Ljubo Mlađenović, *Beisfjordska tragedija*, Gornjji Milanovac: Dečije novine, 1988

Beisfjord Tragedy by Ljubo Mlađenović
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THE CONCENTRATION CAMP

The camp in Beisfjord had an official name: "Concentration Camp I Narvik—Beisfjord".

It was built in the middle of the town, on a hill by the river. On its western and southern sides there were slopes covered with forest, but the area where the camp was built is quite flat and spacious.

The camp was built in accordance with all the rules of the German occupying power at the time. It had a 3 metre high fence with standard barbed wire, in two rows, between which were unwound threads of another barbed wire at a height of 1 meter.

It was built for 2,000 inmates. That many were planned to arrive from Yugoslavia. But that was not achieved, due to strange circumstances, and for one group of Yugoslav internees — they were lucky circumstances.

Namely, 1,125 internees were boarded on the "Kerkplein" ship. They were all designated for Beisfjord. The remaining 300 internees from concentration camps in the vicinity of Vienna, in Austria, were to arrive on another ship, after this transport.

However, this German plan was thwarted by the outbreak of typhus among a group of Yugoslavs in Austrian concentration camps. That group was stopped. Quarantine was introduced. At that time, new groups of inmates had not arrived from Yugoslavia. Because of this, there was a change of plan. A group of 224 inmates landed and was later transferred to the Osen camp for the construction of the Mosjøen-Elsfjord road, and 900 were sent to Beisfjord.

It was thought that the group, left behind in Austria due to quarantine, would still leave for Norway after 6 weeks and reach Narvik in July at the latest.

The plan was for 1,000 inmates to arrive then. However, the quarantine lasted a little longer, so this entire group of Yugoslav internees was sent to Norway from Austria in late September, and arrived in Trondheim on 1 October 1942. At that time, it no longer made sense to send these inmates to northern Norway, that is, to Beisfjord, because they would not be able to perform the work they were intended for due to the winter and poor weather conditions, so they would not do anything for almost 6 months.

The internees who arrived on 24 June 1942 were housed in 7 barracks. Three more barracks were used for the kitchen, workshop and laundry, and one smaller one for the warehouse. Three temporary latrines were built in the immediate vicinity of the first seven barracks.

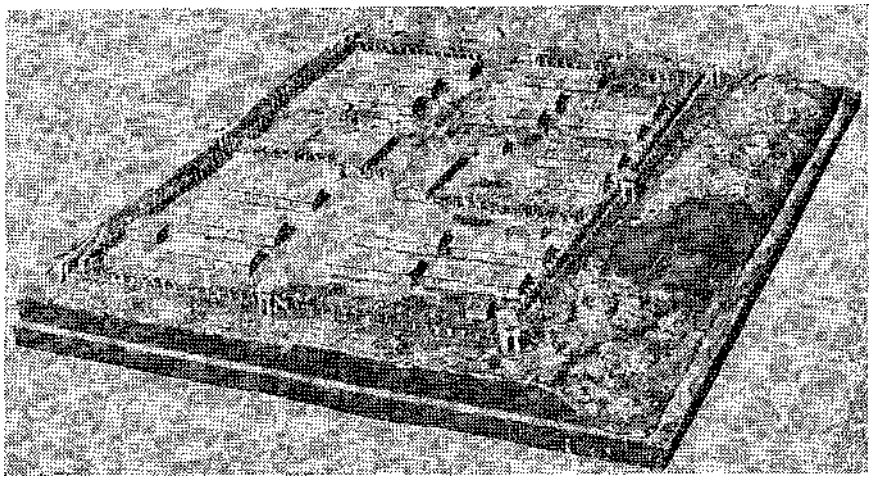
This group thus occupied only half of the camp. That's why the camp was reduced and fenced off with wire, so 8 barracks remained outside the wire. Norwegian guards, who were part of the camp command, moved in later.

Seven guard turrets were placed around the entire complex, but due to the reduction of the camp, only five were used. There was one machine gun on each turret, and the camp was encircled with several searchlights that were supposed to illuminate it during winter nights.

On the plateau in front of the camp, on the other side of the newly built road, there were the barracks of the German camp command: offices, a dining hall, a hall for events and movies, as well as officers' apartments and rooms for German guards.

The commander of the camp was Obersturmbannführer Goecke, who as a member of the SS had the number 21,529, which meant that he was one of Hitler's veterans. Practically speaking, he held the rank of lieutenant colonel.

His deputy was first Obersturmführer Franz de Martin and later Obersturmführer Otto Seifert. They had the rank of lieutenant. These two were the leaders in the camp, so the internees considered them commanders. Goecke, as the highest-ranking officer, was somewhat isolated. He probably had other assignments in Narvik. He didn't even live in the officer's barracks near the camp. When he visited the camp, he stayed in the holiday home of an electrician from Narvik, Alfred Jacobsen, on the other side of the river. The commander moved in there on 8 July, but the owner did not want to hand it over to him voluntarily. That is why the High Command in Narvik requisitioned this holiday home by special decision. It was used until the end of September of that year.



Model of the Beisfjord concentration camp

It is interesting that the surviving internees remembered that the commander had lived some distance away, but they stated that it was a villa. According to the conditions of camp life, that not so luxurious holiday home really looked like a villa in the eyes of the internees.

In addition to Commander Goecke and his deputies De Martin and Seifert, the Beisfjord concentration camp was commanded by the following officers and non-commissioned officers: Obersturmführer (First Lieutenant) Branken, Hauptsturmflierer (Captain) Pluscott, 7 Unter-Sturmführers (Second Lieutenants): Ahlgrimm, Hertzer, Kappus, Kranz, Hager, Dwelk and Janasik, then, Sturmscharführer (Command Major) Matheus, Oberscharführer (Senior Second Sergeant), Sarfert, Unterscharführer (First Sergeant), Otto and 3 Rotenführers (Sergeants): Beckmann, Felte and Bott.

Besides them, there were about 40 other soldiers, guards.

All of them belonged to SS units.

The command of the Beisfjord camp was directly linked to the SS Directorate at the Reichskommissariat in Oslo.

As is known, the Reich Commissioner for occupied Norway was Josef Terboven, one of Hitler's very close collaborators and his favourite, and Terboven's first deputy and head of the SS in Norway was SS General Rediess. The two were directly responsible for the concentration camp in Beisfjord.

In addition to the whole company, possibly a slightly larger one, made up of German members of the SS, another 40 Norwegians, members of the Norwegian Guard SS Battalion, kept watch.

On the main gate of the camp was written in capital letters: “Mit fleissige Arbeid — Weg in Freicheit” which should mean: “Through hard work — the way to freedom!”

Judging by this slogan, the SS brought the Yugoslav internees to Beisfjord to work.

However, in this camp, no important buildings were worked on. For the first few days, the camp was arranged, then the groups went out on side jobs, on land planning around the newly built cobbled road towards Narvik, a smaller group went to work in Narvik, and the largest number was engaged in extracting gravel from the river.

Unlike the other Yugoslav internees, who were in the Osen, Korgen and Botn camps in northern Norway at that time, working on the construction of the main road, this group in Beisfjord was not working on any major building.

It was only later, from the correspondence between the SS Administration and the head of the Todt organisation in Narvik, that one could see the reason why Yugoslav internees had been brought to this camp. The Beisfjord camp was supposed to be used for housing only during the winter, while during the summer they would work for several

months on the construction of the road to the Swedish border. Due to the weather conditions, up in the hills of Björnfjell, it was not possible to carry out works from October to April.

The Todt organisation was late with the preparations for the construction of buildings for the housing of inmates in Björnfjell, as well as other barracks for guards and the like, and apparently not enough tools and other materials were delivered for those works. For this reason, the Yugoslav internees were kept in the Beisfjord camp in June, when they arrived. It was planned to be temporary.

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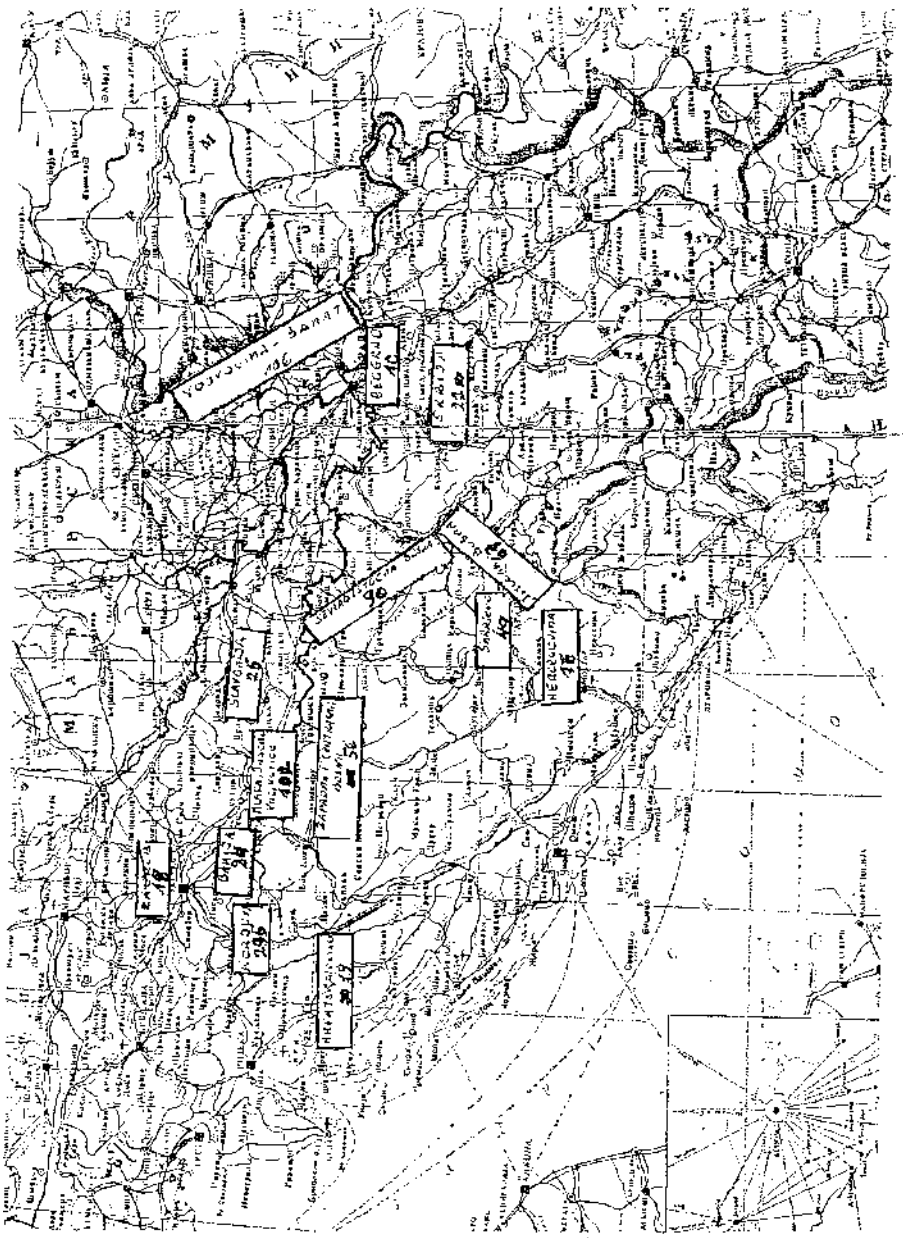
CAPTURE, ARREST AND TRANSPORT TO NORWAY

The largest number of Yugoslav internees who ended up in the Beisfjord concentration camp came from the epicentre of the people's liberation struggle, whether they were fighters of partisan units and city strike groups, or as their collaborators or sympathisers. Each of them, in those first months of the uprising, gave as much as they could, knew, and were able to.

The largest group was from Kordun. 295 of them. Almost one in three. Among them were 30 fighters of the Kordun partisan unit and 40 members of the local and village people's liberation committees. Among the members of the communist party, the ones who were caught and sent to the Beisfjord camp were: father and son Nikola Milić Grubješić and Millić Nikole Grubješić, then Mile Nikole Lončar and Rade Jovana Lončar, all from the village of Donji Sjeničak, as well as partisans: Mile Ljubana Maslek from Lasinjski Sjeničak and Rade Zrinjanin from Banske Moravice.



An overview of the places and areas from which the Beisfjord camp internees came.

Over 150 of them belonged to the reserve partisan units, which were created in Kordun in 1941, because there were not enough weapons for everyone who wanted to join the active units.

Branko Mrkalj, one of the few survivors from Kordun, said:

> "Most of my fellow peasants from the villages of Gornji, Donji and Lašćinski Sjeničak, as well as from other villages of Kordun, actively worked for the people's liberation movement. The young and middle-aged were also included in the war unit. We would go on assignments for days at a time. We took the partisan oath. Had drills. There were not enough weapons, so we were included in the reserve units. We stood guard, dug roads, demolished smaller bridges, performed courier service and performed other tasks assigned to us by the Headquarters of the Kordun Partisan Unit. The elderly took care of the supply, and in each village there was also a local people's liberation committee. The majority of my countrymen ended up in Norway, and many of them in the Beisfjord camp."

