



A journey to death: the deportation of November 1941 from Nuremberg to Riga-Jungfernhof

In the fall of 1941, 15 people lived in a so-called *Jewish House* in Nuremberg's Marienstraße 1, intimidated and insecure about their future. Originally owned by a Jewish landlord, since its *Aryanization* it belonged to the regional leadership (*Gauleitung*) of the Nazi party. Now its purpose was to house those Jews who were forced to leave their dwellings by landlords who took advantage of the racial legislature. They were thrown together into *Jewish Houses*, of which there were 52 in Nuremberg. As a side effect this made it easier for the Nazis to watch and count the Jews.

The young family of Artur Stern (34), his wife Lina (35) and two sons (5 and 2) was part of the group at Marienstraße 1. Until 1938 he had run a workshop as a self-employed car mechanic at Rothenburger Straße 33 which then still was frequented by non-Jewish customers. The Nazis strongly disapproved that fact and in November 1938 the infamous anti-Semitic tabloid *Der Stürmer* published a besmirching article against the *Car Jew Stern* with a list of those Gentiles who still dared to make use of his services. To identify them their license plate numbers were noted and checked with the local police who gave away the names and addresses without any objections.

After the regime had destroyed his business, Artur Stern worked at the vocational retraining workshop of the Jewish congregation at Obere Kanalstraße 25 where hopeful emigrants were taught skills which were in demand in the countries they wanted to go to. Among his trainees the man born in the Palatinate was popular and appreciated for his knowledgeable instructions.

A neighbor of the Sterns, Galicia born Rosalie Sanders (37), with her sons Leon (9) and Manfred (4) had to struggle on her own since her husband Zelman (45) had been deported to the Polish border in October 1938 as an *unwanted alien*. After the outbreak of war on September 1, 1939 any contact between the couple had ceased.

Ernest Buehler, a childhood friend of the Anders brothers whose family succeeded in fleeing to the USA in the very last moment, has kept a photo of them, probably taken in the summer

of 1939 which shows curly blonde Manfred and dark haired Leon, called *Lonnie* by his playmates. Scarcely anyone besides Mr. Buehler might remember that once there were those boys.



Jewish children at a party in the summer of 1939: 2nd from left Manfred Anders, 4th from right Leon Anders, 2nd from right Ernest Buehler
(photo: private)

Without knowing, the Sterns and the Anders like all remaining Jews in Germany were yet targeted by their persecutors: After the ban on any further emigration on October 23, 1941 the aim was the deportation of the victims *to the east* as the first step to their systematic extermination. On October 31, the headquarters of the Nuremberg-Fürth Gestapo received an order from Himmler to ready 1000 Jews from the three Franconian districts for *evacuation* and get them going by train. 500 of them were supposed to come from Nuremberg alone.

The *organizational instruction for the evacuation of the Jews on November 29, 1941* was signed by the Gestapo officer Dr. Theodor Grafenberger. He worked in the *Jewish Department* of the secret police in Nuremberg and originated from a family whose members traditionally were Bavarian public servants. He had served in WW1 and afterwards took part in the overthrow of the soviet-styled leftist *Räterepublik* in Munich as a member of *Freikorps Epp*, a reactionary paramilitary organization. With such references and personally jockeyed by the head of the Nuremberg-Fürth state police Heinrich Gareis, after 1920 he was hired by this office known for its political leanings toward the right, fittingly to monitor the growing local Nazi movement lead by Julius Streicher. Grafenberger did his job so efficiently that after the

Nazi takeover he instantly made a remarkable career, by now being a member of the party and the SS.

According to Grafenberger's detailed plan, on November 23, 1941 the people affected by the order were given notice that they had to be ready to leave on November 27. Their belongings were confiscated, only the strictly limited travel baggage remained in their possession. Four days later, starting at 8 a.m. 512 Nurembergers were picked up, visible for anyone who wanted to see and transferred to a camp in the Langwasser suburb where they were joined by others from Fürth, Würzburg, Bamberg and smaller Franconian towns. The difference between the initial Nuremberg quota and the eventual number of deportees was due to the fact that children younger than six years were not counted. After paying 60 Reichsmarks for their *transportation* and humiliating body searches the train with its frightened passengers left Nuremberg on November 29 at 3 p.m. from Märzfild station, among them the Sterns, the Anders and all the other inhabitants of Marienstraße 1. Thus the house became *judenfrei* (free of Jews) in the Nazi terminology.

