



Tomislav Dulić
**Among the Hyperboreans:
YUGOSLAV PRISONERS IN NORWAY 1942-1945***

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ABSTRACT

This article provides new insights into the violence suffered by more than four thousand Yugoslavs who were deported to Norway by Nazi Germany during the Second World War. Placed in labour camps throughout the country, they were made to work under extremely harsh conditions on projects such as road construction and military installations. Particular attention is paid to their interaction with prison guards and to the political conflicts that emerged within the prisoner group. The findings of sociologist Nils Christie on the camp guards are juxtaposed against new sources from Belgrade, which became fully available to scholars in the early 2000s. These new sources show how the camp administrations exploited the terrible hygienic conditions, malnutrition and negative stereotypes about a violence-prone “Balkan culture” to create emotional distance between prisoners and guards. The prisoners complained that they were not given enough food or sufficient opportunity to maintain their hygiene, which they attributed to a conscious policy on the part of the camp administration. Lice infestations, outbreaks of typhus and malaria, combined with extrajudicial executions, not least of prisoners who fell ill, resulted in a death toll of over sixty percent for the Yugoslavs. The Yugoslavs thus suffered among the highest death tolls of any national or ethnic community relocated to Scandinavia during the war. The analysis further deals with prisoner escapes to Sweden, which were often made possible by help from Norwegian civilians. Such experiences contributed to the very positive image of Norway and Norwegians in the witness statements taken by the Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm. These statements also show that the prisoners had a very positive view of how they were treated by the authorities upon arrival in Sweden.

Key words

camps, prisoners, guards, Yugoslavs, Norway, World War Two

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A concentration camp is one of the most important symbols of mass murder of millions of Europeans during World War II. Interest in these institutions began to develop after the war, when Eugen Kogon and others wrote about life in the camps from a personal perspective. The scientific community during the 60's expressed interest in this subject, thanks, among other things, to the work of political scientist Raul Hilberg, who identifies the camps as an integral part and basis of Nazi terror in his masterpiece *The Destruction of the European Jews*. However, the research interest in the camps peaked as late as the fall of the Berlin Wall, when easier access to the original material in the archives of Eastern Europe enabled a more detailed analysis of the camp system, including the "extermination camps" (*Vernichtungslager*), which include Auschwitz, Belżec, Sobibor, Chelmno, Treblinka and Majdanek. During this period, Ulrich Herbert and Karin Orth, for example, made the connection between the camp system and the German war economy,¹ which aimed at providing cheap labour to various institutions and companies, while also undertaking the systematic extermination of a countless number of men, women and children.² While historians had primarily been interested in concentration camps as a system, sociologist Wolfgang Sofsky in this period partly shifted the focus to the social and psychological perspective through detailed analysis of the relationship between structural factors and violence in the camps.³ Sofsky's analysis in this respect largely builds upon the idea of Zygmunt Bauman about the Holocaust as an expression of modern society, which includes ideas of racism, nationalism, modern bureaucracy and communication.

Norway also had its own camp system, although Norwegian camps cannot be compared with German extermination camps. Unlike the German camps the aim of which was to directly and systematically exterminate incoming prisoners, Norwegian camps had the purpose of supplying the German economy with a labour force. The camps in Norway were under the German administrative apparatus, and those with Yugoslav prisoners, in which about 4,300 people were kept, had the highest mortality rate. Prisoners from Yugoslavia were primarily placed in northern Norway; on the border with Finland (in the Karasjok camp), where they spent several years exposed to severe physical work on the construction of roads and other infrastructure, and on strengthening the various military installations of Adolf Hitler's so called "Atlantic Wall". Most of the prisoners died of hunger and disease or were killed by German and Norwegian guards, but their fate

1 Ulrich Herbert, Karin Orth, and Christoph Dieckmann, *Die nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager: Entwicklung und Struktur* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1998); Ulrich Herbert, *Fremdarbeiter: Politik und Praxis des "Ausländer-Einsatzes" in der Kriegswirtschaft des Dritten Reiches*, 2. Aufl. ed. (Berlin: J. H. W. Dietz, 1986); *Hitler's foreign workers: Enforced foreign labor in Germany under the Third Reich* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Europa und der "Reichseinsatz": Ausländische Zivilarbeiter, Kriegsgefangene und KZ-Häftlinge in Deutschland 1938-1945*, 1. Aufl. ed. (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 1991).

2 Karin Orth, *Das System der nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslager: Eine politische Organisationsgeschichte*, 1. Aufl. ed. (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1999).

3 Wolfgang Sofsky, *Die Ordnung des Terrors das Konzentrationslager* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993).

had great significance for the establishment of very good diplomatic relations between Norway and Yugoslavia after World War II. However, there is not much scientific research on them. Birgit Koch, for instance, only marginally mentions Yugoslavs in her master's thesis from 1988, bearing in mind that she was primarily interested in Soviet prisoners who were accorded the status of prisoners of war.⁴ The Soviet focus also dominates the works of Mariane Soleil and Einar Kr. Steffenak.⁵ Russian historians have studied in detail the fate of Soviet prisoners, refuting the widespread belief in the West that the prisoners were more or less systematically killed or punished upon their return to the Soviet Union. In this context, it is worth mentioning the formally voluntary Polish workers of the so-called "Organiaation Todt", whose fate was described by the Polish historian Emilia Denkwicz-Szczepaniak.⁶

