

My heart was again locked in that moment that I have re-lived so many times before. I had rushed to the Rīga harbor the day the Nazi ship took our Latvian men away, but the men were already aboard the ship. There I stood staring into the choppy waters, my heart pounding wildly, my mind unable to assemble a meaningful thought. It seemed that this moment could not, should not, be real. The Daugava river shoreline was full of people, each family seeing off their loved one. All eyes were filled with tears as each struggled to get closer to the shore, as if that little distance would make a difference in the parting. The young men were aboard the ship, waving to the gathered crowds. Each man tried to discern his family from amongst the crowd, calling out names - names that were swallowed up in the noise of the surroundings.

I felt crushed, having hoped that I would have a chance at one last farewell. I tried desperately to pick Jānis' face out from among the many young men who were pressing against the railing of the ship. From time to time I thought I heard my name called but failed to find an owner to the voice. Many of the families had brought flowers that they threw toward the ship. Soon the Daugava was filled with flowers, though most reached no further than the shoreline rocks and were soon trampled under the feet of the masses. Even as these young men had filled the ship to capacity, new trucks were delivering still more Latvian men with uniformed German soldiers flanking them. The entire shoreline of the Daugava was under the watch of the German police.

Soon a whistle sounded from the ship and it began to slowly back away from the shore. On the deck of the ship the young men suddenly stiffened their bodies and in strong manly voices began to sing the Latvian National Anthem. We wanted to join their voices but were so overcome with emotion that not a word could escape our constricted throats. So, our Latvian sons left behind their homeland, their parents, their children, and their wives. The pain was intense on both sides of this parting, with only the waning voices bridging the intolerable abyss.