

# ZUGLUFT

peace, love  
& locomotives

RDC Deutschland employee magazine | Special issue | March 2022



Henry Posner III photographed the train team after the trip on 3/13/2022. Martin Pavlik, Chris Rühle, Julian Rönsch, Katrin Schardin, Jens Lüdecke, Nate Asplund, Adi Gök, Maximilian Schmidt.

**ZUGLUFT**

The special issue to  
the special train

**SPECIAL ISSUE**

## A TRAIN THAT MOVES

Millions of people from Ukraine have to leave their country because of the war. The railroad is their central means of transport to reach safety in neighboring countries. We were very quick to offer our fleet and now run an RDC refugee train every day on behalf of the German government. More in this special issue.



# War in Ukraine!

Unthinkable, but We Are Where We Are: History comes at you on short notice. The expectation was for chaos at the Polish border as millions of people leave Ukraine (I will not use the word "flee" as families are separated and many stay behind to defend the country).

But Frankfurt/Oder Hbf is an oasis of calm as the RDC special train awaits our guests arriving By Any Means Necessary from Ukrainian territory. Many arrive by train from Poland but some also arrive by bus. Our train awaits, a classic BTE consist: couchettes & Bimz in a rainbow of colors reflective of our history.

As passengers arrive they are boarded in a graceful and systematic way under the direction of master train conductor Martin Pavlick, in this day acting as Train Commander of the Special Train RDC 1799 or more precisely Nachanalnuk Spetz-poezd. He is supported by conductors Katrin Schardin and Adi Gök. Julian, Nate & I also work for Martin: he is, after all, the Train Commander.

Passengers are loaded from both ends of the train toward the middle so that people are evenly distributed. The operation is coordinated from 2 staff compartments in the center of the train in couchette #5. As people arrive they are welcomed- not ordered! by Martin-onto the train, and they find their place in a calm manner. Support comes from Red Cross staff in 2 compartments in couchette #6.

Our scheduled departure of time of 1039 comes, but several buses are late arriving and the train is not full. Whose decision is it to wait? Of course, the Train Commander! We depart ultimately at 11:15 with 480 guests on board.

The welcome continues with an announcement on the PA system in Ukrainian by Martin, who speaks nine languages, supplemented by personal announcements compartment by compartment in cars 9, 10 & 11, the three cars where the PA system is not functioning: I speak Russian but not Ukrainian but I get it: more or less "Welcome on board the special train. You are our guest and if there are any issues please look for us in wagon 5 in the service compartment". Martin notes that the most important thing is to calm people and make sure that they are made welcome.

En route the day is sunny, we move at track speed with a few stops waiting for paths, and our passengers are enjoying some



On March 13, RDC main shareholder Henry Posner III supported the train team around Katrin Schardin.

tranquil time. Toilets are nearly 100 percent operational and kept clean by our NSG colleagues. The train is an oasis of calm on wheels: lots of wheels. The passengers are mostly families with children who take the opportunity to enjoy small pleasures such as snacks and electrical outlets to recharge their phones. This allows them to be more prepared for the next step in their journey- Hannover Messe where we arrive 1400. From there they will continue their journeys to many places as small groups: Amongst the destinations mentioned are Hamburg, Kassel, Osnabrück.

The train is discharged within ten minutes and then we loop back east to Braunschweig for a group photo and to service the train. And in Nate's & my case we head for Frankfurt airport to go home.

We have once again proven ourselves to be a family with diverse resources-rolling stock, industry respect, committed and skillful people-that have been trusted with this task on short notice to meet transportation needs that did not exist a few weeks ago. War in Europe was not in our business plan just as COVID 19 wasn't, but that did not stop us from delivering in a manner which is a credit to our company, our industry and to Germany. I am proud to be part of this.

слава україне!  
**Henry**

Addendum: Thanks to Henry's contacts with the Jewish community in Berlin, volunteers with Ukrainian language skills and psychological training are now accompanying our RDC special train. Thank you

# A TRAIN THAT MOVES

The war in Ukraine is leading to a mass exodus to the West. With a special train, which RDC has been operating daily between Frankfurt/Oder and Hanover-Laatzen on behalf of the German government since March 10, we are helping to evacuate countless families. This mission requires a high degree of empathy from the teams on board. ZUGLUFT was on board for the first trip.



