

"After ten days, the trains rushed through our village without stopping."

Diana de Bosmelet describes this story about the trains in her book In Golden Spurs. She said that there were cattle cars full of refugees fleeing from Holland and Belgium. She said that these trains stopped at Auffay from May 10 - 19, 1940. The villagers did their best to give the refugees food, milk, warm clothes and blankets.

We know that trains full of refugees did travel through France. Why were these refugees put into degrading cattle cars.

I wonder if this was early evidence of official French and Nazi victimization of Jews. I also wonder if the trains stopped at Auffay after ten days without stopping because the people of Auffay were helping feed and cloth these refugees.

I wonder if the French government was, even before the surrender of France, already complicit in handing over Jews to the Germans.

James Lander wrote:

I've already touched on this in an earlier email, but it has to be a matter of artistic license to suggest that the trains of refugees that Diana witnessed in 1940 were filled with Jews, since she never says so and there's no reason to think so. At that time, everyone in the path of the German advance were contemplating flight to some safer area further west or south: Diana would join them in a few days. The Germans would not have bothered to load up trains, even cattle-cars, with refugees to help them flee. When the Germans loaded people into trains they were indeed Jews, but they were being sent eastward to face slave labour or immediate execution: and that generally happened after 1941.

So, artistic license is fine, but I'm just advising you that anyone who knows anything substantial about the Holocaust will know this is an error. Of course, the fact that Diana comes from a Jewish family is hugely important to the story of her experience during the "Invasion."

Although this statement that James Lander wrote is true, Diana saw the trains in May 1940, foreshadowing the role the trains and cattle-cars would play in carrying Jews to the killing centers, later in the War.