



LUKÁŠ PŘIBYL
AND TOTAL HELPART T. H. A.
PRESENT A DOCUMENTARY SERIES

FORGOTTEN TRANSPORTS

WRITTEN AND DIRECTED BY LUKÁŠ PŘIBYL
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When the Holocaust is mentioned, most people recall images of tattooed numbers on forearms, footage of children in striped uniforms in Auschwitz or Hitler's speeches. Dispelling our notions of a "Holocaust documentary", *Forgotten Transports* have none of that. Based on 400 hours of interviews recorded in twenty countries on five continents and ten years of work, each of the four films describes one destination of Nazi transports and one unique "mode of survival" in extreme conditions - told, for the first time, by Czech and Central European Jews deported to unknown ghettos and camps in Latvia, Belarus, Estonia and Poland.

The film about Estonia offers a fascinating story of a group of young women and girls who - thanks to youthful naivety, friendship, mutual help and giving up individual thinking - managed to pass through camps while remaining oblivious to the genocide around them. Unlike in Estonia, where there were no male survivors, from the 7,000 Czech deportees to Belarus no women came back. However, twenty-two fiercely self-reliant men did, due to resistance and armed struggle. These men fought, were killed, but also killed.

Forgotten Transports to Latvia depict the effort to preserve a semblance of normal family life in ghettos and camps. Young people fell in love, danced at clandestine parties, children attended school but on the way to it had to pass by the gallows - life in the shadow of death. The film about deportations to eastern Poland is concerned with the psyche of people permanently on the run, constantly in hiding, who had to continually feign and change identities.

The film on "Poland" is thus a story of the loneliness of individuals who have to joke to survive, "Latvia" is a story of families, "Belarus" of men and "Estonia" of women. Each film is designed to stand on its own but when screened as a series, a certain superstructure becomes apparent, allowing the viewer to compare individual survival strategies, reactions and difficult choices faced by people exposed to ultimate violence.

Employing no commentary or contemporary footage, only true, time-and-place precise images, the director (and political scientist and historian) Lukáš Příbyl documents every word of the witnesses by painstakingly researched visual materials - pictures exchanged for bottles of vodka in Polish villages, found in albums of former SS men and their lovers, fetched from KGB holdings or through film fragments selected in over 1600 hours of footage perused in official archives. The people speaking in the films can thus be seen on images taken almost seventy years ago. From an astonishing story of concentration camp *Romeo and Juliet* to that of a man locked up in the same prison three times, always under a different identity, this minimalist montage of narrow, personal points of view and never seen materials combines to paint a life-affirming picture of survival through luck, wisdom, ingenuity and sheer will and shows the Holocaust "as we don't know it".

