

Behind the lists.

A close analysis of three transports from the Netherlands to 'the East',
1942-1943

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ABSTRACT

In this MA-thesis, three transport lists from the Netherlands are analyzed in order to determine a pattern in which the Nazis deported the Dutch Jews: the first transport on July 15, 1942; the first transport to Sobibór on March 2, 1943 and the last transport of 1943, the one on November 16, 1943. We knew approximately in what general order the Nazis deported the Jews: starting with the poor ones and ending with the richer ones who could afford to buy themselves protection to prevent they would be deported earlier on with the proletariat. We've reconstructed a lot already, but the little day-to-day facts that are also important when one wants to make a reconstruction, are becoming much more visible by looking at the individual transport lists, one by one.

Throughout the years, some works have been written on a few of the 102 transports that left Holland between July 1942 and September 1944, like the booklets the Red Cross published after the war about the people in the transports and their fate. Jules Schelvis, a Holocaust survivor himself, wrote an immense reference work about Sobibór in the 1990s.

The transport lists were used for the book *In memoriam l'zecher* (1995), which contains all the names of the 104.000 Dutch Jews who didn't return from the concentration camps. But after that, the lists weren't subject to any kind of research anymore, until Guus Luijters started with the research for his book *In memoriam* (2012) in 2009, for which I was responsible for the image collecting and -editing. In this book, Luijters memorialized all the Jewish, Roma and Sinti children that were murdered during the Shoah. Besides almost 3000 photos of

children in the book, he gives some details about the 102 transports: how many people were in the train, how many of them were children, how many survivors did a certain transport have? Luijters also found sources from survivors: biographies and testimonies. Some of them I used in this thesis as well.

Besides this, the 102 transport lists have never been studied together as a whole. Due to the limited volume requested for an MA-thesis, I was forced to make a selection and I chose to analyze three transports. On top of that, I also wanted to examine what had happened to the transports *after* they left Westerbork: What was it like in the train? What happened after the arrival of a certain transport at its destination? Were there any survivors at the end of the war? How did they manage to survive?

After analysis, it turned out that the number of deportees for each transport was different than always assumed before. Some people were mentioned twice on the list. Other people were taken off the list last-minute, but their names were never removed. Also, the amount of survivors turned out to be higher than assumed until now. From the first transport, 10 people returned instead of 8, and from the last transport, 18 people returned instead of 16. This means, that indiscriminately repeating numbers off of lists – thinking authorities and organizations are always correct – is not accurate: the differences may be marginal, they are however important: especially because in many cases, mainly in Eastern-Europe, we have to guess about the number of victims, it's important that we *do* establish the correct data wherever it *is* possible.

It also turned out that Jews were still living in Amsterdam after the big round-up of September 29, 1943. It was always assumed that with this final round-up, Jewish life outside camps and prisons in Holland ended. This turned out to be incorrect: since a relatively high number of Jewish Council employees were brought into Westerbork on October 28 and the beginning of November, it's safe to conclude that certain departments of the Jewish Council apparently continued to be operative after September 29. This interesting conclusion is certainly well worth the effort to be researched further.