

Susanne Kill

Deutsche Reichsbahn and Deportation

The Personal Archive of Alfred Gottwaldt

Abstract: Alfred Gottwaldt, senior curator at the German Museum of Technology, was one of the experts on the history of the Deutsche Reichsbahn under the Nazi Regime. His intensive research on the organization of the deportations, his knowledge of operational processes at the Reichsbahn and his great interest in biographical issues made him an in demand internationally advisor for memorials and museums. His private collection was acquired and made accessible with the help of the Deutsche Bahn Stiftung (DB) Foundation. It is now also open for research. His collection is to be seen in context of the progressing research on the deportations with railways in occupied Europe. The active role of the state-owned Reichsbahn in the deportations must also be seen against the background of its economic and bureaucratic procedures in peacetime.

Introduction

October 18, 1941, marks a turning point in the deportation and killing of German Jews. On this Saturday, the Gestapo in Berlin began systematically deporting Jewish women, men and children from Germany. The deportations started at a train station on the outskirts of Grunewald, an exclusive residential suburb of Berlin. There, 1,091 people were loaded into third-class passenger cars and transported to the Litzmannstadt Ghetto. Today, the Track 17 memorial at Grunewald station serves as a monument to those who were deported, with the dates of the transports – 184 in all, starting with October 18, 1941 – inscribed in cast steel plates that line the tracks. Deutsche Bahn AG (DB) dedicated the memorial in 1998. It has since become a place of public and private remembrance. Each steel plate includes the date, the number of deportees and the destination of the transport. In its impressive simplicity, the memorial represents all the deportations that departed from stations in Berlin – from Grunewald, Moabit freight station, and Anhalter Bahnhof.

Grunewald station was firmly entrenched in the memory of the Jewish communities in East and West Berlin as a deportation site. The first memorial here, a plaque “dedicated to the tens of thousands of Jewish citizens of Berlin who were deported from this station to the death camps by henchmen of the ruthless Hitler

regime,”¹ was placed at the site by the Association of Persecutees of the Nazi Regime (VVN) in 1953. Over time, the station, which was operated by East German Railways during the Cold War, was all but forgotten as a location for commemoration ceremonies until it began to be used again in the 1980s. In 1993, Alfred Gottwaldt wrote a report for the German railways, which were managed at that time by CEO Heinz Dürr, on the historical topography of the deportation of Berlin Jews at Grunewald station.² This report was the motivating factor for erecting the memorial on Track 17.

Alfred Gottwaldt’s unexpected death in summer 2015, less than a year after he had retired from his job as rail transport curator at the German Museum of Technology in Berlin, was a great loss for the field of historical research on deportations and for Holocaust remembrance, especially in Berlin. Gottwaldt most certainly would have followed the November 2020 conference “Deportations in the Nazi Era” with interest and played a role in it. As the Deutsche Bahn Foundation was fortunate enough to acquire Gottwaldt’s collection, this paper discusses his impact, describes his preserved documents – which we have since catalogued almost in full – and shares how it came to be. Drawing on the literature, I will also discuss the role that the Reichsbahn played in the deportations.

Gottwaldt as Researcher and Curator

Alfred Gottwaldt was nearly peerless in his research of the role of the Reichsbahn during the Nazi period. As a jurist and, in his capacity at the Museum of Technology in Berlin, an advocate of examining the history of technology in a sociopolitical context, he had both railway expertise, which he began acquiring in his youth, and a deep understanding of legal and administrative factors. Gottwaldt was a regular at seminars held by Wolfgang Scheffler and Helga Grabitz at the Center for Research on Antisemitism at the Technical University of Berlin, where his insights were a great asset, as they were for museums and memorials whose curators sought pieces for their exhibitions that were as authentic and powerful as possible. A curator himself, Gottwaldt created an exhibit at the Museum of Technology in 1988 that was dedicated to the Holocaust and centered around a historic freight car. At that time, it was still uncommon for museums to address the extermination of European Jews within the context of the history

¹ Gerd Kühling: *Erinnerung an nationalsozialistische Verbrechen in Berlin. Verfolgte des Dritten Reiches und geschichtspolitisches Engagement im Kalten Krieg 1945–1979*, Berlin: Metropol, 2016, 286.

