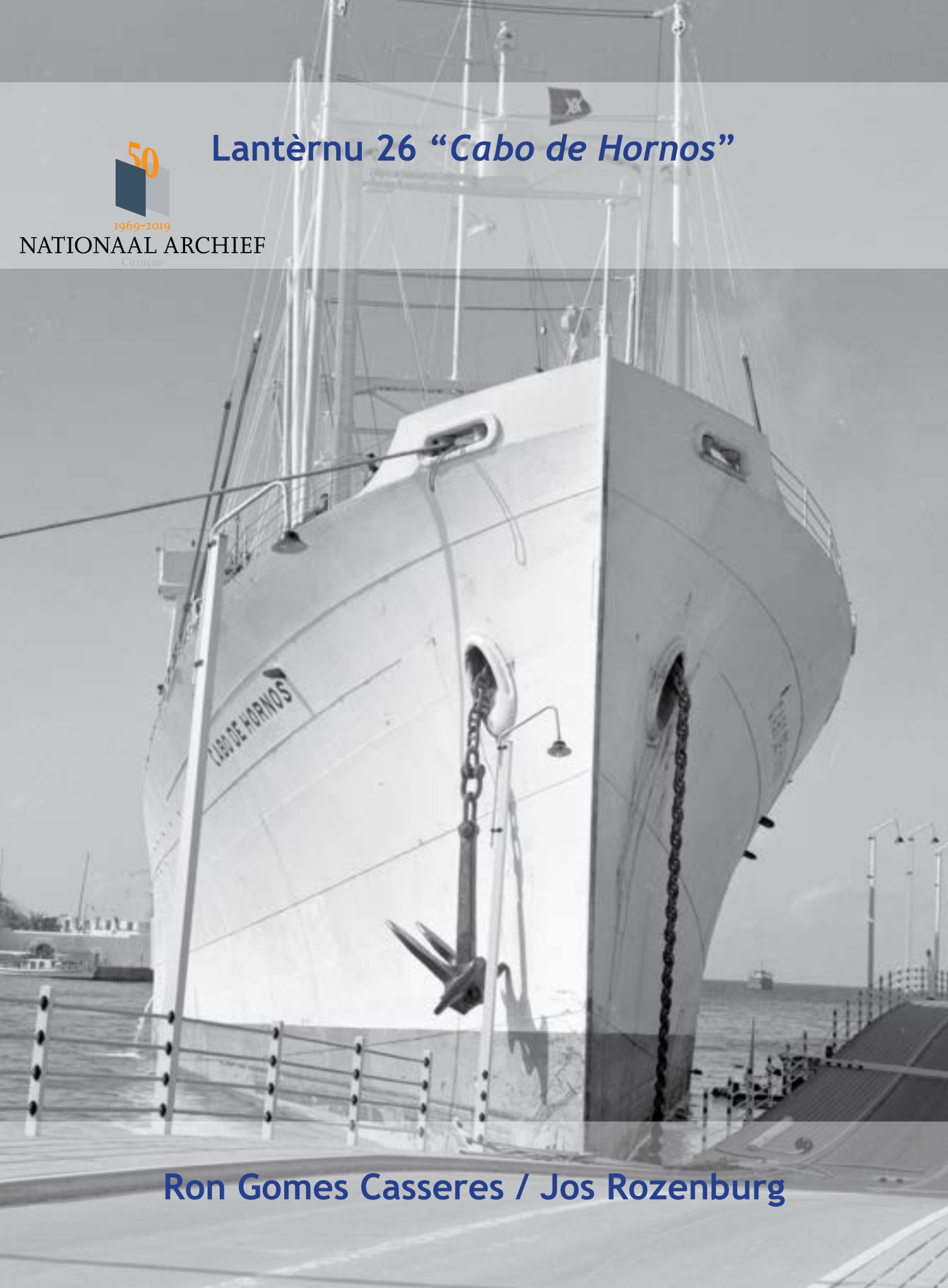


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Ron Gomes Casseres / Jos Rozenburg

**The Saga of *Cabo de Hornos*
Fleeing the Horrors of War**

Ron Gomes Casseres

**The 86 refugees, who were they and what happened to them
after their arrival?**

Jos Rozenburg





Lantèrnu 26

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Preface

The Spanish ship *SS Cabo de Hornos* was able to disembark 86 Jewish refugees on Curaçao in November 1941. On the run from the Holocaust in Europe, the Jewish refugees eventually made it to South America, where they were refused entry in several countries but were finally able to set foot on Curaçao. The refugees were granted access to Curaçao after intensive diplomatic pressure and notable hesitant action from the Curaçao Governor. Separate internment camps were set up on Curaçao for the large group of the *Cabo de Hornos*. The site in Suffisant had previously served as temporary housing for newly arrived foreign Shell workers. It was now used as housing for the male *Cabo de Hornos* refugees. The former quarantine building Plantersrust in Mundo Nobo was chosen for the women and children. The group of originally 86 *Cabo de Hornos* refugees has been reduced quite quickly. A number of countries had expressed their willingness to grant asylum to these Jewish refugees, including the United States, Cuba and Colombia. By December 1941 their number had fallen to 76; two years later there were only 11 in Plantersrust. The latter group remained there until the end of the war. Another 6 left before the end of 1946.

This *Lantèrnu* publication gives more insight into the dramatic journey of these refugees. The “saga” of all that the refugees endured is described by Ron Gomes Casseres, while author Jos Rozenburg provides more detail about the fate of every individual who initially found asylum here on Curaçao from the atrocities of the Second World War.

The photo on the cover dates from after the war. In February 1946, the *SS Cabo de Hornos* collided with the Queen Emma Bridge which is perhaps illustrative for the period before that. Due to his hesitancy and reluctant cooperation to take in the *Cabo de Hornos* refugees, Curaçao’s Governor Wouters was replaced by Governor Kasteel on July 15, 1942 by the Dutch Government in exile in London.

Two interesting perspectives written by Ron Gomes Casseres and Jos Rozenburg. Enjoy reading this part of our local history among others from recently disclosed archives.

National Archives Curaçao, 2022.

The Saga of *Cabo de Hornos*

Fleeing the Horrors of War

The unprovoked Russian invasion of Ukraine and subsequent bombing raids on cities and civilians has brought to life the early horrors of World War II (WWII) in the 1930's which many of us know about today only from hear-say, history books and movies. The millions of Ukrainians fleeing to nearby European countries bring to mind the refugees who fled Europe at the onset of WWII in 1939, the year that Nazi Germany invaded and occupied Poland, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Contrary to the open arms which European countries are extending to Ukrainian refugees, the refugees from Nazism were often not welcomed by, and even denied admittance to, the free Western world of the Americas.

In May 1939 the German liner SS *St. Louis* sailed from Germany to Havana, Cuba. Its 937 passengers were almost all Jewish refugees holding Cuban transit visas. When the *St. Louis* arrived in Havana harbor on May 27, the Cuban government admitted 28 passengers and refused to admit or to allow the remaining passengers to disembark the ship. The United States and Canada were unwilling to admit the passengers. Sailing so close to Florida that they could see the lights of Miami, appeals were cabled to US President Franklin D. Roosevelt asking for refuge. While Roosevelt never responded, the State Department and the White House decided not to permit these refugees to enter the United States. Following the US government's refusal, the *St. Louis* sailed back to Europe on June 6, 1939. The refugees did not return to Germany, however. International and Jewish organizations negotiated with four European governments to secure entry visas for the passengers, and the *St. Louis* passengers were relocated in Great Britain, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. Of these 909 *St. Louis* passengers who had hoped to continue their life freely in the Americas, 254 died in Nazi concentration camps.¹

Two smaller ships carrying Jewish refugees sailed to Cuba in May 1939. The French ship, *Flandre*, carried 104 passengers; *Orduña*, a British vessel, held 72 passengers. Like the *St. Louis*, these ships were not permitted to dock in Cuba. *Flandre* was turned back to its point of departure in France, while *Orduña* proceeded to a series of Latin American ports. Its passengers finally disembarked in the US-controlled Canal Zone in Panama. The United States eventually admitted most of them.²

Spanish shipping company Ybarra y Cia. owned the SS *Cabo de Buena Esperanza*

and the SS *Cabo de Hornos* which, between 1940 and 1943, carried Nazi refugees on a number of voyages to South America, often from Lisbon. These ships continued to carry immigrating passengers to Argentina after the end of WWII - as well as Nazis fleeing liberated Europe and their personal accountability for the horrors they had perpetrated. The *Cabo de Esperanza* alone is said to have arrived thirty-nine times in Buenos Aires in that four-year period, each time bringing immigrants from Europe. On one voyage in May 1942 this ship sailed from Gibraltar with several Dutch refugees on board with the intention of dropping them off in Curaçao but not much is known of this voyage or even if they made it to Curaçao.³

None of these several voyages was as dramatic as the voyage in 1941 of the *Cabo de Hornos* which was originally destined for Rio de Janeiro.

Leaving war-torn Europe behind

The saga of *Cabo de Hornos* is more than the story of a ship with predominantly Jewish refugees which, after floating around for months, was finally allowed to disembark its passengers in Curaçao in November 1941. It is also the story of valiant individuals who assisted these refugees and of reprehensible positions taken by several countries as well as by authorities of those and other countries. The story starts well before November 1941.

The calendar read January 1941. Germany had invaded France, Belgium and the Netherlands and was bombing London and East and North Africa. It would still take almost a full year before the US entered the war against Hitler. That is when more than a hundred Jewish refugees fleeing Nazism embarked in Marseille on the French steamer *Alsina* destined for Rio de Janeiro. The refugees hailed from, among others, Germany, Poland, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Belgium, France, Austria, Switzerland and Belarus, and every one of them was armed with a neatly stamped visa permitting them to enter Brazil.

