



1

PREPARING THE TRANSPORT

The Jew transport planned for 11 December 1941 included 1,007 Jews... The transport was compiled of Jews of both sexes, of various ages—from babies to 65-year-olds... On the way from the slaughterhouse yard [the designated assembly point] to the platform, a male Jew attempted to commit suicide by throwing himself in front of the streetcar. But he was caught by the streetcar's bumper and only slightly injured. He recovered during the trip, and realized that he could not avoid sharing the fate of the evacuees. An elderly Jewish woman walked away from the platform without anyone noticing—it was raining and it was very dark—entered a neighboring house, took off her clothes and sat on a toilet. However a cleaning woman noticed her and she too was led back to the transport.

2

BOARDING THE TRAIN

Departure of the transport was planned for 9:30. The Jews were therefore brought to the loading ramp ready to board at 4:00 a.m. However, the *Reichsbahn* [The German Railway] could not have the train ready so early, allegedly due to lack of personnel. Subsequently the loading of the Jews did not begin until 9:00 a.m. The loading of the Jews into cars was carried out in great haste, as the *Reichsbahn* insisted that the train must depart on time. It is therefore no surprise that some cars were overloaded (60–65 persons) while others had only 35–40 passengers. This caused problems throughout the entire trip to Riga, since individual Jews repeatedly attempted to get into the less crowded cars. As much as time permitted, I allowed them, in some cases, to make changes, as there were also mothers who had been separated from their children. ... The loading of the train ended at 10:15 and...the train left the Dusseldorf-Derendorf station at about 10:30....

3

THE TRAIN MOVES

I realized that the car reserved for the guards had not been put in the middle, but was at the end of the train, i.e. it was car no. 21... Due to a faulty heating system, the steam pressure did not reach the last cars of the train. Because of the cold, the guard squad's clothing did not dry. (It rained during the entire transport). Thus, I had to deal with guards who could not stand duty because of illness....

The commander of the transport could not see the whole train from his position. Whenever the train stopped, the Jews tried to contact the people at the railway stations, to have their letters mailed or to ask for water. As a result I had to put two guards in one of the cars at the front...

At 11:10 [on 12 December] Konitz was reached. [Salitter wanted to rearrange the train so that the guards' car would be in the center of the train]. This was agreed upon at first, but then the station master declared that...it would not be possible...he told me that the train would have to leave right away. A rearrangement of the train would be impossible... The conduct of the station master seemed strange to me, and I informed him that I would take the matter up with his superiors. He responded that I would be unable to reach his superior. He had his orders. The train would have to leave, as there were two other trains en route.

He suggested that I remove the Jews from the center car and put them in the guards' second-class car. Then I could move my guards to the empty car. I think someone from the upper echelons should see to it that this railway man is informed that members of the German police are to be treated differently than the Jews. I have the impression that this is a man who still speaks of 'those poor Jews' and for whom the term 'Jew' is totally unknown....

...At Tilsit: There...the car of the guards was put in the front of the train and they finally got some heating. The guards appreciated the warmth very much...as their uniforms were soaked and they could finally dry them.... Normally, the train ride from this point to Riga would take 14 hours, but since there was only one track and our train had only a secondary priority, the trip was often delayed for long periods of time....

4. JOURNEY'S END

...We arrived in Riga at 21:50. The train was kept at the station for one and a half hours.... The train stood there without heat. The temperature outside was minus 12 centigrade.... At 1:45 a.m., we relinquished responsibility for the train over and six Latvian guards were charged with watching it. Because it was past midnight, dark, and the platform was covered with a thick layer of ice, it was decided to transfer the Jews to the Sarnel ghetto only on Sunday morning....

...Riga has a population of about 360,000. Among them were approximately 35,000 Jews. As in other places, the Jews were very prominent in business. After the entry of the German army, their shops were closed and confiscated. The Jews were closed in a ghetto surrounded by barbed wire. At this time, there are only 2,500 male Jews who are being used for labor. The remaining Jews were used elsewhere or shot by the Latvians.... The Latvians, as far as I can tell, are friendly to Germany and many of them speak German.... Their hatred is directed mainly towards the Jews. Therefore, from the moment of their liberation, they have played an important part in the elimination of these parasites. However they seem to find it strange, as I have heard from the railway workers, that Germany brings the Jews to Latvia, instead of eliminating them in their own country.

5. CONCLUSIONS

- A) The provisions [for the guards] were good and sufficient.
- B) the pistols and ammunition provided were sufficient....
- C) the two search lights served their purpose well....
- D) the assistance of the [German] Red Cross [to the German guards] is commendable....
- E) In order to supply the Jews with water, it is essential that the Gestapo get in touch with the *Reichsbahn* and coordinate one hour stops every day at a railway station in the Reich. Because of the time table, the *Reichsbahn* was reluctant to comply with the transport commander's wishes. The Jews are usually on the road for 14 hours or more before the transport leaves and have used up all the drinks they had taken with them. When they are not provided with water during the trip, they try, in spite of the prohibition, to leave the train at every possible spot or ask others to get them water.

- F) It is also essential that the *Reichsbahn* prepare the trains at least 3–4 hours ahead of departure, so that the loading of the Jews and their belongings can be conducted in an orderly fashion.
- G) The Gestapo has to make sure that the *Reichsbahn* place the car for the guard detachment at the center of the train.... This is essential for the supervision of the transport....
- H) The men in the guard squad gave me no reason to complain. With the exception of the fact that I had to prompt some of them to act more energetically against Jews who wanted to disobey my orders, they all behaved well and fulfilled their duty well. There were no incidents of disease or any other troubles.

Signed: Salitter, Hauptmann of the Schupo

THE FATE OF THE JEWS IN RIGA

On November 30, 1941 the first transport of Jews from Germany arrived in Riga. In the coming months another 24 transports with a total of over 25,000 Jews arrived. One of these was the transport guarded by Salitter. Thousands of these Jews were murdered upon arrival. The rest were put in concentration camps in the area. The Germans conducted periodic mass executions of Jews by shootings in the nearby Rumbuli Forest.

SECURITY POLICE

The transports were accompanied by a detail of guards who were usually recruited from the police. Their task began with the boarding of the train and ended when they handed the transport over to the person in charge at the destination. Captain Salitter was an officer in charge of escorting a transport of 1,007 Jews that left Dusseldorf for Riga on December 11, 1941.



ABOUT THE PHOTOS

Left: Jews being led to the deportation train by German Police, Wiesbaden, Germany. Yad Vashem Photo Archive (1046/6)
 Right: Jews boarding a deportation train, Bielefeld, Germany. Yad Vashem Photo Archive (1286/3)

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