² HA-20-Mahnmal-02, Topografie, Historische Sammlung Deutsche Bahn AG (HSD BAG).

of technology. Gottwaldt exhibited the freight car as a memorial site among historical passenger cars and locomotives. He later advised other museums and memorials on the acquisition and restoration of similar pieces.³

We will leave the question of whether Alfred Gottwaldt would have considered himself a disciple of Wolfgang Scheffler to others to answer.⁴ We do know that he frequently attended Scheffler's colloquia and studied the prosecution of Albert Ganzenmüller, the former State Secretary at the Reich Transport Ministry, in depth. Scheffler served as an expert witness in the criminal proceedings against Ganzenmüller. When looking to determine how deportation trains were organized and who was responsible, Gottwaldt shared Scheffler's assessment in particular of documents and statements from the Düsseldorf public prosecutor's office relating to the charges that Ganzenmüller had aided and abetted the murder of millions of people.⁵

One product of the years-long research projects and in-depth discussions in the context of Scheffler's colloquia was *Die Judendeportationen aus dem Deutschen Reich* ("the deportation of the Jews from the German Reich"), which Gottwaldt published with Diana Schulle in 2005 and which is considered a standard reference work.⁶ This annotated chronology provides a systematic overview of the prehistory and background of each of the waves of deportations and then lists and annotates each of the deportation transports from the German Reich to the ghettos and extermination sites in German-occupied Eastern Europe. The book is both a reference work and a memorial, a fact that is sometimes overlooked. On the one hand, its chronology is based on the work of many studies, which were often conducted outside of the university research landscape as part of history workshops and local history projects. Such workshops and projects often focused on the fate of individual Jewish citizens, leading to contact with survivors of the persecution and their descendants. In this way, the local public was made keenly aware that not a single town or city in Germany had protected its Jewish citizens from persecution and deportation, a fact that had long been

3 Alfred Gottwaldt: "Der deutsche 'Viehwanne' als symbolisches Objekt in KZ-Gedenkstätten", in *Gedenkstättenrundbrief*, 139, 2007. Available at: https://www.gedenkstaettenforum.de/uploads/media/GedRund139_18-31.pdf. Last accessed: 20.10.2020.

4 I would like to thank Martina Voigt for providing me with information about the Scheffler colloquia.

5 The complete files on the Ganzenmüller case, which the Düsseldorf prosecutor's office were concerned with, can be found in the Rhineland Department of the State Archives of North Rhine-Westphalia in Duisburg.

6 Alfred Gottwaldt and Diana Schulle: *Die Judendeportationen aus dem Deutschen Reich von 1941–1945. Eine kommentierte Chronologie*, Wiesbaden: Marix, 2005.

kept in silence. The chronology and its index of places brought this complicity out into the open. On the other hand, the work, with its aim to retrace the timeline of each of the deportations and train movements, is an important addition to the central German Memorial Book, the online version of which is continually updated by the German Federal Archives.⁷ The Pan-European Deportation Database,⁸ a much more comprehensive research and online project begun by Yad Vashem in 2007, also benefited from Gottwaldt's and Schulle's detailed work, which offered an authoritative summary of research in the field to date.

Many publications by Gottwaldt on railroad history, and especially on locomotive construction, preceded this chronological memorial. In particular, his two books on the impact of Julius Dormmüller, General Director of the Reichsbahn and Reich Transport Minister, provide context for the deportations. Gottwaldt's interest in the internationally respected railway engineer was driven by the psychologically motivated question of how a national conservative official who considered himself apolitical became entangled with Nazism. Gottwaldt's books *Julius Dormmüller, die Reichsbahn und die Autobahn* and *Dormmüllers Reichsbahn*, which are full of illustrations and photographs, introduced an audience familiar with railroad history and technology to the critical history of the Reichsbahn under the Nazis.⁹ With equal skill, Gottwaldt's set of popular publications on "trains, locomotives and people"¹⁰ repeatedly called attention to the role that the Reichsbahn and its personnel played in achieving Nazi objectives. In later years, Gottwaldt applied this same skill to researching the fates of Jewish railroad workers – including those who were soon forgotten in postwar Germany. This was the case with railroad engineer Ernst Spiro, who was highly respected in his field and managed to emigrate to England, and with Paul Levy, who, along

7 Federal Archives: "Memorial Book. Victims of the Persecution of Jews under the National Socialist Tyranny in Germany 1933–1945". Available at: <https://www.bundesarchiv.de/gedenkbuch/introduction/en>. Last accessed: 10.04.2020.

8 Yad Vashem: "Transport to Extinction: Holocaust (Shoah) Deportation Database". Available at: <https://www.yadvashem.org/research/research-projects/deportations.html>. Last accessed: 10.04.2021. For both databases, see also the contribution by Maximilian Strnad in this volume.

9 Alfred Gottwaldt: *Julius Dormmüller, die Reichsbahn und die Autobahn*, Berlin: Argon, 1995; Alfred Gottwaldt: *Dormmüllers Reichsbahn – Die Ära des Reichsverkehrsministers Julius Dormmüller 1920–1945*, Freiburg: EK-Verlag, 2009.