The visas had been granted by Brazil's ambassador to Vichy France, Luis Martins de Souza Dantas. These were not the only visas granted by De Souza Dantas to Jewish refugees during the years of World War II. As was the case with Dutch consul Jan Zwartendijk, Japanese consul Chiune Sugihara, and Portuguese consul Aristides de Sousa Mendes, De Souza Dantas was recognized as 'Righteous Among the Nations' by Yad Vashem. That recognition is Israel's official memorial to the victims of the Holocaust for actions taken in the function of a diplomatic officer which in the war saved the life of tens of thousands of Jewish refugees.⁴

From Marseille, *Alsina* would head to Brazil via Dakar in Morocco and via Martinique in the Caribbean. Upon docking in Dakar, Vichy France, which collaborated with Nazi Germany, revoked the ship's sailing license for "military and political

reasons.” The passengers spent four and a half months on the ship at anchor in Dakar. *Time* magazine wrote that there was no torture, only heat, hardship and the constant reminder that they had once almost been free.⁵ From there they were transported to Casablanca, disembarked and incarcerated in horrible concentration camps in the interior of Morocco. In August 1941 forty of the Alsina passengers were placed on board the Spanish *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* which was bound for Brazil.

In the meantime, their visas to enter Brazil had expired, but after much effort by authorities in both Vichy France and Spain, these were revalidated. For various reasons, likely security and safety, the vessel had to make a detour via Trinidad and Curaçao. Towards the end of September 1941 the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* spent two days in transit in Curaçao but the passengers were not allowed to disembark, perhaps because the authorities feared they might try to remain on the island. Even if there only in transit, the refugees were shown empathy by Curaçao’s Jews. Max Montevenado-Hirschberg visited them aboard ship and is said to have provided some relief from their difficult journey. On October 18, 1941, forty passengers signed a handwritten letter in German to Montevenado-Hirschberg (calling him ‘Herschfeld’) to thank him for the “tremendous and generous way you approached the passengers then on the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* during their stay in the port of Curaçao. You have brought us much joy and have made easier our unenviable situation on this arduous voyage. This noble destination will for always be remembered by all of us.”⁶ Max Hirschberg is said to have ‘latinized’ his last name when he moved to Colombia by adding the Spanish translation of Hirschberg to his name: Montevenado. His family recalls hearing that Max’s business suffered because he was so committed and engaged, constantly running to the authorities to plead for asylum on behalf of Jewish refugees.⁷

Once the ship arrived in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil’s role in this saga became an unenviable one. The Brazilian authorities refused to allow the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* passengers to disembark on the basis of the revalidated visas. Appeals to allow the refugees to disembark went up all the way to then-president Getúlio Vargas through his friend Roman Catholic Cardinal Sebastião Leme da Silveira Cintra, but to no avail. While Brazilian authorities claimed their refusal was based on immigration regulations, others have considered their actions to have been of an anti-Semitic nature.⁸

After sailing from Brazil, the refugees endured camp-like stays in Buenos Aires and failed attempts to go to Paraguay, for which they had recently received visas. Argentina did not permit them even to walk across the city to the river boat to Paraguay. Argentina’s refusal to admit the Jewish refugees is not really surprising considering that country’s affinity with the Axis powers. In Argentina the forty for-



On November 19, 1941, the *Cabo de Hornos* docked in Curaçao. Collection American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, JDC.NY_05823_da1

mer *Alsina* and *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* passengers were put on board the Spanish *Cabo de Hornos* which was destined to return to Europe together with some fifty other refugees already on board. These last refugees may originally also have been *Alsina* passengers who had stayed behind in Morocco. And so, back to war-torn and Nazi-dominated Europe they headed unless a sanctuary could urgently be found for what was then a group of 86 predominantly Jewish refugees.

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, or JDC, is a leading global Jewish humanitarian organization which, before and during World War II, supported European Jewish refugees in partnership with local Jewish organizations and other international refugee immigration aid organizations. During the above stopover in Buenos Aires, the JDC guaranteed the expenses incurred by the Argentinean government and undertook numerous emergency efforts there.⁹ In addition to JDC and the American Jewish Congress, the Foreign Affairs Committee of the US Congress, the British Embassy in the US and its Ambassador Lord Halifax, and the Dutch Government, then in exile in London, all played important roles in finding

a solution to the 'floating refugees'. They were now on the *Cabo de Hornos* and en route to Europe where they would likely have landed in German concentration camps.

The JDC urgently mobilized the local Jewish community Mikvé Israel in Curaçao in order to lobby Governor Wouters and the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs to admit the 86 refugees temporarily to Curaçao. The JDC backed up its request by providing financial guarantees to the Curaçao and Dutch governments for expenses to be incurred by the government, and on this basis the *Cabo de Hornos* refugees were allowed to disembark and remain temporarily in Curaçao.¹⁰ The JDC's local representative was Milton Maduro who, in 1941 and 1942, was president of the board of Mikvé Israel. That is also the period that Rabbi Isaac Jessurun Cardozo was Mikvé Israel's rabbi. He would soon become a key person in the lives of the *Cabo de Hornos* refugees and a fierce advocate and benefactor of Jews interned in camps in Curaçao and Bonaire.¹¹

That then-Governor G.J.J. Wouters had to be lobbied to admit temporarily the *Cabo de Hornos* refugees is expressing it too kindly. It took a direct instruction from the Dutch Minister of Colonies C.J.I.M. Welter to force Wouters to do so after he had earlier refused to allow these refugees to disembark in Curaçao. In a hearing in 1951 by the formal Commission of Inquiry into the Dutch government's war-time policies, Wouters would claim not to recollect the request to have the 86 predominantly Jewish refugees disembark in Curaçao which he had been opposed to until so ordered by the Dutch Government. The Commission questioned Wouters on whether he had then been prepared to grant residency only to persons with sufficient financial means or whether he had a dislike of Jewish refugees, all of which he (naturally) rejected. The Commission faulted Wouters for "obstinacy" and insensitivity of the refugees' fate.¹² Wouters' background was a military one and he is said to have feared a repeat of the 1929 incident whereby Venezuelan rebels led by Rafael Urbina attacked Fort Amsterdam, emptied the Fort of its weapons arsenal and even kidnapped then-Governor Fruytier as a hostage. Others, while blaming Wouters, assign principal accountability for the actions towards the refugees to then-Prosecutor General Van der Laan. The latter was by Royal Decree responsible during the War years for safety, security and orderly life in the Dutch colonies. Historians are left with a deservedly painful impression of the lack of empathy for the refugees by both Wouters and Van der Laan during the years of WWII. The principal Dutch historian of those years, Dr. Louis "Loe" de Jong, referred to Wouters as having been "authoritarian" and suspected him of having "an aversion to Jews."¹³

Depraved and reprehensible indifference by officials of several countries was not all that these *Cabo de Hornos* refugees had to endure. *Time* magazine wrote that

“the *Cabo* ships were called ‘whited sepulchers’ in South America, a reference to the smart white paint of their top sides and the filth, crowding, misery and disease inside their hulls. The whole ship stank, the food was nauseous, and the ship’s hospital used dirty newspapers for sheets. During the slow voyage across the Atlantic two refugees died. Before the ship sailed from Buenos Aires one of the refugees killed himself.”¹⁴

Arrival in Curaçao

On November 19, 1941, the *Cabo de Hornos* docked in Curaçao. Ten months after embarking in Marseille, three steamships and four countries - France, Morocco, Brazil and Argentina - and several camps and immigration hotels later, its 86 passengers were finally permitted to debark and allowed to remain in Curaçao for 90 days “pending permanent admission elsewhere.” Most countries did not welcome European war refugees to residency in those days, and many of the *Cabo de Hornos* passengers would end up staying in Curaçao well beyond the initial 90 days.

Cabo de Hornos was not the first ship to bring WWII refugees to Curaçao. That distinction belonged to KNSM’s *Stuyvesant* which arrived in Curaçao with seven Dutch Jewish families on board, in total twenty persons. On May 10, 1940, the very day that the Germans invaded the Netherlands, these refugees were admitted to Curaçao by Governor Wouters.

Near the end of June 1940, another KNSM steamship, M.S. *Crijnsen*, brought a group of seventeen Austrian Jewish refugees to Curaçao. In May 1940, days before the Netherlands was invaded by Germany, they had boarded a KNSM ship with visas to go to Chile. While underway, the ship’s captain received notice that Chile had rescinded their visas. They requested political exile in Curaçao early in June 1940 which was refused by Governor Wouters. They were therefore forced to continue on the same KNSM ship which disembarked them in Panama. They were not allowed to stay in Panama and were boarded on the M.S. *Crijnsen* which brought them back to Curaçao near the end of June. This time, Dutch Minister of Colonies Welten accused Wouters of “inhuman behavior” and forced him to admit the refugees.¹⁵ They were admitted under a guarantee by KNSM for any expenses the government incurred, and as citizens of an enemy nation, Austria, the refugees were promptly sent to an internment camp in Bonaire. The *Crijnsen* refugees included some families that are today still well-known in Curaçao and who were able to build up their lives on this island: Max Israel, Erni Sara and Elvira Kywi and Alfred and Erika Schnog were among these seventeen Jews.¹⁶