Early in the morning on platform 6 at Frankfurt/Oder station. Martin Pavlik, Michael Zuch and Michael Schwalm (from right) stand by the train - and show their colors.

## QUOTES FROM THE RDC FAMILY

"This is so incredible!! Thank you everyone for your part in this! Makes me incredibly proud to be part of the RDC family."

Bobbi J. Allen, Iowa Interstate Railroad, USA

## QUOTES FROM THE RDC FAMILY

"Probably RDC's most precious consignment ever."

Bill Morrow, RDC-D Director, UK

It is one of the most touching moments on this emotionally rich day when little Pavlov stands sobbing on the platform. In the confusion at the Frankfurt/Oder train station, the nine-year-old has lost his mother. He speaks haltingly, the DRK helper does not understand Ukrainian. Then **Martin Pavlik** leans over to the blond boy and starts a conversation with him. The BTE train manager has a master's degree in Slavic philology and speaks fluent Ukrainian. The boy calms down and starts to trust the man, who speaks his native language and now explains to him that his mom will surely be back in a moment with tea and coffee, as she promised.

We meet Pavlov again later on the train. Just like the German teacher **Piotre** with his family or the pensioner **Nina** with her children as well as **Olena**, who has lost everything and is traveling alone and finally **Viktoria**, who is still on the run with her children without a destination and herself works at the railroad in Ukraine. With hundreds of refugees, they are now traveling on the RDC special train for about three hours. According to many, this is the most pleasant part of their journey.

Just the night before, the 310-meter-long train with eleven cars was made ready in Hamburg-Langenhof. A few hours earlier, RAG fleet manager **Holger Zugreif** had coordinated the wagon portfolio of six couchette and five seat wagons and sent them from Vienna to the north after DB-Fernverkehr had requested the capacity. With DB and the private Centralbahn, four

## IMPRESS

**Publisher:**  
RDC Deutschland GmbH  
Altonaer Poststr. 9 | D-22767 Hamburg  
[info@rdc-deutschland.de](mailto:info@rdc-deutschland.de) | [rdc-deutschland.de](http://rdc-deutschland.de)

**Responsible in terms of press law**  
Meike Quentin  
Head of Corporate Communications  
[meike.quentin@autozug-sylt.de](mailto:meike.quentin@autozug-sylt.de)

**Concept, Editing and Layout:**  
Meike Quentin (MQ), Kristoffer Laib (KRI),  
Robert Quentin (RQ).

**Editorial contact:** [zugluft@rdc-deutschland.de](mailto:zugluft@rdc-deutschland.de)

**Credits:**  
If not marked separately, the picture credits are RDC Germany.

**Status:** March 25, 2022

All rights are held by the publisher. Reprints - including excerpts - are only permitted with the express written consent of the publisher.

As a newsletter for internal communication, ZUGLUFT provides you with digital reading material from our RDC family every three months in an attractive magazine layout. If you have any suggestions for topics, photos or original social media posts, feel free to send them to the editorial team at [zugluft@rdc-deutschland.de](mailto:zugluft@rdc-deutschland.de). The next issue will be published in May 2022.

special trains have been used daily on this route to transport the refugees since March 10. After an intensive check of the car brakes and other checks by train driver Martin Pavlik, the two locomotive drivers **Michael Zuch** and **Michael Schwalm** set the train in motion at three o'clock in the morning in the direction of Frankfurt/Oder.

The RDC special train arrives punctually at 07:30 on track 6 at Frankfurt/Oder station. Here, train driver **Adi Gök** and conductor **Klaus Gosda** join the train. The station is eerily empty. The Polish commuters have been on their way to Berlin for a long time. On the station forecourt, the DRK helpers have gathered, sent by the Hanover regional association for the first RDC special train. The emergency workers bring 200 liters of coffee and 100 liters of tea onto the train. Plus 30 boxes with 500 packed lunches. "We don't know how the arriving people are fed. After 20 years of experience, we take the precaution of assuming that the refugees need some," says the responsible DRK operations manager Andreas Bruns.

