

wanted to slam shut the doors. When she was up she looked down at me, and two tears came, one from each eye, and rolled down her cheeks. She did not say anything to me, we never spoke throughout. Then the doors were slammed shut and the van rolled away. The last thing I saw were her eyes looking at me.

I have spent twenty years trying to understand the look in her eyes. Was it love or hatred, contempt or pity, bewilderment or understanding? I shall never know.

When the van had gone Roschmann turned to me, still grinning. 'You may go on living, until it suits us to finish you off, Tauber,' he said, 'but you are dead as from now.'

And he was right. That was the day my soul died inside me. It was August 29th, 1942.

After August that year I became a robot. Nothing mattered any more. There was no feeling of cold nor of pain, no sensation of any kind at all. I watched the brutalities of Roschmann and his fellow SS without batting an eyelid. I was inured to everything that can touch the human spirit and most things that can touch the body. I just noted everything, each tiny detail, filing them away in my mind or pricking the dates into the skin of my legs. The transports came, marched to execution hill or to the vans, died and were buried. Sometimes I looked into their eyes as they went, walking beside them to the gates of the ghetto with my armband and club. It reminded me of a poem I had once read by an English poet, which described how an ancient mariner, condemned to live, had looked into the eyes of his crew-mates as they died of thirst, and read the curse in them. But for me there was no curse, for I was immune even to the feeling of guilt. That was to come years later. There was only the emptiness of a dead man still walking upright. . . .

Peter Miller read on late into the night. The effect of the narration of the atrocities on him was at once monotonous and mesmeric. Several times he sat back in his chair and breathed deeply for a few minutes to regain his calm. Then he read on. Once, close to midnight, he laid the book down and made

move coffee. He stood at the window before drawing the curtains, looking down into the street. Further down the road the brilliant neon lights of the Café Cherie blazed across the Stein-damm, and he saw one of the part-time girls who frequent it to supplement their incomes emerge on the arm of a business man. They disappeared into a pension a little further down, where the business man would be relieved of a hundred marks for half an hour of copulation.

Miller pulled the curtains across, finished his coffee and returned to Salomon Tauber's diary.

In the autumn of 1943 the order came through from Berlin to dig up the tens of thousands of corpses in the High Forest and destroy them more permanently, either with fire or quicklime. The job was easier said than done, with winter coming on and the ground about to freeze hard. It put Roschmann in a foul temper for days, but the administrative details of carrying out the order kept him busy enough to stay away from us.

Day after day the newly formed labour squads were seen marching up the hill into the forest with their pickaxes and shovels, and day after day the columns of black smoke rose above the forest. For fuel they used the pines of the forest, but largely decomposed bodies do not burn easily, so the job was slow. Eventually they switched to quicklime, covered each layer of corpses with it and in the spring of 1944, when the earth softened, filled them in.*

The gangs who did the work were not from the ghetto. They were totally isolated from all other human contact. They were Jewish, but were kept imprisoned in one of the worst camps in the neighbourhood. Salas Pils, where they were later exterminated by being given no food at all until they died of starvation, despite the cannibalism to which many resorted. . . .

When the work was more or less completed in the spring of 1944 the ghetto was finally liquidated. Most of its 30,000 inhabi-

* This procedure badly burned the corpses but did not destroy the bones. The Russians later uncovered these 80,000 skeletons.

tants were marched towards the forest to become the last victims that pine wood was destined to receive. About 5000 of us were transferred to the camp of Kaiserwald while behind us the ghetto was fired, then the ashes bulldozed. Of what had once been there, nothing was left but an area of flattened ashes covering hundreds of acres. . . .*

For a further twenty pages of typescript Tauber's diary described the struggle to survive in Kaiserwald concentration camp against the onslaught of starvation, disease, overwork and the brutality of the camp guards. During this time no sign was seen of SS-Captain Eduard Roschmann. But apparently he was still in Riga. Tauber described how in the early October of 1944 the SS, by now panic-stricken at the thought they might be taken alive by the vengeful Russians, prepared for a desperate evacuation of Riga by sea, taking along a handful of the last surviving prisoners as their passage-ticket back to the Reich in the west.

It was in the afternoon of the 11th of October that we arrived, by now barely 4000 strong, at the town of Riga, and the column went straight down to the docks. In the distance we could hear a strange crump as if of thunder along the horizon. For a while it puzzled us, for we had never heard the sound of shells or bombs. Then it filtered through to our minds, dazed by hunger and cold—there were Russian mortars landing in the suburbs of Riga.

When we arrived at the dock area it was crawling with

* The Russian spring offensive of 1944 carried the tide of war so far westwards that the Soviet troops pushed south of the Baltic states and through to the Baltic Sea to the west of them. This cut off the whole of Ostland from the Reich, and led to a blazing row between Hitler and his generals. They had seen it coming and had pleaded with Hitler to pull back the forty-five divisions inside the enclave. He had refused, reiterating his parrot-cry 'Death or Victory'. All he offered these 500,000 soldiers inside the enclave was death. Cut off from re-supply, they fought with dwindling ammunition to delay a certain fate, and eventually surrendered. Of the majority, made prisoners and transported back in the winter of 1944-5 to Russia, few returned ten years later to Germany.

officers and men of the SS. I had never seen so many in one place at the same time. There must have been more of them than there were of us. We were lined up in rows against one of the warehouses and again most of us thought that this was where we would die under the machine guns. But this was not to be.

Apparently the SS were going to use us, the last remainder of the hundreds of thousands of Jews who had passed through Riga, as their alibi to escape from the Russian advance, their passage back to the Reich. The means of travel was berthed alongside Quay Six, a freighter, the last one out of the encircled enclave. As we watched, the loading began of some of the hundreds of German Army wounded who were lying on stretchers in two of the warehouses further along the quay. . . .

It was almost dark when Captain Roschmann arrived, and he stopped short when he saw how the ship was being loaded. When he had taken in the sight of the German Army wounded being taken on to the ship he turned round and shouted to the medical orderlies bearing the stretchers, 'Stop that.'

He strode towards them across the quay and slapped one of the orderlies in the face. He whirled round on the ranks of us prisoners and roared, 'You scum. Get up on that ship and get these men off. Bring them back down here. That ship is ours.'

Under the prodding of the gun barrels of the SS men who had come down with us, we started to move towards the gangplank. Hundreds of other SS men, privates and NCOs, who till then had been standing back watching the loading, surged forward and followed the prisoners up on to the ship. When we got on the deck we began picking up the stretchers and carrying them back to the quay. Rather, we were about to, when another shout stopped us.

I had reached the foot of the gangway and was about to start up when I heard the shout and turned to see what was happening.

An army captain was running down the quay and he came to a stop quite close to me by the gangway. Staring up at the men above, bearing stretchers they were about to unload, the captain