

St. Louis Manifest

252 Tweets

Tweets

Media

Likes



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Joachim Hirsch. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz



15,241

12.9K

38.7K

23



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Fritz Zweigenthal. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in France

5,113

31.1K

30.1K

24



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Max Wolff. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

5,114

31.1K

30.1K

23



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Abraham Wolf. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Theresienstadt

5,114

31.1K

30.1K

23



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Flora Wilmersdörfer. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Nora Nathanson. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 100 Likes 100



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Harry Nathanson. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 100 Likes 100



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Meta Münz. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 100 Likes 100



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Paula Münz. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 100 Likes 100



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Sophie Münz. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

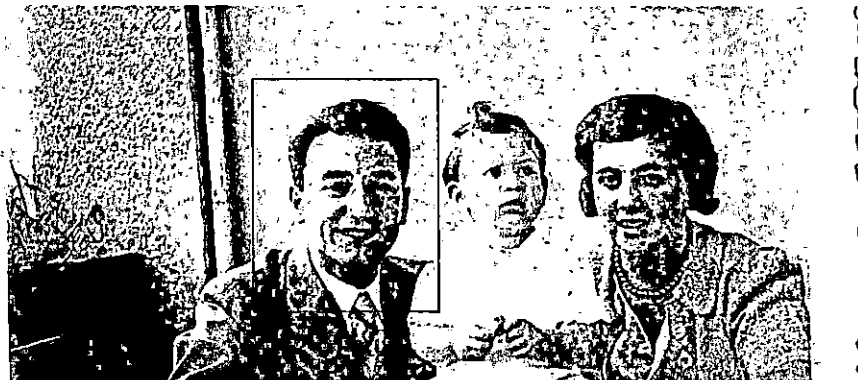
Retweets 100 Likes 100



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Max Hirsch. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Mauthausen

Retweets 100 Likes 100



Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Max Pander. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

4,577 25,710 72,717 24



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Käthe Oehl. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

4,517 23,410 72,760 24



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Hedwig Oberdorfer. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

4,513 23,205 72,727 24



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Günther Heilbrun. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz



4,510 23,257 72,460 24



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Simon Oberdorfer. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

St. Louis Manifest

252 Tweets

- Tweets
- Media
- Likes



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Fanny Reingenheim. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets: 11 Likes: 179



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

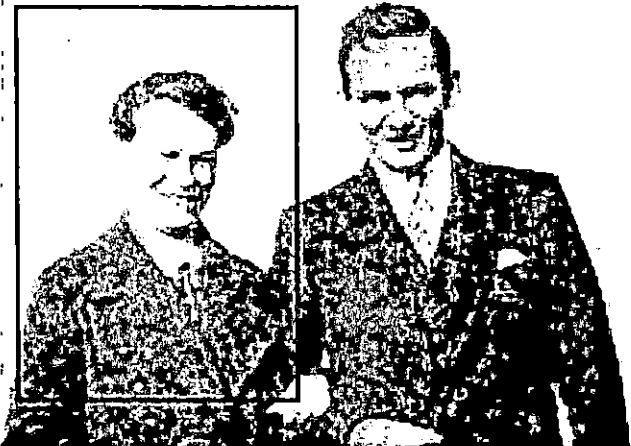
My name is Harry Rabinowitz. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets: 12 Likes: 700



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Martha Karliner. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz



Retweets: 306 Likes: 4,518



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Lisbeth Preiss. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets: 8 Likes: 517



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Gerhard Preiss. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets: 8 Likes: 517

Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Irmgard Köppel. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz



123 8,812 6,015



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Walter Rinteln. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Majdanek

10 1,000 925



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Hermann Riesenburger. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

14 857 754



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Selma Reingenheim. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

10 1,000 925



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Jacob Reingenheim. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Tweets Media Likes



1,536 13,051 2,354



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Selma Rosenfeld. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

457 623 771



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Hans Rosenfeld. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

411 837 765



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Selig Rosenberg. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

37 609 761



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Ricka Rosenberg. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

37 611 787



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Louis Rosenberg. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

38 613 760



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Wilhelm Ritter. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Dachau

37 613 761

Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Berthold Rotholz. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 107 Likes 134



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Rolf Rosenthal. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Buchenwald

Retweets 107 Likes 134



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Max Rosenthal. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 107 Likes 134



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Steffi Rosenfeld. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

Retweets 107 Likes 134



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Martin Wiesenfelder. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 107 Likes 134



Retweets 107 Likes 134

Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Frieda Rothschild. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

Retweets 1,211 Likes 2,821



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Erwin Rothschild. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Bergen Belsen

Retweets 1,021 Likes 2,023



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Horst Rotholz. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 65 Likes 5,312



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Guenther Rotholz. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 112 Likes 2,121



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Margarete Rotholz. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 112 Likes 2,121

Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Ison Schild. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

15 1 27 868 12...