While the focus of Norwegian historians was almost exclusively on the Soviet prisoners, in the studies from former Yugoslavia we are confronted with other problems. The literature is dominated by the memoirs of former prisoners, while only the frequently quoted studies by Ljuba Mladenović and Milorad Ašković represent something that could be called historical work.⁷ However, their works have a specific character in that they are based on the recollections of former prisoners or personal reflection, mixed with archive sources. This kind of literature, which represents a combination of popular history and journalism, was common in the Yugoslav society, and is pervaded by many serious shortcomings. Although the data in them may not of course be wrong, the lack of quoted sources means that it is often very difficult or almost impossible to distinguish between the facts and quotes or personal reflections.⁸

In general, we can conclude that the book *Fangevoktene in konsentrasjonsleire* (Prison Guards in Concentration Camps) by the famous Norwegian criminologist Nils Christie, remains for now the only monograph on Yugoslav prisoners in Norway, which completely meets the criteria required of a scientific paper. Christie, however, focuses solely on the guards, with the primary goal being to explore the social and psychological

4 Birgit Koch, *De sovjetiske, polske og jugoslaviske krigsfangerityskfangenskapi Norge 1941-1945* (Oslo: Hovedoppgave, 1988).

5 Marianne Neerland Soleim, *Sovjetiske krigsfangeri Norge 1941-1945: antall, organisering og repatriering* (Oslo: Spartacus, 2009); Einar Kristian Steffenak, *Russerfangene: sovjetiske krigsfangeri Norge og deres skjebne* (Oslo: Humanist forl., 2008).

6 Emilia Denkwicz-Szczepaniak, "Polske OT-tvangsarbeidere og krigsfanger i Norge under annen verdenskrig", *Historisk tidsskrift*, no. 2 (1997). There were also a few hundred Yugoslav "Todt workers" in Norway, primarily from Slovenia and ISC.

7 Milorad Ašković, *U logorima u severnoj Norveškoj* (Kikinda: Komuna, 1979); Ljuba Mladenović, *Pod šifrom viking: život, borba i stradanja jugoslovenskih interniraca u logorima u Norveškoj 1942-1945* (Beograd: Institut za savremenu istoriju, 1991).

8 Mladenović's 700-page work, for example, has only 192 footnotes, many of which refer to statements that were in his possession but not referenced. Unfortunately, while working on this project, we were not able to obtain these interviews or other data.

aspects, and to determine whether the abuse of the prisoners may be explained by various pathologies of the guards, or by the socio-psychological processes of group dynamics in the context of what Sofsky would call “the order of terror”. After a detailed analysis of a guard’s socio-economic status, Christie places them either in the “extreme group”, which includes those guards who committed murder and other serious crimes, or in the “contrast group”, which includes guards who, according to the available data, had not committed crimes and, in some cases, even helped prisoners. By using detailed analysis and interviews with about fifty guards, Christie concluded that there was in fact nothing in the social, professional or psychological character of the most brutal guards “which would differentiate them from the other guards and which would in some way explain the differences in their behaviour.” What he found is that the guards in the “extreme group” were more frustrated with their situation than the guards in the “contrast group”, chiefly because the majority had wanted to join the Norwegian volunteer Waffen-SS units such as the “Viking” and the “Nordland” to fight on the Eastern front,⁹ but had been rejected. Christie also found that the “extremes” had less physical contact with the Yugoslavs, and were, on average, younger than the rest.¹⁰ Christie’s conclusion is, therefore, that individual-psychological or ideological aspects did not have a decisive influence, but that most of the violence can be explained by socio-psychological elements of group dynamics (loyalty to the group, real or presumed expectations about behaviour, the psychological distance between the guards and prisoners, etc.). This means that Christie’s original study (the book is based on a 1952 master’s thesis) preceded the research of prominent psychologists such as Stanley Milgram and Philip Zimbardo, whose research from the 1960s and 1970s on obedience of authority and group dynamics mostly confirms what Christie established based on his research on the Yugoslav camps in Norway.¹¹ However, we must also bear in mind that Christie’s guard is not an average representative of the Norwegian population. About forty percent of them were convicted of minor offenses before they joined the “Norway” guard battalion (Vaktbataljon “Norge”), and the data also show that they were, on average, more prejudiced and xenophobic than the average Norwegian. It is possible that these facts explain the

9 Some of the Norwegians who were admitted in Nordland ended up on the battlefield in Yugoslavia in 1943 or in Kordun and Banija, where they participated in anti-partisan operations after the capitulation of Italy until November 1943. Several Norwegians died in the Balkans, while the Danish “Nordland” units suffered the greatest losses during the attack of the units of the 7th Banija division with support from the 8th Kordun division on Glina and the village Hrastovica in November; see Tomislav Dulić, “Danish Waffen-SS units in Yugoslavia: The fighting at Hrastovica and Glina, Autumn 1943”, *Fra Krig og Fred* (2016): 63-96..

10 Nils Christie, *Fangevoktene i konsentrasjonsleire: en sosiologisk undersøkelse av norske fangevoktere i “serberleire” i Nord-Norge i 1942-43* (Oslo: Pax, 1972), 102.

11 Stanley Milgram, *Obedience to Authority* (New York: Harper & Row, 1974); Philip Zimbardo, “Interpersonal Dynamics in a Simulated Prison”, *International Journal of Criminology and Penology* (1974); See also, Henri Zukier, “The Twisted Road to Genocide: On the Psychological Development of Evil During the Holocaust”, *Social Research* 61, no. 2 (1994); Philip G. Zimbardo, *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil* (New York: Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2008).

widespread belief among the prisoners that “all the guards were bums who sold themselves to serve the Germans.”