10 This was the title of an exhibition catalogue. See Alfred Gottwaldt: *Züge, Loks und Leute. Eisenbahngeschichten in 33 Stationen. Ein Katalog*, Berlin: Nicolai, 1990.

with his wife, was deported from the Berlin-Moabit freight depot on February 26, 1943, to Auschwitz, where they were murdered.¹¹

In 2009, the German Federal Ministry of Transport commissioned Alfred Gottwaldt for a study of the Reich Transport Ministry's antisemitic policy. Gottwaldt wrote the study with Diana Schulle.¹² In his dissertation, which he began under Wolfgang Scheffler and completed under Wolfgang Benz, he traced the implementation of antisemitic measures at the Reichsbahn in great detail.¹³ His analysis of the management structure of the Reich Transport Ministry and Reichsbahn, personnel policy, and implementation of antisemitic measures and laws supports the theory, first developed by Hans Mommsen, of "cumulative radicalization"¹⁴ of institutions and society as it applies to the microcosm of railroad administration and operations. Players in this microcosm made locomotives and railcars available to the SS and police without a second thought as Polish Jews throughout the Reich were being removed to the German-Polish border in October 1938¹⁵ and as Jewish men who had been arrested following the November pogroms were being transferred to German concentration camps. Based on what we know now about the war of extermination, these transports were a precursor to the systematic deportation of Jews by rail in German-occupied Europe. They were the consequence of radicalization, which began with the defamation and exclusion of Jewish employees in 1933 and which quickly made the Reich Transport Ministry and Reichsbahn accessories to the Nazis' criminal goals.

11 Alfred Gottwaldt: *Ernst Spiro: ein jüdischer Reichsbahndirektor*, Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2014; Alfred Gottwaldt: *Paul Levy: Ingenieur der Hedschasbahn und der Reichsbahn*, Berlin: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2014.

12 Alfred Gottwaldt and Diana Schulle: *"Juden ist die Benutzung von Speisewagen untersagt". Die antijüdische Politik des Reichsverkehrsministeriums zwischen 1933 und 1945: Forschungsgutachten*, erarbeitet im Auftrag des Bundesministeriums für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung, Teetz: Hentrich & Hentrich, 2007.

13 Alfred Gottwaldt: *Die Reichsbahn und die Juden 1933–1939. Antisemitismus bei der Eisenbahn in der Vorkriegszeit*, Wiesbaden: Marix, 2011.

14 Hans Mommsen: "Der Nationalsozialismus. Kumulative Radikalisierung und Selbstzerstörung des Regimes", in *Meyers Enzyklopädisches Lexikon*, volume 16, Mannheim, 1976, 785–790.

15 In addition to H.G. Adler's *Der verwaltete Mensch. Studien zur Deportation der Juden aus Deutschland*, Tübingen: J.C.B Mohr, 1974, 91–105, it was primarily Sybil Milton's "The Expulsion of the Polish Jews from Germany October 1938 to July 1939. A Documentation", in *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book*, 29, 1984, 169–199, which drew attention to the expulsion of Polish Jews from Germany as a precursor to the deportations.

The Reichsbahn as the Focus of Research

It is important to understand the research context of Gottwaldt's publications in order to place his work, and thus his collections, within a larger context. Like many of his generation, Gottwaldt was greatly influenced by the work of historian Raul Hilberg. Hilberg's seminal work, *The Destruction of the European Jews*,¹⁶ which was published in 1961, and his 1976 study *The Role of the German Railroads in the Destruction of the Jews*, a German translation of which was published by a railway publishing house as *Sonderzüge nach Auschwitz*¹⁷ in 1981, made Hilberg one of the founding fathers of university Holocaust research not only in the English-speaking sphere, but in Germany as well. For the Vienna-born American historian, the technocratic handling of deportation trains, and thus the Reichsbahn more generally, were typical of the bureaucratic actions and highly departmentalized division of labor behind the plundering and extermination of Europe's Jews.¹⁸

Hilberg's research on how the Reich Security Main Office (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*, RSHA) and Reich Transport Ministry interacted in the organization of deportation transports has remained unchallenged to this day. When a new, updated edition of his 1961 book *The Destruction of the European Jews* was re-released in Germany in 1990 as part of S. Fischer Verlag's series on the Nazi era, only a few nuances in the accounts of the responsibilities of the Reichsbahn needed to be expanded upon.¹⁹ Additions included a few sources that became public in conjunction with the prosecution of Albert Ganzenmüller, Deputy General Director and State Secretary at the Reich Transport Ministry, and some documents from East German archives, which had long been inaccessible to research-

¹⁶ Raul Hilberg: *The Destruction of the European Jews*, Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961.

¹⁷ Idem.: *Sonderzüge nach Auschwitz*, Mainz: Dumjahn, 1981.