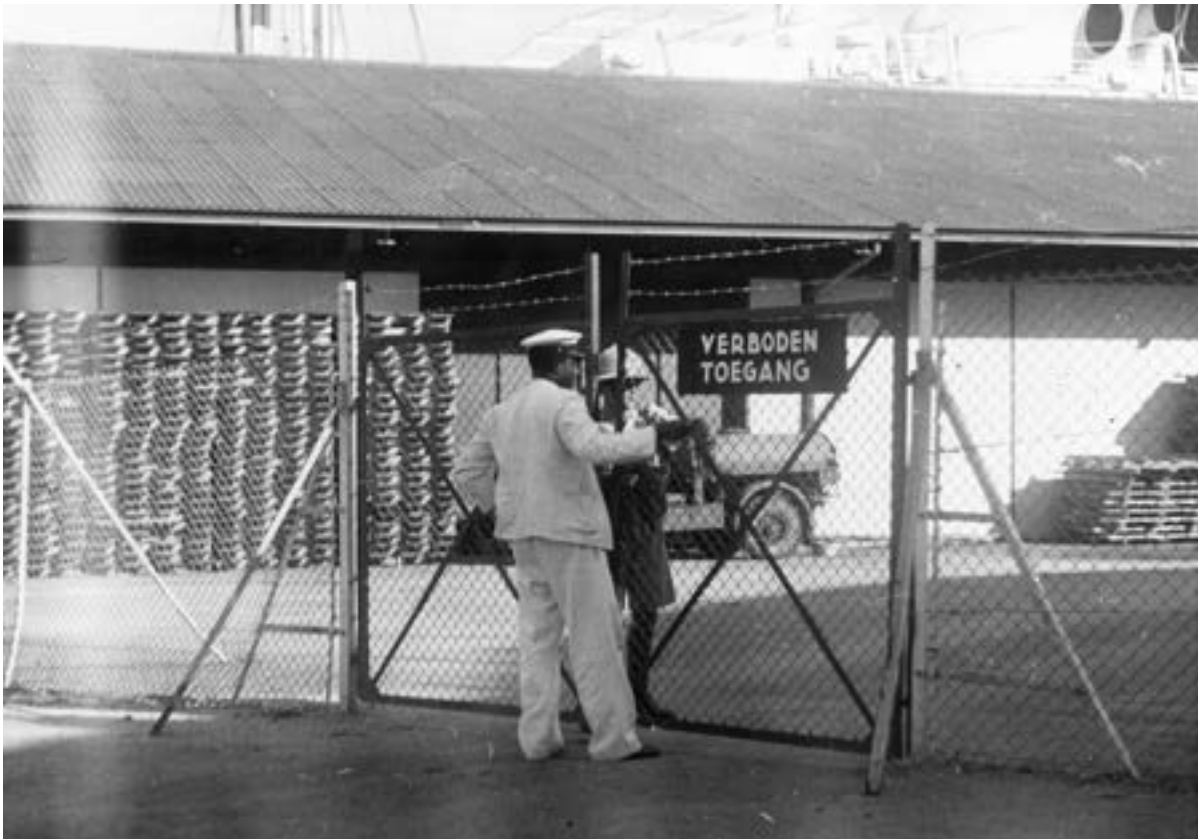
It has been reported that Wouters demanded a similar guarantee from *Cabo de Hornos*’ Spanish ship owners Ybarra for expenses that might be incurred by the government,¹⁷ perhaps due to the high number of refugees. The refusal by Ybarra

to extend that guarantee is said to be the reason for Wouters' refusal to admit the refugees to Curaçao. Already on November 12, 1941, however, Prosecutor General Van der Laan had provided Wouters with another argument for refusing to allow the refugees to disembark. Van der Laan recommended that Wouters "decline admittance as Curaçao will not be able to accommodate these refugees and that it was very obvious that they will never leave" this island.¹⁸ Wouters agreed with Van de Laan's recommendation and on November 13th instructed to send to the Minister of Colonies in London a coded cable with the identical wording. As noted above, the *Cabo de Hornos* passengers were admitted by Wouters only after receiving specific instruction thereto by the Dutch government in London and a guarantee by the JDC for all expenses incurred. That JDC commitment was already in place on November 16, 1941, only four days after Van der Laan's recommendation not to accommodate the refugees.

Archival documents and reports differ as to the exact number of *Cabo de Hornos* refugees who disembarked in Curaçao but the most reliable number and available listing totals 86 refugees. Some archival documents mention 84 while one other even 83. The refugees originally included at least 27 men, 35 women and 20 children. With assistance of family members in the US and in South America, the JDC and other Jewish community and official organizations, refugees steadily found new homes in the Americas. It is reliably documented that in 1943 there were still some 33 *Cabo de Hornos* refugees in Curaçao, who upon arrival in November 1941, were of ages ranging from two months to 70 years old. It is also reliably documented in February 1943 that 49 passengers had left Curaçao and two had died there. The latter are Ferdinand Weisstein (or Weihsstein) and Ernestine (or Emilienne) Grassian.¹⁹ They had died respectively in November 1941 and March 1942 and were buried at Beth Haim Bleinheim. There is an additional former *Cabo de Hornos* refugee buried in Curaçao, and that is Irma Lustig-Schulhof who had immigrated with her husband from their stay in Curaçao to Venezuela. After her husband passed away, she returned to Curaçao where she died in 1991, and is buried at Beth Haim Berg Altena.

Baptized Jews?

The *Cabo de Hornos* refugees are often said to all be Jews, but in reality this seems not to have been the case. The *Amigoe* newspaper reported on November 21, 1941, that the refugees included ten men and fourteen women of Roman Catholic faith.²⁰ A detailed but incomplete archival list of the refugees shows that twelve refugees were of Roman Catholic faith (and one an agnostic.)²¹ The foregoing might explain the pro-active involvement of the Roman Catholic Diocese with the refugees. Already on November 18, 1941, one day before arrival of the refugees, the Diocese founded a provisional Roman Catholic Committee to "take to heart the interests of refugees landing in Curaçao."²² The Committee was



After docking at the Curaçao harbor, the Refugees were initially not allowed to disembark until diplomatic pressure forced Governor Wouters to do so. Collection American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, JDC.NY_05825_da1

headed by Port Chaplain J.B. van der Meer O.P., who would work very closely with Rabbi Isaac Jessurun Cardozo in looking after the needs of the refugees.

The presence among the 86 refugees of some twenty refugees of Roman Catholic faith, the others all being Jewish, is noteworthy. It is also remarkable that the earlier South American ports, and then especially at Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires, did not allow the Roman Catholic refugees to disembark even though they may have had (political) reasons for declining that privilege for the Jews. Once in Curaçao, the Roman Catholic refugees did not hide their faith as it was promptly reported on by the *Amigoe* newspaper just days after arriving in Curaçao's port. Were these Roman Catholics in fact Jews who had converted to Roman Catholicism before fleeing Europe in order to increase their chances of being admitted to these South American countries, and especially to Brazil, which was their original destination after departing Marseille? That good question cannot definitively be answered eighty years later but the phenomenon of "baptized Jews" during the second half of the 1930's in Europe is one that can lead to an educated conclusion.

The anti-Semitic and racial 1935 Nuremberg Laws in Germany did not define a Jew as someone with particular Jewish beliefs. Instead anyone who had three or four Jewish grandparents was defined as a Jew. Even individuals who had been baptized Christians but had Jewish grandparents were - after 1935 - defined as Jews in Germany. This principle would be in force also in Italy and in the countries that were conquered in war by Germany. The United States Holocaust Museum wrote that “converting to Christianity offered no protection and ... made things worse, making people appear as though they were trying to hide their true identities, thus confirming hateful stereotypes of Jews as untrustworthy and scheming.”²³ The other equally horrible side of this same racial law is that also Jews who had been baptized after 1935, and for half a decade or more had faithfully and openly lived their new Roman Catholic beliefs, were considered by the 1935 Nuremberg criteria to be Jewish and subjected to all the terrors that the Nazis subjected Jews to in WWII.

Historians of Vatican archives during the years of WWII have argued that Pope Pius XII’s purported fear of reprisals against non-Aryan Catholics, and specifically baptized Jews, was an important reason for his not speaking out against the Holocaust. He allegedly feared that doing so would bring Hitler’s wrath on all Roman Catholics in the occupied countries, especially predominantly Catholic Poland.²⁴ Mussolini’s Fascist regime in Italy had early on been an admirer of Hitler and Nazism and after entering the War in 1940 became a crucial ally of Germany. Recently opened Vatican archives demonstrate that two of Pope Pius XII’s key emissaries in Italy repeatedly urged authorities of Mussolini’s regime to spare baptized Jews from anti-Semitic racial laws and campaigns. As stated by Pietro Tachi Venturi, a prominent Jesuit and a principal advisor to the Pope, the Church considered these baptized Jews to be no less “children of the Church than any other Catholic of Aryan descent”.²⁵

With regard specifically to admittance of refugees, in March 1939 members of the German Catholic hierarchy “asked Pope Pius XII to petition the Brazilian government for 3,000 immigration visas for German Catholic Jews to settle in Brazil.” The visas were formally conceded in June 1939 by the Brazilian Immigration authorities after appeals to that country’s president. These visas for baptized German Jews came with very strict conditions which included recommendations from the nuncio of the country in which they had been baptized; in the end, only 1000 visas were actually issued and utilized.²⁶ There were similar initiatives of the Vatican hierarchy to have travel visas issued to baptized Jews, including an unsuccessful one by a Cardinal of Vienna asking for the Vatican’s assistance to have visas issued for 11,000 Jews who had been baptized. Similar initiatives and programs ended in 1942.



Other pictures show refugees being transported in the back of trucks and escorted by military police on motorcycle. Collection American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, JDC.NY_05821_da1

The hesitancy of the South American ports to admit the Roman Catholic *Cabo de Hornos* refugees as well as the pro-active involvement of the Roman Catholic Diocese upon the refugees' arrival in Curaçao may both be more understandable with the above background. In view of the visa-initiatives described above for thousands of German Catholic Jews, the immigration authorities of Brazil and Argentina may have well looked beyond the small number of the possibly-baptized Jews on the *Cabo de Hornos*. Their decisions might have been based more on not wanting to create a precedence which might be used for potentially thousands of Catholic Jewish immigrants from European countries than about the small number on the *Cabo de Hornos*. At the same time, the Roman Catholic Diocese in Curaçao might have been aware of the protective attitude of the Vatican hierarchy towards baptized Jews and perhaps for that reason immediately created a committee which worked closely with the Curaçao Jewish community with the interests of all refugees at heart.

It remains an unanswered question, however, why seemingly all articles, reports, letters and other writings regarding the *Cabo de Hornos* throughout the past

years, both online and offline, have always referred to 86 Jewish refugees while approximately one fourth of the refugees are listed in archival documents and listings as well as reported in the press in Curaçao to be of Roman Catholic faith. One possible (and speculative) answer to this query is that the refugees believed that as Jewish refugees it might have been easier for them to be allowed to embark from southern Europe, in this case Marseille, France, to South America and so escape Nazi terror. Once arrived in Curaçao, however, they felt safe on a Dutch island, the Netherlands being an important member of the Allied forces and itself occupied, to declare their (real?) faith to be Roman Catholic.

