



# BULLETIN

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## Dumped Emigration

### A Statement of J.D.C. Policy Evoked by the St. Louis Crisis

**T**HROUGH the energetic efforts and financial guarantees of the Joint Distribution Committee the refugees of the SS *St. Louis* have been saved from return to Germany. They have been landed in Belgium, France, Holland and England on the assurance of J.D.C. that they will not become public charges.

The dramatic emergency presented by these 907 men, women and children denied entry into Cuba evoked the sympathy of humane people throughout the world. The proximity of Cuba to the United States naturally heightened the public interest and the desire that everything humanely possible be done to help these passengers. It was taken for granted by the Jewish and by the general community that it was the function of the J. D. C. to provide for these people.

It should be borne in mind that none of the refugees on the SS *St. Louis* had been advised or assisted in any way to take passage to Cuba by the Joint Distribution Committee, or by any agency which it subventions. On the contrary, the Joint Distribution Committee had made public announcement that it was dangerous and undesirable for any persons to attempt to gain admission to Cuba or to any other country unless they were in possession of such documents as would be entirely acceptable to the receiving countries. However, in the emergency presented by the SS *St. Louis* matter, the National Coordinating Committee and the Joint Distribution Committee acted without delay to find a settlement for this problem, sparing no effort or cost. The National Coordinating Committee sent its representatives to Cuba; the Joint Distribution Committee deposited in cash over \$500,000 to cover the required guarantees of \$500 per person.

When, despite these efforts, the Cuban Government declined to admit the refugees, the J.D.C. immediately turned its attention

*Few events within recent months have aroused such wide sympathy as the plight of the 907 refugees aboard the Hamburg-American liner "St. Louis", who, refused admission into Cuba despite the energetic efforts of the Joint Distribution Committee and its offer to put up cash guarantees of \$500 for each person, finally found asylum in Holland, Belgium, England and France. These temporary havens were granted as a result of the negotiations conducted by the J.D.C. and the financial guarantees which it made to the four countries. This story has been told in every newspaper throughout the country.*

*The "St. Louis" emergency is over, but the problem presented by the "St. Louis" has far wider implications than the immediate question of 907 human lives. It cannot be repeated too often that, although the "St. Louis" made front page news, it was by no means graver than the numerous problems affecting far larger numbers of people with which the Joint Distribution Committee must cope from day to day. It is important that the general public understand that the work of the J.D.C. is not limited to such crises as that of the "St. Louis" whose dramatic character lifts them in the public mind out of their proper place in the general program of refugee assistance.*

*The whole question has been the subject of careful thought by the Joint Distribution Committee. At the last meeting of the Executive Committee on June 16, 1939, there was unanimously approved a policy to be pursued in connection with possible future events of this type. The article on this page is a statement of that policy.*

to finding havens in Europe. The results of these efforts you already know. That these refugees are now in Belgium, Holland, France and England, instead of in Germany, is due to the intercession and the financial guarantees of the J.D.C.

This emergency is over. It is essential, however, to take into account the bearing that this incident may have on the future. Your attention is directed to a statement by Mr. Osbert Peake, undersecretary of the British Home Office, as published in the New York Times on June 14th. Mr. Peake stated that the exceptional circumstances resulting from "the fact that all these people had been granted visas which later were not honored", prompted the British

Government to make an exception in their case. He went on to state: "It is of the first importance that arrangements for the emigration of Jewish refugees from Germany shall proceed in accordance with an orderly program and that no encouragement shall be given to any idea that refugees may leave Germany before arrangements had been completed for their reception."

A similar statement was made by a spokesman for the Liaison Committee of the League of Nations High Commission for refugees, as reported by the New York Herald-Tribune of June 14th. He said: "One thing we must state is that if these (the *St. Louis* passengers) are taken care of by certain governments it is not to constitute a precedent for other shiploads." This is a point which we cannot afford to overlook. On numerous occasions the Joint Distribution Committee and its collaborating agencies have warned against the chaos resulting from "dumped" emigration. We have requested emigration bureaus and refugee committees and organizations throughout the world who have any dealings with the problems of refugees to take note of the abuses unfortu-