¹⁸ Christopher R. Browning and Peter Hayes published two of Hilberg's essays on the Reichsbahn and Holocaust, "German Railroads, Jewish Souls" and "The Bureaucracy of Annihilation," for the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, supplementing them with English translations of key primary sources and with two of their own articles providing context. See Christopher R. Browning, Peter Hayes and Raul Hilberg: *German Railroads, Jewish Souls. The Reichsbahn and the Final Solution*, New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2019.

¹⁹ Raul Hilberg: *Die Vernichtung der Juden*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 1990. In this context, see also the collection Walther Pehle and René Schlott (eds.): *Raul Hilberg, Anatomie des Holocaust. Essays und Erinnerungen*, Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer, 2016.

ers in the West.²⁰ They did not significantly change the fundamental image of the Reichsbahn as a “bürokratischer Moloch”²¹, however.

Given the highly regulated nature of railroad operations, it should come as little surprise that the Reichsbahn continued to follow regulations and practices that had been developed in peacetime, even as it operated trains outside of the regular civilian or Wehrmacht schedules. In addition to traditional special trains (*Gesellschaftssonderzüge*) for passengers, the Reichsbahn had already operated numerous trains for the Nazi regime in the years leading up to the war. These included special trains for the Nuremberg party rallies, the Reich Harvest Thanksgiving Festival on the Bückeberg near Hamelin, the *Deutsches Turn- und Sportfest* in Breslau (now Wrocław) and other mass Nazi gatherings of millions of enthusiastic participants.²² Paul Schnell published a detailed description of the policies of the Reichsbahn’s special train service in the transport journal *Verkehrstechnische Woche* in 1938.²³ Schnell originally worked in railcar management in Leipzig but transferred to Rail Operations Department 21, *Massenbeförderung* (“mass transport”), at the Reich Transport Ministry in 1936. This was the department that was also responsible for providing deportation trains, which ran on the orders of the SS and police force, beginning in 1941. Direct contact between Adolf Eichmann’s department at the RSHA and his transport officer Novak ran through the subordinate department 211 and its head, Amtsrat Otto Stange. The trains, whether they were equipped with passenger cars or freight cars, as was the case later on, were formally planned by the general operating offices (*Generalbetriebsleitungen*) using the same rules that were applied to charter trains.

Managing trains based on civilian rules also had a stabilizing effect on the regime, which was typical of the way bureaucracy was used in the Nazi period. Reichsbahn functionaries may have forced people onto trains with complete disregard for their victims’ humanity, but they did so under the guise of officially sanctioned ‘resettlement’ and ‘evacuation,’ and they translated their actions into a procedure that was familiar to them and therefore seemed legal. There

²⁰ The compiled files of the Reich Transport Ministry are part of the R5 database of the German Federal Archives in Berlin.

²¹ Raul Hilberg, *Vernichtung*, 1990, 428.

²² Klaus Hildebrandt: “Die Deutsche Reichsbahn in der nationalsozialistischen Diktatur 1933–1945”, in Lothar Gall and Manfred Pohl (eds.): *Die Eisenbahn in Deutschland*, Munich: Beck, 1999, 165–250, here 217.

²³ Paul Schnell: “Der Reisesonderzugdienst der Deutschen Reichsbahn und die zu seiner Bewältigung getroffenen Maßnahmen, insbesondere auf dem Gebiet der Personenwagenbewirtschaftung”, in *Verkehrstechnische Woche*, 32, 1938, 125–134.

was a set group of offices authorized to order trains. This meant that there were also official billing addresses. Special reduced fares were arranged for orderers based on the number of people transported and the number of kilometers traveled. The expulsion of Polish Jews from Germany in 1938, the deportation of Jews from Baden and the Palatinate to Gurs in 1940 and of Sinti and Roma from Cologne that same year, the deportation of Vienna's Jews in early 1941, and not least the resettlements, expulsions, and deportations in Poland once World War Two began were all organized in this way.

Soon after the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 began, the Reich Transport Ministry issued a decree specifying in more detail how special passenger trains were to be billed.²⁴ The rules were updated in part to restrict who could order special trains and to prevent local Gestapo and SS offices from interfering in processes relating to train operations. Twelve institutions of the Nazi state were authorized to order trains, including the Reichsführer SS, the Chief of the Security Police and the SD, the Gemeinnützige Krankentransport GmbH Berlin (a euphemistically named 'charitable ambulance' service), the Reich Labor Minister, and state employment offices. The new rules also specified the minimum number of people that could be transported and the price that would be billed to orders of special trains.²⁵ The decree was based on procedures for and experience with resettlement, expulsion, and prisoner transports carried out before October 1941. Gottwaldt summarized these various precursors to systematic deportation from the German Reich.²⁶ No further formal orders were needed. Reichsbahn trains would run – and everyone, including the initiators and participants of the Wannsee Conference on January 20, 1942, could count on that. Peter Longerich has described the Wannsee Conference as aiming to make a number of important Reich offices accessories to and jointly responsible for the RSHA's plan to deport all Jews in the areas under German control to the East, where they would be exposed to extremely difficult living conditions and ultimately worked to death or murdered.²⁷ But if this was the primary purpose of the conference, it was not necessary in the case of the Reich Transport Ministry. The RSHA had its assurance in the Reichsbahn's catchy 1935 slogan 'Dem Reiche

²⁴ The following is summarized from the exhibition catalogue Andreas Engwert and Susanne Kill: *Sonderzüge in den Tod. Die Deportationen mit der Deutschen Reichsbahn*, Cologne: Böhlau, 2009.