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Herbert Manasse. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz



5 72 5,350 4,775



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Martha Scheyer. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

5 12 54 800



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Ruth Sandberg. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

5 11 54 800



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Delta Sandberg. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

5 11 54 800

St. Louis Manifest

252 Tweets

Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Max Schweitzer. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets: 10, Likes: 100, Replies: 10, Retweets: 10



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Josef Schwalbendorf. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets: 6, Likes: 100, Replies: 10, Retweets: 10



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Emil Schumanovsky. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets: 10, Likes: 100, Replies: 10, Retweets: 10



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Gertrud Schueck. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets: 8, Likes: 100, Replies: 10, Retweets: 10



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Meta Schlesinger. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

Retweets: 7, Likes: 100, Replies: 10, Retweets: 10



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Richard Schlesinger. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

Retweets: 12, Likes: 100, Replies: 10, Retweets: 10



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17
My name is Irma Schild. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets: 10, Likes: 100, Replies: 10, Retweets: 10

Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Siegbert Seligmann. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 10 Likes 17



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Rosa Seligmann. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 10 Likes 17



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Selma Simon. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor



Retweets 40 Likes 3,813



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Max Seligmann. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 8 Likes 17



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Jenny Schweitzer. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Else Stein. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz



48 4,052 2,698



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Leo Silber. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

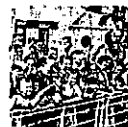
11 986 984



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Chaja Silber. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

9 975 986



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Salomon Silber. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

10 926 947



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Arthur Siegel. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

10 926 947

Tweets Media Likes

St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Inge Skotzki. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz 1,139 1,073 14

St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Helga Skotzki. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz 1,139 1,073

St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Charlotte Skotzki. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz 1,139 1,073

St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Guenther Skotzki. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Buchenwald 1,139 1,073

St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Josefina Siperstein. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz 1,139 1,073

St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Selma Simon. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz 1,139 1,073

St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Martin Simon. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz 1,139 1,073

St. Louis Manifest

252 Tweets



Tweets

Media

Likes



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Lotte Sternlicht. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 1,193 Likes 1,530



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Gertrud Sternlicht. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 1,141 Likes 1,408



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Paul Stark. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 1,072 Likes 1,540



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Julius Springer. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

Retweets 1,146 Likes 1,300



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Meier Speier. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 1,049 Likes 1,305



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Werner Stein. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz



Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Blanca Trödel. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 1,507 Likes 1,217



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Leopold Trödel. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 1,731 Likes 1,770



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Else Tichauer. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 1,375 Likes 1,320



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Herbert Tichauer. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

Retweets 1,133 Likes 1,110



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Lore Dublon. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Golleschau



Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Walter Velman. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Golleschau

17 1,721 1,267 44



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Bertha Unger. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

24 1,349 1,167 34



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Willi Dublon. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz



65 5,245 2,634 101



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Erich Trödel. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

42 1,712 1,354 34



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Walter Trödel. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

42 1,712 1,354 34

Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Leopold Dingfelder. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz



146 1,214 2,097



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Walter Weinberg. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

45 1,255 1,201



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Oskar Wechselmann. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in France

58 1,237 1,249



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Amanda Wachtel. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

57 1,115 1,525



St. Louis Manifest @St_Manifest · 1/27/17 My name is Joseph Wachtel. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

57 1,115 1,525

Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Charlotte Weinstock. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

Retweets, Replies, Retweets, Retweets

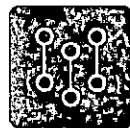


St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Arthur Weinstock. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Sobibor

Retweets, Replies, Retweets, Retweets

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Nick Offerman

@Nick_Offerman

citizen

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More suggestions



St. Louis Manifest @StL_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Leopold Dingfelder. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz



Tweets Media Likes



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Siegfried Wilmersdörfer. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Belgium