This was also the case in the other villages of Kordun: Kupljensko, Vojišnica, Manjerović Selo, Svinjice, Ostrožin, Slavsko Polje and others. The councillors from the village of Kupljensko, Mile Novaković, Nikola Vukobratović and Miloš Škrgić, as well as other active fighters of the partisan unit, were also in the Beisfjord camp. Rade Malobabić, Teodor Vukšić and councillor Ignjatije Malobabić, fighters of the 4th partisan battalion from the village of Slavsko Polje, were also in this group.

All of them were captured or arrested in early 1942 in their villages or on their assignments, in the great spring offensive, which the Ustasha units organised in order to stifle the people's liberation struggle in Kordun.

A similar thing happened to the inhabitants of the villages of Mlaka, Jasenovac and Uštice, which are located along the Sava River, on the Slavonija side. These villages were inhabited mainly by Serbs and were important communication points between the Bosnian partisans from Kozara and the Slavonian partisans, who were operating on the Psunj mountain. Almost the entire illegal local People's Liberation Committee of the village of Mlaka ended up in the Beisfjord camp. They are: Jovo Kovljanin, Ilija Šalindrija, Đuro Šalindrija, Ostoja Samardžija, Stojan Samardžija and Dmitar Malbaša. PLM activists from Jasenovac and Uštice who were also arrested and taken to the camp: Dušan Vukomančić, Branko Trivunčić, Mirko Kovačević, Lazo Ćukalac, Spasoje Ljutica, Nenad Lužajić, Vidoje Mutibarić, Milan Ugreniić, Vaso Vučićević, Jovo and Mile Vlaisavljević, Mile Lapčević, Stevo and Bogdan Rastovac, Tešo Tomašević, Matija Poznanovtć, Mirko Unčanin and others.

Banija, the area that stretches between Kordun and Zagreb, was also the scene of an offensive and large-scale arrests, mostly of Serbs, in the spring of 1942. The Banija partisan unit, one of the first formed units in Yugoslavia, operated in that area. In order to prevent liaisons between the people of Banija and the partisan unit, on 17 May 1942, the Ustasha surrounded the three most suspicious villages for them: Kinjačka, Bestrma, and Blinjski Kut. Then they arrested and imprisoned 210 men and 560 women and children. Among them, according to the Ustasha report, were 13 active partisans, as well as several PLM associates. The very next day, on 18 May 1942, about 100 Banija men from the Jasenovac camp were sent from this group to Sajmište and then on to Norway. Of those, 24 arrived in Beisfjord. Another man from Banija was Berislav Hanžek, a student from Petrinja, and one of the most prominent young illegals of the people's liberation movement, who was arrested in action and together with his brother was deported to the Jasenovac camp. There he parted ways with his brother, whose fate is unknown, and Berislav ended up in Beisfjord.

The next larger group of internees came from Slavonija and Zagreb.

While from the area of Kordun, Banija and Mlaka, Serbs predominated in the groups of those arrested and captured, among the Slavonians north of the Sava River and the people of Zagreb, the majority were Croats. They were fighters of partisan units, illegal fighters, or members of the town's illegal strike groups.

At the end of January 1942, all Ustasha newspapers wrote that on 28 January, fighters of the First Psunj Partisan Company were captured, among them Ivan Dragomanović, Stjepan Klarić, Mato Knežević and Josip Majiček, farmers from the village of Komarnica, municipality of Nova Gradiška. With their capture, half of the party organisation of this village, which they made up, was unable to operate any further. Nikola Božić from the village of Cage, Marjan Radičević from Magić Mala and Marko Sirovac from Mašićka Šagovina were also imprisoned and later transported to Beisfjord.

Zdenko Garabija, a youth leader from Osijek and a member of the Croatian communist party regional committee, also ended up in the Beisfjord camp. He was one of the organisers of the city's strike groups. A very active young man, Dinko Nelović, was arrested with him, and according to the documents from that time, he threw three-pronged nails and damaged the tires of German cars, set fire to German newspapers and carried out other actions with a group of young people in Osijek on several occasions. Jovo Panić, a farmer from the village of Topolje, who was caught by the Ustasha while transporting large quantities of food, clothes and medicine for an illegal partisan shelter was also arrested then.

Several PLM activists from the territory of Slavonski Brod also

fell into the hands of the Ustasha and were taken to Norway. The members of the CP in the Beisfjord camp were: worker Ivan Jurišić and metalworker Stjepan Rajković, as well as PLM activist Đuro Poljak.

There was a politically strong group from Zagreb. The members of this group were mostly illegal workers in unions, in factories, then members of the city's illegal groups and, on various other grounds, PLM activists. The most famous among them were: Ivan Korkut, Toma Vrabec and Jozef Bartl, who were also members of the CP, then Josip Matišić, Emil Magdić, Ivan Kovačić, Dragutin Molan and others. All of them were sentenced to prison terms for PLM activities, but no one expected to find themselves all the way in Beisfjord.

A youth official from Split, Franjo Barić, was also arrested in Zagreb. He was sentenced to death in absence by the court in Split, for escaping, but he was arrested in Zagreb. He was one of the few who confessed to many illegal contacts in prison, but later had proper conduct in the camp in Norway.

From the territory of Bosnia and Herzegovina, a larger group of illegal workers and organisers of the uprising in their regions, as well as fighters from partisan units, arrived in the Beisfjord camp. Among them, the most famous was lawyer and member of the CPY local committee for Sarajevo, Adil Grebo. He was arrested in a major raid of the Sarajevo party organisation and had exceptional conduct in prison. Besides him, many others were taken from the movement: Ismet Milavić, Mumin Bešlić, Našid Haračić, Stjepan Ivanišević, Žarko Vidović, Tafro Nurija, all party members and illegal workers, as well as a large number of PLM partisans and associates from Sarajevo and the surrounding area, from Kakanj, Blažuj, Visoko and other places. Among the active illegal workers and organisers of the uprising in his region, we should also mention Osman Zubović, a student from Bosanska Dubica, and member of the CPY district committee. He participated in organising the uprising in the Kozara area. He was caught red-handed along with a group of PLM activists from that area. Besides them, several hundred more Muslim CPY members, activists, fighters and collaborators were arrested or captured, of whom a total of 33 ended up in the Beisfjord camp.

This group also includes Jusuf Filipović, secretary of the CPY district committee and one of the organisers of the uprising in Jajce and its surroundings.

A very strong political illegal group that arrived in this camp in northern Norway was from Banat. In the group of several dozen of party and SKOJ members and activists, there were also Milan Stančić Uča, secretary of the CPY district committee for Bečej and member of the CPY regional committee for Northern Banat and Mile Arsenov, secretary of the SKOJ regional committee and member of the CP regional committee

for northern Banat. Most of those interned were from Kikinda, Melenci and Zrenjanin. They belonged to partisan units, town strike groups or performed tasks as illegal workers. Several illegal workers, PLM activists from Pančevo were also interned with them, such as: tailor Ostoja Kovačević, Jovan Bezuljević, Gojko Martinović and others.

Several members of the illegal party organisation in Belgrade also found themselves in the Beisfjord camp in mid-1942. Among them are: Grga Andrijanović, carpenter, who was secretary of the cell for a while, then Todor Drpa, trade assistant, Milan Davidović, furrier, Špiro Prostran, coastal worker, Mihajlo Mandić, trade assistant, Mihajlo Perić, labourer, Borivoje Sarić, electrician and others, such as Ivan Milinković and Josip Vladušić.

There were not many internees from the rest of Serbia in the Beisfjord camp, unlike other camps in northern Norway where they were majority. Those who were there were mainly fighters of partisan units from the Valjevo unit: Dragoje Aleksić, Nikola Buljan and Dragoljub Radovanović, from the Užice partisan unit: Ivan Božović, Vidoje and Milosav Vajović and Veljko Irić, from the Posavina unit Ivan Egedušević, from Jastrebac unit Milorad Miladinović, Belgrade SKOJ member Sredoje Đuričić, Požarevac partisan unit fighter, Vlastimir Paunović, from Malo Crniće and others.

In the Beisfjord camp there was also a group of mostly Serbs from the territory of eastern and northeastern Bosnia and Semberija. Among them were several members of partisan units, other activists, and one group of members of the first Chetnik units in Bosnia, which was part of the liberation movement and was not under the command of Draža Mihajlović. These Chetnik units joined the people's liberation volunteer army under Tito's command in December 1941, but during March they were disarmed by Chetniks loyal to Draža Mihajlović and handed over to the Germans.

Captured partisans and arrested illegal workers, collaborators and sympathisers of the PLM from the territory of the then Independent State of Croatia, i.e. Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina, were first interned in the Jasenovac and Gradiška camps, and from there on 18 May 1942, they were sent to the Sajmište camp, near Belgrade. There is an official document about it. On 13 July 1942, the police attaché of the German Embassy in Zagreb sent the following report to the German High Command in Belgrade:

> "On the basis of a FS letter dated 13 May from the commander of the security police and the SD in Belgrade, in which 2,500 people were asked to be transported to the Zemun camp, examined, and put to work, the Ustasha surveillance service dispatched 500

people to a labour campaign in Zemun on 18 May 1942. On 21 May 1942, another 700 people were sent to Zemun, so that a total of 1,200 people arrived in Zemun for the Viking labour campaign. All of these people come from the Croatian Jasenovac camp, where they had mostly been sent as communists and partisans. . . "

Captured partisans, illegal workers, collaborators and sympathisers of the PLM from the territory of Serbia and Vojvodina were also transferred from the camps and prisons where they were kept, to Belgrade and Sajmište, and from there, based on the order of the Supreme Command, sent to Norway. This can be seen from the letter of the commander of the Southeast, General Field Marshal List, which he sent to the commander of Serbia, Bader, on March 31, where he says:

"The Supreme Command agreed that the insurgents from the territory of Serbia, if they are to be shot for participating in the battle, should be used on construction sites in Northern Scandinavia, *under the most inhospitable living conditions* (underlined by the author).

The commander of the armed forces of the Southeast requests an urgent report on the number of inmates he could count on. . . ")

Thus, fighters of partisan units, illegal workers, collaborators and sympathisers from Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Banat, were all put in the same position and transported to the north of Europe, to Norway.

The Beisfjord group crossed to northern Norway by the following route:

The route through Europe. From Belgrade to Vienna by boat, from Vienna to Szczecin by train, from Szczecin to Narvik by boat.

They were sent from Zemun by ship, from Sajmište via the Danube to Vienna. There they were distributed in several camps in the vicinity of this town. After a short stop and regrouping, they took the train to Szczecin. In the transport to Beisfjord there were 365 internees from the Gisshubel camp, 469 internees from the Alland-Ost camp and 291 from the Sittendorf camp. That is a total of 1,125. Of these, 224 were unloaded during the ride through Norway and sent to the Osen concentration camp in northern Norway. One of them died on the way. 900 of them arrived in Beisfjord.

What was their status?

On 3 July 1942, the senior SS and police chief »Nord« from Oslo sent a telegram to the command of the Beisfjord camp with the request that the records of all inmates be organised immediately.

That document is also the first official document written in Norway, which accurately indicates the status of interned persons in the Beisfjord camp. They are referred to as inmates (Hätflingern). Based on this status, the Yugoslav internees in the Beisfjord camp were left at the mercy of the German Nazis, the SS and the Gestapo, without any rights to protection under international regulations, because they did not have prisoner of war status. For this reason, they were beyond the reach of the International Red Cross and any international control. When you add to that that these people were dressed in their civilian clothes, the clothes in which they were captured or arrested and that they did not receive any clothes during the transport to Norway, then their position becomes completely clear: they were brought to northern Norway to truly live "under the most difficult living conditions". Fighters of partisan units, in that first year of war against the fascist occupier, did not have special uniforms, but mostly fought in their civilian clothes - but they still had one common distinctive mark: they all wore a red five-pointed star on their caps, a sign of fighters against fascism and members of the people's liberation movement. However, the German Nazis did not recognise the military status of these fighters, so they ignored the application of the Geneva Convention on the captured partisans.

All this gave the Beisfjord camp full characteristics of a classic Nazi concentration camp, in which the Nazis ruled without limits.

BEFORE THE STORM

The peace that reigned for two or three days was short-lived. It soon became clear that the German SS had taken an hour's rest. It was as if they had been conferring for that long and agreed on how to proceed.

After a short break, a frenzied persecution of internees started again. Hundreds of different ways were invented to humiliate, torture, exhaust and drive the prisoner to an early grave.

The diet was very poor. In the morning, a cup of black coffee, which was so in name only, 250 grams of bread for the whole day, 10 grams of margarine, and in the evening, a soup in which you could barely find scraps of potato, a bean or some cabbage.