At 9:30 a.m., the ÖBB Nightjet arrives on track 5 from Warsaw. Police officers are manning the car exits. Passport control. The same picture 45 minutes later, when the EC248 from Warsaw arrives. In both trains, the officers encounter a problem: people remain seated because they actually want to go to Berlin. However, since the capital already has to cope with an extremely high number of refugees and there are two exhibition halls in Hanover ready for the initial reception, the police officers have to persuade the refugees to change trains. Without language skills, this is a difficult undertaking - and the ÖBB train team apparently can't help with Ukrainian either. When the police notice that Martin Pavlik speaks the language, they urge him to make an announcement on the foreign train and persuade people to change trains.

Meanwhile, a DB employee is trying to distribute zero-euro tickets to the refugees. He stands on the platform with five large DIN A4 envelopes. Each one contains tickets with different destinations to use after they arrive to Hanover. The sense of this measure is not clear and cau-



*This 80-year-old Ukrainian woman has fled all alone. Train manager Adi Gök shows her that she can calmly join him on the RDC special train to Hanover.*



*Train manager Martin Pavlik addresses the refugees in their native language, thus ensuring orientation and trust. The people gladly follow his instructions.*



*The team after the successful premiere: Martin Pavlik, Adi Gök, Carsten Carstensen, Selcuk Karaman, Klaus Gosda (from left). Behind them Michael Zuch and Michael Schwalm.*



*Besides transportation, speaking in their native language is the most important thing for the refugees on board. Martin Pavlik has created this language helper for the train team.*

#### QUOTES FROM THE RDC FAMILY

**"Thanks, Meike! Adding in the rest of the RDC team. Again, we've very proud to be able to do this. Thanks for keeping us updated."**

*Ida Posner, RDC, USA*

#### QUOTES FROM THE RDC FAMILY

**"Congratulations to Henry, Julian and team, very proud to even just be associated so tenuously with what you are doing. Thanks for the update."**

*Ian Wenman, Vivarail, UK*

#### QUOTES FROM THE RDC FAMILY

**"Felicitaciones al equipo de RDC Alemania por tan loable gesto con los desplazados de Ucrania. Orgullosos de formar parte de RDC."**

*Jaime Blanco Raving, FCCA, Peru*

#### Call for donations for painting materials

What can colleagues who are not on the train themselves do for the people on board? The team from the blue AUTOZUG Sylt answered this question with a fundraising campaign for painting materials. "There are a lot of mothers with small children on the train. With a few pens, coloring books and paper, the little ones can occupy themselves on the way and process what they have experienced in their pictures a bit. The mothers get a little peace and quiet during this time," says **Meike Quentin**, explaining the idea. **Martina Bonnicksen** launched an appeal for donations within the team, among RDC colleagues in Hamburg and on Facebook - with a great response.



*"This picture was painted by Maria (4) from Kharkiv (above left her face) on board and given to me. It's nice to see the children's eyes happy for a short moment." Torge Nielsen, CEO of AUTOZUG Sylt.*

ses head shaking among the RDC colleagues - everywhere else in Europe, people from Ukraine are allowed to travel free of charge with their identity documents. The confusion on the faces of the passengers is great - no one understands why they need these additional tickets.

At 10:50 a.m., the 10,000 horsepower Siemens Taurus locomotive pulls the eleven cars out of the station toward Hanover, 17 minutes late. With about 700 people, the train is fully occupied. The DRK team uses carriage 7 as a logistics compartment. The mood is subdued. The people from Ukraine are completely overtired and shy, many do not know where they are going.

#### QUOTES FROM THE RDC FAMILY

**"Congratulations to the RDC team in Germany. Proud to be part of the RDC family."**

*Juan Olachea, FCCA, Peru*

In this atmosphere, Adi Gök says, "Martin, I'll take over the technology, you do the people." Pavlik nods and sets off on his first inspection tour. In each car, he greets people in fluent Ukrainian. He literally picks people up, with their gazes hanging on his lips. This has an effect. Many start to smile, dare to accept the packed lunches and have tea and coffee. "I prepared for this trip in detail and thought about what these people need in terms of a message," Pavlik explains. "As the first German officials they meet here, we first need to build trust and give them

some security. We want them to catch their breath and not panic."