²⁵ Decree dated July 26, 1941, on the pricing of special trains, reprinted in Engwert/Kill, *Sonderzüge in den Tod*, 47.

²⁶ Gottwaldt and Schulle, "Judendeportationen", 26–51.

²⁷ Peter Longerich: *Politik der Vernichtung. Eine Gesamtdarstellung der nationalsozialistischen Judenverfolgung*, Munich: Piper, 1998, 466.

wir dienen auf Strasse und Schienen' (roughly: serving the Reich by road and by rail). The law of February 10, 1937, formally establishing government control of the Reichsbank and Reichsbahn,²⁸ made official what had long been common practice. The head office of the Reichsbahn was now a department of the Reich Transport Ministry instead of an independent company of the Reich.

Thomas Kuczynski has examined whether the Reichsbahn profited from the deportation trains and from transports of roughly 12 million forced laborers.²⁹ This question might seem strange at first since the Reichsbahn was not expected to generate a profit as it had been during the Weimar years. The Deutsche Reichsbahn-Gesellschaft, which was founded in 1924 and which operated independently and paid reparations under the Dawes Plan, was in practice quickly relegated to history in 1933. Following the laws passed in 1937, a new Reichsbahn Act dated July 4, 1939, explicitly stressed the importance of the Reichsbahn as part of the Reich's administration: It was supposed to work "for the benefit of the German people and the German economy."³⁰ Even in peacetime, the sheer number of tasks required of the Reichsbahn by the government threatened to result in underfunding of the responsibilities that a civilian transport operator would be expected to carry out.³¹ To be sure, this does not change the fact that income was generated with each train. However, the question of how exactly and to what extent orderers paid the arranged fares for the deportation trains to the Reichsbahn accounts, remains unanswered. The invoices and letters that have survived are too few in number for us to draw any serious conclusions about the amount of income generated. The Reichsbahn's 1942 statistical report lists a share of 0.04 percent, or nearly 3.8 million Reichsmarks, under "Special trains for individual orderers, etc."³² It is difficult to identify the transfer amounts that were to be paid when deportation trains from Belgium, France and the Netherlands

28 "Gesetz zur Neuregelung der Verhältnisse der Reichsbank und der Deutschen Reichsbahn vom 10.2.1937", in *RGBl.*, 1937 II, No. 8, 47 et seq.

29 Thomas Kuczynski: "Dem Regime dienen – nicht Geld verdienen. Zur Beteiligung der Deutschen Reichsbahn an Deportationen und Zwangsarbeit während der NS-Diktatur", in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 57, 2009, 510 – 528.

30 "Gesetz über die Deutsche Reichsbahn (Reichsbahngesetz) vom 4.7.1939", in *RGBl.*, 1939 I, No. 123, 1205 – 1210, here 1206. Translation by the author.

31 Alfred Mierzejewski: *The Most Valuable Asset of the Reich. A History of the German National Railway*, volume 2, 1933 – 1945, Chapel Hill/London: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000, 57 – 76 and 166.

32 Deutsche Reichsbahn: *Statistische Angaben über die Deutsche Reichsbahn im Geschäftsjahr 1942*, Berlin, 1943, 53. Translation by the author.

were billed via the official travel agency Mitteleuropäisches Reisebüro (MER).³³ The Reichsbahn bureaucracy and Reich Transport Ministry used a peacetime instrument here, too. The travel agency was responsible for billing European transports and transferring the money for the individual transport services to the participating railways based on their share of the services performed. The majority shareholder in the MER was the Reichsbahn, or, in other words, the German state. The amounts that were transferred and the railways that received payments via the MER have so far not been determined.³⁴

The payment practices of individual government orderers of special trains left much to be desired from the perspective of the Reichsbahn accounting office. Its first postwar financial report for the US and British sectors shows accounts receivable of nearly 570 million Reichsmarks.³⁵ The balance sheets included a section entitled “Receivables from the Reich, Wehrmacht, NSDAP, etc. and doubtful accounts.”³⁶ Hilberg summarized the issue of revenues thusly: “And trains could be dispatched before payment was received; in other words, the SS was entitled to credit.”³⁷ His wording is less monocausal and more careful than Christopher Browning’s assertion that the Reichsbahn’s business with the SS was very profitable.³⁸

The bureaucratic billing of fares stands in contrast to the utter disregard for the misery on board trains to the ghettos and extermination sites. It could have given railroad officials the impression that they were following the rules, which could have left them feeling exonerated. However, billing needs to be considered in the larger context of the plundering of Jews by the Reich. Each deportation began with theft.³⁹ The Reich Finance Ministry and RSHA spared no effort when it came to appropriating every last possession of Jewish citizens and mak-

33 Telegram from the Referat für Personentarife dated July 14, 1942, reprinted in Engwert/Kill, *Sonderzüge in den Tod*, 49.