The whole routine in the camp was set up in such a way that the evil only got worse. Slavko Vukić from Kikinda described that period shortly after arriving in Beisfjord. In those days, he had just turned 19. Here is what he wrote:

> "For food, we received just enough to remind us where we came from. We still had some food from Kikinda. There was maybe two to three kilograms of bacon and ham for all of us. Hunger started eating away at us like rust. Slowly we all felt it. It was ordered that we must be half naked in a circle from morning to bedtime. Seemingly harmless. One would say: Well, it's June! But Beisfjord is not Kikinda.
> We got up at five o'clock, and could come back to our rooms only at eight o'clock in the evening. This torture became more dangerous by the day. Even when the sun was shining, it did not warm our bodies. Besides, it would quickly set behind the surrounding hills. A shadow would hang over the camp. Because of the cold, we would run to the leeward side. We would sit next to each other trying to keep warm. Our bodies were no longer able to compensate with internal temperature for what we were losing with the low external temperature. We endured the first ten days without major consequences, but then we also started to buckle under the pressure. For many comrades this was fatal. Death started cutting us down. Days went by. One morning after the count, a light icy rain started falling on our naked bodies. Comrades were standing on the left and right. They waited for Ruski to come by and receive the report from the room wardens. We waited for more than an hour, but the SS man still wasn't there. And why would he be in a hurry? When he finally came in a rubber raincoat, we were all wet and cold. Our skins rough with goosebumps. It didn't help that we were pressed against each other. We bounced and rubbed each other. Across from us stood the

people from Kordun, the Slavonians and other comrades in even weaker shape. We already knew each other well. They often came to our room for a chat or advice. They were a group of corpses whose heads were large but everything else was withered and distorted. There were about 200 people between the two barracks, who stood opposite each other. Everyone was in everyone's sight. All heads were turned in the direction from which Ruski was expected to come. On the other side, several comrades collapsed. We knew what that meant. No one could help. We were not allowed to help them stand up and bring them into the barracks, and even if we were allowed, we would hardly have been able to do it, because many of them had a hard time even leaning on someone. We couldn't wait for Ruski to show up and do the count. After that, we would find some kind of shelter, huddle together, and wait until eight o'clock to go to our rooms and cover ourselves with a tattered blanket. That's why we bundled sleeping blankets together, so that our body temperature would be a few degrees higher... “

Still affected by the long boat ride, poor nutrition, even poorer hygiene, and the daily austere life routine, people began to weaken more and more, to disappear. Many of them suffered hard times in prisons when they were captured or arrested. There, they were beaten unconscious, to confess, to betray their comrades, the organisation. It was hard in Jasenovac, Gradiška, Zrenjanin, Belgrade, and Sjmište. But, in the Beisfjord camp, everything was even harder.

The guards often walked around the camp grounds and had fun. Officers as well. When they would see an inmate passing by, they would ask him which street he was from. They would often get viciously beaten for not knowing, but the area between the barracks was declared a street. Other times, they would have to do push-ups, about twenty or thirty of them. The guards would say it was to warm up the body. As a third option, the Germans would make them run several laps around the barracks...

A favourite German pastime was making the inmates pull a wooden cart. They would order one, two or three internees to sit on top of each other in a small, wooden cart, and the punished inmate to drive them around! Some could not even lift the handle of such a heavy cart. Some would collapse along with those in the carts. It was a heavy load! But the beating was merciless. If they collapsed, the guards would trample them with their shoes, shout at them that they were slackers and saboteurs. They would beat them. Those who got beaten would rush to the infirmary and gradually get closer to death.

The Norwegians also saw some of that and told their own people.

The aforementioned Greta Dahl heard about one such instance and wrote about it in her diary:

> "… And down in the Serbian camp it's terrible.
> Leif and Martin worked on a hill, from where they had a good view of the prison camp. They saw a lot: one was sitting and cleaning his shirt from lice, the other was walking around the camp in a circle with a bandage on his head. Another one was sitting on the steps of the shack with his head buried in both hands, pensive and absent.
> It would be best if one could escape and travel somewhere far away from here, so that they wouldn't have to see or hear all this. . .
> On Sunday, 4 Serbs came with spades on their shoulders and dug a big pit near Rasmus Carlsen's old holiday home. After that they buried many corpses. The pit was near the road, so that everyone could see it. They probably wanted to scare us too... .
> It makes you feel sick, it makes you feel terrible when you see what the Germans are doing. The worst part is that the Norwegian legionnaires are also prison guards and they are just as horrible as the Germans. It is only natural for sadists from all countries to treat the inmates they are responsible for in the same way.
> Odveig Sohlie said that when the inmates passed by her holiday home, she also noticed the Norwegian guards, but that they seemed like they didn't like the situation, as if they wanted to escape from it. No! Us Norwegians, we don't like doing something like that, she said and I believe and hope that she is right. The inmates passed by her holiday home once from 12 to 3 at night. It was horrible to watch them. Some cut a big hole in some blankets and put them over their heads. . . "

The memories of a survivor and the testimonies of others match.

It was no better for those who went out to work. German and Norwegian guards seemed to be competing in who would torture the people more. They would load huge stones on people's backs, and when they couldn't carry them, they would beat them and hurt them with pointed sticks that they always carried with them. The group that brought water from the river to the camp experienced the worst hardships. They had to run and carry the bucket. The water would, of course, spill. The internees were beaten when they did not bring a full bucket. And when they went slowly and were careful not to spill, they got beaten for being too slow!

IN FIVE DAYS, OVER A HUNDRED FELL ILL

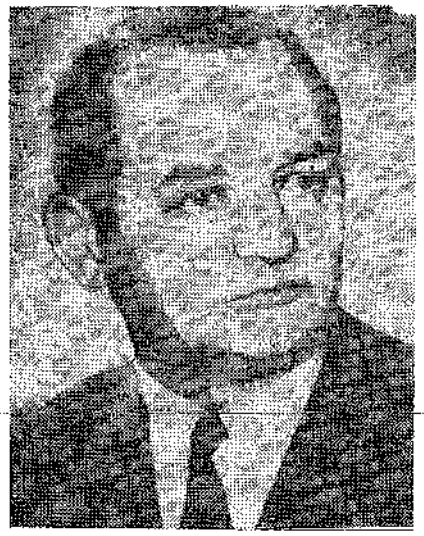
On the basis of the order of the Higher SS and the police leader from Oslo, of 3 July, the command of the Beisfjord camp made a list of internees with data: name and surname, year and place of birth, occupation and prisoner number.

According to this census, on 4 July 1942, there were 887 internees in the camp.

Since, according to the documentation of the camp command, 900 Yugoslav internees arrived in the Beisfjord camp ten days earlier, it is easy to calculate that by then 13 inmates had already lost their lives.

In a special report sent to Oslo on 4 July, the names of the ten dead were listed, namely: Stojan Todorić from Mlaka, Rade Nikola Maslek from Donji Sjeničak, Ilija Krlić from Mlaka, Filip Zvečevac from Mlaka, Gligorije Čabraja from Donji Sjeničak, Rade Đura Maslek from Donji Sjeničak, Steva Krlić from Mlaka, Vladimir Zadravec from Zagreb, Nikola Milić Grubješić from Donji Sjeničak and Dušan Petar Manojlović from Donji Sjeničak.

A report on the fate of three more internees who died in those first days, who actually died on the way from the ship to the camp on 24 June, was not found in the camp's archives. They are Vidoje Vajović from Požega, Luka Kosić from Kikinda and Đura Nikola Bjelić from Gornji Sjeničak. Their names were probably sent earlier. However, in a Norwegian list we found that 20-year-old Kosta Trnić, originally from Kikinda, was also killed in the Beisfjord camp. He isn't mentioned anywhere in the records. The question of the place of his death remains unanswered. It is possible that Đura Bijelić remained in the Osen camp group, and Trnić died on the way from the ship to the camp, and it is possible that Trnić was transferred to the Osen camp. It is also the only unsolved case, when it comes to the names of the inmates of the Beisfjord camp. In any case, the tally on 4 July was 887.



Slavko Vukić, worker from Kikinda, author of the book "Memories from Norway"

Osman Zubović, student from Bosanska Dubica and illegal worker

There were 800 healthy people. They were placed in 18 rooms, in barracks 14, 15, 26, 27, 28 and 29.

There were 87 sick people. They were separated in barrack number 16, which was declared an infirmary. The patients were placed in 3 rooms, according to the type of illness. There were 38 patients in room number 1, 10 in room number 2, and 34 in room number 3.

As mentioned above, the paramedic in charge was Žarko Vidović, a medical student, and the other paramedics were: in room number 1 Neđo Kovačević from Sarajevo, in room number 2 Herbert Grebicki from Zagreb and in room number 3 Šefkija Sirćo from Visoko. Later, the number of paramedics was increased, so Milan Davidović from Belgrade and Mugdin Mehmedagić from Bijeljina performed that duty, among others. The SS appointed the criminal Štefan Telišman, who had worked in the kitchen until then, as the head of the infirmary.

However, from 4 to 10 July, that is, in just the following six days, the situation in the camp changed significantly. There was a real flood of patients. That is why two more barracks: 15 and 16 were designated for the sick. The number of sick people doubled and there were as many as 175 of them on 10 July.

However, it is indicative that there were no deaths during that time. From 5 to 10 July, only two internees were buried, namely: Đuka Gligorin from Kikinda and Živojin Maksimović, from the village of Bezgradići, municipality of Rogatica. But, they were killed by the German guards.

Seeing that the situation in the camp was getting worse, the camp administration tried to find some solutions to improve the treatment of the sick.

The conclusion was that the following measures should be taken urgently:

1. that through Colonel Diklić, whom the Germans held in high esteem, the camp command should be asked to feed sick better;
2. to convey that the cooks who were criminals were stealing from the sick, and that there should be a reassignment in the kitchen;
3. that a voluntary donation of bread and margarine be collected in an organised manner for the most seriously ill patients.

Colonel Diklić addressed the Camp Command with a proposal to improve the nutrition of the sick. They refused it. They answered that all inmates in the camp were to receive the same amenities and that no one could have more favourable treatment. They promised to give more medicine to the sick, for the sake of promising at least something to Diklić, but they did not fulfil that either.

The German camp command refused to replace the cooks, because there was allegedly not enough evidence that they were stealing from the sick.

Thus, only the third task remained: to develop solidarity in the rooms, among the healthy internees, and to occasionally spare what they can to give to the sickest.

No one had surplus food, but every now and then something that was collected was transferred.

Encouraged by the support of the SS, the criminals became even more powerful in the kitchen. They stole mostly margarine and honey, when it was occasionally available, or marmalade. They traded with surpluses. Whoever had a good coat, shoes, gold tooth and the like could get quite a lot of food from them.

If one of the internees did not want to engage in trade, and something that they had caught the eye of the criminals, they quickly found a solution, either they killed such internees themselves, or they denounced them to the Germans as lazy and saboteurs, so they were shot.

Their suffering was multifold, and the infirmary was getting more and more full.

Where did so many sick people come from in such a short time?

In order to answer that we have to go back a few months.

Before being assigned to transport to Norway, the internees spent several months in prisons and camps in Yugoslavia. There they were severely tortured, some more, some less, but it was almost fatal for all.

The internees, who arrived in Beisfjord, passed through the largest and most gruesome camp in Yugoslavia — Jasenovac, which even in those days in 1942 was called the camp of death and destruction. It was ruled by the Ustashas, who were no less cruel than their founders, the German SS. The Jasenovac camp was organised according to the classic Nazi system for torture and mass killing, although it was officially called a labour camp. Scenes of the lowest sadism and inhumanity took place in it. Ustashas beat, tortured and killed inmates for pure fun. Under the pressure of those difficult conditions, poor nutrition and forced labour, people who were in that camp began to wither and disappear, even before Beisfjord. A similar thing happened to the group of inmates who had been in the Stara Gradiška camp before being sent to Beisfjord. In addition, it should be said that some internees were brought directly to the Jasenovac and Gradiška camps, while some had had to survive endure torture in prisons, such as in Sarajevo, Zagreb, Novi Gradiški, Bijeljina, Osijek and other places beforehand.

Internees who were deported to Beisfjord from the territory of Serbia and Vojvodina went through similar torture. They fell into the clutches of the German SS and Gestapo agents. Individuals suspected of being partisans or party officials, illegal workers and members of strike groups were especially tortured.

When they were assigned for transport to Germany, and then to Norway, they were relieved, because they thought the worst was over. For a few days through Austria and Germany, food and treatment were improved, and then the torture started again.

For twelve full days, the internees were crammed into the very bottom of the “Kerkplein” cargo ship. Unaccustomed to sailing in rough seas, crammed into the ship's cabins like sardines, with very poor nutrition and poor hygiene conditions, that journey brought many internees to the lowest point of their lives. Thus, when they got out of the ship onto solid ground, many could hardly even walk. And when the SS’s nefarious game with human lives started again in the Beisfjord camp, they had nothing left but to fill up the infirmary…

TERBOVEN'S ORDER IS ENFORCED

It was around 10 PM on 17 July 1942.

Shooting ensued.

At first sporadic, weak, then increasingly fierce and strong.

According to the statement of Stjepan Pištignjat, the guards from the tower first shot several patients who went to use the toilet, which was a few meters away from the barracks. There was probably already an order that no one leave the barracks, but people were forced by necessity. After the shots from the tower, two were killed, but several managed to return to their rooms.