1.2k 10.5k 1.5k 20



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Regina Blumenstein. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz



1.2k 10.5k 1.5k 20



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Renate Weltmann. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

1.2k 10.5k 1.5k 20



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

My name is Elly Weltmann. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

1.2k 10.5k 1.5k 20



St. Louis Manifest @Stl_Manifest · 1/27/17

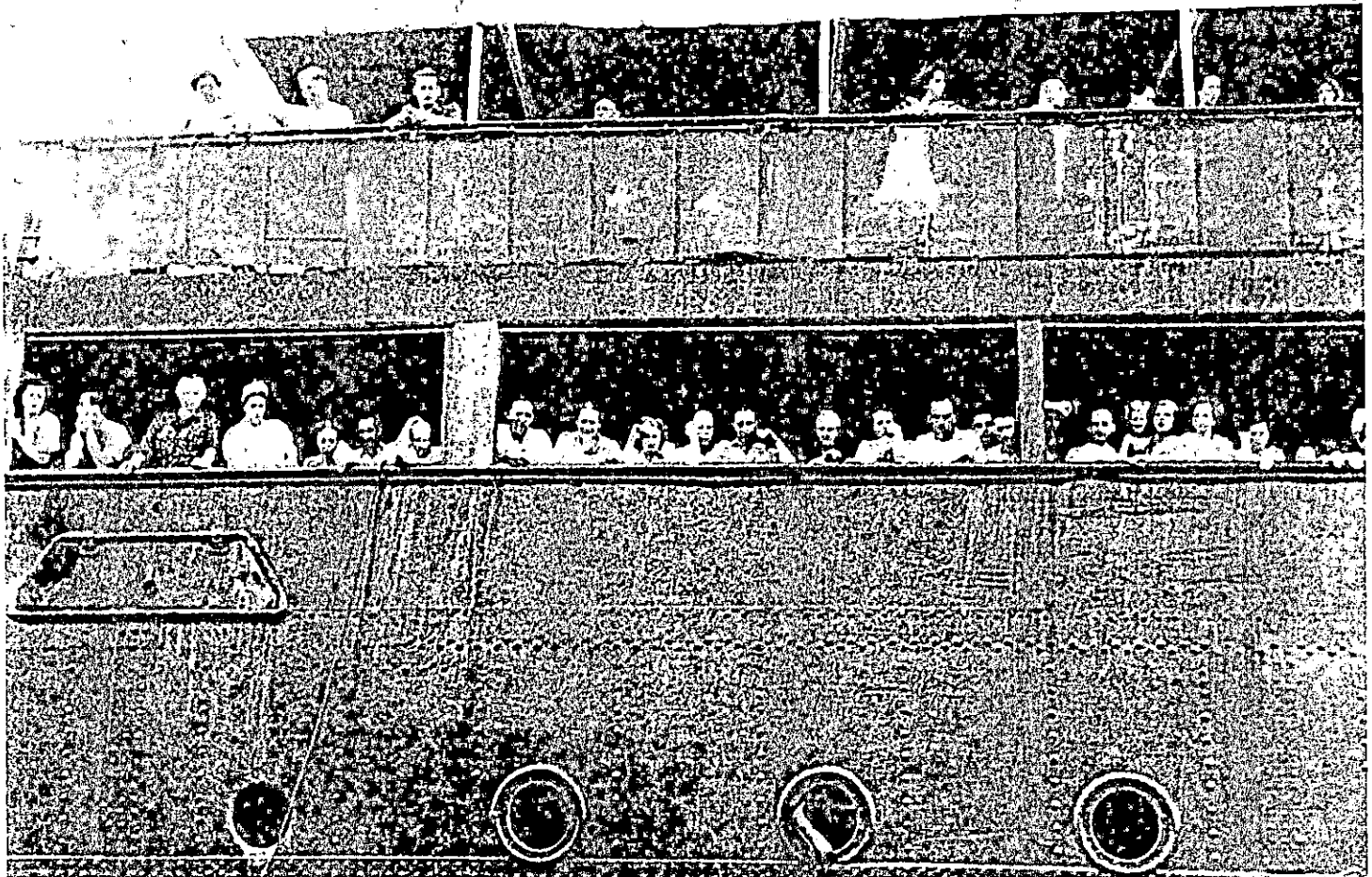
My name is Erich Weltmann. The US turned me away at the border in 1939. I was murdered in Auschwitz