Christie also concludes that most of the guards from the “extreme group” were ideologically motivated, which “should have a significant impact on the differences in the desire to fulfil the Germans’ objectives - in the sense of anticipating and carrying out the assigned tasks - in the camps.”¹² Christie’s conclusions have been met with support in recent studies of violence in other regions and periods, which point to the fact that violence against prisoners is *primarily* explained by group dynamics, although “the intensity of participation” correlates with ideological conviction. This means that most of the perpetrators do not commit crimes primarily for ideological reasons, though the most prolific criminals are also those most ideologically motivated.¹³

The fact that the fate of the Yugoslavs did not attract much attention of the Norwegian and other foreign historians is clear and can be at least partially explained by the linguistic barrier.¹⁴ At the same time, examining the fate of Yugoslav prisoners seems to be particularly important precisely because the death rate among them far exceeded that of the other categories of prisoners.¹⁵ In addition, we should bear in mind that although Christie laid a solid and important foundation for further research, his research was done solely from the perspective of the guards, while the voice of the prisoners was only sporadically shown through memoirs and other unscientific, though interesting, studies done by people who had also had personal experiences of tragic events. However, the new documents that became available only in the first decade of this century enable us to revisit these questions and seek answers based on primary sources which meet the basic criteria of accuracy between the events themselves and documented description better than memoirs and similar materials.

The aim of this work is to complete the picture of life in the camps through the eyes of the victims on the basis of new materials, with particular focus on the relationship between prisoners and guards, the conflicts within the prison community, the view of the Norwegian public and the escape and life in Swedish shelters. Yugoslav sources will also be linked to previous surveys and memoirs if necessary, with special emphasis on Christie’s study.

¹² Christie, *Fangevoktere*, 89.

¹³ Michael Mann, “Were the Perpetrators of Genocide ‘Ordinary Men’ or ‘Real Nazis’? Results from Fifteen Hundred Biographies”, *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 14, no. 3 (2000): 151; Scott Straus, *The Order of Genocide: Race, Power, and War in Rwanda* (Ithaca, NY and Bristol: Cornell University Press, 2006).

¹⁴ This is the aspect that Abraham noticed in the case of research on Russian prisoners; Ole-Jacob Abraham, “Russarfangene - mytar, fakta og nyansar”, *Historisk tidsskrift*, no. 02 (2009): 296.

¹⁵ Trond Risto Nilssen, “Jugoslaviske fanger i Norge under andre verdenskrig”, in *Sotavangit ja internoidut*, ed. Lars Westerlund (Helsinki: Kansallisarkisto, 2008).

Sources

The material that forms the basis for this analysis comes from the Archives of Yugoslavia (hereinafter: AJ), primarily the Archives of the government in exile in London (fonds 103), and the fonds of the Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm organised in the early 2000's (fonds 382). The extent of the analysed material exceeds six hundred pages of text (including copies of correspondence between the government in exile and the embassy in Stockholm), and some material that can also be found in the Swedish and Norwegian state archives, which encompasses a lot of extensive material that gives us a fairly complete picture of the communication between the Swedish authorities, institutions and embassy. This material, fonds 382 in particular, was not freely available in the socialist period, although some researchers had access to the material from fonds 103 and even issued collections of archives. The reason is probably that it was quite problematic for the former regime, especially in the first decades after the war, to allow free access to the material, as this might have allowed certain unpleasant details about how the Communist Party of Yugoslavia (CPY) had climbed to power to reach the general public (as a reminder, the government in exile in London was recognised as the *de jure* representative of the Yugoslav state at an international level in the eyes of western allies until the end of the war(and they wanted to create some kind of *modus vivendi* through the Tito-Šubašić agreement which was, of course, doomed to failure). The fonds also provide information about the divisions within the government in exile, and even about certain "ethnic conflicts". For example the disagreements over how to treat the Yugoslav communists after the outbreak of the conflict between them and the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland, or the Serbian-nationalist Chetnik movement of Draža Mihailović, whose organisation was accepted as the official military branch of the government in exile on the territory of Yugoslavia since autumn 1941.

The archive of the Stockholm embassy was catalogued only at the beginning of this century and has almost never been used for research purposes. The collection is particularly interesting, because the sources illustrate, among other things, the situation and living conditions of refugees in Sweden. About ninety Yugoslavs were recorded by the embassy in Stockholm and their statements give quite an interesting picture of their fate, from their capture in Yugoslavia to transport through Germany, to life in Norway. The embassy staff were particularly interested in the issue of war crimes, which we must connect with the instructions that had been received after the decision of the Allies in the autumn of 1943 to begin gathering evidence in order to establish a military tribunal after the war (later established in Nuremberg). This material is particularly useful because it gives us a very good insight into life in the camps from the perspective of the prisoners, although we must be aware that the prisoners did not always speak freely but answered the questions of embassy officials. In such situations, there is always a risk of a witness or a victim tuning their statement to the questions so that some aspects seem unconnected, or to emphasise some aspects according to their assumptions about what the officials want to hear. One very important aspect is, for example, that the communist-oriented prisoners

could mitigate ideological aspects considering potential conflicts (which did occur later) between their views on the socialist revolution and the pro-royalist views of the embassy. However, the material does not provide the basis for the claim that self-censorship had a decisive impact on communication. The reason for this is probably the fact that during the second half of the war, and especially after the Tito-Šubašić agreement and King Peter the Second's rejection of the Yugoslav Army in the Fatherland (YAF), some kind of a *modus vivendi* was established between the government in London and the National Liberation Movement of Yugoslavia (NLM), which then had the initiative in the fight against the Axis powers. A good part of the basic data can certainly be checked against the statements of former Norwegian guards, which the embassy acquired through the Norwegian ambassador Jens Bull.