“Curaçao became a symbol of the deliverance”

Upon arrival in Curaçao, the *Cabo de Hornos* refugees were not sent to internment camps in Bonaire as had occurred with the *Crijnsen* refugees. That may have been because they were only to remain in Curaçao 90 days according to their admittance permits. The men were initially separated from the women, allegedly for “technical reasons”. The men were housed in temporary housing in Suffisant, while the women (with children up to 11 years of age) were housed in the former Quarantine building in Plantersrust at Mundo Nobo. Mindful of the fact that the Dutch colonies were in a state of war and perhaps that the background of all of the refugees was not known, both ‘camps’ were managed by military captains and majors and guarded by local police. The two camps were several kilometers apart and were each surrounded by mesh wire fencing.

Prior to debarking in Curaçao, the refugees had endured horrible conditions and food for ten months aboard ship and in Morocco. They were undernourished and sixteen of the passengers were initially hospitalized for observation. A few were unable to leave the ship by foot and had to be carried off on stretchers. While they were not yet free to move around the island as they might have wished, newspaper *Amigoe* reported two days after their arrival that they were grateful to receive good food, two sets of clothing, hygienic conditions and health care upon disembarking.²⁷ Some of the refugees spent the first days in Curaçao in the St. Elisabeth Hospital. In the camps, more clothing, toys for the children, fruit, extra vitamins and reading material were distributed on a regular basis by the local “Joodsche Hulp Comité.” Expenses to obtain medical care and hospitalization were covered by the local Jewish community.

Earlier in 1941 the three Jewish communities on the island - Mikvé Israel, Emanu-El and Club Union, thus encompassing both the Sephardic and the Ashkenazi communities - had formed the “Joodsche Hulp Comité,” a Jewish Aid Committee under the leadership of Rabbi Isaac Jessurun Cardozo to assist Jewish refugees.²⁸ That Aid Committee went into high gear after the arrival of the *Cabo de Hornos* refugees. Frieda Fuhrmann-Spritzer frequently visited the women in the Quarant-

tine building while the Suffisant camp was visited daily by men of the Aid Committee. The Committee was joined in their work by the Roman Catholic Pastor Van der Meer who became a frequent visitor to the refugees in each of the two camps. Rabbi Cardozo paid regular visits to refugees in the hospital and in the camps.

“Curaçao became for us a symbol of the deliverance,” Dr. David Chazen, a *Cabo de Hornos* passenger wrote in February 1942 from his new residence in New York City.²⁹ He wrote that “food is plentiful even if monotonous, the sleeping quarters quite comfortable and the hygienic conditions very good.” The treatment by the Dutch military authorities is said to be correct and even quite cordial ‘in some cases.’ “On the whole,” Chazen wrote, “the population of Curaçao and particularly of the Jewish circles meets the non-Dutch refugees with great sympathy.” He praised the efforts of Max Montevenado-Hirschberg who had brought them gifts, food, soap, clothing and more when they first docked in Curaçao for two days in September and again helped prepare for their return in November. Chazen wrote that he was grateful that the “Spanish and Eastern European Jews were united to relieve the bitter distress of the Jewish refugees and that the Catholic community likewise contributed to the relief work.” Towards the end of his report, he wrote that “nobody will be surprised to hear that the refugees in Curaçao are longing for liberty because also in Curaçao they are constantly watched over by the police.”

It is interesting to note how the Jewish community got together regardless of ethnic origin or religious affiliation in the face of the larger outside threat. Eva Abraham-Van der Mark described that in the 1930’s the Sephardim considered themselves to be the axis around which the island’s economy revolved. They had strong political connections which they exercised through the Chamber of Commerce. The Ashkenazim came to the island mostly in the 1920’s and 1930’s and were fiercely competitive businesspersons who knew how to fill gaps that existed in the market. The Ashkenazi community had only a social center, Club Union, to rally around; the Shaarei Tzedek Orthodox Jewish congregation would be founded in the late 1950’s. It is likely that the Ashkenazim, many with families in some of the countries invaded early on by the Nazis, felt closer to the Eastern-European refugees. Under the leadership of Rabbi Isaac Jessurun Cardozo, however, both the Sephardic and the Ashkenazi communities were fully engaged in the relief activities. Nazism was a threat to all Jews, regardless of origin, and spared none. And so it was a telling sign of that unity that refugee Chazen noticed and praised it, writing that “Spanish and Eastern European Jews were united to relieve the bitter distress of the Jewish refugees.”

Similar to Chazen’s gratitude, Odilia Schwarz, a Swiss citizen and *Cabo de Hornos* refugee, wrote to the Curaçao authorities: “You were not only our saviors and benefactors, but did so much more: all authorities and all Curaçaoan people were

so kind to us. We think of this period of our life with feelings of agreeable remembrance and tender affection for your island.”³¹

The men and women of the *Cabo de Hornos* were initially separated in November 1941 and housed in different camps. That separation came to an end rather quickly. Already in February 1942 the men were moved from the Suffisant camp to the Quarantine building at Mundo Nobo³² though it appears that men and women were still housed in different barracks there. That came to an end as well in June 1942 when the Joint Distribution Committee authorized expenditure to expand the Mundo Nobo facilities in order to restore family connections.³³ A year later, in June 1943, there were still refugees remaining in the Quarantine building despite efforts to find other lodging for them at a cost that would be acceptable to the JDC.³⁴

During Rabbi Jessurun Cardozo’s frequent visits to the *Cabo de Hornos* refugees in their respective camps, he completed detailed information forms for each refugee. This was needed by the refugee organizations in New York in order to help obtain visas to enter other countries, including to the USA itself. These forms included personal data of each family, passport and visa data, close relatives in the US and in other countries and their contact information. Many of these completed forms are included in the archives of Mikvé Israel-Emanuel at the Mongui Maduro Library.³⁵

The Curaçao Jewish community worked at creating as close to a normal living environment as possible for the refugees. We learn from an invitation to the Jewish community that in 1942, likely in April or July of that year, a young refugee, Wolf Gruenberg, had his Bar Mitzvah at Mikvé Israel subsequent to which the synagogue board sponsored a Kiddush.³⁶ Charles Leider and Jeanne Penchas were not yet married when they arrived on the *Cabo de Hornos* in 1941 with a three-month-old baby and would marry in Curaçao in 1943. Mikvé Israel archival documents also include a listing of Curaçao families which would host twelve *Cabo de Hornos* children, aged seven to sixteen. These included the Spritzer, Silberstein, Brandao, Valencia, Causanchi, Maduro, Hirschberg and Curiel families who were thus representative of both the Sephardic and Ashkenazi communities. Several descendants of these families recalled that their parents or grandparents had taken care of one or more of the refugee children.

One such case was uncovered when Monique Hermsen-Jonckheer decided to dig into the history of the *Cabo de Hornos*. She had been told by her mother that she had a (for that time in Curaçao) unique French first name because she had been named after a Jewish refugee girl in the early 1940’s. Hermsen-Jonckheer was able to trace back that among the refugee children there was also Monique Levy,

who was 10 in 1941. This Monique was picked up every school day at Mundu Nobo by a member of the Curaçao Jewish family Valencia, who took her to Wilhelmina-school, had her at home for lunch, returned her to school for afternoon classes, and then took her back to the camp where her parents were. She is said to have “started learning Dutch in the first grade and did three years in one year.” Yet another family is said to have taken care of two siblings, a boy and a girl.³⁷ The community covered the expenses for youngsters to attend public schools. Funds would be raised community-wide to support the needs of the refugees. One such fundraising list³⁸ shows fifty-seven donations ranging from 5 to 100 guilders by fifty-seven members of the Jewish community. That 100 guilders in 1941 is the equivalent of US\$ 1000 today.

Life in the camps

Chazen wrote that the Dutch military authorities treated them correctly but it was still a life in a camp surrounded by woven wire fences. Junnes E. Sint Jago wrote in fascinating detail about life in the Bonaire and Curaçao camps in his book *Wuiven vanaf de waranda*.³⁹ Similarly, Aart Broek’s *Medardo de Marchena, Staatsgevaarlijk in koloniaal Curaçao*⁴⁰ provides glimpses of life in the Bonaire camps.

The Curaçao camps were fenced and military personnel and police guarded the camps at all hours. Other pictures show refugees being transported in the back of trucks and escorted by military police on motorcycle. Each of the two camps had a chief officer, and his instructions were to be diligently followed by all refugees. The restrictions that applied to the internees in the Curaçao camps were gradually loosened, often as result of the effective lobbying of Rabbi Jessurun Cardozo.

Junnes E. Sint Jago described the professions of some thirty of the refugees and argued that Curaçao missed various opportunities by viewing them only as refugees instead of considering the added value they might have been or become to Curaçao’s society. Among these thirty there were musicians and an art expert, industrialists and medical professionals, a diamond dealer, a jeweler, a banker and countless businessmen, agriculturalist and chemist, and so on. In many ways that same mistake is being repeated today when we view each Venezuelan (undocumented) refugee to be a subject to be deported as soon as possible instead of considering the value that some of these individuals might be(come) to our society.

During the war years, there were two specific sets of Dutch legislation which impacted directly the refugees’ lives. These are popularly referred to as the A1-legislation and the A6-legislation.

By and large, controlling the adherence to restrictions imposed on the internees in Bonaire or living in the camps in Curaçao was the task of CORVO, the ‘Commit-

tee for the Regulation of Legal Transactions in War Time'. CORVO was instituted for the execution of the A6-legislation to regulate legal transactions in the years of war. Oscar Lanser wrote in his essay "Victims of Circumstances: Jewish Enemy Nationals in the Dutch West Indies 1938 -1947"⁴¹ that the execution of these regulations by the Dutch Colonial government was motivated by a desire to stop a further influx of Jewish refugees into the colony and by economic considerations. This wartime policy, Lanser wrote, led to a breakdown of the long-standing cordial relationship between Protestants and the Jews in Curaçao. One reviewer considered that this even fueled anti-Semitic feelings among some colonial officials. Rabbi Isaac Jessurun Cardozo went so far as to challenge the legalities of some of CORVO's actions in 1943 and argued in support of a case brought by a Jewish refugee against CORVO stating that the latter's actions went well beyond its legal authority.