1.2k 10.5k 1.5k 20

Smithsonian.com

The U.S. Government Turned Away Thousands of Jewish Refugees, Fearing That They Were Nazi Spies

In a long tradition of “persecuting the refugee,” the State Department and FDR claimed that Jewish immigrants could threaten national security



Jewish refugees about the *St. Louis* (Wikimedia Commons)

By Daniel A. Gross
smithsonian.com
November 18, 2015

In the summer of 1942, the *SS Drottningholm* set sail carrying hundreds of desperate Jewish refugees, en route to New York City from Sweden. Among them was Herbert Karl Friedrich Bahr, a 28-year-old from Germany, who was also seeking entry to the United States. When he arrived, he told the same story as his fellow passengers: As a victim of persecution, he wanted asylum from Nazi violence.

But during a meticulous interview process that involved five separate government agencies, Bahr's story began to unravel. Days later, the FBI accused Bahr of being a Nazi spy. They said the Gestapo had given him \$7,000 to steal American industrial secrets—and that he'd posed as a refugee in order to sneak into the country unnoticed. His case was rushed to trial, and the prosecution called for the death penalty.

What Bahr didn't know, or perhaps didn't mind, was that his story would be used as an excuse to deny visas to thousands of Jews fleeing the horrors of the Nazi regime.

World War II prompted the largest displacement of human beings the world has ever seen—although today's refugee crisis is starting to approach its unprecedented scale. But even with millions of European Jews displaced from their homes, the United States had a poor track record offering asylum. Most notoriously, in June 1939, the German ocean liner *St. Louis* and its 937 passengers, almost all Jewish, were turned away from the port of Miami, forcing the ship to return to Europe; more than a quarter died in the Holocaust.

Government officials from the State Department to the FBI to President Franklin Roosevelt himself argued that refugees posed a serious threat to national security. Yet today, historians believe that Bahr's case was practically unique—and the concern about refugee spies was blown far out of proportion.

In the court of public opinion, the story of a spy disguised as a refugee was too scandalous to resist. America was months into the largest war the world had ever seen, and in February 1942, Roosevelt had ordered the internment of tens of thousands of Japanese-Americans. Every day the headlines announced new Nazi conquests.

Bahr was “scholarly” and “broad-shouldered,” a man *Newsweek* called “the latest fish in the spy net.” Bahr was definitely not a refugee; he had been born in Germany, but immigrated to the U.S. in his teens and become a naturalized citizen. He returned to Germany in 1938 as an engineering exchange student in Hanover, where he was contacted by the Gestapo.

At his preliminary hearing, the Associated Press reported that Bahr was “nattily clad in gray and smiling pleasantly.” By the time his trial began, he had little reason to smile; in a hefty 37-page statement, he admitted to attending spy school in Germany. His defense was that he'd planned to reveal everything to the U.S. government. But he said he'd stalled because he was afraid. “Everywhere, no matter where, there are German agents,” he claimed.

Comments like these only fed widespread fears of a supposed “fifth column” of spies and saboteurs that had infiltrated America. U.S. Attorney General Francis Biddle said in 1942 that “every precaution must be taken...to prevent enemy agents slipping across our borders. We already have had experience with them and we know them to be well trained and clever.” The FBI, meanwhile, released propaganda films that bragged about German spies who had been caught. “We have guarded the secrets, given the Army and Navy its striking force in the field,” one film said.

These suspicions were not only directed at ethnic Germans. “All foreigners became suspect. Jews were not considered immune,” says Richard Breitman, a scholar of Jewish history.

The American ambassador to France, William Bullitt, made the unsubstantiated statement that France fell in 1940 partly because of a vast network of spying refugees. “More than one-half the spies captured doing actual military spy work against the French Army were refugees from Germany,” he said. “Do you believe there are no Nazi and Communist agents of this sort in America?”

These kinds of anxieties weren't new, says Philip Orchard, a historian of international refugee policy. When religious persecution in the 17th century led to the flight of thousands of French Huguenots—the first group ever referred to as “refugees”—European nations worried that accepting them would lead to war with France. Later, asylum seekers themselves became objects of suspicion. “With the rise of anarchism at the turn of the 20th century, there were unfounded fears that anarchists would pose as refugees to enter countries to engage in violence,” Orchard says.