SOCIOECONOMIC AND POLITICAL STRUCTURE OF THE PRISONER GROUP

There were two main reasons why the German authorities decided to transport over four thousand Yugoslavs to Norway and use them as workforce there. The first reason is that, already in April 1941 and until the end of the war, the German military force refused to recognise the partisan units and the National Liberation Army of Yugoslavia (NLAY), or the Chetniks of Draža Mihailović, as legitimate military forces in Yugoslavia.¹⁶ Yugoslavs were therefore considered to be common criminals and were not protected as prisoners of war under the Geneva Convention, although even the German commanders in Norway were uncertain about whether the Yugoslavs were actually prisoners of war or not.¹⁷ The reason why they were sent to Norway of all places can be explained by the interesting personal relations between the German Reichskommissar for the occupied Norwegian areas, Jozef Terboven, and the German personnel in the Balkans. The decision

¹⁶ This fact made it significantly more complicated for the Stockholm embassy to send packages to prisoners. For example, on 30 March, in answer to his question to the Norwegian Red Cross if they could get in touch with the Yugoslav "prisoners of war", Ambassador Alexander Avakumović was told that this was not possible, because there were actually no Yugoslav prisoners of war in Norway. The government in London therefore instructed Avakumović to ask "whether there were any of our citizens who had fought as guerrillas and who had been, as such, sent to internment camps in Norway"; The telegram from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Yugoslav government in London to the Royal Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm of 30 March 1943; AJ 103-108-462. In his response to the government in exile, Avakumović writes that there really are prisoners of war in Norway, but that the Germans "maybe wanted to say that there were no prisoners of war referred to in the resolution of 18 April 1941, only those caught after that date"; Letter from the Royal Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm to the Ministry of Internal Affairs (Political Department) of the government in exile in London, 5 May 1943, AJ 103-108-503. This correspondence is evidence of the fact that the Germans did not want to recognise the Yugoslav prisoners as prisoners of war, if they were caught after the capitulation of Yugoslavia on 17 April in 1941.

¹⁷ Nilsen has shown in his research about the payment of reparation at the end of the last century that even German officers often didn't clearly understand the status of a "prisoner of war", since they often used terminology which suggested that they considered them prisoners of war, although they formally did not have that status; Trond Risto Nilssen. „Krigsfanger, politiske fanger eller opprørere? Om de jugoslaviske fangenes skjebne i Norge under andre verdenskrig og erstatningsoppgjøret i ettertid," in *Forskning i Trøndelag*, ed. Morten Stene (Trondheim: Tapir akademisk forl., 2010).

was made at the initiative of August Meyszner, who was appointed police commander in Norway in August 1940, and in January 1941 he was transferred to Belgrade where he received the new title of the Higher SS and Police Leader in Serbia.¹⁸ His first initiative to use the captured partisans as forced labourers, however, met with disapproval of the German military leadership of the Southeast who believed that the practice of executions by firing squad should be continued. A treaty was concluded, however, on the 31st of March, according to which the partisans who were caught outside of battle were supposed to be sent to concentration camps, while the rest should be shot. The treaty was later extended to include the partisans in the Independent State of Croatia, primarily from the territories of Lika, Kordun, Banija, and Bosanska Krajina.¹⁹

The prisoners were transported to Norway on four occasions, from June 1942 to September 1943. Most were communists and partisans, or their sympathisers. However, among them were also a large number of civilians “purged” from the Independent State of Croatia, a small number of Chetniks, other political enemies of the regime, and a number of common criminals.²⁰ The available data indicates that Serbs constituted the vast majority of the prisoners, which also explains why the camps are routinely viewed as “Serbian concentration camps” (*serberleire*) by the Norwegian public.²¹ There were several reasons why Serbs were the dominant group, starting from the fact that around half the contingent was brought from Serbia under German occupation (a territory in which there weren’t a lot of minorities) or from the region of ISC where a large percentage of the population was Serbian. Another reason is that Serbs, especially in the first years of the war, accounted for the majority of the opposition against the Axis powers in the ISC.²² Many prisoners were captured during the “anti-bandit operations” in Serbia, which started in autumn 1941, when the NLM managed to free a large part of southern Serbia (the so-called “Užice Republic”).

18 Ruth Bettina Birn, *Die Höheren SS- und Polizeiführer* (Düsseldorf: DrosteVerlag, 1986), 96.

19 *Zbornik dokumenata i podataka o narodnooslobodilačkom ratu jugoslovenskih naroda: Dokumenti nemačkog rajha*, vol. XII, book 2, Beograd: Vojno-istorijski institut Jugoslovenske armije, 1976, 265.

20 Mladenović mentions that among the prisoners there were about 150 criminals and 1,783 individuals taken hostage during the German anti-partisan operations; Mladenović, *Pod šifrom Viking*, 34.

21 Mladenović states that there were 3,841 Serbian prisoners from various parts of Yugoslavia, 179 Muslims (Bosnians) and 165 Croats; *ibid.*, 71-72.