After that, from the tower, the first officer in the camp command, Franz De Martin, ordered that the sick internees be taken out of the barracks. He commanded the shooting from the watchtower.

People approached the pit four by four in groups of twenty. Some went alone, some were held by others, and some were carried.

When the first group entered the corridor and reached the edge of the pit, they were ordered to line up next to the pit. Then they started mowing with machine guns. One machine gun was located on the guard tower, another on the roof of one of the barracks, and the third on the other side of the pit. They were arranged so that everyone could shoot without disturbing each other.

Thus began the massacre.

There were few witnesses. The first group of internees, 430 of them, were already leaving the camp when the shooting started. They could not see much, because they were leaving through the side exit, between barracks 27 and 28, on the other side of the camp. The second group of internees stayed longer in the barracks, but the shutters on the windows were ordered to be closed, so they too could not see much. They heard the firing and knew that the Germans were shooting the sick. A few brave ones tried to see what was happening outside through the small cracks between the shutters or through the slightly ajar door, despite the stern warning that it was forbidden. One of them, Milorad Miladinović, still remembers the people fighting to not go to the execution site, trying to leave the file, but German SS men were nearby, maintaining order with sticks and bayonets. Soon his group also left the camp, and there was only one way out of the infirmary - the path to death!

The only one among the Yugoslavs who was able to see more, he too sporadically and incoherently, was the main camp interpreter, Hivzo Galošević. This was his experience of that terrible event:

Passing between our barracks, I saw how the sick comrades

were fighting with the paramedics between barracks 15 and 16, because they were reluctant to go to their deaths. But, when they did go, they walked calmly and with a sure step.

We couldn't hear if they were saying or shouting anything during the shooting, because the pit was quite far from us, and everything was closed. It was three o'clock in the morning, and the killing of our comrades was still going on. I went out and came back at the sound of whistles. In the patient barracks, a terrible and gruesome desolation gradually spread, until finally, around half past five in the morning when the last ones, that is paramedics Davidović and the other one, who had to take all their comrades to the execution site, stood at the entrance to death themselves. Giving their names to "Ruski", they went to the pit, where the executioner's bullets united them forever with the other slain comrades. The shooting did not stop yet. The whistle was blown again. I was told to prepare people, because we would soon be going somewhere.«

Hivzo wrote this poignant and sad memory in May 1945, a few days after the liberation. He still felt the effects of all the traumas he had experienced three years prior, knowing that his comrades were dying and that he could not help them. This is also felt in the text. That's why Hivzo couldn't get everything together, because after all, he hadn't seen everything. The reconstruction of the entire event can therefore only be carried out when other witnesses are heard.

The shooting scene was seen by a Norwegian man Johann Sundby, whose house was the closest to the camp. He said:

"I saw that a passage was built on the camp fence. Barbed wire was placed from the barracks on the lower side of the camp all the way to the pits. There were 2 guards in each watchtower, instead of one as usual. The inmates were taken out of the barracks between rows of wires all the way to the tomb. There were about 20—25 people in each group. Six attendants escorted the inmates to the cemetery. They lined them up there. When the inmates were lined up in front of the pits, the attendants retreated and the man with the machine gun started shooting at the people. When the firing stopped, the six attendants pushed into the pit those who did not fall into it, those who were already dead and those who were not. I myself saw that after falling into the pit, many inmates raised their hands and tried to jump out of it. Those six attendants would come with a new group and they would, under strict supervision, throw dirt over their comrades who were thrown into the pit. Those who would try to escape would just be buried in dirt until there was silence."

The same witness, a little later, clarified some of his memories of that night. He added:

> "That evening, I saw the Germans take group by group of 25 inmates to the edge of a large grave, next to the camp itself. The guards, who had bayonets on their rifles, pushed some of them to the pit from a distance with their bayonets.
>
> The inmates were mowed down with machine guns by the guards, who were on the tower and on the roof of one of the barracks. I saw that many inmates were only wounded, but were simply pushed into the graves alive."

Johan's son Arill Sundby also gives an authentic testimony of this massacre. He was 20 years old at the time and for the longest time he followed what was happening and how his peers were losing their lives in the camp right next to his house. He said:

> "On the day of the shooting, I don't remember the exact date, whether it was 16 or 17 July, we were ordered, even before noon, not to leave our houses and to close the shutters on our windows. German patrols were circling the entire Beisfjord. We felt that something was going to happen, but we didn't know what. When the shooting started, I couldn't resist, I climbed into the attic of the house and watched everything through a very small and inconspicuous window.
>
> Group by group, of about twenty people, was taken out and shot. Those who were not killed immediately were finished off by the officers with their pistols in the breaks between the shootings. An officer from the tower kept shouting something. It seems to me that he commanded the shooting.
>
> It was awful to watch it all. I tried to pull away, but something always pulled me to keep looking. A little later, after the shooting started, I saw that a group of inmates was going somewhere through the side exit. Sometime later, another, but smaller, group was taken out of the camp.
>
> ---
>
> It was only when this second group came out and headed down the road towards Narvik that an SS orgy broke out in the camp. They acted as if they were on a hunt. At some point, the inmates stopped coming out and I thought that there were no more people alive, that the shooting was over. But it wasn't.
>
> The machine gun started mowing again, but now in the barracks. Only then did I realise that there were more inmates in them. Some of them, after the shooting in the barracks, tried to reach the other

barracks, not knowing that they were empty, that their comrades from those barracks had been taken somewhere. They would fall to the ground.

After that, there was a little lull. I saw only that groups of German soldiers had encircled the barracks.
Suddenly I saw fire.

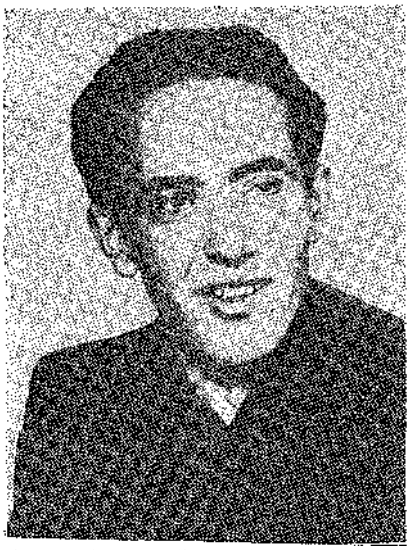
It was all like a nightmare. A thousand things were happening, right there in front of me, at the same moment and in such a small space, and my eyes couldn't keep track of it all.

The fire was getting bigger. It was clear that two barracks were burning. When some of the remaining inmates still tried to escape the fire, the Germans met them with bullets. I could not say for sure how many people burned in the barracks. But it was certainly more than a few."

Young Arill's story, which is really full of details, was largely confirmed by the German officers, who, a few days later, explained to the Norwegians why they had to shoot people. They also presented the information that a certain number of inmates did not want to leave the barracks, and that was why they set the barracks on fire. The Norwegian guards did not take part in this shooting. They went with two groups outside the camp, but they also reported, listening to the German officers, that many inmates were burned in the barracks, and that some were even buried alive in pits. A Norwegian, Osmund Rerslet, who was staying in Narvik at the time of the shooting, but who fled to Sweden a month later, also wrote and spoke about it. His statement will be discussed later.

Johann Sundby from Beisfjord with his wife, witness to the massacre

Carstein Foere from Narvik with his girlfriend, witness to the massacre



Atle Foere from Narvik, eyewitness to the terrible events

Arill Sundby from Beisfjord, saw the most

The impressions and memories of Arill Sundby are somewhat complemented by two other Norwegian high school students.

Sverre Millerjord also saw some of those events and talked about them:

> "I saw many of my peers in the row among the inmates. It was very difficult for me, and therefore, whenever I had free time, I would come near the camp and follow everything that was happening.
> The Yugoslavs were very well guarded.
> That night, when they were shooting people, I felt that something terrible was going to happen. Such was the atmosphere. When my mother came home, I told her I was going to the hill.
> I was on the other side of the hill. I heard gunshots and bursts. I watched for a bit through the bushes. I saw people falling into the pit and non-commissioned officers, who went by the pit and shot those who were not yet dead with their pistols. Blood poured over the corpses in the pit. I couldn't bear to watch everything until the end. It was a terrible night, the most terrible night of my life. I couldn't sleep that whole night.
> A little later I asked the Norwegian Svensson from the legionary battalion, who was a cook, what happened. He told me sadly "They were annihilated like insects!"

Nineteen-year-old Carstein Foere was also curious as a young man, and despite curfew orders, somehow made it to the hill above the camp from where he watched part of the shooting. He said:

> "I was 19 at the time. I lived not far from the camp. One day, it was ordered that everyone go home, close their windows and shutters, and not leave their houses. We boys, despite the order, sneaked outside. We took a shortcut, which the Germans did not use. There were four or five of us, I don't remember exactly. But not all of us stayed long. Some fled immediately when the shooting started. Some stayed longer. But no one lasted until the end. Me neither. The harrowing sight was too much for our youthful curiosity. However, we did see something.
> When we arrived, the first thing we saw was one big pit, and maybe more, I don't remember exactly. And then came the scariest part:

the inmates were placed on the edges of the pit, and from the watchtower and the roof of a barrack, the Germans showered bullets at them in bursts. People fell, some into the pit, and some onto the plateau above the pit. It's sad. You're watching a crime, but you can't stop it.

When the first group fell to the ground and into the pit, two officers or non-commissioned officers, I didn't quite see, were walking along the edge of the pit and shooting from their pistols, probably at those who were not dead. I stood in the shade of a tree. I also saw that the Germans would stop firing and pour some white liquid over one group at a time.

Some, as I saw, were running around the camp grounds. They hid under the barracks. Some did not even want to leave the barracks. They were also shot.

I couldn't watch it until the end either. It was a very harrowing sight for me. I ran like in a daze, like crazy. I didn't even know what I was doing. I shouted: »Goddamned Germans!« I remember that some of those who were shooting wore navy suits.

I only told my father what I saw.

Later I heard that our doctor Weideborg had been in the camp before and declared typhus. But I don't know if that's true.«

The recollections of the witness, his brother Atla Foere, about the first shooting incident more or less match. This was how they experienced it.

However, since it all lasted a long time, and the scenes were painful and harrowing, not everyone could watch for a long time. They would leave before the end. With sad, gloomy faces, distressed.

That is why the second part of the shooting or the second act of this massacre remained largely unexplained. Young Arill Sundby followed all this for the longest time, so probably his memory of this second act is the most reliable. . ..

By careful reconstruction, based on all the statements, the following can be concluded:

Firstly, the second group of Yugoslav internees was stopped to wait in the camp for the end of the shootings in order to fill the pits. However, an unforeseen situation occurred. Many inmates did not want to leave the barracks. How to drive them out? By shooting at the barracks. The Germans didn’t want the sight of inmates barricading themselves to appear heroic to their comrades, and they had to remove them, so that they would not see those scenes. The shooting stopped. That's why neither Hivzo Galošević nor the other Yugoslav internees knew at the time that the barracks were on fire.

Secondly, it is obvious that a large group of inmates really barricaded themselves in the rooms and did not want to die voluntarily. The special unit of guards first tried to drive them out with bayonets, but they were ordered to do it from the doors and windows, not to enter the rooms, nor to approach them any closer. That is why that action was not successful. Then they were ordered to fire machine guns into the barracks. When the shooting started, some internees tried to escape from those two barracks, but other bullets caught up with them in the camp area or under the barracks. Most of them stayed in their rooms.

That's when the camp command made a new decision. To burn the barracks. Buckets of gasoline were brought in. Several soldiers spilled gasoline on the walls of the barracks and under them. After that, the flame burst out. People were being burned alive in the barracks. Several individuals, their suits burnt, tried to escape by jumping out of the windows. They were met by bullets from the watchtower.

The first camp officer Franz de Martin commanded this massacre the whole time from the watchtower. He felt as if he were in a military headquarters on the front and on the other side of the barricades were armed enemy soldiers. He was in ecstasy. At least that's what the Norwegian legionnaires say based on the explanations of the German soldiers who witnessed the act. They say that the whole time he was yelling maliciously: “Say hello to the partisans, you pigs! You dared the German Reich. Now you will get what you asked for! “

Then peace reigned over this valley of death. An eerie peace.

Only the remains of burnt barracks were still smoking for two days. The smoke rising from the burning place was blown by the wind towards the sea and scattered across the narrow bay of Beisfjord. Along with the smell of burnt dry planks, the stench of burnt human bodies could still be felt for two days.

The aforementioned Greta Dahl did not omit this event in her diary. She wrote:

> “... It would be best if a person could be completely indifferent, and not go out anywhere and not hear anything, and not see all that. Because now spotted typhus has spread in the Beisfjord camp. Those infected with typhus were immediately shot. This is also what the Germans did to the soldiers in Bude.
> We have already learned to understand how little a human life is worth today!”

Pages 114 and 115

DEATH DID NOT CHOOSE

On 6 August 1942, the command of the Beisfjord concentration camp sent a report with two errors to the SS High Command and the "Nord" Police in Oslo. Both are certainly intentional.

The first is that, as the subject of the report, they stated that it was about the deceased, and the second, that instead of their names, they wrote numbers.

