**Seeking Refuge**

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* ROBERT KATZ

August 14, 1939

*This might be naive or ignorant question… but why aren’t more Jews trying to leave Germany?*

HALINKA STREZGOWSKI

How could we move? Why would they want to? Our home was beautiful, palaital almost. Papa's fur business was thriving, We had good friends at school and synagogue, we couldn't just leave them.

LEO LIFFMAN

It is not that simple. Nobody wants us.

NORBET WOLLHEIM

To get out is not easy the world is not open. America has quotas. People had tried to get into Palestine needed at least 10,000 pounds. Emigration is not an automatic easy thing

SUSAN WARSINGER

I heard them (my parents) talking at home. My mother always says – let’s get out of Germany… my father, he isn’t in such a hurry because he thinks it is going to blow over. You know a lot of German Jews don’t want to leave because they are Germans first and Jews second so they figure things are going to get better…

KURT KLEIN (Buffalo, USA)

Due to my sister’s coming to the US in 1936. It was then through her intervention that I got the necessary papers that allowed me also to follow her in 1937 and I also settled down in Buffalo.

ALICE MEROUDES

 my mother before the war, really was the only one in the family who badly wanted to emigrate, to run away, we had means, but because my father was very keen to protect both me and my mother… he felt we were not fit to undergo the hardships of emigration. He didn’t want to leave. And of course there was also other family considerations, the grandparents etc.

MAX URI

We struggled to get out of Vienna. After the pogrom night, taxes were imposed on Jews, such as the Reich Flight tax and the Judenvermogensabgabe (transfer of Jewish property). We then had tax debt that never before had and our business was also taken from us. Because they needed to be debt free in order to get a passport, the official at the Gestapo said to my mother: “You know what Mrs Uri, I will give your children passports, but you stay here as a deposit.”

MAX SCHWAB

Even just the thought of leaving my old home for an unknown destination and an unsure future, never mind everything else that that entails, makes me feel very homesick. The very thought of moving from the house where I lived, come rain or shine for 47 years, makes me shudder

ROBERT KATZ

*Really? After all that has happened?*

MAX SCHWAB

My concerns about emigrating are not based on egotism or self-interest, they’re perfectly understandable... You’re intelligent enough to read between the lines and see how heavily this weighs on my heart – me a front-line veteran and patriot, just like my father and grandfather before me, may their memories be a blessing… When you are young like you… these things don’t effect you much but for old people who are set in their ways it’s much harder to adapt to living like a nomad.

LEO LIFFMAN

I found some cousins in New York who were finally willing to give me an affidavit. That wasn’t that easy either because… the person that had to give you the affidavit had to make sure that they had money in the bank, that they could support you, that you were not going to be a public charge in the United States. All these had to be worked out and it wasn’t all that simple. So it took four years finally to get this show on the road.

MAX URI

I finally left Vienna with ten Reichsmark in my pocket, as it wasn’t allowed to take more if your destination was (British Mandated) Palestine.

* ROBERT KATZ

*Where else are people trying? Surely not every country has quotas?*

HILLEL SCHECHTER

I devote all of my time to helping my parents emigrate. I am 16 years old. There were rumours... that South American countries gave visas. There was Cuba, there was Peru, Argentina, I think Costa Rica too. One had to apply. I ran to all these consulates, stood in line, filled in the forms. But it is to no avail, because acquiring or receiving such a visa necessitated enormous costs.

FRANCIS WAHLE

Hitler marched into Austria in March 1938. Until that time I was just an ordinary Catholic. I then discovered that I was Jewish as far as Hitler was concerned, because all my four grandparents were Jewish. My parents tried to get us out. As we had relations in Italy the first attempt was to get us out to Italy, but they never got all the right papers. So we started learning English.