22 Dragan Cvetković, „Stradali pripadnici Narodnooslobodilačke vojske Jugoslavije iz Hrvatske prema popisu *Žrtve rata 1941-1945*. iz 1964. godine: Analiza trenutnog stanja prema do sada izvršenoj reviziji”, in *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara*, ed. Hans-Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac (Zagreb: Zaklada Friedrich Naumann, 2002); *Idem*, „Bosna i Hercegovina - numeričko određivanje ljudskih gubitaka u Drugom svetskom ratu”, in *Prilozi istraživanju zločina genocida i ratnih zločina*, ed. Jovan Mirković (Beograd: Muzej žrtava genocida, 2009); Ivo Goldstein and Slavko Goldstein, „Srbi i Hrvati u narodnooslobodilačkoj borbi u Hrvatskoj”, in *Dijalog povjesničara-istoričara*, ed. Hans-Georg Fleck and Igor Graovac (Zagreb: Friedrich Naumann-Stiftung, 2003).

The structure of the prisoner group according to the Yugoslav States

State	Number of prisoners
Serbia	2239
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1055
Croatia	926
Other states	48
Total	4,268

Source: Mladenović, Pod šifrom viking, 25.

Another large group of prisoners was deported after the Battle of Kozara in the summer of 1942. The operation was a great success for the Wehrmacht, which managed to besiege and destroy the majority of the partisan units, which had retreated with a large number of civilians to Kozara mountain near the strategically important Prijedor. The civilians issue was a subject of discussion with the authorities of the ISC as a result of the German plan to deport the Serbs from the territory close to the main roads and to bring in a “more loyal population” to live there.²³ During the deportation, tens of thousands of civilians were sent to forced labour or simply executed during the marches or in the Jasenovac concentration camp.²⁴

Yugoslav prisoner Petar Stojanović presented some details in a statement to the Swedish authorities about his journey from home to Norway, which is quite typical and gives a general picture of similar journeys. Upon the outbreak of war, Stojanović was conscripted and served for several days in an air defence battery in Niš. German forces captured him on April 9th, but he managed to escape from captivity to Pirot and he returned home. However, the quiet life that he had hoped for was not possible because of the “terror” spread by the German forces and Yugoslav “traitors” against the civilian population.²⁵ Stojanović joined the Nišava NLM detachment, the partisan unit which consisted of about 2,500 fighters. The main tasks of the unit were “sabotage, attacks on transport troops and obstruction of important communication on the Belgrade-Athens road.” The changes in the treatment of captured partisans meant that Stojanović was not shot after surrendering on March 14th 1942, but went on a journey that would take him to northern Norway, thousands of kilometres away from Niš. He departed on 21st of March, when he was taken from the prison camp to the Gestapo headquarters in Niš, where he underwent tests which resulted in him losing

23 National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, Record Group T-501, roll 265, images 1389 -90.

24 See Tomislav Dulić, *Utopias of Nation: Local Mass Killing in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 1941-42*, *Studia Historica Upsaliensia*, 218 (Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis, 2005), diss., 242-81; Dragoje Lukić, *Rat i djeca Kozare* (Beograd: Književne novine, 1990).

25 AJ, 103-108-99. Transcript of the interview with Peter Stojanović in the Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm, 8 December 1943.

most of his teeth. Then he was sent to the Sajmište camp (Anhaltelager Semlin), from where he was transferred on a barge to Stalag XVII B near Krems in Austria in October 1942:

We were there for three months. From there, in fifteen days we went for two months to Stargard in Germany, and then to Stettin. We were severely tortured, abused and starved in those camps. We were transferred from Stettin to Norway, where we landed in Trondheim. We stayed in Melhus in Trondheim for about a month and went from there to the Botn camp in Rognan. There were various forms of torture, the likes of which only Germans could imagine. I was there on 8 September, when I escaped. I ran away during labour right next to where the guards were. Norwegians helped me along the way and took me across the border to Sweden. In Sweden, I was surprised by the reception of the Swedes. I was in Arjeplog for 25 days. From there I went to Stockholm and retained the rest of my teeth. I came from the hospital to Enköpingsön 10 November.²⁶

The guards

Most of the Yugoslav prisoners arrived in camps while the SS and the Organisation Todt were still in charge of the camps. The guards were divided into two main groups: on the one hand, the SS and the German police (Ordnungspolizei), and on the other members of the so-called “Norway” guard battalion (Vaktbataljon “Norge”), who had been arriving from June to November 1942 and were active in the camps until March 1942. The “perimeter guards” were primarily Norwegian and oversaw the work at the construction sites and this meant that they in fact did not have much contact with the Yugoslavs within the actual camps. In April 1943, Wehrmacht took over the administration of the camp system, when the Norwegian guards were disbanded as well. Almost all of the prisoners’ statements point out that this change led to a significant improvement in the living conditions in the camps.²⁷

As for the guards’ view of the prisoners, Christie states that the members of the “extreme group” had a more negative view of the Yugoslavs than others, and the reason was usually that they thought that the prisoners didn’t maintain personal hygiene and that they were lazy. Christie’s reasoning for this is that hygienic conditions in the camps were so bad that lice, scabies, dysentery and the uncontrollable outbreaks of typhoid were in fact the result of poor living conditions in the camp and the apathy that arose afterwards, which led to the deterioration of physical and mental health of the prisoners. Even some of the guards understood this very well. A John Doe from the town of Røros, for example, gave the following statement at a shelter in Kjesäter in Sweden, which the Norwegian ambassador Jens Bull addressed to the Yugoslav embassy in April 1944:

26 AJ, 103-186-424, Royal Yugoslav Ministry of Internal Affairs, Petar Stojanović’s letter, 22 November 1943.

27 Koch, “De sovjetiske”, 99.

The treatment of Serbs was simply inhuman and it is a big mystery why the German guards mistreated and tortured them so much - the Germans themselves had to understand that they would sooner or later answer for such utterly senseless atrocities which we witnessed daily.

