



Ukrainian Drama
TRANSLATIONS

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Play	RELOCATION
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Dear Fritz! I'm writing to you from a very strange place. I am in a train car with... get this, now... Jews who are being relocated. You know how I feel about these matters of blood lines, this ramshackle toy of our romantics. But, believe me, in this car that is intended to transport animals (I avoid the phrase of “cattle car” so as not to wallow in melodrama) you would also become an anti-semite. I have no access to such ameliorating circumstances. This is because, as I recently learned, I am a Jew after all, and – having no inclinations to commit suicide – I am bound to limit myself to the role of a nascent misanthrope. I apologize for the last phrase, it began going sour towards the middle, but the lighting here is atrocious and I'm writing almost by feel, with no possibility of rereading or correcting for style. I think you've understood my notion – there is a veritable hell of human themes around me, all of them orbiting around questions of food and waste avoidance. One conjugal couple that failed to pack sufficient provisions has brought down such universal indignation upon themselves that even die-hard enemies – the editors of *Theatrical Thought* and *Evening Revue* – have united against them. The humor of the situation is enhanced by the presence of a handful of unweaned infants; their inevitable cries firmly shift the general public

mood in the direction of the Triassic Age. We have not yet resorted to egg-laying, but, according to my calculations, we are becoming quite equivalent to Homo heidelbergensis. Fritz, explain it to me! What is headquarters thinking? Isn't it clear that anyone encountering such attitudes will subsequently carry the seed of doubt about all that is German? I support some of the military and civil measures. But this all can't last forever! Sooner or later we again will have to live with these people, and they will remind us (you see, I still feel I am German) of all the absurdities and mistakes of resettlement. You should hear the local conversations! All of a sudden everyone has turned into H. G. Wells, although only yesterday they had never read anything but detective stories. I am tired of refuting the rumors of warehouses full of lethal gas and electric furnaces supposedly designed to burn Jewish corpses (yes! that's what they're saying!). At the very first stop I will attempt to talk to the officer who is escorting the train. By a few of his mannerisms I have recognized in him an educated, well-meaning individual. I think it would be proper if, for example, he were to punish a few of those with especially zealous imaginations. It's in our common interest, we can't give in to the baobabs from a book that neither you nor I like. Fritz, press upon your colleagues. I know you know many among the top brass, and that you have their ear. Here is a list of what must be done, without question:

- 1) Eliminate the rude behavior at boarding time. As an old Freudian, I understand that irritation at one's own inability to improve the situation via accommodation lies at the root of any shout. But no compensation can justify the words of "climb in, you shit!" directed by some young Hauptmann at an utterly flustered girl. Believe me, everyone is well aware that train cars in wartime are worth their weight in gold. No one expects especial comfort. Still, one must not forget the elementary grimaces of politeness;
- 2) Label baggage carefully. If it is impossible to ensure that bags travel in the same car with their owners (there are reasons for this, I am sure, and they are probably reasonable), then markings must be made employing a unified system, using continuous numbering. As it is now, everyone marks their bags as best they can, and confusion and conflicts are inevitable upon arrival;
- 3) Conduct explanatory work. In fact, this point is of utmost importance. Everything else pales by comparison. The presence of a person who is empowered to communicate and explain is absolutely crucial;
- 4) Don't lose people! Let me explain by example: a barely literate Pole was appointed head of our car. Everyone among the elite here is offended, it will require

serious effort later to return them to the ranks of the builders of the new Germany. What prevented you from delineating a true hierarchy? One has the sense that your reliance on the lowest common denominator is a matter of the lower ranks taking revenge for their own oppressed position;

- 5) I won't even touch upon supply issues. There is no supply. The breakdown is so glaring that it is probably an exception, rather than a systemic problem. I see no point in discussing particulars;
- 6) Discuss plans ahead of time. Provide at least a general understanding of future settlements. The time wasted in wailing and pessimism in the train cars could be spent reflecting upon ways of settling into a new residence. I understand you have a unified plan, but quashing initiative is unproductive. "Why not talk?" as our flappy-eared sergeant major would say. You remember him?
- 7) In any unclear situation, make theater. This is a universal principle, there are enough specialists in our car to assemble a full-fledged troupe. Pointless nervous fear could be avoided if people were busy choosing a repertoire, or preparing a concert. My own experience tells me that theater can eat up an infinite amount of time, labor and even lives. Moreover, it suits those who tend to fade in the absence of histrionics. In a word, I am an ardent supporter of theater as a response to all life catastrophes. Theater is like a bone monkey paw for those in power, it scratches when their itches strike. Theatre for everyone! After all, even a good old theatrical spat is more productive than the atmosphere in which we currently find ourselves;
- 8) There must always be water, this is important;
- 9) Don't allow incidents of death,