The whole situation is poignant for the 38-year-old as well. From his student days, he knows the subway stations in Kharkiv, where people now seek shelter from Russian bombs. He enjoyed photographing the mosaics there. He has friends there, knows how hard it is for some who have to live on state pensions. "And now war, too." Pavlik will accompany the train for four days, then he will hand over to **Edward Schofield**. He, too, speaks Ukrainian and will be able to greet the refugees in their native language.

The three-man train crew of Pavlik, Gök and Gosda are repeatedly approached as they walk through the train. The pensioner **Nina** falls around Pavlik's neck in gratitude. The 72-year-old made it out of Kharkiv with her grandchildren. For five days she sought shelter in the metro. When it was no longer safe, she traveled west to Lviv. For almost three days now, she and the four little ones have been on their way to Munich to visit relatives. "We had little to eat and the children often cried. I am so glad, that we can be

here now and soon reach our destination," the woman says.

There is the former German teacher **Piotre** from Kiev. He has been on the road for three days with his wife and three grown-up daughters. He tells Adi Gök how much he loves the German language and that they just want to rest here in Germany, without alarms and bombs. He would like to return ▶

#### QUOTES FROM THE RDC FAMILY

**"I appreciate RDC's service to the Ukrainian people during this difficult and troubled time. It is wonderful to see people helping others. May God bless your efforts in this project. Some of my family has made it safely from Kyiv to Warsaw. My wife will be truly pleased to hear that RDC is helping her people."**

*James Mattsen, Iowa Interstate Railroad, USA*

with his family quite soon. He says that his apartment has not yet been destroyed. "We will rebuild Kiev together," the man says. In his 41 years on the railroad, Gök has seen a lot. But he is not unmoved by the teacher's words. "I am happy to be able to do something for these people here within my means. These are very fine people, not despondent. They have my sincere respect," Gök says, moved.

Little *Pavlov* has been comfortably accommodated in the seating car with his mother and is engrossed in his drawing book, which he got from the train crew. Together they want to go to Cologne. "We come from Sumy in the northeast and were evacuated with 30,000 others. My husband stayed behind. We have been on the road for five days. My son is severely traumatized. The war has affected him. He has lost a lot of confidence," says mother *Natasha*.

*Viktoria* was afraid of the consequences of the attack on the largest nuclear power plant in Europe. As a result, the 50-year-old left Zaporizhia in the south with her children and grandchildren. They made it here in five days via Warsaw. They do not have a goal, they just want to be safe. "Currently, the prospect of returning is not very big. My husband and my daughter's are struggling. We don't know if we will see them again," she says, adding that she is also employed by the Ukrainian railroad.

At 1:45 p.m. on the dot, the RDC special train arrives in Hannover-Laatzen. Pavlov's blond head disappears into the crowd. A woman gets off the train and walks towards Pavlik. In her hand she has a sticker with the Ukrainian flag. She pins the metal piece to his blue uniform, squeezes it and says, "Spasybi." **RQ**

QUOTES FROM THE RDC FAMILY

**"Thank you so much for all you are doing for these refugees. Seeing the images day-after-day is heart wrenching. I am so moved to read this article and to see the life-line you are providing for so many."**

*Lynn Wendell, Sierraventures*

QUOTES FROM THE RDC FAMILY

**"Congratulations to ALL in the team! And THANK YOU for what they are doing in this human disaster!"**

*Marc De Cnijf, Eurorail, Belgium*

QUOTES FROM THE RDC FAMILY

**"That is so very good to know, it is heartening to hear something so praiseworthy during these difficult days. Thank you."**

*Dave King, Vivarail, UK*



*Martin Pavlik is not only a train manager these days, but also a emotional support with his kind manner. Here he manages to make pensioner Nina smile (right).*



**Arrival Hannover-Laatzen: Two exhibition halls are set up here for the initial care of people and serve as a hub for the distribution of refugees.**



► International Press: Here you can find an online article on *Railway Age*.