Yes, exactly, numbers.

For the Germans at that time, people were numbers.

287 numbers were listed in the report.

So many people died on that fateful and sleepless night[1], between July 17 and 18.

The numbers were given to the internees when they arrived at this camp.

On the list of the executed is internee number 3. It is Radivoje Rotarov from Kikinda. The last one is number 879. It is Čedo Čudić from Severin, municipality of Duga Resa.

As chance would have it, in their country, both the first and last on the list of this massacre were lawyers.

Radivoje Rotarov, born on 2 December 1915 in Kikinda, had already been working as a lawyer when he was arrested as a member of the People's Liberation Movement. He was one of the prominent members of the communist party in Kikinda. During the uprising - very active, in the organisation of the partisan unit in Northern Banat. Arrested on assignment.

There is little information about Čedo Čudić, born in Severin, near Duga Resa, who was a trainee lawyer, or about his work before his arrest. He reached the Beisfjord camp via Jasenovac. He did not know many people in this group, and he would have been almost forgotten, because he died quickly, had it not been for the discovery in the archive of the Belgrade Gestapo of a letter rogatory from the Serbian Red Cross, to the German Red Cross. In that letter, the German authorities were asked to answer what had happened to him. In their reply, the German authorities stated that Čudić went with the third group to the "Wiking" working command on 25 May 1942. Information about his further movements, it was said, could be obtained from the "Organisation Todt Leitstelle, Wien I, Dr Karl Leueger — Platz 5." The letter was written on 13 August 1943. It is not known if further attempts were made to trace the fate of Čeda Čudić. But, when the first notice arrived in Belgrade, Čeda Čudić, was, unfortunately, no longer alive.

Two lawyers opened and closed the dossier of a barbaric crime. International law and humaneness could not help them nor all the others who were shot that night. The German fascists simply did not recognise these.

That night, farmers, workers, students, craftsmen were shot. That night, Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Montenegrins, Slovaks were shot. Death did not choose. All of them had their own human, work and family characteristics, and what they had in common was that they did not want to serve the fascist occupier and his servants. All of them were honest patriots, who loved their hearth, freedom and homeland.

In this massacre, many men of families from Kordun lost their lives: Bijelić, Mrkalj, Lončar, Vlajnić, Jurić, Nikoliš, Kljajić and Manojlović. Among them were those from eighteen to twenty years old, as well as those over 50

years old. Fathers and sons, uncles and nephews.

Residents of the village of Mlaka, municipality of Novska, also met a similar fate. Most of the men of the Bulići, Krlići, Malbaša, Ćurulija and Zvečevac families left their bones in those pits on that fateful night. 10 men from the Krlić family were killed, and 4 from the Malbaša family.

Many more villages of Kordun, Banija, Slavonia, Semberija, eastern Bosnia and other parts of Yugoslavia, mostly Serbs, were decimated. But, together with them, Croats and Muslims died that night, too.

One of the most prominent people in the camp, also a lawyer, Adil Grebo from Sarajevo, lost his life. A man and a communist. He used to gather people around him, no matter where they were from. He was a great people's person. Besides him, in this massacre, Ismet Pašić, typographer, Ismet Milavić, lawyer, Muharem Alibegović, worker, Hašim Husenčehajić, baker, Ahmet Dizdar, hairdresser and others fell or burned to death in the barracks.

In addition to Grga Andrijanović, who was an illegal fighter from Belgrade, Franjo Aldrava, a worker from Sarajevo, Josip Vladušić, a worker from Zagreb, Franjo Goneta, an employee from Sarajevo, Borislav Hanžek, a student from Petrinja, Dragutin Molan, an employee from Zagreb and others.

Out of the members of the First Psunj Partisan Company, Ivan Dragomanović and Stjepan Klarić, all from the village, lost their lives.

Pages 137-145

TEMPORARY LEAVING OF THE CAMP IN BEISFJORD

With the shooting of the insolent members of the SS, the other internees, the so-called healthy ones, were taken out of the camp in two groups.

Both groups left the camp area, not through the main gate, but through a side exit, which was located between barracks number 17 and 18. The SS estimated that, if they took this exit, the internees would not be able to see what was happening at the other end of the camp, where the shooting of the sick had already begun. They only heard gunfire.

The first group of prisoners left the camp area around 9:30 p.m. At that time, in this part of Europe, it is visible, as in plain daylight.

The group was divided into 4 transport subgroups.

The first subgroup of 100 internees was led by Ale Lelić, the second of 100 by Marko Šobot, the third of 115 by Nedeljko Marković and the fourth of 115 by Stanko Diklić.

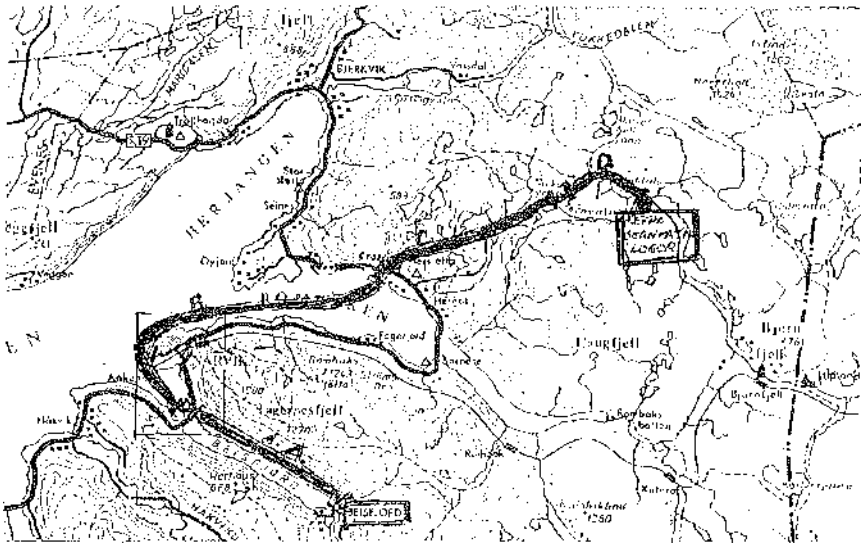
For subgroups 1 and 2, 10 German and 7 Norwegian guards were appointed to accompany them, and for subgroups 3 and 4 11 German and 8 Norwegian guards.

Captain Euler was in charge of the guards for the first two sub-groups, and Lieutenant Becker for the other two.

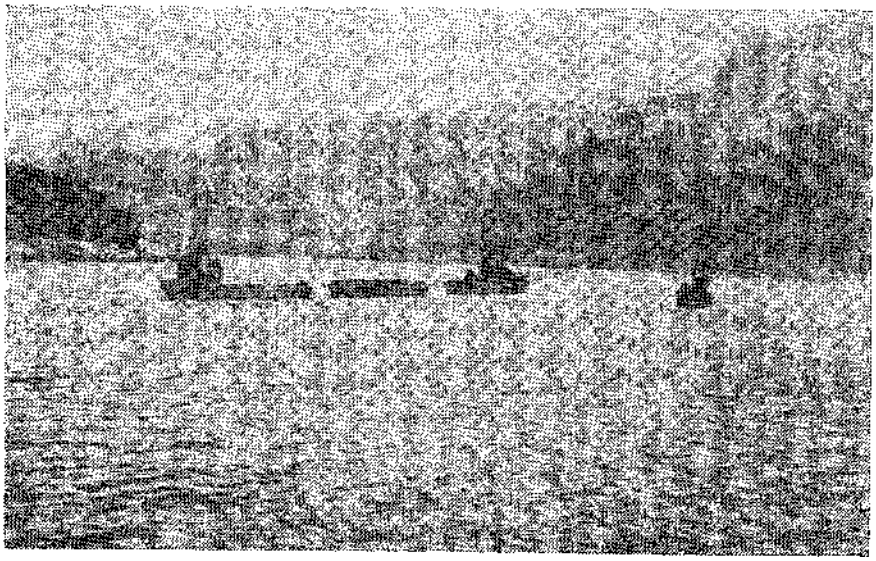
The last group of internees, including the chief camp interpreter Hivzo Galošević, left the camp two or three hours later and it had a total of 158 internees. They were taken over by German soldiers, who kept watch in the close and further proximity of the camp, at the time of the shooting.

588 internees left the camp.

The first group waited for the second group on an empty field in Fagernes Quay, and then they were all loaded together in three barges and headed down the fjord. During the entire journey, a small German patrol boat was circling around this unusual convoy, in which there were several German officers. They showed the direction and at the same time controlled the internees and the guards, who stood on the sides of the barges and other outposts.



Sketch of the route from Beisfjörður to Björnfjell of 588 internees who were not designated for execution.



A convoy of small boats with internees at Rombakenfjioird, on the way to Traeldal, and from there to Björnfjell

Attention was redoubled.

The middle barge, which had neither a cabin nor its own traction, was

apparently taken from some workshop and was not fully operational. As soon as we left Fagernes Quay, it started to get filled with water. Already after half an hour, the internees had to get up and ride standing up, because in the middle of the barge the water was up to their knees.

Where are they going?

Not a single internee knew that. Not even the interpreters. They were only told that they were going to the quarantine.

The fjord is dominated by high mountain ridges, they were tearing into the sky. Only to their right one could still get a glimpse of Narvik.

The boats circle the town and turn right again, entering a new, slightly larger bay, Rombaksfjord, to the north of Narvik. After some time, the convoy crossed the fjord and, after going around a small island, docked on the other side, on a small quay, built of wooden poles, not far from the power station.

That place is Storvik by Traeldal.

From there, the road leads to the mountain.

In their statements the internees said that they stayed in these barges for about 3 days and that they were without food and water for that long.

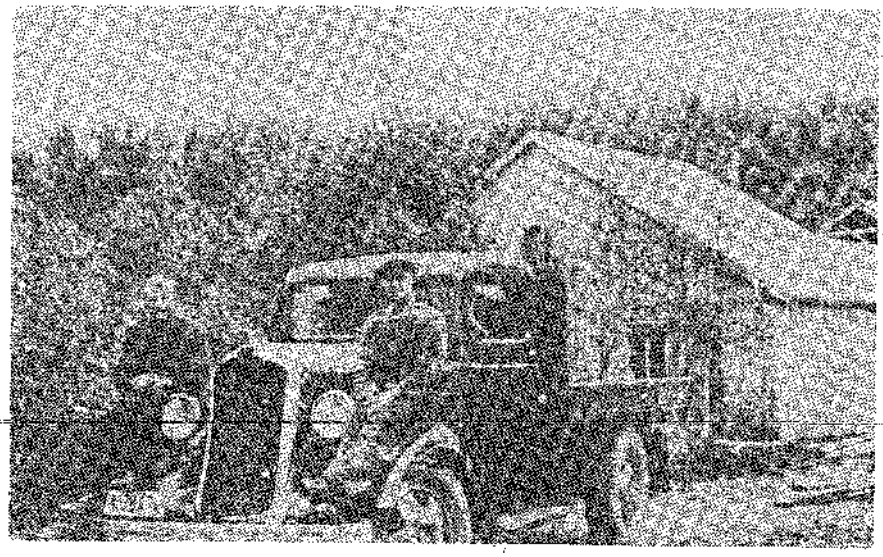
In fact, before leaving, they were given abundant meals of dry, salted cod and that's all.

However, since they did not take containers with drinking water with them, new troubles arose. Thirst was constantly increasing, so many were forced to drink water from the bottom of the barges. One can imagine what that mens when one also takes into account that during that entire time no one was allowed out, so they even relieved themselves in those barges. Individuals, with the generous permission of the guards, scooped up sea water with their bowls and drank it, expecting to quench their thirst, which was unbearable.

Of course, the thirst was getting stronger. And with it the suffering.

It is difficult to determine exactly how long the internees actually waited on the Traeldal quay. In any case, it was between two and three days.

Why did they wait so long?



One of the trucks which took the internees from Traeldal to Bjørnfjell

Probably so the Germans could prepare 4 trucks for further transport and equip them as they saw fit.

And they equipped them very strangely.

On each truck at a height of one meter to one meter and twenty centimetres, barbed wire was intertwined from above, as well as from all four sides. It looked more like a barbed wire cage than a means of transporting people.

The first group was savagely crammed into truck cages. People could not enter upright, nor could they stand. They were half-bent, so they crawled in and squeezed themselves in a crouching position, until the head of transport assessed that there were enough of them in the truck.

After a long haggle and a fight, the first group of work trucks left somewhere. Up the hill. To the mountain.

According to the statement of the driver Seter, the trucks were requisitioned from a construction company from Oslo, which was working on the construction of the road, so, in addition to him, the other drivers were also Norwegian.

The Germans surrounded the trucks with barbed wire.

And the convoy moved uphill like this:

In the front of each truck, on the sides on the headlights, two SS men were sitting, and one was sitting in the driver's cabin.

A non-commissioned officer was sitting in the cabin next to the driver. At the

front and at the back of the convoy were two passenger cars with German officers.

Guards doubled, vigilance tightened!

This is, of course, because it was considered that they would be passing, so to speak, close to the Swedish border, so perhaps some might try to escape from that evil.