34 The few surviving business records of MER and Deutsches Reisebüro are located at the Hessisches Wirtschaftsarchiv in Darmstadt.

35 “Geschäftsberichte der Deutschen Reichsbahn im vereinigten Wirtschaftsgebiet über die Geschäftsjahre 1945–1948 (Mai 1945 bis 20. Juni 1948), Offenbach am Main, 1949”, 58, MB-05-IRa/b70/1945/48, DB Museum Nuremberg.

36 Ibid. Translation by the author.

37 Raul Hilberg: “German Railroads, Jewish Souls”, in Browning, Hayes, and Hilberg, *German Railroads*, 19–49, here 29.

38 Christopher Browning: “Raul Hilberg and Other Historians of the German Railways during the Nazi Era”, in Browning, Hayes, and Hilberg, *German Railroads*, 104–120, here 110.

39 Martina Voigt: “Die Deportation der Berliner Juden 1941–1945”, in Zentrum für audio-visuelle Medien (ed.): *Die Grunewald-Rampe – Die Deportation der Berliner Juden*², Landesbildstelle Berlin, Berlin: Edition Colloquium, 1993, 23–46, here 31.

ing money through a wide variety of channels. Especially perfidious was the RSHA's method of forcing the Reich Association of Jews in Germany to open a special account 'W'. This account would collect donations from "participants in evacuation transports," allegedly to finance the care of the "emigrants."⁴⁰ In fact, the revenues were used to finance the cost of transport and to enrich the Reich. Beginning in December 1938, Jewish emigrants were also forced to pay an 'emigration fee' to the local Jewish community, in addition to the Reich Flight Tax (*'Reichsfluchtsteuer'*).⁴¹ The RSHA had access to the accounts where the funds from these fees were kept. Jews were also charged 50 Reichsmarks to have "Evakuiert" (evacuated) stamped on their identification cards before deportation. This fee was to be paid in cash, if they even had any cash.⁴² The money was then collected before the transport by members of the Gestapo or by the transport head of the escort unit. This method encouraged individuals to keep the cash for themselves. As Beate Meyer has demonstrated, it was very much in the RSHA's interest for the Reich Association of Jews in Germany and their district offices to pay for their so-called transport costs through account 'W'.⁴³ Otherwise there was a risk of cash disappearing into the pockets of escort unit men, which were normally staffed by members of the SS and the Gestapo as well as policemen (*Ordnungspolizei*).

Alfred Mierzejewski notes that operating deportation transports posed no challenges for the Reichsbahn in comparison with the total number of trains operated during the war.⁴⁴ However, we must not forget the active role that the Reichsbahn played. The operating offices insisted that trains be deployed effectively, regardless of which trains were being used. This was the only way to make trains 'pay off' from a logistical standpoint, justifying the use of rolling stock, locomotives and personnel. No one appears to have cared about the morality of it, even when 5,000 people were being squeezed onto a train with no more

⁴⁰ Adler, *Der verwaltete Mensch*, 526, 563 et seq.; Beate Meyer: *Tödliche Gratwanderung. Die Reichsvereinigung der Juden in Deutschland zwischen Hoffnung, Zwang, Selbstbehauptung und Verstrickung (1939–1945)*, Göttingen: Wallstein, 2011, 126–210.

⁴¹ Fees could be quite high, as in the case of Reichsbahn Director Ludwig Homberger and his wife. The files of the offices responsible for restitution (*Wiedergutmachungsämter*) relating to Homberger are located at the Berlin State Archive (B_Rep_025–01_Nr_1655_50) and the state office for unresolved property issues (*Landesamt für Vermögensfragen*).

⁴² This was the procedure recorded by the '*Judenreferent*' of the Gestapo in Frankfurt am Main while in custody; 'transport funds' were later paid by check, as was done by the Jewish community in Cologne. See Jewish Museum Frankfurt: "*Und keiner hat für uns Kaddisch gesagt.*" *Deportationen aus Frankfurt am Main 1941 bis 1945*, Frankfurt am Main: Stroemfeld, 2004, 124.

⁴³ Meyer, *Tödliche Gratwanderung*, 126–210, 278.

