

## The voyage of Jews on the MS St Louis ship to Cuba (1939)

How would you feel if you set voyage on a ship to seek refuge but get rejected from the countries and finally end up just beside the country that caused you to seek refuge in the first place? That's what the passengers the MS St Louis ship felt. The purpose of the voyage was because of how the Jews were treated back in Germany. When Adolf Hitler, the leader of Nazi Germany rose to power treated all Jews very harshly.

Adolf Hitler did not like the Jews in Germany. The Nazi Germany carried out the Holocaust which killed six million Jews who did not even commit a crime, fearing Hitler's wrath many Jews Fled the country. This was the main idea why Jews set voyage on MS St Louis, they wanted to take refuge in Cuba and set free from Nazi Germany. The Luxury German Liner the MS St Louis was one of the last ships to leave Germany, hoping to find freedom far away from Hitler and his wrath.

The voyage of Jews on the MS St Louis ship to Cuba was Jewish people who were trying to be free. On May 13<sup>th</sup>, 1939, there were 937 Jewish refugees who boarded the MS St Louis in Hamburg Germany to travel to Havana where they presumed that they would be allowed to live freely. But for a lot of people the journey was set to fail because of the strong anti-immigrant sentiment that prevailed in Cuba. Most refugees who crossed the Atlantic never made it on shore, and many ended up facing death in European concentration camps.

The MS St Louis had arrived in Cuba in middle of a perplexing political and economic issues. At the time official Cuban immigration policy at the time stood by mighty Nationalism, At the time foreigners were seen as major threat to employment. According to a daily newspaper EL Mundo May 23, 1939, while the MS St Louis was still at the Atlantic when the Cuban Treasury department planned to add the law prohibiting the landing of "Individuals who were born in or from Hungary, Poland, Germany, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, Lithuania, Bulgaria, Romania, Russia, Jamaica, China, Haiti ,and Japan." But the passengers who had relatives in Cuba could officially seek refuge in Cuba.

The voyage of St Louis and other events such as anti-immigration media camping was performed by Germany Ministry of propaganda. This was done to sway international opinion and to show that Nazi Germany allowed Jews to leave freely but at the same time forming hostile receptions in other countries. When the MS St Louis arrived at the port of Havana on May 27. There was a special order given by Bru which banned MS St Louis entrance to the port and there was a police patrol boat dispatched and it escorted MS St Louis to a roadstead.

There were only 22 lucky refugees who could change their permits for regular visas after paying a fare of 500\$ and were able to step foot on land. One of the passengers on MS St Louis attempted suicide after cutting his veins and jumping into the water, while there was other six lucky people who obtained last-minute visas thanks to arrangements made by the Cuban ambassador to the United States. However, the MS St Louis was forced to leave the Cuban water with 907 Jewish refugees remaining. Captain Schroder was unable to dock in Florida waters, Captain Schroder again headed back to Cuba hoping Berenson who was a former president of Chamber of Commerce to persuade the Cuban Government and bring positive results. Also, Berenson with his efforts made an appeal to the media stating "Gentlemen have mercy on these poor people. They have already received enough punishment, and you should look at them with compassion they will not break any law in this country and we on the committee assure you that they will not be a public burden".

Unfortunately, after a meeting with Bru, Col Batista and other officers on June 6 they pointed finger on Berenson for not complying with a 48-hour ultimatum to deliver cash bond and declared the St. Louis case closed. But Thankfully because of the efforts put in by the American Jewish Joint Distribution committee , the boat did not land in Germany but in Belgium and The Belgian government and other governments such as France, England and Holland accepted the Refugees but by 1940 except the people who were in the united kingdom other found themselves again under control of the Nazis.

This whole event was caused by only One person, and it was Adolf Hitler, the Leader of Nazi and Chancellor of Germany and the man who caused the holocaust killing 6 million Jews. His early life consisted of a lot of things one of the things where he served in the German Army at the start of World War I, even though he was Austrian citizen he served in the military. He was immensely disturbed by the defeat of 1918. After the war he lived in Munich a city run by ex-soldiers and other people who were angry with the new democracy government in Berlin, so he began his expedition and began associating with few of many groups that were formed to agitate against all the evil. Hitler almost died many times but by his luck of fate survived. One time is the war Hitler was badly wounded and the person who saw Hitler did not shoot and let him live. Another time Hitler almost died in a car accident.

A fun fact was that Hitler did not actually invent the hatred of the Jews. Jews who lived in Europe had always faced discrimination and hatred since the Middle Ages, mostly because of religious reasons. Christians saw the Jewish faith as an anomaly that had to be stopped.

The situation was so terrific that sometimes the Jews were forced to convert, or they were even stopped from practicing certain professions.

Later when he rose to power on November 9, and 10 Nazis storm troopers from Hitler youth killed at least 91 Jews destroyed 267 synagogues and at least 7,500 Jewish businesses throughout Germany, Austria and Sudetenland in an attack known as Kristallnacht or known as the Night of the Broken Glass. They also damaged many other Jewish things and on top of that they also took 30,000 Jewish men into concentration camps. The only condition on which they let them free was that they immediately leave Germany and never come back. Going into one of the concentration camps meant certain death.

The results were very sad and terrific. Many Jews were killed for no reason and many families lost their loved ones. The refugees who set voyage on the MS St Louis mostly never survived.

Most of The Jews on The MS St Louis who were in France, Holland and other countries in Europe except the United Kingdom were invaded by the Nazis and were forcefully sent to concentration camps where they died eventually. The leader Adolf Hitler carried out mass annihilation of the Jews later He committed suicide after the Soviet Union invaded Berlin.

During this event the passengers on The MS St Louis also faced a lot of challenges. They got denied by Cuba and the United States and were accepted by four of the western European countries. Out of all the passengers, only 288 of them were sent to England. Unfortunately, just after a year the Nazis had controlled the whole of Europe except England, and the passengers were on the run again.

In conclusion the MS St Louis kind of served its purpose because it did get the refugees to safety. But sadly, only the refugees who were assigned England completely survived and others found themselves again under the control of the Nazis and got sent to concentration camps and died eventually.

The pain and the struggle the Jews felt when Hitler rose to power was just very heart breaking and terrifying. Anyone who was sent to the concentration camp was literally killed. Hitler showed little to no mercy. The Jews who did not even commit a single crime were killed relentlessly and brutally. The Jews did not deserve this hatred, and all this mass killing was just because they were Jewish. This Tragic event of The MS St Louis, The Holocaust and the Kristallnacht will always be remembered and never forgotten in our history.