There was little difference between the restrictions placed on the internment camps in Bonaire to those placed on the *Cabo de Hornos* refugees in Curaçao. These restrictions were said by Governor Wouters and his Prosecutor General Van der Laan to be necessary in view of security considerations. These measures included being disciplined for saying hurtful things about the Netherlands or about the camp guards; for receiving or bringing any material into the camps that had not passed censorship; for discussing or singing about political subjects; for consuming alcoholic beverages; for speaking to guards unless there is a need to do so; and for lying in bed from morning till after lunch. Leaving the camp was not allowed unless with express permission and leaving the island where they were interned was forbidden.

In July 1942 Governor P.A. Kasteel replaced Governor Wouters. Prompted by the Dutch government, Kasteel in August 1942 provided limited liberties to the Jews interned in Bonaire who would now also be able to return to their homes in Curaçao or Aruba. At the same time these limited freedoms were extended also to the *Cabo de Hornos* refugees in Curaçao.⁴² They would continue to have to report their on-island movements to the authorities and be back in the camp after dark but, subject to prior approval in each specific case, they could now accept employment.

A Czech refugee and ex-passenger of the *Cabo de Hornos* wrote in 1942 to Governor Kasteel: "Since your Excellency's visit in our camp, our situation has changed thoroughly, thanks to your magnanimous and comprehensive decisions. We have been ever since enjoying liberty and we have been feeling ourselves readmitted to human community."⁴³ The writer of this letter continues with a "respectful request to abolish all remaining restrictions, and particularly the one which compels to stay at home from sunset till sunrise" so they can go "walking in fresh air

after the hot sun has set, visit concerts or spiritual events and play chamber music together.”⁴⁴

In addition to being confined inside during the dark hours, two of the continuing restrictions imposed on the refugees seem to have been especially onerous even after the relaxation thereof in 1942. The A6-legislation regulating legal transactions was accompanied by the A1-legislation which stipulated that all properties of the refugees be seized upon arrival and their assets placed under control of CORVO. At the same time, A6 stipulated that the refugees pay for their own sustenance, beyond of course the expenses guaranteed and paid by JDC. The foregoing meant that the refugees had to request that CORVO liquidate any assets they had brought along to give them spending money. There are several such written requests in the archives in which refugees beseeched CORVO to let them have \$50 or \$100 from their own funds or assets while in other cases family members abroad would make such wire transfers to them. These requests sometimes were replied to only weeks later, reportedly leading to feelings of humiliation, despair and anger.⁴⁵

The second loathed restriction was limiting gainful work to being in the employment of others. Many of the refugees possessed entrepreneurial skills that were gainfully exercised before they fled their home country, and both for their own self-respect and for the income they could earn, many were eager to exercise their skills again on their own. Charles Leider was a French jeweler who had been employed in Curaçao by a local jewelry outfit and was eager to start on his own, a request that was denied. Matias Adler was proficient in leather crafting; he was allowed to do so in the camp but was not permitted to start a business outside the camp to sell leather objects crafted by him. Filipo Philippon was allowed to work for local merchant Aron Abady to “keep an eye on happenings in his store” but was not allowed to set up his own retail store to sell clothing. And working in some specific types of businesses, among others in the financial and banking sector, was entirely prohibited by CORVO.⁴⁶

The American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee or JDC had been of crucial importance in convincing the Dutch War Government in London to order the temporary admittance of the *Cabo de Hornos* passengers to Curaçao but also in lobbying other countries to admit the refugees to permanent residency. These countries included the USA, Colombia, Venezuela, Argentina and Cuba. Already at the end of December 1941 the number of *Cabo de Hornos* refugees had been reduced to 67 from the original 86, while in February 1943 there were only 33 left in Curaçao. Nine refugees were still on the island in July 1945. The National Refugee Service, Inc. in New York City wrote on July 20th to the JDC, which continued to be involved, that it had not been able to assist the remaining three *Cabo de*



It was in February of that post-war year that the same Cabo de Hornos vessel collided into the Queen Emma Bridge spanning Curaçao's port. Collection Benjamin Gomes Casseres-06-84-0895

Hornos “families involved as they had not been able to locate any United States relatives.”⁴⁷ One way or another that seems to have succeeded subsequently as all would be gone by the end of 1946.

That year, 1946, would be remarkable also in the ‘life’ of the *Cabo de Hornos* itself for yet another, fully unrelated, reason. It was in February of that post-war year that the same *Cabo de Hornos* vessel collided into the Queen Emma Bridge spanning Curaçao's port, causing significant damage as shown in pictures taken at the time.

Not only Cabo de Hornos refugees

This dramatic saga of *Cabo de Hornos* thus came to an end almost six years after it had started in Marseille in January of 1941. That cannot be said of efforts in Curaçao to provide relief and assistance to World War II refugees and victims of the Holocaust.

The USC Shoah Foundation contains several video interviews of World War II and Holocaust Dutch refugees for whom also Curaçao became a symbol of deliverance, as it was for *Cabo de Hornos* refugee Dr. David Chazen. David Cohen in 1942 fled

through Spain to Jamaica where he remained until the camp he was in closed at the end of 1943. He headed to Curaçao where in 1945 he would celebrate a delayed Bar Mitzvah at the Mikvé Israel synagogue. Joseph Citroen traveled to Curaçao on the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* early in 1942 when he was just 20 years of age. He stayed only a few months as adult Dutch men were drafted to join the armed forces of friendly nations; in Citroen's case that became the Canadian armed forces. That was also the fate of Philip Jacobs who came to Curaçao after an arduous journey that included Marseille, Switzerland, and Barcelona before he boarded the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* to Curaçao. Here he too joined the Allied armed forces in October 1942, ending up serving for Canada in Guelph, Ontario, and afterwards in the Royal Airforce and the Dutch military.

The Jewish Aid Committee remained active to support refugees who reached the island and in raising funds which were used in many ways to help the war effort in Europe. One example was raising US\$ 26 thousand from Curaçao's Jewish community in 1944, the equivalent today of over US\$ 400 thousand, which the then- Princess Juliana designated for buying clothing to be distributed by the Netherlands Red Cross. Fundraisings were also held in Curaçao which resulted in significant sums for the so-called "Spitfire Fund" which financed Spitfire aircraft for the Allied war effort. Due to the many urgent requests by Jewish organizations in the US and in Europe for funds to assist war refugees and victims of the Holocaust, a "Joodsch Noodfonds," a Jewish emergency fund, was instituted in 1945 under the leadership of Rabbi Isaac Jessurun Cardozo and banker Isaac H. (Sha) Capriles.⁴⁸ But relief went well beyond raising funds. In 1943 Rabbi Jessurun Cardozo urged Governor Kasteel to remove the restrictions placed on the medical services that Dr. Benesch was allowed to perform when he returned to Curaçao after being released from a Bonaire internment camp. Curaçao's relief activities were known beyond our borders. In 1945 a Jewish resident of Trinidad wrote to the Joint Distribution Committee to contact a concentration camp in Turkheim, Germany to rescue his sister "so that she can leave for Curaçao." In 1948 the Jewish Relief Committee wrote to the Joint Distribution Committee about activities - and expenses incurred - in connection with refugees coming in transit to Curaçao from the Dominican Republic "without valid papers." The archives of Mikvé Israel contain over 140 forms dated after WWII with names of persons being looked for by family members local and abroad; sadly, many include an annotation that the person being looked for had died in a Nazi concentration camp. And in 1953 the Office of the General Prosecutor in Curaçao wrote to Rabbi Jessurun Cardozo regarding the request of a Dutch Jew in New Zealand to be admitted to residency in Curaçao.

During this entire post-war period, the brother of Rabbi Jessurun Cardozo, David S. Jessurun Cardozo, who established himself and his law office in Curaçao in 1946, assisted scores of stateless former Dutch citizens in obtaining again their

Dutch citizenship or searching for information about family members who had perished in the Holocaust.

Neither did this Jewish relief work for refugees who came to our shores end in the aftermath of World War II. *Generation to Generation*⁴⁹ by Jane Gomes Casseres describes relief activities by the Jewish community when a group of forty-two Jewish Cuban refugees fled to our shores in December 1965. A 'Central Jewish Committee' was formed which included all of the Jewish organizations in Curaçao while assistance was also obtained from the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society (HIAS), the Curaçao government, Shell Curaçao and other local institutions. The refugees were hosted by local Jewish families which led to many lasting friendships. The last Cuban refugees left early in 1970. For his leadership and unselfish dedication to easing the plight of the refugees, B'nai B'rith honored then-Honorary Consul of Israel William Cohen with its 1971 Human Rights Award.

The 'Central Jewish Committee' went into action again in 1981 to assist a group of African Jews wishing to flee the terrorist regimes of Somalia and Ethiopia and settle in Israel. With visas in hand that were issued by the Curaçao government for these refugees to settle in Curaçao, the Somalian and Ethiopian authorities permitted the Jews to depart. The African Jewish refugees never actually reached Curaçao: on changing planes in Madrid or Rome, they were quickly and stealthily whisked to Israel on El Al flights.

At the start of this article, it is mentioned that the saga of the *Cabo de Hornos* and other efforts to relieve the lives of refugees are also stories of valiant individuals and of reprehensible persons. More or less in the sequence that they appeared in this saga, one should think of the valor and courage and honor of Brazil's ambassador Luis Matins de Souza Dantas, benefactors Max Montevedo-Hirschberg and Frieda Fuhrmann-Spritzer, Roman Catholic Pastor Van der Meer, Joint Distribution Committee's Curaçao representative Milton Maduro, Mikvé Israel's Rabbi Isaac Jessurun Cardozo, lawyer David S. Jessurun Cardozo, Israeli Consul William Cohen and Governor P.A. Kasteel. The names of the persons of reprehensible character or actions shall remain unmentioned.

About the author

Ronald Gomes Casseres is a leader of Curaçao's historic Mikvé Israel-Emanuel community. Now retired, one of his interests is the history of his Jewish community and its practices. He has been active in numerous organizations and institutions in Curaçao. He has published in local newspapers, in a social-cultural quarterly, *Kristòf*, and in the American Jewish Archives Journal.