Although they treated these people cruelly, the German Nazis were always afraid, to the end, that they would run away, or that, somewhere in those mountainous areas, they would even attack them!?

As the first groups left on these specially equipped trucks, the rest waited in barges. It was ordered that no one, not only must not leave the barge, but that any movement in was prohibited. They had to sit or stand peacefully for hours, on these small boats, which rocked on the troubled sea. .

There was a long wait for the return of each truck tour.

So, the place of quarantine was not very close.

MEMORIES OF YUGOSLAVS AND NORWEGIANS OF THIS JOURNEY

The situation was toughest for those who were last. They had to wait the longest, and many were in the water up to their knees, hungry, thirsty and and tormented by a new uncertainty. To add to that, they were concerned by the fate of their sick comrades, who remained forever at the execution ground in Beisfjord. They weren't sure that everyone had perished, but they assumed that their comrades had still met that evil fate. Some had a brother, a father, a cousin.

The journey to Bjørnfjell remained, therefore, forever in the memories of the internees, as one of their most difficult moments.

About that, Stjepan Rajković, a metal worker and an illegal fighter and party member from Slavonski Brod, says:

> »That journey was like my own funeral. As if we were all going to our own funeral.
>
> I had several reasons for that: firstly, no one knows where we were going. The uncertainty was complete. Secondly, the way in which they put us in those cages was more than barbaric. I looked at my comrades in the truck: all wonderful people, good hosts, patriotic, anti-fascists. The SS called us savages, and I believe that none of us, if the situation were reverse, would do that to them. They beat us violently and stab us with pointed sticks, to make us squeeze as tight as possible, to make us fit as much as possible.
>
> For them, the law of physics did not apply, how many people can fit in a truck. They just beat and load new prisoners. If you mumbled anything, a thousand blows would befall you at once. And the fate after so many beatings was all but well known.

The suffering started when the truck started on a rough, gravel road. The taller ones, especially, but also the others, moaned in pain, because as the truck jolted, the barbed wire got stuck in their head, the shoulder, in the body. And some had only blankets as clothes. Many have blood dripping from their heads or spilling somewhere on their clothes. I was slightly in the front in the group. I noticed that the driver chose the less bumpy parts of the road, in order to ease our misery as much as possible. Later we heard that he is Norwegian!

That journey could not go unnoticed by the Norwegians, Some saw it. Trader Olav Angell Nygaard says:

»I was on the dock at Fagernes Quay until the local regular boat left. Then I saw the inmates in the boats and how the guards were mistreating them. When I approached the dock, where the boats were, the Norwegian guard urged me to move on. I asked what they were afraid of. He replied that I didn't know how dangerous these camp inmates were. He assured me that they slaughtered and ate their countrymen."

Norwegian Leif Ottar Saether, the driver, who drove the internees from the quay in Traeldal to the mountain, says of it:

"The loading of the inmates into the trucks took place in such a way that the German and Norwegian guards hit them and stab them with guns or sticks; it hurt, if they didn't go in fast enough. When they did not stand close enough, these guards pushed them from the outside with spiked sticks and packed them in like sardines. The inmates had wounds on their legs and body, and some had swollen feet. There were about 600 inmates that we transported!

During that time, they received neither food nor water. But, some still nibbled on some leftover piece of bread. If someone fell out of the truck on entry, the guards would prevent the others from picking him up. German and Norwegian guards were hitting him together.

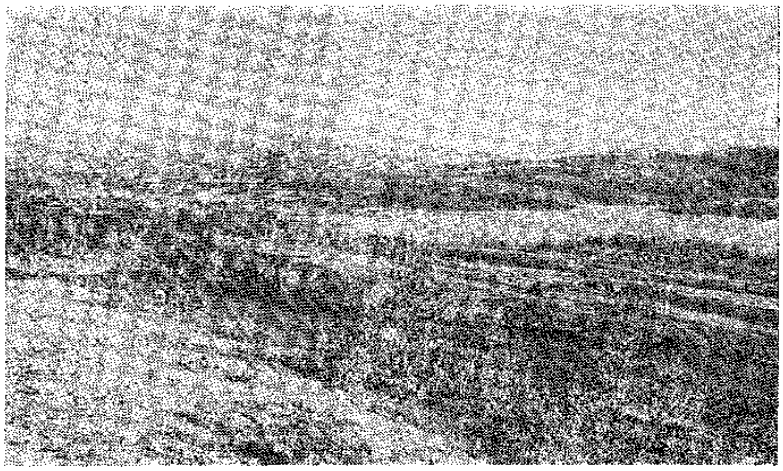
The Norwegian guards' treatment of the inmates was cruel and inhumane. There are no words strong enough to describe the cruel actions of the Norwegian guards, without exception.

I asked down on the dock, what had these prisoners done when they received this treatment. A Norwegian guard answered me that if I knew what they had done, I would not feel sorry for them at all. The inmates were treated too leniently, he told me.

I had the impression that the Norwegian guards also enjoyed torturing the inmates.

Those camp inmates, who were sitting on the side of the truck, were prickled with barbed wire as the truck jolted, even though I was only driving in first and second gear. Many screamed, and some silently

endured it all. There was a lot of moaning. Down on the quay, they were controlled by German and Norwegian guards. All the guards received food, but the internees did not. . .)



Farmer Nikolai Harr from the town of Traeldal shares his memory with many details, which he has not forgotten. He told me this:

> “On Saturday, 19 July 1942, the camp inmates came to the dock in Storvik. They were delivered in three barges. They came in them on Saturday night. They were huddled together in the barges and there they stood the whole time without food or water.
> They were naked. Those who had trousers, didn't have shirts, and those who had shirts, didn't have trousers. Most of them were barefoot, and some had clogs, without socks.
> The vehicles were ordinary 2 to 2.5 tonne trucks. On them they put bars, densely wrapped by barbed wire. This superstructure was so low that the camp inmates had to crawl inside. When they entered, they sat huddled together, because, otherwise, their heads would touch the wire.
> The Norwegian guards, who were standing on the dock, also had a machine gun, some only had rifles. In addition, they also held sticks, about 2 meters long, pointed. These sticks were specially made for these occasions.
> On the steps of the dock stood some inmates, who I think were informants, Croats. They had a green ribbon, on which it was written: "on duty".
> As the inmates climbed up the dock, they would hit them with sticks. Passing by each guard like that, you would get hit. When they got into the trucks, the Norwegians were ready to receive them. German and Norwegian guards also beat them in the truck.

Then they would stab them with sticks. They pushed them with the pointed end and compacted them so that as many of them as possible could fit in the truck. When they did not succeed in squeezing them enough, they went to the side of the truck and pushed them. Spikes were used to push the inmates and compact them.

On the site of the new camp, the half-finished barracks were given to the Norwegian legionnaires. The second one, finished, was taken by the Germans.

Above the camp is a large swamp and the Serbs were stationed there. They immediately built a barbed wire fence and towers. The Serbs lay in the swamp for at least 14 days, without a roof over their heads.

On Friday evening, a north-westerly wind began to blow with mist and rain and even sleet. It became very cold. At that time there was no shooting in the camp, as was usual. When the inmates reached Sirkelvatnet, they had to walk about a kilometre and a half, to Jernvatn, before they were loaded into boats. During that entire time, they were under the guard of German and Norwegian soldiers.

It was a road covered with sharp granite stones. The Serbs walked barefoot along the road.

The guards took stones and threw them at the column. A stone usually flew past the column and hit individuals in the head. The guards laughed cynically at this and imitated the inmates. Norwegian and German guards also took part in this "stone-throwing game.")

Yugoslav Hilmija Terzić, an electrician from Bosanska Krupa, was an inmate in the Beisfjord camp, and after the war he testified at the trial of the Norwegian guards. which were tried by the Norwegian court. On that occasion, he said about this journey up the mountain:

"They were cramming us into the boats, about 100 in each. (He means a small boat, and other evidence shows that there must have been about 200 people in each barge, author's note).

We were in them for 3 full days, without food or water. After that. we were put into trucks with barbed wire and taken to Björnfjell. There were no barracks for us in Björnfjell. They showed us a space. We dug a canal around it and we were not allowed to go outside it. So we were housed for 3 weeks without a roof over our heads. Later we got some Finnish barracks, small, round ones. We slept in them, 15 in one.")

A SONG OF SADNESS AND DEFIANCE

On the evening of 6 August 1942, the numbers in the camp were as follows: 508 alive, 43 sick, 3 dead.

The dead: Roknić (No. 593), Ćurulija (No. 753) and Roknić (No. 580). Two from Kordun and one from Mlaka.

The number of the living is decreasing. There are already eighty fewer of them than on arrival at Björnfjell, and only two weeks have passed. There are fewer people in each group: among those from Kordun, Vojvodina, Sarajevo, Romanija, Banija, Mlaka, Slavonija, Belgrade.

In the evening of that day, sometime before dinner and the roll call, a man from Mlaka, Milan Ćurulija, died suddenly from hard work and general weakness. He was a farmer. Born in 1909. On the way to Norway, he kept spirits up not only for his countrymen, but for the entire transport, with a song sung along with his cousins, Ilija, Ostoja, Boža, Sava and Branko.

— Well, guys from Mlaka, who will sing now? Milan has gone too - Ale Lelić sarcastically shouted at this group of internees, showing that he was publicly rejoicing in someone else's death.

The men from Mlaka were silent.

After dinner, some of them crawled into makeshift tents. Cold rain was pouring outside.

Suddenly a song was heard:

- Oh, my girl,
my dear,
where's your dear mother!

It was a favourite song of Ćurulija and men from Mlaka, and it was also accepted by the neighbours from the villages of Jasenovac and Uštica.

It was sung in such a way that one soloist sang the first stanza, followed by the chorus which was joined by everyone who wanted and as they wanted.

In the cold, rainy evening, this folk melody, created on the banks of the Sava river, echoed through the inhospitable area of Björnfjell.

At the moment when the people of Mlaka finished their two stanzas, the people of Banat came up with their own, calm, lowland folk melody: "Whose pipe is playing in the road". The men from Melenci started, and the others joined in.

Two folk songs crossed and merged into one, although the melodies are different.

Suddenly, from the part of the camp where the men from Kordun were, one could hear their "anthem", as they called it on the way from

Yugoslavia. They often sang it. In the Beisfjord camp, it was as if they had forgotten it. The events somehow overtook them, so they didn't have time for a song.

It is a folk song. The people from Kordun were wrote and composed it. It was created in the fall of 1941, when the Ustasha authorities launched the first offensive against this freedom-loving region and mercilessly killed everyone they imprisoned or captured.

It was sung in all the villages of Kordun and in the partisan detachment. Aa sad song, but it always restored the strength of the people as well as the idea of the freedom struggle.

— In Kordun, grave next to grave,
a mother for her son looks.
She found him, on the grave she knelt
and told her son this:

Oh, my son, my pain,
Here lies your youth,
Oh my son, my sorrow,
How heavy is this earth on you?

Your tears are heavier for me
than my black earth.
Oh, mother, our kin do tell
that for freedom I fell! . .

The people of Kordun had not even finished the last stanza, when the people of Sarajevo joined in. They had been following this song quietly until then. At one point, the voice of the teacher, Desimir Janjetović, stood out. With a raised voice, he returned the song to the very beginning, but with one modification: instead of the line: "In Kordun", Desimir sang:

— In Björnfjell, grave next to grave,
a mother for her son looks.
She found him, on the grave she knelt
and told her son this

The whole camp, all the inmates, accepted this new, spontaneously created, camp song.

The spirit of solidarity and freedom sparked. For a moment, a new life horizon shined and separated these people from the harsh everyday life.

The song echoed louder and louder in this space.

A song of sadness, but also of defiance.

Everyone sang it, except the criminals, who were silent. They remained numb. They simply did not believe that there was still so much moral strength in these living skeletons.

The German command of the camp was some distance from the place where the internees slept. They didn't even hear the song. Only the guards, who had the night shift, at the guard posts around the camp, heard it. But they did not react.

That night, at one of the guard posts, there was also an unidentified Norwegian, a member of the Norwegian guard battalion. He memorised the song.

In the investigation, which the Norwegian judicial authorities conducted against all the members of the Norwegian SS guard battalion, right after the war, one of those guards just said that he remembered that the Yugoslav prisoners, in the nightmare of their lives, even sang. He says:

"I remember one evening in Björnfjell. It was raining heavily. And then they suddenly started singing. It overwhelmed me so much that I cried. I still remember the that song's tune. . .")

It was on 6 August 1942, in Björnfjell, in the Øvre Jernvann camp

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SADNESS BY THE SMOULDERING RUINS

When he counted the last surviving internee from Bjørnfjel, in the train outside the Beisfjord camp, Matheus the Lagerführer, asked sarcastically:

— What, there so few of you? Where are the others?

He was not in Björnfjell. He didn't even visit, but he certainly knew what was going on up there. He received information from his colleagues.

That is why, Hivzo Galošević, whom Matheus addressed, still considering him the main interpreter, did not respond to this challenge. He just shook his head and briefly reported: "Well, you see, Mr. Lagerführer!"