⁴⁴ Mierzejewski, *The Most Valuable Asset*, 128.

than 60 cars. At any rate, the surviving sources from the Reich Transport Ministry and minutes of meetings of the General Operating Office do not even hint at any objections that anyone might have voiced on the matter.⁴⁵

Cataloguing and Using the Gottwaldt Collection

The bureaucratic structure of the Reichsbahn, so aptly described by Raul Hilberg in its technocratic attitude toward railway service and its view that the Reichsbahn's role was to serve the Nazi regime, was something that also interested Alfred Gottwaldt. However, he quickly homed in on the people who kept the bureaucracy and operations going. Shortly before his death, Gottwaldt prepared a brief synopsis of a publication he was planning and submitted it to the Deutsche Bahn Foundation. It was to be a continuation of his dissertation. He intended to continue his examination into 1945, focusing primarily on analyzing the role of the Reichsbahn and its leadership in carrying out the deportations from the German Reich and occupied countries. His aim was to present a strictly source-based view of the role of the railroad in the extermination of Europe's Jews in World War Two. He wanted to study not only the role of the Reichsbahn, but also the involvement of other national railways in occupied and allied countries. He planned to structure his work chronologically, dividing it into 12 six-month periods from September 1939 to May 1945. He had also planned to publish an accompanying collection of documents. The Deutsche Bahn Foundation promised to provide initial assistance for the necessary groundwork. It was an ambitious undertaking that would have closed a gap in research, or at a minimum compiled knowledge that had been gathered in different contexts – particularly if Gottwaldt had succeeded in drawing on sources and literature on other state railways, as had already been attempted for the French national railway.⁴⁶ It is important to note that there has been very little study of the perspective from within

⁴⁵ The minutes of the meetings of the operating offices are also in the R5 database of the Federal Archives in Berlin. Questioning in the indictment of Albert Ganzenmüller and Franz Novak is also revealing.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of the French national railway see Marie-Noëlle Polino: "Der Zusammenhang von Transport und Vernichtung – ein ungelöstes Problem für Historiker", in Ralf Roth and Karl Schlögl (eds.): *Neue Wege in ein neues Europa. Geschichte und Verkehr im 20. Jahrhundert*, Frankfurt am Main, Campus, 2009, 281–300. The files of SNCF are available at: <https://www.sncf.com/en/group/history/sncf-archives>. Last accessed: 03.12.2021.

the railways in occupied countries.⁴⁷ The Dutch national railway only recently commissioned the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam to conduct a pilot study in light of calls to pay compensation to Holocaust victims and their families.⁴⁸ The study will doubtless need to determine what leeway, if any, was given to the Dutch railway to make its own decisions under German occupation. Still, it is extremely discouraging to see that the system developed in peacetime for moving cars back and forth and billing cross-border services through the MER worked just as well for deporting European Jews, in a practice that was as effective as it was cruel. Gottwaldt was unable to conduct his own studies on Europe's railways or their role in the Holocaust.

When it became clear that Gottwaldt's collection might otherwise be lost, the Deutsche Bahn Stiftung was persuaded to acquire it and most notably to provide the funds needed to catalogue its contents. This decision was not without risk since there was no way to assess the size or quality of the private collection, which was being stored in a shipping container. After thorough discussion and an initial examination, all parties agreed that Gottwaldt's collections on railroad history and his preliminary work for future publications on the history of the Reichsbahn in Nazi Germany should be kept and made public.⁴⁹ It proved to be an advantage that the DB Museum in Nuremberg, which is part of the Foundation, had long collaborated with Gottwaldt in his capacity as a Museum of Technology curator and private collector. The Foundation was able to fund two sub-projects. Jan-Henrik Peters, also an expert in the technical and political history of the Reichsbahn and its sources, took on the task of cataloguing the extensive collection of photographs. The photographs have now been tagged with metadata and are accessible at the DB Museum in Nuremberg and DB's historical collection in Berlin. There are just over 5,400 photographs, with most of the twentieth-century photographs from the collections of railroad employees. There are also over 100 prewar postcards showing train stations, which are of particular historical value because many of the stations no longer exist. Design drawings, maps and brochures relating to Prussian locomotive and railcar-building history are gradually being catalogued at the DB Museum.

⁴⁷ This became obvious in Ralf Roth and Henry Jocolin (eds.): *Eastern European Railways in Transition. Nineteenth to Twenty-First Centuries*, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2013.

⁴⁸ Nederlands Spoorwegen: "Preliminary research by NIOD". Available at: <https://www.ns.nl/en/about-ns/dossier/ns-during-the-second-world-war/preliminary-investigation-niod.html>. Last accessed: 03.12.2021.

⁴⁹ I would like to express my gratitude to Diana Schulle, Jörg Schmalfuss, Ulrich Tempel, and the staff of the DB Museum.