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The 86 refugees, who were they and what happened to them after their arrival?

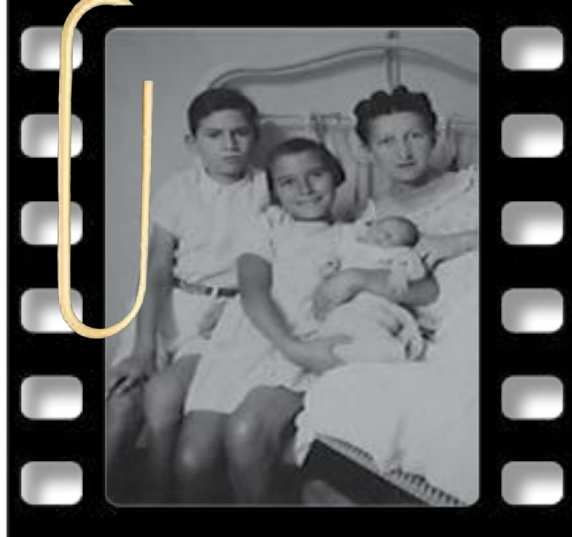
After war breaks out in Europe in 1939, the Spanish cargo ships *Cabo de Hornos* and *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* become special ships for many people who are trying to find a way to escape out of the bitterly divided continent. They represent symbols of hope, a road to possible salvation or a means to a better future. Their neutral Spanish nation flags guarantee immunity from interference from any of the belligerent nations that are now locked in a deadly struggle on the world's oceans. The pristine white ships are a calm and peaceful spot in the middle of terrible turmoil, a place where sanity seems preserved and decency is still considered one of the most important human qualities.

Those who try to book passage on her for a journey from Spain to South America have different motives, as diverse as finding a way to join the military forces of the Allied Powers to fight, to emigrate to a country with opportunities no longer available in the old continent or to escape from prosecution, tyranny, imprisonment or worse.

This saga is about 86 people who fall into the latter category, desperate to escape the terror of Nazi occupation and with great fear of far worse things to come. They are Jewish people from all over Europe who simply wish to go to a country that will accept them and allow them to live their lives in peace. So they find a way to procure visa that will allow them to enter Brazil in South America. They book a passage on one of the ships and manage their way to the port of embarkation in Southern Europe. Even before they set foot on the deck of either ship for the first time, their sacrifices and risks taken must have been great and worthy of remembering with awe and respect.

An unknown number of Jewish refugees leave on the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* in July 1941, the remainder departs on the *Cabo de Hornos* in September. The Leider family is among the first group. When the *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* arrives in the next port of Casablanca, Morocco, a baby is born. On 25 July 1941 Jacques Leider becomes the 86th member of the group, when his mother Jeanne Leider-Penchas gives birth to him in the hospital ashore. Also in the picture are Robert and Christiane Leider, children of their father's first marriage. (photo courtesy of Mrs. Christiane Leider).

The *Cabo de Buena Esperanza* then sets course for Brazil, crossing the Southern



Jeanne Leider-Penchas with baby Jacques and Robert and Christiane Leider

Atlantic Ocean. Upon arrival the Jewish group requests entry into the country based on their visa. But the government of Brazil refuses them permanent entry for unknown reasons. It is not unlikely that Germany exerted her influence on the neutral country of Brazil to ensure that the visa would be rejected. But, regardless of the actual reasons, the inevitable result is that the refugees are left with no other option than to go back on board of their ship. So they continue their way southward, to Buenos Aires.

After arriving in the capitol of Argentina, they try once more to gain entry into this country. But again their efforts are in vain, for reasons that are unclear. By that time their frustration, anger and fear must have been enormous. After surviving many ordeals in occupied Europe and risking their lives to get on the ship, they have finally arrived in the safety of the South American continent, only to find that they are not welcome. And for no other apparent reason than the fact that they are Jewish.

During their procedure the ship departs again for Europe, leaving the Jewish refugees behind in Buenos Aires. Time passes while the government of Argentina is trying to decide on their future. The waiting must have been pure agony for the group, knowing that their lives could depend on the outcome.

After some time the Argentinian authorities reach a decision. The refugees are informed that they are not allowed to stay in Argentina. Instead they must reboard the *Cabo de Hornos* when the ship reaches Buenos Aires on her next voyage and sail northward back to Europe.

One cannot imagine the reaction amongst the members of the Jewish group when news of this decision reaches them. By then the horrors of the Nazi actions against Jews must also have started to reach far flung places such as Buenos Aires. The prospect of having no other option than to return to Nazi dominated Europe must have been the worst possible nightmare for them. All their efforts possibly in vain, turned back at the very last instant when freedom and survival are within grasp, to face prosecution and worse in their former European countries. An impossible choice and terrifying prospect for the desolate group, who must have felt by then

that they had no support anywhere. When the *Cabo de Hornos* arrives she carries the second part of the group of refugees, who were also denied entry in Brazil before and are not even allowed to leave the ship during her port visit. So both groups are united on board of the *Cabo de Hornos* in the port of Buenos Aires. When the ship leaves port, the now 86 refugees start their voyage on the Atlantic Ocean once more. But finally their fate reaches the ears of those who are sympathetic to their plight. Jewish organizations in the United States learn of the decision to turn back the refugees and spring into action. The Netherlands government in London is formally approached by them with the urgent request for assistance. And after some deliberation it is decided to allow temporary entry for the refugees on the island of Curaçao. By then the *Cabo de Hornos* is well underway across the ocean and a decision is now critical. Against the objections of the Dutch Governor the ship is redirected to Willemstad with orders to disembark the Jewish group there.

The 86 people must have been jubilant to learn of their rescue at the very last instant, and one can only imagine their feelings when the island finally comes in sight. On 19 November 1941 the ship enters port and the group finally steps ashore. And, although their movements are restricted and their welcome is subject to conditions of leaving to a final destination when permitted, it must have been fantastic to finally realize that their ordeal is over. Most members of the group lose no time and start procedures to relocate to a country that will permanently welcome them.

In the following overview an attempt is made to describe the final destination of the 86 group members, as best as can be determined from available archival information. The group is separated into families who travelled together and individual persons. They are presented in alphabetical order, some of them with the photo that was attached to their original visa in 1941 (courtesy of Ancestry.com)

The ADLER family

This family consists of Mathias and Paulette with their daughters Simone and Colette and originates from Romania. After arriving in Willemstad they manage to get visa for relocation to Colombia. They leave Curaçao for their new country during the war.

ADLER, Mathias (husband), born Craiova (Romania), 24 June 1903 (picture above)

ADLER-BLUSSE, Paulette (wife), born Bucharest (Romania), 3 May 1905 (picture below)

ADLER, Simone (daughter), born x (Romania), 14 March 1929

ADLER, Colette (daughter), born x (Romania), 2 January 1933



The CHAZEN family

The Chazen family originates from Poland, with husband Dawid, wife Maria and her mother Sora Rozenberg. Soon after arriving on Curaçao they get visa for the USA. In January 1942 they board the freighter FAUNA (KNSM) and leave for the United States.

CHAZEN, Dawid (husband), born Lodz (Poland), 7 December 1888 (picture above)

CHAZEN-ROZENBERG, Maria (wife), born Lodz (Poland), 1 October 1900 (picture middle)

ROZENBERG, Sora Leja (mother of wife), born Moscow (Russia), 9 January 1873 (picture below)



The EIGER family

Wladyslaw Eiger and his younger brother Kazimiercz (right picture) come from Poland and are joined by Wladyslaw's wife Sura. Wladyslaw and Sura obtain visa for the USA and leave Curaçao by airplane in September 1942. The destination of Kazimiercz is still unknown at this time.

EIGER, Wladyslaw (husband), born Lodz (Poland), 8 February 1907

EIGER-LIPSKI, Sura (wife), born Pabjanice (Poland), 19 November 1912

EIGER, Kazimiercz Mieczyslaw (brother of husband), born Warsaw (Poland), 22 September 1909 (fourth picture)



The FELBER family

The Felber family of four, Hermann (picture below) and Johanna with their daughter and his mother, also comes from Poland. There is no photo of daughter Rachel available. They manage to obtain visa for the USA and leave Curaçao in January 1942 on the Dutch steamer AMAZONE (KNSM).



FELBER, Hermann (husband), born Berlin (Germany), 22 November 1906

FELBER-AZDESBAL, Johanna (wife), born Leipzig (Germany), 8 November 1908 (picture above)

FELBER-SCHUCK, Sara (mother of husband), born Ulanów (Poland), 30 October 1880 (picture below)

FELBER, Rachel (daughter), born Enghien les Bains (France), 1937



The FINKEL family

Isaac and Elisabeth Finkel come from Russia. In 1941, probably in the period before their departure from Marseille, their daughter Jocelyne is born.

They leave during the war for Venezuela after receiving visa for that country.

FINKEL, Isaac (husband), born Odessa (Ukraine), 28 March 1906 (picture above)

FINKEL-BREGER, Elisabeth (wife), born Kiev (Ukraine), 15 November 1917 (picture below)

FINKEL, Jocelyne (daughter), born 1941



FRANKL-SCHWARZ, Olga

Olga Frankl-Schwarz from Austria is probably travelling alone, even though there is another Schwarz family on board also. This family leaves for Cuba soon after arriving on Curaçao, but Olga remains behind. In October 1942 she is granted a visa for the US and she departs soon afterwards by airplane to the United States.

FRANKL-SCHWARZ, Olga, born Innsbruck (Austria), 10 November 1902

The GRASSIAN family

The Grassian family from Romania consists of six people. Edouard and his wife Helene travel with their two children, brother Henri and grandmother Ernestine. On 2 March 1942 Ernestine Grassian-Leon passes away in Willemstad and is buried there. Later the other members of the family are allowed entry into Venezuela and leave Curaçao.