One of the last living returnees, Mr. Ernst Haas, born 1925 in Neumarkt (Upper Palatinate) and deported from Fürth, is still haunted by what he had to witness after his arrival at the transport's destination, the destitute estate Jungfernhof near the Latvian capital Riga: Already in Langwasser he had experienced the merciless brutality of the SS and the Gestapo, where Jews were beaten up heavily for trivial reasons. After that and a ride of 1200 kilometers (not in cattle cars but coaches) the deportees were welcomed by a troop of the German Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service) and Latvian SS who marched them from Skirotava switch-yard to the camp. *Its commander was SS sergeant Seck. From the beginning he made his intentions absolutely clear to us: He made it known that he had already killed thousands of Jews, and to kill more would make no difference to him.* His first victim was a youth from Fürth who was shot dead by Seck because he did not march fast enough on the way to Jungfernhof.

Until the end of December 4000 people also from other German cities were cramped into the improvised camp. Its poor inmates suffered from malnutrition, cold and overcrowding. The latter problem was solved by the Nazis on March 26, 1942: Using the pretext of a resettlement, 1840 children, elderly and incapacitated individuals were taken to the woods at Bikernieki and shot there. To mark the spot where this unspeakable crime had been committed, a grove was planted in the 1990s. Probably Rosalie Anders and her two sons were among those who perished in Bikernieki. On September 30, 1957 the court in Nuremberg declared them to have died.



Commemorative grove in the woods at Bikernieki
 (photo: Volksbund Kriegsgräberfürsorge)

Artur Stern was able to save his family until spring 1944 by repairing the motorized vehicles of the SS henchmen. His luck left him when they grew increasingly nervous about the approaching Red Army and began to move their slaves westward: Stern was transferred to the concentration camp Buchenwald near Weimar, where he died on May 30, 1944. His wife and sons were shipped to Bergen-Belsen where they luckily survived.

On a long journey of suffering from Riga via Danzig to camp Rieben in Pomerania Ernest Haas lost his parents and sister and eventually he contracted typhus. In March 1945 the camp commander in Rieben ordered the evacuation of the inmates with the cynical remark: *You don't want to fall into the hands of the communists, do you?* 2700 men, those who still were able to march, left. Haas and his ailing comrades stayed behind and were liberated by the Red Army on March 11, 1945. However, those who had left the camp ran into a terrible surprise: They were all shot in nearby woods.

Ernest Haas returned to Fürth but like Lina Stern emigrated to the USA in July 1946, where his younger brother had found refuge from the persecution by the Nazis. He could not go on living in his country of birth, where in November 1945, shortly after the opening of the Nuremberg Trials, a man told Haas without shame or remorse: *The only mistake Hitler made was to lose the war.*



Ernest Haas after his liberation in 1945
(photo: private)

Just 18 Jewish Nurembergers returned from the journey to death which had started on November 29, 1941 at Märzfild station. After the war the Nazi criminals extensively took advantage of the opportunities the constitutional state offered to defend themselves, a privilege they had denied their victims. Dr. Theodor Grafenberger who had not stained his hands with blood but like Adolf Eichmann with ink causing death and misery thousand fold, was acquitted on all counts in a trial in 1949. When he died in 1954, his widow could claim a significant assistance because he ended his career as a high ranking police officer. Only twelve years before, in the spring of 1942, he had rewarded his underlings after another deportation with a *nice and harmonious get-together* for their *multiple detail work, engagement, trouble and excitement* while committing this crime. In 1951 Rudolf Seck, the mass-murderer of Jungfernhof, received a lifelong prison sentence by the court in Hamburg. He died peacefully 1974 in Flensburg.

Susanne Rieger & Gerhard Jochem, translated by *Anne E. Herrmann*. Mrs. Herrmann, living in Washington D.C., lost her parents during the fateful deportation from Nuremberg on November 29, 1941.

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