Diana Schulle, who is likely more familiar with Gottwaldt's methods than anyone else, was willing to undertake the second sub-project. She sorted, evaluated and indexed Gottwaldt's typescripts and research documents on the history of the Reichsbahn in Nazi Germany. Ultimately, Schulle came to the sobering conclusion that the collection did not include a cohesive manuscript on the European scale of the deportations or the role of the railways and their leadership. To be sure, there was a collection of copies of documents and typescripts that Gottwaldt had created for the second part of his history of the railroad during the Nazi era. In all there are more than 1,500 typed pages on the history of the Reichsbahn between 1939 and 1945. It is an extensive collection, but there is great variety to the contents, and large portions have already been published. The information that has already been published primarily concerns the history of the deportations to Auschwitz and Theresienstadt in 1942 and 1943 and the deportation of the Jews from East Prussia.⁵⁰ Gottwaldt's preliminary work did not address other questions, such as the evacuation of the camps, the transport of internees by rail to other locations near the end of the war, or cooperation among the RSHA, Wehrmacht and Reichsbahn as the war drew to a close. Diana Schulle and I ultimately came to the unfortunate conclusion that it would not be possible to publish a posthumous work. Any such work would not have come close to the standards that Gottwaldt set for his own work.

Gottwaldt's collection of biographical information about functionaries involved with Reichsbahn and deportation matters could be helpful for prosopographic studies. Gottwaldt created biographical notes and short biographies and compiled career histories over many years. He focused primarily on functionaries who worked at Reichsbahn divisions in the occupied East during the Nazi period, particularly the Reichsbahn divisions in Minsk, Opole, Poznań, Riga and Warsaw and the General Directorate of the Eastern Railway ('*General-direktion der Ostbahn*', Gedob) headed by Adolf Gerteis in Krakow. And finally, Gottwaldt searched for Reichsbahn functionaries who were involved, or might have been involved, in deportations at individual Reichsbahn divisions, including those in Berlin, Essen, Kassel, Königsberg, Munich, Saarbrücken, Stuttgart, Szczecin, Wrocław, and Wuppertal. The result is an arresting, though not seamless, picture of the career paths of the Reichsbahn functionaries involved in the deportations, which extends even into the years after World War Two.

⁵⁰ Most recently Alfred Gottwaldt: "Die Deportation der Juden Ostpreußens 1942/1943", in Uwe Neumärker and Andreas Krossert (eds.): "*Das war mal unsere Heimat ...*" *Jüdische Geschichte im preußischen Osten*, Berlin: Stiftung Denkmal für die ermordeten Juden Europas, 2013, 125–137.

Anyone who knows how hard it is to research biographical information on employees of large government agencies and companies will appreciate this preliminary work. It is available for use in research projects, such as a project currently being conducted by the Leibniz Institute for Contemporary History for the German Federal Ministry of Transport on “continuities and transformations during the National Socialist dictatorship, the East German regime, and new democratic beginnings”⁵¹ and projects undertaken by the Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte.⁵² Precisely because the employees of the Nazi-era Reichsbahn cannot collectively be considered ‘uncompromising’ in Michael Wildt’s use of the term,⁵³ questions about the careers of Reichsbahn functionaries and their courses of action could create divergent views of the railroad employee profession under the Nazi regime.

However, we cannot expect the history of the deportations to be reevaluated based on the collection. The work of Raul Hilberg and H.G. Adler was truly pioneering thanks to the authors’s vast knowledge of sources and profound understanding of the role of bureaucracy in the Nazi state. Alfred Gottwaldt made sure to explain in many talks that every deportation train had its own story: the story of the people who were forced to board the trains, and the story of the people who made sure that the trains ran.

Alfred Gottwaldt’s collections has largely been catalogued and is available for use. The written documents, which have been pared down to 350 files, are now part of Deutsche Bahn’s historical collection in Berlin, as are over 5,000 photographs. Because the material was private and not actively given to us, we have chosen not to digitize it or publish the metadata of the research work. However, Deutsche Bahn Stiftung would be delighted for the collections to be used and for it to serve as motivation for further research.

51 IfZ München: “Kontinuitäten und Transformationen zwischen NS-Diktatur, SED-Herrschaft und demokratischem Neubeginn”. Available at: <https://www.ifz-muenchen.de/aktuelles/themen/das-deutsche-verkehrswesen/>. Last accessed: 20.11.2020. Translation of the title by the author.

52 Gesellschaft für Unternehmensgeschichte: “Unternehmensgeschichten – laufende Projekte”. Available at: <https://unternehmensgeschichte.de/mbH-Unternehmensgeschichten-laufend>. Last accessed: 24.05.2021.

53 Michael Wildt: *Generation der Unbedingten. Das Führungskorps des Reichssicherheitshauptamtes*, Hamburg: HIS, 2002.