GRASSIAN, Edouard (husband), born Bucharest (Romania), 15 January 1900 (picture above)

GRASSIAN-TOURKELSEM, Helene (wife), born Paris (France), 25 December 1912 (second picture)

GRASSIAN, Ghislaine (granddaughter), born x (Romania), 12 May 1935

GRASSIAN, Albert (grandson), born x (Romania), 12 June 1939

GRASSIAN, Henri (brother), born Bucharest (Romania), 11 August 1896 (third picture)

GRASSIAN-LEON, Ernestine (grandmother), born Bucharest (Romania), 18 September 1864, died Willemstad (Curaçao), 2 March 1942 (fourth picture)

The GRÜNBERG family

The Grünberg family start their journey from their homeland Poland. After arriving on Curaçao a visa to Colombia is given to Mendel, Leonora and their two children. During the war the family leaves the island for Colombia.

GRÜNBERG, Mendel (husband), born Krakow (Poland), 14 August 1895 (fifth picture)

GRÜNBERG-FAKLER, Leonora (wife), born Krakow (Poland), 31 January 1909 (picture below)

GRÜNBERG, Aron Wolf (son), born x (Poland), 1929

GRÜNBERG, Marion (daughter), born x (Poland), 17 April 1935



JAKUBOWIECZ, Anna Sara

Anna (68 years) is born in Germany and is probably travelling alone. It is still unknown if, and where to. She travelled from Curaçao.

JAKUBOWIECZ, Anna Sara, born x (Germany), 21 December 1872

The JUSTIC family

The Justic family consists of husband Ottakar, wife Elsa, daughters Hanicka (photo) and Alena and his sister Gabriela. Almost immediately after arriving on Curaçao they obtain visa for the USA. Ottakar and his family board the freighter SANTA ROSA in January 1942 and leave for the United States. In the same month Gabriela travels the same route on the steamer AMAZONE (KNSM).

JUSTIC, Ottakar (husband), born Tabor (Czechoslovakia), 4 July 1892 (picture above)

JUSTICOVA-RABL, Elsa (wife), born Prague (Czechoslovakia), 29 September 1902 (second picture)

JUSTICOVA, Hanicka (daughter), born Prague (Czechoslovakia), 22 April 1922 (third picture)

JUSTICOVA, Alena (daughter), born x (Czechoslovakia), 18 June 1926

WOTTITZOVA-JUSTIC, Gabriela (sister of husband), born Tabor (Czechoslovakia), 1 September 1887 (fourth picture)



JUSTITZ, Julius

Julius is born in Germany and travels alone. He gets a visa for the USA and leaves Curaçao for his new homeland during the war.

JUSTITZ, Julius, born Stuttgart (Germany), 5 January 1890

KIPPER, Anna

Anna comes from Poland and probably travels alone. It is still unclear if and where she went after arriving on Curaçao (right picture)

KIPPER, Anna, born Warsaw (Poland), 4 September 1908



The LEDERER family

The Lederer family from Czechoslovakia arrives on Curaçao with five persons. Jan and Frieda travel with their children Herbert and Lisl (all with photo). Also Anna, the mother of Frieda, is with them. They get their visa for the USA soon after arriving on the island and leave Curaçao in December 1941 on the freighter SANTA ROSA bound for the United States.

LEDERER, Jan (husband), born Pfaffstätten (Austria), 4 June 1892 (picture above)

LEDEREROVA-ROSENBAUM, Frieda (wife), born Vienna (Austria), 20 March 1891 (second picture)

LEDERER, Herbert (son), born Vienna (Austria), 9 June 1921 (third picture)

LEDEREROVA, Lisl (daughter), born Vienna (Austria), 19 February 1923 (fourth picture)

ROSENBAUMOVA, Anna (mother of wife), born Furth (Germany), 16 May 1866



The LEIDER family

This family from Romania arrives on Curaçao with baby Jacques (page 30-31), born enroute to South America in Casablanca (Morocco). Also with them are Robert and Christiane, children from an earlier marriage of Charles. On Curaçao another son, Michel, is born on 31 December 1942. Their father Charles and mother Jeanne apparently were not married before, because a marriage between them is registered in Willemstad on 17 February 1943. In 1944 they get visa for Venezuela and leave the island.

LEIDER, Charles (husband), born Bucharest (Romania), 11 November 1899 (right picture)



LEIDER-PENCHAS, Jeanne (wife), born Paris (France), 1 January 1911

LEIDER, Robert Charly Henri (son of Charles), born Paris (France), 12 September 1929

LEIDER, Christiane Simone (daughter of Charles), born Le Plessis Bouchard (France), 1 October 1930

LEIDER, Jacques (son), born Casablanca (Morocco), 28 July 1941 (page 30-31)

The LEVY family (1)

Leon and Florence Levy are among three families on board with the last name Levy. But they seem to be unrelated, as they all leave on different moments.

This Belgian couple is granted entry into the USA and they leave Curaçao by airplane to the United States on 22 July 1942.

LEVY, Leon (husband), born Anderlecht (Belgium), 14 March 1886 (picture above)

LEVY-STRASS, Florence (wife), born Brussels (Belgium), 27 May 1896 (second picture)

The LEVY family (2)

Pauline Levy is a widow from Belgium and is accompanied by her two daughters Rose and Anne (right photo). They obtain visa for the US and proceed to that country by airplane on 7 October 1942.

LEVY, Pauline (widow), born Lille (France), 9 October 1901

LEVY, Rose (daughter), born Saint Gilles (Belgium), 9 September 1922

LEVY, Anne (daughter), born Paris (France), 19 April 1924 (third picture)

The LEVY family (3)

Lambert and Andree Levy are from France. They have their daughter Monique with them. This family remains on Curaçao during the entire war period. After peace is restored in Europe the family returns to France.

LEVY, Lambert (husband), born Paris (France), 30 September 1897



LEVY-LEVY, Andree Rose (wife), born Mulhouse (France), 29 October 1906

LEVY, Monique (daughter), born x (France), 17 February 1932

The LICHTENSTEIN family

Desider and Maria Lichtenstein from Czechoslovakia get their visa for the US soon after their arrival on Curaçao. They join the Justic and Lederer families on the freighter SANTA ROSA in December 1941 and leave for the United States.

LICHTENSTEIN, Desider (husband), born Dolné Lefantofce (Czechoslovakia), 6 March 1900 (picture above)

LICHTENSTEIN-LASZLO, Maria (wife), born Szentes (Hungary), 27 January 1907 (second picture)



The LUSTIG family

Pavel and Irma Lustig are also from Czechoslovakia. During the war they manage to get visa for Venezuela and leave Curaçao.

But the story does not end there. Many years later Pavel has passed away and Irma decides to move back from Venezuela to Curaçao. The island warmly welcomes her this time. On 22 February 1991 Irma passes away in Willemstad and is buried there.

LUSTIG, Pavel (husband), born Hodonin (Czechoslovakia), 31 May 1905 (third picture)

LUSTIG-SCHULHOF, Irma (wife), born Prague (Czechoslovakia), 21 August 1906, died Willemstad (Curaçao), 22 February 1991 (fourth picture)



The MOSTNY family

Ludwik and Eliska Mostny originate from Austria. Some years before their voyage to South America, in the summer of 1938 Ludwik is a prisoner for months in the German concentration camp Buchenwald. During that time a number of prominent Austrian Jews, mostly scientists

and artists, are imprisoned there. Many of them perish in Buchenwald, but Ludwik manages to return to Austria. While on Curaçao the couple obtains visa for Colombia and they move there during the war years.

MOSTNY, Ludwik (husband), born Salzburg (Austria), 6 March 1884

MOSTNY-KRAUS, Eliska (wife), born Prague (Czechoslovakia), 16 May 1894

The PHILIPSON family

Filippo and Elda Philipson are from Italy. It is uncertain what happens to them after arriving on Curaçao. It is possible that they decided to remain on the island until the war ended and then returned to Italy.

PHILIPSON, Filippo (husband), born Rome (Italy), 9 January 1901 (picture above)

PHILIPSON-LUZZATTI, Elda (wife), born Rome (Italy), 21 August 1912 (second picture)

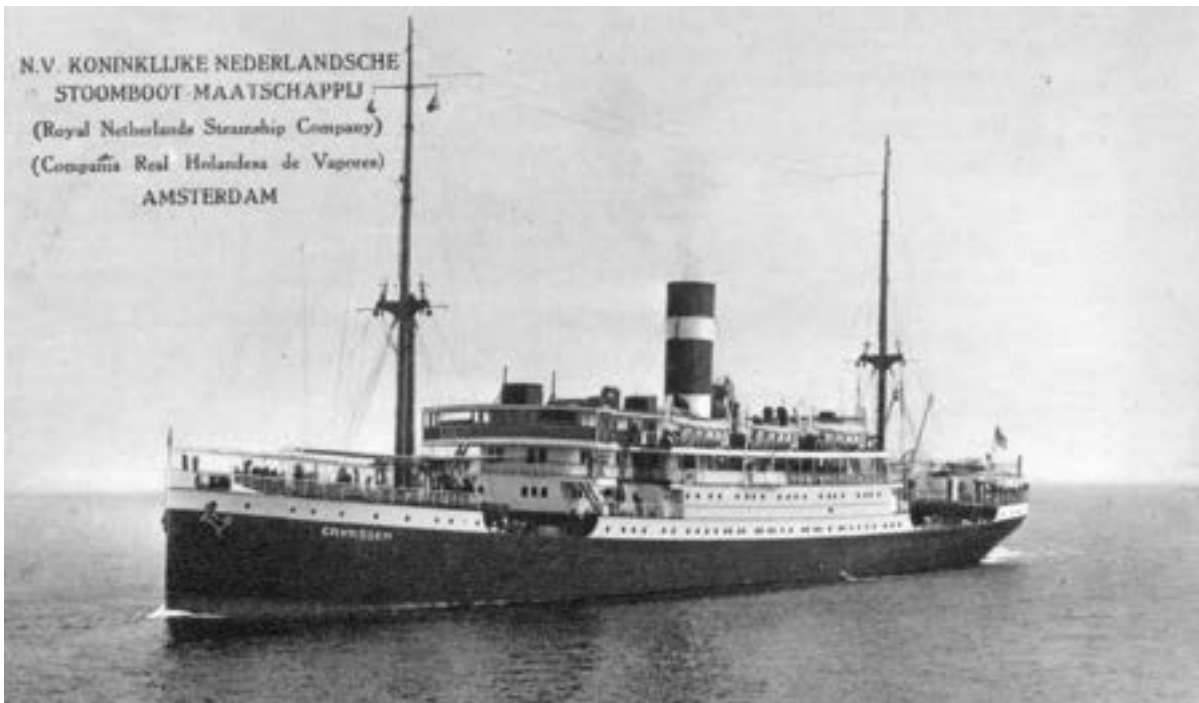


The ROBITSCHKEK family

Josef and Libuse Robitschek, with their daughter Hedwika, are from Czechoslovakia. After arriving on Curaçao the family applies for visa to the United States.