You could hardly call that food human food. It consisted almost exclusively of kohlrabi - or potato soup, which almost entirely consisted of water. Prisoners were served two bowls of such soup daily, when they returned from work at 6 p.m. [...]

The health condition of prisoners could not have been worse. Everyone showed clear signs of starvation and those who were just starved and did not have any disease were still in a much better situation than those who suffered a variety of illnesses. After all, most did suffer from serious illnesses, usually scabies, tuberculosis and gonorrhoea. Those suffering from scabies were the most difficult to look at: most of them had open wounds all over their body.

The hospital was an ordinary barrack. They crammed as many people as they could there and it was always packed. There were often 60-70 people in one room. And when new patients would arrive to the already crowded barrack, some of them would just be taken out and shot.²⁸

Yugoslav sources are evidence of the fact that some prisoners came to the same conclusion as the historian Soleim - that causing death was in fact the goal of the camp system in Norway. Croatian prisoner Ivan Šuman, for example, stated that every week in Mosjøen they were forced to bathe for half an hour in water as cold as 4-5°C and, therefore, many prisoners fell ill. However, there was no medical aid, which led to the following conclusion - "they tortured us as if they just wanted to decimate us."²⁹ In addition, doctor Jovan Krstić said that it was life-threatening to check in at the infirmary. When he arrived in Korgen, he discovered that bayonets were used to perform amputations and open abscesses. After the situation became acute in late 1942, Commander Fritz Kiefer decided to "radically solve" the issue by ordering the shooting a total of 150 of prisoners on three occasions.³⁰

As for the "laziness", some of the guards interviewed by Christie believed that prisoners generally worked well,³¹ while others claimed that "working was the worst of their abilities."³² Yugoslavs, however, pointed out that malnutrition and poor hygienic conditions ruined their physical and mental strength to the point where they would "faint from hunger

28 AJ, 382-8-581, Statement by a Norwegian refugee at the Kjesäter shelter, 15 April 1942.

29 AJ, 382-1-502, Statement by Ivan Šuman for the Royal Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm, 3 August 1943.

30 AJ, 103-382-8-611, Letter by Jovan A. Krstić to the Royal Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm, 28 July 1944.

31 Christie, *Fangevoktere*, 114.

32 Ibid., 156.

and exhaustion,” and then “the SS and Quisling’s Hird members beat them to make them work harder”.³³ Krstić also recounted one event, which can serve as an illustration of the prisoners’ very positive impression of the Norwegian civilians:

In the winter of 1942-43, when we had to stop work on the roads because of the cold, we had to clean the airport in Rognan. Norwegian civilians were infuriated and upset when before dusk they saw people barefoot in ragged clothes moving about in the snow at minus 20-30 degrees. If someone would fall from fatigue and cold, he would be left in the snow until their departure for the camp.³⁴

Of course, it is not surprising that violence against prisoners was more common in the camps controlled by the SS than in those under the control of the Wehrmacht, bearing in mind that the former organisation functioned under entirely different conditions than the latter, and it had to do with the survival of the prisoners. It is much more interesting to try to establish the consequences of alienation between prisoners and guards, which sometimes resulted in guards viewing the prisoners “as animals. Animals in human form”.³⁵ One of the guards, for instance, said that the prisoners “beat and thrashed each other all day”, while another said that “after we saw how they behaved towards their own, we had no choice but to despise them.”³⁶ The fact that cultural differences were used as an explanation for seemingly irrational behaviour is illustrated in one guard’s statement - “when I attended school we learned that the Balkans were an unstable region of Europe with revolutions and assassinations.”³⁷ Cultural differences sometimes turned into pure racism, for example, according to one guard - “only Slavs can do such a thing, or a people with significant Slavic influence”,³⁸ or in the statement of another “Serbs” were unable to feel remorse.³⁹ Christie believes that the so-called “kapos” (prisoners who were responsible for maintaining order and discipline in the barracks), were especially brutal, and that ethnic tensions in the camps were frequent.⁴⁰

The prisoners themselves confirm that the kapos were responsible for a large part of the violence, stressing that “often ‘our people’ inflicted more pain than the fascists

33 AJ, 382-I-497, Letter by Vladislav P. Milić to the Royal Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm, 3 August 1942.

34 AJ, 103-382-8-61I, Letter by Jovan A. Krstić to the Royal Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm, 28 July 1944.