Sturmscharführer Karl Matheus, nicknamed "Snake" by the internees, because he never parted with his truncheon, which resembled a snake, ordered the internees to be distributed in rooms. 40 each.

They broke rank, lazily, listlessly.

Each of the 346 survivors, before turning left into the barracks, towards the room where they were assigned, glanced at the right side of the camp. There were no longer "Spanish horses" made of barbed wire, which divided the camp into the healthy and the sick. . .

There was no guard, who prevented the sick from crossing into the barracks of the healthy.

There was no longer a temporary opening on the camp fence, nor a short "extension" made of barbed wire, which encircled the three large pits...

But there were no barracks either, where their sick comrades had stayed five weeks earlier.

Just smouldering ruins!

Sadness crept into each of them.

Nobody said anything. The word remained frozen on the lips.

Every now and then someone wanted to say something, mumbled, but when he saw that he was breaking that sad silence, he gave up. ..

Everyone just looked at each other silently.

Silence.

The survivors paid their respects to their fallen comrades.

It was only then that it definitely became clear to many what had happened to the sick. The forebodings became reality.

Few people noticed that a new "comfort" was introduced in the rooms. Someone installed "boxes" in them, on two floors. It was possible to sleep more comfortably.

The comments about the massacre that took place when they left the camp came later, when the people had recovered from both what they had endured on Bjørnfjell and the shock of the burning barracks.

The shortest report about his lost comrades was written by the Belgrade illegal fighter Špiro Prostran, a native of the village of Smoković, near Zadar, in a post-war questionnaire:

> "In the Narvik camp, I remember when our sick comrades stayed in the barracks, and the rest of us were driven to Björnfjell. When we returned after a few weeks from the hills, we found the barracks burnt down and not a single one our friends alive.")

Dušan Vukomančić, from the village of Jasenovac, municipality of Novska, also returned with the group of survivors from the hill. He talked about the assignment he received immediately after returning to Beisfjord:

> "The Germans assigned me to the work group, to level the ground next to the very wire fence along the camp on the outside, which was very rutted.
>
> We knew what was under the thin layer of earth: the bones of our comrades!
>
> As far as I could tell and as far as my memory served me, there were a total of three tombs. All three were full. We were ordered to bring humus from the nearby terrain, from the forest, and to cover the uprooted parts, which we had previously levelled.
>
> After that, the Germans brought young pine trees from somewhere and we had to plant them there.
>
> I guess, to cover up this barbaric crime!")

Coming to Beisfjord for the second time, a new phase in the life of these people started. New only in time, but basically everything continued as before.

Since the Todt Organisation did not want to admit them, because they were unable to work, the SS units found it very convenient. Otherwise, they would be out of work, and would have to fill combat units on the fronts, where, by the way, many things had already not been going on as planned by the German High Command and Hitler.

Remaining still in the hands of the SS, the uncertainty regarding the survival of this group of Yugoslav internees was prolonged.

The only difference wass that the camp command was no longer obliged, as with Björnfjell, to send daily reports on the situation in the camp to Oslo. Apparently, Reich Commissioner Terboven was no longer interested in this group of Yugoslavs. They were written off for him.

But it also brought difficulties in research. There are no more daily documents about the mistreatment and the killing of people. Only global data remained.

The quarantine was abolished as early as Björnfjell. This was announced by the first camp officer Seifert.

But the killing of people was not.

It continued in Beisfjord at almost the same pace.

When Emil Magdić, an electrician from Zagreb, in the first days after his return to Beisfjord, went out with a Norwegian guard to the officers' quarters to repair the radio, he took the opportunity, when they were alone, and asked the Norwegian:

— Is there any hope that even some of us will return home alive? ...

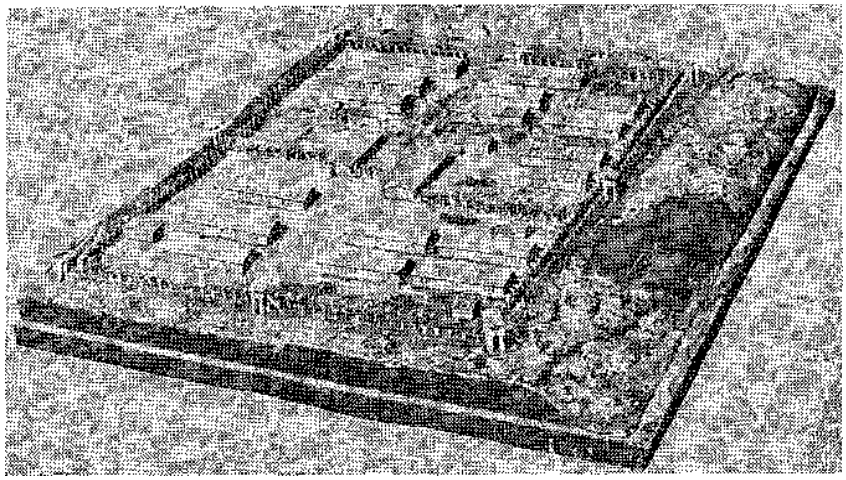
"I doubt it," answered the Norwegian without thinking. “As far as I know what the Germans say about you, there is little hope that someone can survive. I pity you all, I see you are good people. But I can't change anything. After all, you can see for yourself that we Norwegians don't kill you. Only those two, three are bad. Everything is decided by the German SS.”

The only novelty that the camp command introduced after returning to Beisfjord was bathing in barrels once a week.

In the camp itself, several barrels were placed into which water was brought from the river, and slightly heated water from the laundry. Then the internees entered the barrels and bathed, thus maintaining hygiene. There was also some soap.

The camp command allegedly wanted to have clean people, but already the next day they were wantonly destroying them.

Because of poor food, people became weak, they would swell up due to the lack of protein. The whole body was swollen, hands and mostly legs. The face would also get considerably deformed. People couldn't walk. The German doctor knew what the causes were. That was also taught at the university. Every student could immediately make a diagnosis. The therapy could be effective only by improving the diet. It could not even be discussed.



Model of the Beisfjord concentration camp

Original photo of the Beisfjord camp after the return of Yugoslav internees from Björnfjell

SEPTEMBER 1942 — A MONTH OF CONSIDERABLE LOSSES

It is difficult to figure out why the German camp command in Beisfjord was so callous in those days in September 1942. Had they already received the order to liquidate the entire camp, or were there other circumstances?!

In any case, they did everything to destroy as many internees as possible. And they didn't choose the means.

One of the methods was destruction with food?!

Namely, on 2 September, they brought into the camp two barrels full of salted cod, whose shelf life had expired in 1934. They distributed them to everyone. It was a dietary supplement.

Hungry people eat that overly salty pressed cod. They chew. They are happy that they have something to put in an empty stomach, which is crying out for any kind of food.

What did the Germans want with salt cod?

It looked like an experiment, so that they could observe the reaction of hungry people when they are given excessively salty food. But it could also be that it was a random circumstance, they had cod in the warehouse, so they wanted to use it up.

So, the people ate.

After two hours, complications sprang up. Great thirst, and the Germans do not provide additional amounts of water.

Torment. Illnesses, dysentery, stomach aches, sweating. . .

No commission monitored these reactions. The infirmary was just filling up more and more.

And the way from there is known.

On 6 September, the Germans organised an examination of all the internees, not a medical examination, but an examination to find lice. A group of five officers and 3 non-commissioned officers entered the camp that day and, with the assistance of Ale Lelić and his police group, arranged them in four columns, they checked the clothing and the body of each internee individually.

Lice were declared "state enemy number one!".

That's why, without holding back, they peered into every seam of clothing and every part of the body of the internees, who had to stand naked the whole time in the chill September climate.

They didn't even shy away from examining the backside.

The criminals helped them abundantly:

— Here, Mr. Lagerführer, this one has them. So many of them!, they shouted importantly, as if they had no less found bombs on them.

Woe to the one on whom even a single louse, or even a nit was found.

That day, 17 lice and nits were found in seventeen of them.

The order was brief.

Seventeen of them were separated into a special room. They were stripped naked, and their suits were sent for disinfection. In the evening, everyone got dinner. And then went to sleep.

But in the morning, not one of them woke up alive.

The execution was carried out overnight. Silently. No shooting.

How did it happen?

As soon as the internees fell asleep, the German officers Seifert and Matheus, accompanied by non-commissioned officers Dwelk and Janasik, brought a platoon of soldiers, who surrounded the barracks, where, in one of the rooms, the internees were lying naked, isolated.

Then Ale Lelić, Štefan Telišman and two other camp policemen were called. They were ordered to strangle the people.

No one survived to tell what happened that fateful night.

Only, the following day, Ale Lelić, theatrically said to the chief capo of the camp, Stanko Diklić:

"Tonight, we sorted out the Serbs in honour of your king's birthday!"

The sixth of September was the birthday of King Peter II, who was then in exile in London.

Although almost none of the internees, who were killed that night, had been imprisoned in the camp, due to their loyalty to King Peter II and the monarchy, the order to liquidate people was welcome for Ale Lelić that night, because his star at the camp command had already begun to wane. With this, he wanted to match his rival Diklić, who was a royal officer.

In the heat of the struggle for personal prestige, he did not even care to separate Serbs from others, but only to kill.

That night, the Muslim Sećo Tarahčija from Konjic and Croats: Aleksandar Ficur from Novi Karlovac, Franjo Pohe from Zagreb, Josip Majiček (a Slovak) from the village of Podoli and Ivan Kovačić from Našice were also strangled.

The fate of Ivan Kovačić is sad. He was born in Našice on 5 June 1904. A locksmith by profession. A very good man. When he got to the Zagreb prison, he found his friend Josip Matišić there, with whom he worked together in the railway workshop.

From there, they were both transferred to the Jasenovac camp, then on to Sajmište, near Belgrade.

When the group for Norway was separated, a German commission wanted to leave Kovačić at Sajmište because he was already weak and exhausted. Matišić asked:

— That's my brother. Can we go together?

Matišić thought that it would be better if they were together, they would help each other. And Ivan needed help at that moment.

So Kovačić left for Norway.

And they overcame all difficulties well. Until that day, when criminals allegedly found lice on him.

Why allegedly?

Ivan Kovačić spoke publicly against Ale Lelić several times, discrediting him from speaking on behalf of both Muslims and Croats. He was a Croat, honest and hardworking. He did not suffer the cruelty of criminals. Ale often said that one day he would get his revenge.

And he succeeded.

Kovačić really did not have lice. Ale planted one on him.

The next day he boasted:

— Well, them know who Ale Lelić is. That machine guy goes too. I personally buried him half alive. He was still showing signs of life when I threw a few shovelfuls of earth on him from above. Let him know who he opposed!

On that night, 6 September, the Germans and a group of criminals also strangled several of the youngest boys: Dušan Korkut from Ostrožine, born in 1925, Sava Aksentić from Tabakilovo, born in 1923, Joca Krlić from Mlaka, born in 1923, Veljko Kresojević from Vojnić, born in 1925, and Niko Mulić from Sarajevo, born in 1925.

The existing pit was filling up quickly, so it was ordered to dig another large pit to the northeast side of the camp. It was used for the burial of two groups of internees, who were shot on 17 and 23 September.

In those two days, the Germans took a total of 31 sick internees out of the infirmary and shot them.

Then, among others, Zdenko Garabija, Dimko Nelović, Ivan Milinković, Desimir Janjetović, Mato Knežević, Veljko Irić, a larger group of others, internees from various regions and groups, as well as three of the youngest, who apparently got sick from the salt cod: Rade Ičagić (1925), Jovo Nikoliš (1925) and Nikola Delić (1925).

In September, there were only two shootings, and that month took more than 150 lives.

It is estimated that around 60 people were strangled.

The Germans used this method in order to disturb the residents of Beisfjord as little as possible with shots and to cover up the crimes. They did it deliberately.

Namely, barrack number 17 was declared an infirmary. That barrack was somewhat separated from the others, it was located outside the camp wires. Next to it, in a separate room, barrack number 18, which was also somewhat distant from the others, the members of the police headquarters, led by Ale Lelić, were housed. They, too were outside the wires of the inner part of the camp. The Germans took them out of the inner circle of the camp, in order to privilege them, and, at the same time, to protect them from possible wrath of the internees, because it was rumoured that the Yugoslav internees in some camps in Northern Norway were

liquidating German informers and policemen at night.

The criminals took advantage of their position and permission to leave their rooms at night, they went to the sick barracks and strangled them there, until the last day of September.

No individual could stop criminals, who were doing all this under the immediate direction of the German camp command, from committing their crimes.

One morning, in mid-September, Simo Tuba, a farmer from the village of Past, born on 18 July 1896, fatigued and exhausted, slowly moved from the room towards rank. He was late. The Lagerführer had not yet arrived. The rank was arranged by the policemen themselves.

As a punishment for falling behind, Ale Lelić, on his own initiative, ordered him to eat one, not exactly small, pine branch in front of the rank.

Sima slowly chewed the twig part by part, with beatings that Ale Lelić relentlessly served with a truncheon, obtained from Lagerführer Matheus.

At the trial in Belgrade in 1946, Matheus admitted that he had given Ale Lelić a truncheon as a gift, allegedly so that he could defend himself if the internees attacked him.