Their application is granted and passage is booked on the passenger/cargo vessel CRIJNSSEN, scheduled to leave Willemstad on 7 June 1942 enroute to New Orleans (USA).

When the ship leaves port, course is set towards the channel between Mexico and Jamaica through the Caribbean Sea. The first three days at sea pass uneventful. But on 10 June, as the Crijnsen passes Grand Cayman Island, she is detected by the patrolling German submarine U-504. Her captain (Korvettenkapitän Hans-Georg Friedrich Poske) maneuvers his U-boot into an attack position. Shortly before sunset he launches a four torpedo salvo and hits the Crijnsen with one or two shots. The ship stops her engines and launches four lifeboats, in which the Robitscheks find a place. They watch as another torpedo slams into their



SS Crijnsen. Collection H. Smulder 1931



German Submarine in the Caribbean waters 1942. National Archives, Collection St. Jago

ship, after which the Crijnsen sinks away quickly.

During the night the lifeboats get separated, but as the sun rises a ship is seen to approach. It turns out to be the American freighter LEBORE, who picks up 49 survivors from two lifeboats. So the Robitschek family finds itself on a new ship that turns out to be enroute to the Panama Canal. But their ordeal is long from over. On 14 June, about 200 miles from the entry to the Panama Canal, the Leборе is detected by another U-boat. This time it is the U-172, commanded by Kapitän-

leutenant Carl Emmermann. One torpedo is fired at the ship and hits her in no. 6 hold. The ship quickly develops a list of 45 degrees, which makes the launching of lifeboats difficult. But the crew manages to get three lifeboats in the water and the Robitscheks find themselves in a lifeboat for the second time in four days. Later that day two warships are seen on the horizon. They turn out to be the American destroyer USS TATNALL and the gunboat USS ERIE. They pick up all survivors and transport them safely to the port of Cristobal (Panama), where they are landed on 17 June.

From travel documents it becomes clear that the family splits up afterwards. Josef and Hedwika depart from Panama by airplane and fly to Florida (USA) on 16 July. Libuse stays behind and travels over land through Central America to finally reach the US border at Brownsville (Texas) on 14 September. It seems likely that after being shipwrecked twice, Libuse decided against further travel by ship or airplane to avoid all risks. In retrospect it takes the Robitscheks more than two months to travel from Curaçao to the United States on a journey that should have taken less than a week.

After news of their ordeal reaches Curaçao the remaining refugees must have decided that booking passage on a ship was too risky, because afterwards all travel to other countries is done by using commercial airplanes.

ROBITSCHEK, Josef (husband), born Bakovice (Czechoslovakia), 19 November 1901

ROBITSCHEK-LUMAS, Libuse (wife), born x (Czechoslovakia), 1900

ROBITSCHEK, Hedwika (daughter), born x (Czechoslovakia), 1930

The SALZER family

The Austrian family Salzer consists of Richard, Alice and their daughter Gertrude. After arriving on Curaçao they apply for visa to the US. The family is granted entry and leaves for the United States by airplane on 27 July 1942.

SALZER, Richard (husband), born Vienna (Austria), 24 October 1874 (picture right)



SALZER-KHUNER, Alice (wife), born Vienna (Austria), 16 June 1885 (picture above)

SALZER, Gertrude (daughter), born Vienna (Austria), 24 June 1917 (second picture)

The SBOROWITZ family

Jan and Anna Sborowitz from Czechoslovakia are travelling with their son Pavel and daughter Cecile. They manage to obtain a visa for the USA. On 19 October 1942 they depart from Curaçao by plane to the United States.

SBOROWITZ, Jan (husband), born Prostejov (Czechoslovakia), 23 June 1895 (third picture)

SBOROWITZ-KRANZ, Anna (wife), born Prostejov (Czechoslovakia), 22 May 1902 (fourth picture)

SBOROWITZ, Pavel (son), born Prostejov (Czechoslovakia), 29 April 1925 (fifth picture)

SBOROWITZ, Cecile (daughter), born x (Czechoslovakia), 26 December 1927 (picture below)



The SCHWARZ family

The Italian family Schwarz, Guido and Odilia with their two daughters Helena and Anne, decide to choose for a new life on the island Cuba when their visa application is granted. Soon after arriving on Curaçao they leave again, this time on the steamer CUBA in December 1941.

SCHWARZ, Guido (husband), born Milan (Italy), 20 June 1890 (picture right)

SCHWARZ-SOLARI, Odilia (wife), born Lugano (Switzerland), 1898

SCHWARZ, Helena (daughter), born Milan (Italy), 1924

SCHWARZ, Anne (daughter), born Milan (Italy), 1928



The SINGER family

Bernard and Franziska Singer arrive on Curaçao with their son Joachim. This family does not leave the island during the war years. Instead they get visa to the United States in December 1945 and travel there on the steamer COTTICA (KNSM).

SINGER, Bernard (husband), born Jaroslaw (Poland), 10 June 1886

SINGER-RUBERL, Franziska (wife), born Vienna (Austria), 24 January 1899

SINGER, Joachim (son), born Berlin (Germany), 2 June 1930

The STRATEN family

Hartog and Alida Straten are from Belgium. It is still unclear if, and where to, they left Curaçao during the war.

STRATEN, Hartog van (husband), born Liege (Belgium), 7 July 1888 (picture right)

STRATEN-PRESBURG, Alida van (wife), born Amsterdam (Netherlands), 20 March 1890 (picture below)



The WEISSSTEIN family

Ferdinand and Margarete Weissstein (or Weißstein) are a German couple. Only five days after arriving on Curaçao on the Cabo de Hornos Ferdinand unexpectedly passes away on 24 November 1941. He is buried in Willemstad.

It is still uncertain what happens afterwards to his widow Margarete. It is possible that she went to Argentina.

WEISSSTEIN, Ferdinand Israel (husband), born Hirschberg (Germany), 1882

died Willemstad (Curaçao), 24 November 1941

WEISSSTEIN-FUCHS, Margarete (wife), born x (Germany), 1886

WELTEN, Frantisek

Frantisek Welten from Czechoslovakia travels alone on the Cabo de Hornos. It is uncertain what happens to him after he arrives on Curaçao and if, or where to, he went afterwards.

WELTEN, Frantisek, born Prague (Czechoslovakia), 8 July 1893 (right picture)



WERTHEIM, Doris Rosa Sara

Doris Wertheim from Germany also is a single passenger on the ship. After arriving on Curaçao it is unclear if, and where to, she went in later years.

WERTHEIM, Doris Rosa Sara, born Rotenburg an der Fulda (Germany), 11 April 1867

UNKNOWN no 86

One member of the group still remains unknown.

The overview shows a group of Jewish people from many different European nations, divided by culture and languages, strangers when they met for the first time on board of the Cabo de Hornos in Buenos Aires. Most of them do not smile on the pictures for their visa, because there was nothing joyful about their circumstances. Risking everything on the hope of being allowed entry into a country

that was not at war, just wanting to survive the terrible conflict in Europe.

But they do have one thing in common, and that is also visible in the photographs. The sheer will to survive shows in their eyes, and their determination is far stronger than the fear they must have felt also. Every individual story and available photo is a testament to the belief that evil may seem all powerful and omnipresent, but will never triumph over good in the end.

About the author

Jos Rozenburg (Leidschendam, 1960) is a Commander in the Royal Netherlands Navy (retired). During his career he sailed on frigates and flew on maritime patrol aircraft around the Antillean islands. He was stationed on Curaçao for three years, serving as Head of Operations to the Armed Forces on the islands. After eight years of research in five countries he published the book *'De Antillen in de Tweede Wereldoorlog'* in 2014. Since then he specialized in maritime research.

Sources

National Archive Curaçao, Commissie Regeling Rechtsverkeer in Oorlogstijd (CORVO), dossier 3091, overview of all Jewish refugees older than 15 years

Website www.ancestry.com, several archives and pictures of visa

Mongui Maduro library, list refugees with religion.

Stichting Maritiem Historische Databank (Crijnssen).



The Spanish ship *SS Cabo de Hornos* was able to disembark 86 Jewish refugees on Curaçao in November 1941. On the run from the Holocaust in Europe, the Jewish refugees steamed to South America, where they were refused entry in several countries but were eventually able to set foot on Curaçao. The refugees were only granted access to Curaçao after intensive diplomatic pressure and notable hesitant action from the Curaçao Governor. The saga of *Cabo de Hornos* is also the story of valiant individuals who assisted these refugees and of reprehensible positions taken by several countries as well as by authorities of those and other countries.

This *Lantèrnu* publication gives more insight into the dramatic journey of these refugees. The “saga” of all the refugees endured is described by Ron Gomes Casseres, while author Jos Rozenburg provides more detail about the fate of every individual who initially found asylum here on Curaçao from the atrocities of the Second World War.

The photo on the cover is from after the war. In February 1946, the *SS Cabo de Hornos* collided with the Queen Emma Bridge. Illustrative perhaps for the period before that. Due to his hesitancy and reluctant cooperation to take in the *Cabo de Hornos* refugees, Curaçao’s Governor Wouters was replaced by Governor Kasteel on July 15, 1942 by the Dutch Government in exile in London.

Two interesting perspectives written by Ron Gomes Casseres and Jos Rozenburg. An impressive story of hardship, intrigue and ultimately helpfulness and victory. Enjoy reading this part of our local history among others from recently disclosed archives.