MAX URI

 My brother is still a child – he is just 12 years old – and was saved with a [Kindertransport](https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/kindertransport-1938-40) to England

ANNA LIEBNER

*By train, by car even by boat – we are all trying to get out of Germany and the Nazis want us to leave! But as others have already said here, other countries are not willing to take us.*

ROBERT KATZ

*What do you mean “Kindertransport”?*

HILLEL SCHECHTER

The British government agreed to take in children under the age of 14... It was called Kindertransport (Children’s transports). As I was registered as a candidate for Youth Aliyah, they agreed to have me included. Later they raised the age to 16… I left Leipzig for London at the end of July 1939....We were two, a friend of mine and myself, but I lost track of him on the train. I was alone… We travelled through Holland. The parting from my parents and my sister was very difficult. We know, we have the feeling that we will never see each other again…

ROBERT KATZ

*That must have been incredibly difficult – is there anyone else on this page who got to England this way?*

VERA GISSING

As the train exited from the station, my parents were crying. Though they still tried to smile you know, as they waved us goodbye and suddenly I was so glad when my sister’s hand reached for mine and I realized I still had her. And she confirmed this in the same very words. She said you’ll always have me. Come what may. You can always turn to me. I’ll be there for you. And the sister whom I didn’t particularly like you know, being the elder bossy sister suddenly changed into a guardian angel and she remained so all through the years of the war.

SELMAR HUBERT

I do remember when the train stopped for the first time in Holland. Dutch ladies came and gave us food and drink. That was good. But I remember even more that a large lady took me in her arms and hugged me to her bosom. Suddenly I felt free and in safety, like I hadn’t felt for months. I have never forgotten those Dutch ladies. They sensed what we children needed more than anything else at that moment. It was fantastic.

ROBERT KATZ

*And what happened when you eventually got to London?*

SELMAR HUBERT

I remember that we arrived in a large hall. There was a stage and a lot of chairs. Each child had a label pinned to his chest with a number on it. We children sat on the stage and the foster parents were down in the audience. Two names were always called out – first the name of the child and then the name of the foster parents. I sat up there, a 13 year old, looked down and hoped that my name would be called together with that of a beautiful lady and not with a lady who wasn’t so pretty. Suddenly they called my name and that of a Mrs. King. And so I met Mrs. King. Of course my sister was there too. I went with Mrs. King to her house in Leyton, a suburb of London. My sister was living nearby. We even went to the same Synagogue.

ROBERT KATZ

*I read about the St Louis being turned away from Cuba. Is there anyone on this group who was on board the St Louis? What was it like?*

RENATE BRESLOW

For a kid there was nothing not to like. There were 8 decks to explore. There was a big toy-room with all kinds of toys and games and dolls and books. A small swimming pool for kids...

RUTH CARDIN

*But then you were denied access to Cuba?*

RENATE BRESLOW

The day we arrived in Cuba… I was very excited. We arrived very early in the morning… Even though we had purchased the legal landing certificates, the Cuban government would not allow us into Cuba – they wouldn’t let us enter.

GERDA BLACHMANN WILCHFORT

We were just sitting and waiting what's going to happen… Everyday they had like newsletters printed and put out on board to tell us what's happening and everyday there was another country we were supposedly going to go… The food got worse and worse and… we had water but we had to be careful, and of course the parties were over. No more parties… no more fun. We were just sitting and waiting what's going to happen

ANNA LIEBNER

*And then the St Louis was denied access to the United States!*

GERDA BLACHMANN WILCHFORT

We just saw the Coast Guard boats surround us near Miami to make sure that we wouldn't even come close to the border, to the...to shore… So we saw the lights of Miami. We saw the lights of America and that was it.

ROBERT KATZ

*I can’t imagine what it must have been like not to know where you were going…*

GERDA BLACHMANN WILCHFORT

Of course, the fear was that we would go back to Germany. That was the big thing you know… So we slowly sailed back to Europe… You know, there was a lot of negotiations going on with the United Jewish Appeal and there was a Mr. Tupper in Paris and he finally got it together that we will be divided between Belgium and Holland and France and England.

ROBERT KATZ

*I heard that President Franklin Roosevelt has justified his decisions by stating: "The refugee has got to be checked because, unfortunately, among the refugees there are some spies, as has been found in other countries."*