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ST LOUIS 625 115 14 1600

907 PASSAGERS DE ST LOUIS PENDENTS DEPUIS 13 JOURS  
 ENTRE ESPOIRE ET DESEPOIRE RECOIVENT AUJOURD'HUI VOS  
 NOUVELLES SI DELIVRANTES DU 13/6 BUE L'ARRANGEMENT  
 DEFINITIF POUR TOUS LES PASSAGERS ENFIN EST TROUVE  
 NOTRE GRATITUDE EST IMMENSE COMME LA MER SUR LAQUEL  
 NOUS SOMMES EN ROUTE DEPUIS LE 13 MAI D'ABORD PLEIN  
 DESPOIRE POUR UN BON AVENIR POUR TOMBER ALORS DANS  
 LA PLUS PROFONDE DESEPERANCE AGGEEZ MONSIEUR LE  
 PRESIDENT POUR VOUS ET LE JOENT AMERICAN ET NON  
 EN DERNIER LIEU POUR LES GOUVERNEMENTS DE BELGIQUE  
 PAYSBAS FRANCE ET ENGLETERRE LES PLUS PROFONDS ET  
 ETERNELS REMERCIEMENTS DE HOMMES FEMMES ET ENFANTS  
 REUNIS PAR LE MEME DESTIN AU BORD DE ST LOUIS  
 COMMITTEE DES PASSAGERS JOSEPH +

*Photostatic copy of a cable received by Morris C. Troper, European Director of the J.D.C. from the St. Louis refugees on hearing that they had found havens. The cable reads, in translation:*

*"The 907 passengers of St. Louis dangling for last thirteen days between hope and despair received today your liberating message of the 13th June that final arrangements for all passengers have at last been reached stop Our gratitude is as immense as the ocean on which we are now floating since May 13 first full of hope for a good future and afterwards in the deepest despair stop Accept Mr. Chairman for you and for the American Joint Distribution Committee and last but not least for the governments of Belgium Holland France and England the eternal thanks of men, women and children united by the same fate on board the "St. Louis".*

nately practised by certain steamship agencies, travel bureaus and public officials. The press had frequently reported the movement of ships bearing refugees with invalid papers from port to port, and for the most part, denied entry.

It must be obvious to all that aside from the fundamental questions of policy which are involved, the financial and administrative burdens of such "dumped", chaotic, forced and disorganized emigration are entirely beyond the scope of private philanthropic resources or the facilities of existing organizations. Moreover, this type of emigration aggravates immeasurably the situation, not alone of other immigrants who have already found asylum, but of the native Jewish populations in the countries to which these emigrants have gone. On a financial basis, merely to provide minimal funds for transportation, guarantees, and to assure the maintenance for a single emigrant for a single year, without taking future burdens into account, requires an irreducible minimum of approximately \$750. If the Joint Distribution Committee, under this type of terrorized pressure, were to be obliged to submit to this kind of program of enforced help, its entire resources for the whole year 1939 would be exhausted in taking care of from 10,000 to 15,000 emigrants.

In other words, 20 boatloads of refugees like those on the *St. Louis* whom the J.D.C. would undertake to provide for and for whom it would have to give guarantees, would virtually deplete the treasury of the Joint Distribution Committee and would deprive all of the other activities and programs of the Committee of essential funds. Already the cost of providing the entire budgetary allotment of the J.D.C. for all of the viding guarantees for the 907 *St. Louis* refugees is equal to work of relief and assistance to Jewish communities within Germany during the first six months of the year.

Under these circumstances, the Joint Distribution Committee must place on record that it cannot regard its action in behalf of the *St. Louis* passengers, and the enormous sacrifices it has made in the financial commitments undertaken for this relatively small number of persons, as constituting a precedent for any similar action. There are dependent upon the program of aid conducted by the J.D.C. multitudes of persons in Germany and Old Austria, in sections of Bohemia, Moravia and Slovakia; in Hungary; in Poland; in Rumania; and in refugee countries throughout the world. Its program of assistance includes the education of children, child care and welfare work, training of young men and women in productive occupations, credit aid and loans, development of new occupations, medical and sanitary service, relief as well as emergency emigration aid for the refugees. Conscious of its responsibilities in all of the vital necessities of the Jewish populations overseas, the J.D.C. as a trustee for the funds turned over to it by contributors throughout the country, cannot undertake to expend huge sums for a comparatively small number of refugees in any such type of enforced and disorderly emigration.

In the circumstances, the *St. Louis* incident must be regarded as in fact it was, as a special problem that required special treatment. It must be brought home to all governments and all people that the Joint Distribution Committee is daily faced with emergency and critical needs, frequently of an equally urgent nature, affecting Jewish populations in many other parts of the world. Within the limits of the funds made available to the J.D.C. by the Jewish communities of this country, it is our duty so to expend those funds as to bring the greatest and the most lasting good to the greatest number.

*Joseph C. Skyman*

Secretary & Executive Director



*Happy landing! Wirephoto of the St. Louis passengers as they arrived in Antwerp.*