That truncheon, however, served other purposes.

Simo Tuba ate the whole twig. He endured. But later he fell ill and died.

PART OF THE INMATES ARE LEAVING

Human fates in the Beisfjord camp were unpredictable. Someone who held on well and had the strength to endure more hardships would get killed on the construction site suddenly, and yet, people who were on the verge of death managed to escape it.

We have already described such fates in the text, but there is another interesting one.

Žarko Stojkov from Kikinda, like many others, was in a crisis.

— I can’t make it anymore. I’m finished. I have to go to the infirmary, he told his friends.

— Don’t go. Hold on a little longer. We will help you. You can see what happened to those who went to the infirmary. Stay with us.

— It's easy for you to tell me to stay with you when I can't even walk anymore. You see how weak I have become. . .

— You see, Žarko, if you hold on a little longer, we will help you. So don't despair. You are a craftsman. We will see to it that we get you into the workshop, so that you can recover, uncle Steva Mihailov said.

He eagerly agreed.

After that, they put him in a group of craftsmen, who worked on various easier tasks, without terror. That's how he saved himself.

Sometimes, a warm, friendly word could save a life.

And yet othertimes, not even a thousand such words and wishes could stop the dying of comrades.

Uncertainty is constant, until the last day.

In that full daily uncertainty, 30 September 1942 dawned.

It was said that there would be no work that day.

No one knew the reasons, not even the always well-informed camp policemen.

Josip Matiišić, worker from Zagreb

Žarko Stojkov, worker from Kikinda

Around 10 o'clock, camp commander Goecke, first officer Seifert, Lagerführer Karl Matheus, followed by non-commissioned officers Dwelk and Janasik entered the camp. They were quite official.

What was new was that the camp commander was also among the officers at that moment. He did not enter the camp often, nor did the internees see him much.

Petty Officer Dwelk held some papers in his hand.

The rank was called.

70 names were read. They were singled out. Everything was done under the veil of mystery. The Germans did not say why they were separating them. They just smiled importantly. And the internees, once again, taught by their previous experiences, remained totally distrustful and cold.

At one point it was leaked that this group was going to another camp. But no one officially confirmed that.

Hopes were only fuelled, because, in this camp, many possible things took place as impossible, and the impossible as possible!

Colonel Diklić was called first. As the head of the camp, he was privileged all the time. The Germans had some respect for him, because of his rank.

Štefan Telišman was called second, one of the most heinous criminals in the camp, he enjoyed great sympathy with the German camp command.

After them, 67 internees, mostly the physically weakest, were called.

At the end of the list was a Pole. Jan Bara. That's actually his nickname. His real name is Konstantin Homich, a native of Klimowice. As an officer of the Polish army, together with three other colleagues, he escaped from a Hungarian camp, receiving the task of setting up points in Yugoslavia and Bulgaria for the transfer of Poles from this territory, via Constantinople, to the Polish army, under the command of General Sikorski. He was captured.

The whole time in the Beisfjord camp he had a proper conduct, he survived all the horrors, like others.

A moment of anticipation to hear what would happen to the 70 selected. A ray of hope shone on the inmates, but the uncertainty continued.

Doubts were removed by Commander Goecke:

— By decision of the higher command of the SS, this group of 70 internees, is to leave the Beisfjord camp and is to be transferred to another one, which also contains Yugoslav prisoners! . . . Leaving early tomorrow morning...

It's hard to describe that moment when the commander finished.

They separated them into a separate room and brought buckets of water for each of them to wash.

That was already a positive sign.

Greetings and hopes.

They were going somewhere, it didn't matter where. It was important to escape from here, from the nightmare of the Beisfjord camp. It couldn't be worse there than it was here, at the end of the bay and up on the hill... The Bear Hill.

No one slept all night.

Excitement all around.

And various comments. And questions about why they were going and the others stayed.

Word leaked out that those who remained would be released as voluntary workers, included in the Todt Organisation.

This was more wishful thinking of rare individuals, than a real possibility. It was a kind of consolation for those who stayed, because they are told nothing at all as to why they stayed.

Most of the camp police remained in Beisfjord. Those who left were happy about it, and those who stayed were afraid.

The next morning, 1 October 1942, a group of 70 internees lined up with luggage, ready to leave.

And finally seventy lucky people left the camp.

There were people from all over Yugoslavia: 5 from Zagreb, 3 from Belgrade, 6 from Vojvodina, 4 from other parts of Croatia, 4 from Serbia, 8 from Mlaka and Jasenovac, 13 from Kordun, 9 from northeastern Bosnia, 9 from eastern Bosnia, 8 from Sarajevo and from Herzegovina and 1 Pole.

The entire group was sent to the Korgen camp, in northern Norway, not far from the town of Mo I Rana. Yugoslav internees were also housed in this camp since July 1942.

For many of the surviving Beisfjord internees, Korgen is the camp of salvation.

126 internees remained in Beisfjord. Of these, 86 were healthy and 40 were sick.

25 OCTOBER 1942 — THE CAMP WITHOUT YUGOSLAVS

And so the month of October was slowly coming to an end.

The remaining Yugoslav internees were still in limbo. Would they travel somewhere, or would they stay longer here, in Beisfjord.

It was already winter weather in this part of Norway.

Snow covered not only the nearby hills, but also the terrain around the camp. And the camp itself. Cold wind and sleet were commonplace in October.

Fortunately, most of the remaining internees were holding on relatively well. The majority of the former wardens, craftsmen and those younger ones, who were a bit fitter, as far as that could be said for the living conditions in the camp.

They didn't even go out to work outside the camp anymore. One group went to fetch water, the second one prepared firewood for the German soldiers. The third went to Narvik to unload the goods.

That was all.

But the sick were still the biggest problem.

The infirmary was full. It was always open to everyone. The number of patients varied. Only a few managed to get free of those ominous rooms after a pause in the infirmary.

One of them is Dmitar Mrkalj. A young man. He found himself there in the infirmary at the worst possible moment, during the strangling of the people. And he observed everything. He watched helplessly as his countrymen and his other comrades, young and old, disappeared. They disappeared by strangulation. He was waiting for his turn. He was full of anger at those bastards from his country, who violently took the lives of others. But he couldn't do anything about it.

Maybe all that pain of watching gave him the strength to fight somehow, to improve his condition and to one day unexpectedly leave the infirmary and get into the rank of the healthy.

It was a salvation for him.

And he was silent about everything that happened in the infirmary. He was afraid of retribution. Because the criminals were still strong in the entire camp. Not only in the infirmary.

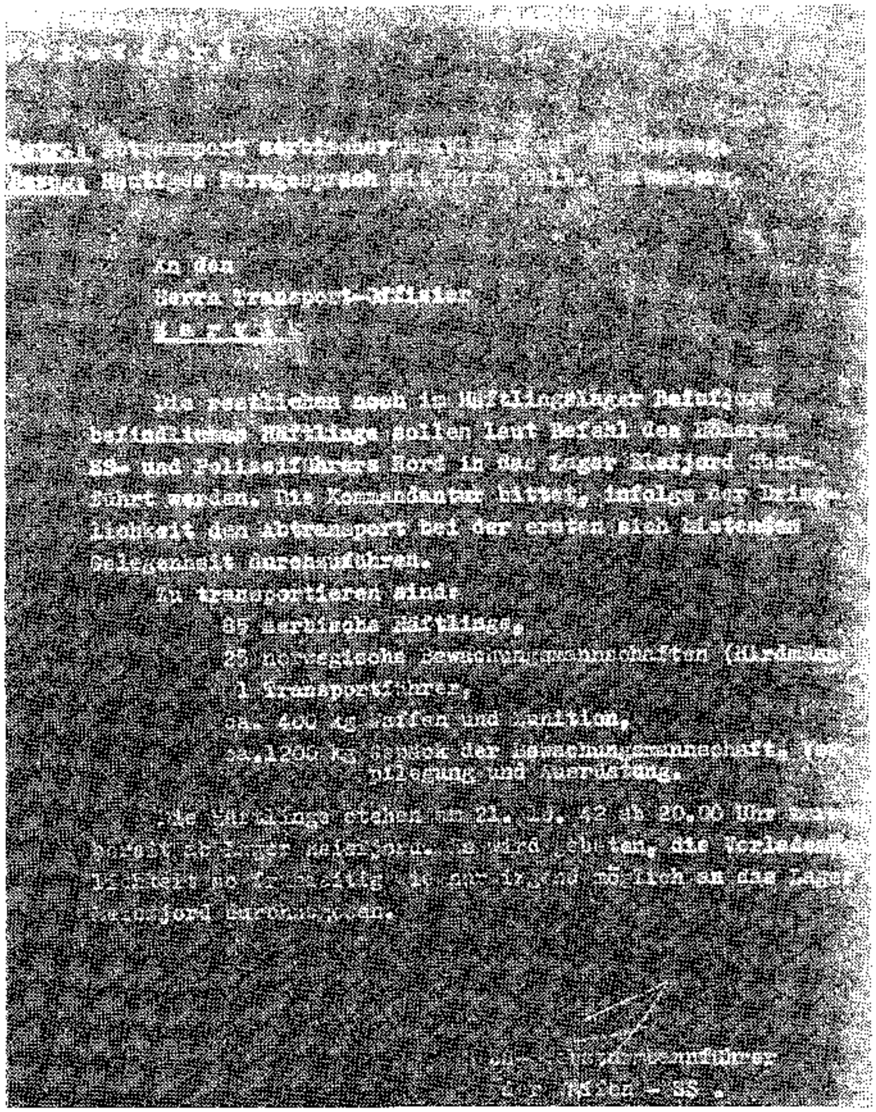
Only when he moved to the Korgen camp and was convinced that the situation there was completely different and that criminals had no power there, did he tell everything.

He was weak and exhausted. He was transferred to central Norway, to the Eisand sick camp. And there he revealed to his comrades what had been done with the sick in the Beisfjord camp and in Björnfjell. He lived to see the end of the war, but died soon after of the consequences of life in the camp, before he could return to the homeland.

Many events in the Beisfjord camp infirmary have been preserved from oblivion, primarily thanks to the statements of this young man, which he made before his death.

But, with his death, the last witness to the events in the infirmary of the Beisfjord camp also disappeared.

For the remaining 25 days of October, the SS continued to terrorise the internees. They chased them around the camp grounds, made them carry sacks of cement in a circle, do push-ups, do lie-downs



Betr.: Abtransport serbischer Häftlinge [illegible]
Bezug: Heutiges Ferngespräch mit [illegible]

An den
Herrn Transport-Offizier
[illegible]

Die restlichen noch im Häftlingslager Beisfjord befindlichen Häftlinge sollen laut Befehl des Höheren SS- und Polizeiführers Nord in das Lager Elsfjord überführt werden. Die Kommandantur bittet, infolge der Dringlichkeit den Abtransport bei der ersten sich bietenden Gelegenheit durchzuführen.

Zu transportieren sind:

85 serbische Häftlinge,
25 norwegische Bewachungsmannschaften (Hirdmänner)
1 Transportführer,
ca. 400 kg Waffen und Munition,
ca. 1200 kg Gepäck der Bewachungsmannschaft, Verpflegung und Ausrüstung.

Die Häftlinge stehen am 21. 10. 42 ab 20.00 Uhr [illegible] bereit [illegible]. Es wird gebeten, die [illegible] möglich an das Lager [illegible]fjord [illegible].

[illegible]-SS-.

A facsimile of the camp command report on sending the remaining group to Osen camp on 25 October 1942

get-ups, to drive their friends in a cart. They did all this to give them no peace, so that they would continue to weaken.

Again, the patients had the hardest time.

During October, a total of 41 inmates died, were strangled or killed.

Almost two a day.

On 24 October, a list was made of those for whom it was decided that they would travel to another camp.

There were 85 on the list.

That was the number of survivors.

The last ones standing.

And when the list and the written instructions were already drawn up, by which the remaining ones 85 were to be sent to another camp, three suddenly fainted. They fell ill. And of course, that night between the 24 and 25 October, they were shot.

So the remaining 82 internees were ready to go.

Early in the morning of 25 October, they also left the Beisfjord camp.

In this group there were: 4 men from Kordun, 7 from Mlaka, 4 from Slavonija, 9 from Zagreb, 5 from other parts of Croatia, 4 from eastern Bosnia, 5 from northeastern Bosnia, 10 from Sarajevo, 10 from Herzegovina, 18 from other parts of Bosnia, 4 from Vojvodina, 1 from Belgrade and 1 from Serbia.

They were transferred to the Osen concentration camp, in northern Norway, in the immediate vicinity of the Korgen camp, to which the first group of survivors from Belsfjord was sent.

In the Osen camp, there were Yugoslav internees who arrived in Norway in July 1942.

These two camps were under common command.

The internees worked on the construction of the Mosjøen-Elsfjord road, one part of which was called the Blood Road.

The SS man Janasik was the group leader of this last group of Yugoslav internees from Beisfjord, and 21 guards, mostly Norwegians, were assigned to accompany them, with the task of remaining in that camp as part of the guard battalion.