These suspicions seeped into American immigration policy. In late 1938, American consulates were flooded with 125,000

applicants for visas, many coming from Germany and the annexed territories of Austria. But national quotas for German and Austrian immigrants had been set firmly at 27,000.

Immigration restrictions actually tightened as the refugee crisis worsened. Wartime measures demanded special scrutiny of anyone with relatives in Nazi territories—even relatives in concentration camps. At a press conference, President Roosevelt repeated the unproven claims from his advisers that some Jewish refugees had been coerced to spy for the Nazis. “Not all of them are voluntary spies,” Roosevelt said. “It is rather a horrible story, but in some of the other countries that refugees out of Germany have gone to, especially Jewish refugees, they found a number of definitely proven spies.”

Here and there, skeptics objected. As the historian Deborah Lipstadt points out in her book *Beyond Belief, The New Republic* portrayed the government’s attitude as “persecuting the refugee.” *The Nation* didn’t believe that the State Department could “cite a single instance of forced espionage.” But these voices were drowned out in the name of national security.

America’s policies created a striking dissonance with the news from Nazi Germany. In the Australian newspaper *The Advertiser*, above an update on Bahr’s trial, a feature story put the refugee crisis in chilling context: “About 50,000 Jews from the protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia and from Berlin, Hamburg, and Westphalia have been dumped by the Nazis at Terezin.” Until the very end of 1944—by which time photographs and newspaper reports had demonstrated that the Nazis were carrying out mass murder—Attorney General Francis Biddle warned Roosevelt not to grant immigrant status to refugees.

Bahr “appeared weak” as he finished his testimony in August 1942. At the defense table, “he collapsed for a few minutes with his head in his hands.” On August 26, the jury reached a verdict: Bahr was guilty of conspiracy and planned espionage, a conviction that could warrant the death penalty.

The next day, Bahr’s birthday, his wife announced that she planned to divorce him.

The case of Herbert Karl Freidrich Bahr fascinated the public for months, and with good reason; it showed readers a very real case of attempted spying, carried out with an utter disregard of its impact on innocent refugees. The question was what Americans should do with this knowledge.

Government agencies like the State Department used spy trials as fuel for the argument against accepting refugees. But late in the war, government whistleblowers began to question this approach. In 1944, the Treasury Department released a damning report initialed by lawyer Randolph Paul. It read:

“I am convinced on the basis of the information which is available to me that certain officials in our State Department, which is charged with carrying out this policy, have been guilty not only of gross procrastination and wilful failure to act, but even of wilful attempts to prevent action from being taken to rescue Jews from Hitler.”

In an interview, Lipstadt says that the State Department’s attitude was shaped by wartime paranoia and downright bigotry. “All those things, they feed into this fear of the foreigner,” she says. It was thanks to the Treasury Department’s report that Roosevelt formed a new body, the War Refugee Board, that belatedly accepted tens of thousands Jewish refugees. But by that time, millions of Jews had already died in Europe.

Bahr lived to tell his tale. He was sentenced to 30 years in prison. It’s not clear whether he lived long enough to be released, but in 1946, after the war ended, he did make headlines again. The FBI called him to the stand in the trial of another accused spy. Once more, he told a rapt audience about spy tricks he learned from the Gestapo. Then he was sent back to the federal penitentiary in Atlanta.

With politicians in the U.S. and Europe again calling for refugee bans in the name of national security, it’s easy to see parallels with the history of World War II.

Lipstadt and Orchard think that although today’s refugee crisis isn’t identical to mass migration in World War II, the past could

still offer lessons for the future. They say that this time around, governments should be careful not to rush quickly into new policies. “Simplistic kinds of answers—close all the doors to refugees, or welcome everyone—are dangerous, and ultimately counter-productive,” says Lipstadt.

Orchard highlights a related worry—“that we’ll see short-sighted policies adopted that have real lasting effects.” He believes governments have historically succeeded at screening for refugees, which suggests that national security isn’t at odds with welcoming them.

According to Breitman, the government, the media, and the public all share blame for the backlash against Jewish refugees during World War II. “I think the media went along with the fears of security-minded people,” he says. Among hundreds of thousands of refugees, there were only a handful of accused spies.

But that didn’t stop them from making headlines. Says Breitman: “It was a good story.”

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About Daniel A. Gross

Daniel A. Gross is a freelance journalist and public radio producer based in Boston.

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