35 Christie, *Fangevoktere*, 138.

36 Ibid., 123.

37 Ibid., 133.

38 Ibid., 122.

39 Ibid., 121.

40 Ibid., 155.

themselves”.⁴¹ However, the source material does not support the notion that violence between prisoners was motivated by ethnic divisions. The sources actually barely differentiate between various prisoners on ethnic grounds, so it seems that this aspect had a relatively limited role in the conflict. Although today it is easy to look at the past through the ethnicity lens, this circumstance can only be understood if the violence is analysed as a result of the political conflict between the left and the right in the camps. Mladenović, for example, points out that the German camp authorities did everything they could to sow discord in the ranks of the prisoners, and it was often achieved by mixing the communists with the anti-communists and common criminals (who made up a disproportionately large part of the “kapos”), and they also mixed Yugoslavs from different parts of the country. However, Mladenović says that there were more than 1,600 CPY members and candidates in the camps, including about a thousand members of the Communist Youth League. In the conflicts that broke out, it was very important to be a member of one of the organised groups in the camp, as the membership more or less provided minimum protection against arbitrary violence.⁴² However, the most important thing was that the communist-oriented Yugoslavs were led by an ideology that boiled down national and ethnic identity to only a transitional phase of a historical process, the main aim of which was to prevent the unification of the working class, in order to preserve the capitalist form of production. The communists have, therefore, often regarded the “reactionaries” and the criminals as their main enemies, regardless of their nationality and ethnicity. The fact that ethnic groups in the camp were in fairly good relations is also confirmed in an article in the Swedish newspaper *Morgon-tidningen social-demokraten* (leftist paper) issue of 8th of January 1944. The report of the meeting of Yugoslav refugees in the town of Viggbyholm, for example, emphasises the amity between the refugees:

An MT (*Morgon-Tidningen*) associate met, in the halls of a Viggbyholm school, with a crowd of black-haired young men whose faces were all lined due to their cruel fate. It was a nice mix of different nationalities and religions: here, as in Yugoslavia, were Serbs, Croats, Slovenians, Montenegrins and Macedonians, all practicing different faiths, whether Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant or Muslim. ... The previous evening, they showed that they were not in fact chauvinists. Representatives of [sic] other refugee groups also came to the meeting and the Yugoslavs warmly welcomed the German democratic party delegates and expressed that they were capable of distinguishing between a nation and its Nazis. The Germans who had joined Tito's partisan army were greeted with boundless joy. Italians and Yugoslav partisans are now fighting side by side.⁴³

41 AJ, 103-114-765, Letter by Derviš Imamović to the Royal Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm, 23 November 1943.

42 Mladenović, *Pod šifrom Viking*, 213.

43 AJ, 103-186-438, Translation of the article „Titovi partizani pripovedaju o svojim sudbinama”,

Based on the statements and these, albeit somewhat romantic, external observations, we can conclude that the violence was not primarily committed by a “Croat” against a “Serb” or vice versa, but it was most likely the result of political disagreements and/or conflicts with the criminals. Norwegian guards, who incited ethnic conflict, simply did not know the circumstances and the relations between the Yugoslavs, and therefore interpreted events through the lens of their own world-view in which ethnic and racial divisions were of central importance.

The murder of Štefan Telišman, a Croatian kapo in Beisfjord, who boasted about having personally strangled “dozens” of prisoners in the infirmary, is a good example of the fate that could befall prisoner-criminals, and also serves as an example of the symbiosis that sometimes occurred between prisoners and guards. According to Mladenović, after Telišman had been transferred to the Korgen camp in late 1942, the communists tried among other things to poison him. After a failed attempt, they went on to “draw in” the Norwegian head of the labour department and the Norwegian guards who were informed about Telišman’s crimes in Beisfjord. The conflict ended with a guard throwing a cigarette stub into the area the prisoners were not allowed to walk in, and told Telišman to go and get it. When Telišman stepped into the restricted area, the guard shot him with a rifle. The guard later claimed that the other prisoners were grateful for what he did, which Mladenović confirms in his study.⁴⁴ However, nothing indicates that Telišman’s ethnicity had anything to do with the incident.

ESCAPE ATTEMPTS AND REPRISALS

Another interesting conclusion that can be drawn from Christie’s material is that a small number of guards feared the Yugoslavs, which implies that the administration of the camp was successful in its efforts to create and maintain psychological and emotional distance between the prisoners and guards. Christie nevertheless points out that the guards only cite one case where “one German was killed in a brutal way.”⁴⁵ The incident occurred during an escape attempt at the Korgen camp in July 1942. According to the detailed account by prisoner Vladislav Milić, the German guard was killed during a fight with Radovan Dimović:

On 17th July, when we were carrying coffee to the Norwegian Hirds, who guarded us at work, an SS man was following us. Dimović and I attacked him in the forest through which we had to pass. When Dimović grabbed him by the throat I took his bayonet, but at that moment he kicked me in the

Morgon-tidningen social-demokraten, 8 January 1944.

44 Christie, *Fangevoktere*, 139; Mladenović, *Pod šifrom Viking*, 321-24. We can conclude from the memoirs of Cveja Jovanović that this was not the only time when the guards threw cigarette stubs into the restricted areas and then ordered the prisoners to go get them in order to have an excuse to kill them; Cveja Jovanović, *Blodveien til nordpartisanavdelingen* (Beograd: [C. Jovanovic], 1988), 129.

45 Christie, *Fangevoktere*, 124.

stomach, so I fell over a trench and the bayonet fell out of my hand onto the grass. When I saw that the SS officer had almost defeated Dimović, I started running through the forest. After a short while, Dimović managed to get away from the SS man and was also running 20 steps behind me. He was shouting to me that we were ruined, and that we'd be shot. I then yelled back at him to run the other way and not with me. While I was running, I heard several gunshots and the SS man calling for help. I got lost in the forest and did not see any more of what happened between the SS officer and Dimović. Only when Dimović and I met again in Sweden, in Tärnaby, did he tell me that the SS officer wounded him three times while chasing him and that later a bullet got stuck in the barrel. When Dimović saw that the SS officer stopped firing and started calling for help, Dimović, as he told me himself, went back, overcame him cut his throat.⁴⁶

Dimović later claimed that he and Milović had agreed to hit the guard in the head with a stone so he would pass out, and that Milović (or Miler, a Jew born in Budapest) escaped with a bayonet in his hand (the stone is not mentioned at all in the embassy's material). After firing, the German caught up with Dimović, who, according to this statement did not come back to kill him. What's more important for our analysis is certainly the fact that what the guards later described as a "brutal murder" occurred in the context of an escape attempt: after moving to Sweden, Dimović was sent to the hospital in Falun, where they found that he had two grains of bullets in his body. The murder, however, also caused diplomatic complications, because it was feared that Dimović would be handed over to the Germans. The Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm repeatedly sent letters about the Dimović case to the Swedish Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Dimović was interned, by the Swedish authorities, in the Långmora shelter, where he spent his days under great stress and pressure.⁴⁷ His communication with the Yugoslav embassy is evidence of the fear that the Swedish authorities would deliver him to the Germans, although that never happened.⁴⁸

However, the murder of the SS officer led to severe reprisals in Korgen. The prisoners were taken back to the camp at 1 p.m, where they were forced to lie on the ground. The ones that stirred were immediately killed. The reprisals continued on 17th of July, when they were brought by the Germans "in front of the camp and kept standing at attention until 4 pm, when 50 men were taken out of the lines and shot before the eyes of all the

46 AJ, 382-1-495, Letter by Vladislav P. Milić to the Yugoslav embassy of 1942, without a date.

47 AJ, 382-1-508, An excerpt from the record at (Socialstyrelsen), 25 August 1942 (transcript).

48 The Institute for Social Welfare issued a decree for the internment of Dimović on 25 August 1942. The Yugoslav embassy, among other things, sought help from the British embassy, so that they might manage to influence the Swedish authorities not to deliver Dimović; AJ, 382-1-508, Letter by Cecil Parrott to the Yugoslav embassy, 25 August 1942.

prisoners.”⁴⁹ It must have been extremely difficult for Života Pirić to witness this event, since he was forced to watch the murder of his own brother.⁵⁰

A view of themselves and others

As we have already seen, Norwegian guards often understated their own actions in the camp, which they compared with that of the Germans and “a few Norwegian guards [who] also showed sadistic tendencies - and this is especially true of the NS members.”⁵¹ In such a context, it was important for one guard who escaped to Sweden to emphasise that the Norwegian guards were not allowed to enter the camp in Korgen itself.⁵² Another said that “his comrades were only responsible for guarding the premises, while the camp was completely under German surveillance and command.”⁵³ A third claimed that he and most of the other guards treated the prisoners well and helped them with food and cigarettes as much as possible. This, however, had to be done in secret, because the Germans did not allow any amity towards the inmates, and several guards were given disciplinary punishment because they had been distributing things to prisoners.⁵⁴

The fact that the Norwegians were primarily responsible for the external security of the camp to some extent confirms the claim that the SS did not fully trust them.⁵⁵ However, we must bear in mind that it was in the interest of the guards to minimise their own offences. During the court proceedings for treason after World War II, it was confirmed that a lot of the guards participated in crimes. Some of the collected materials were later sent to the State Commission for Investigation of the Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators in the country, which operated in Yugoslavia from 1943-47. The proceedings were not conducted against the Norwegians in Yugoslavia, but we can conclude from the materials that they really did commit serious crimes. In one of its “statements”, dated 22nd of March 1945, the Commission describes the murder committed by John Doe from the town of Halden, during the period when he served in Beisfjord and later in the Botn camp. According to the Commission, on one occasion when he was on

49 AJ, 382-1-505, A telegram from the Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm to the government in London, 27 August 1942.

50 AJ, 103-114-716, Statement by Života Pirić for the Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm (transcript), 21 December 1943.

51 AJ, 382-8-550, Statement by a former Norwegian guard on the treatment of Yugoslav civilian internees in Norway (transcript), 17 January 1944.

52 Ibid.

53 AJ, 382-8-571, Report by a Norwegian refugee from the Kjesäter shelter on the Yugoslav prisoners of war from the Botn camp near Rognan in Saltdal (transcript), 15 April 1944.

54 AJ, 382-8-597, Transcript of the report from Kjesäter, 18 October 1944.

55 Dirk A. Riedel, “SS-Inspektion z.b.V in Norwegen. Nationalsozialistische Täter in den Gefangenlagern für jugoslawische Partisanen”, in *Krieg und Verbrechen. Situation und Intention: Fallbeispiele*, ed. Timm C. Richter (München: Martin Meidenbauer Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2006), 116-17.

guard duty outside the camp, a prisoner asked him if he could bring some wood to warm up. John Doe allowed him to go, but killed him from behind with a rifle when he moved a dozen meters away from the fire. When the prisoners asked him why he had done it, he replied, “I wanted to kill a prisoner.” This clearly shows us how little human life was worth in the camps.⁵⁶

Perhaps we expected the Yugoslav sources to provide more detail about the precise atrocities committed by the Norwegian guards. This however is not the case, because prisoners often didn’t make a clear distinction between the German and Norwegian guards. However, one report from the government in exile in London of 30 November 1942, describes a situation that occurred near Rognan, where Yugoslavs worked on the construction of a tunnel near Saksenvik and Saltnes. The report states that “a few Hird members and a small group of Germans are guarding the prisoners. The Hird members are just as ruthless as the Germans. The worst is called John Doe and lives in Rognan “.⁵⁷

Another aspect that we have to bear in mind is that the Yugoslavs often made a very clear distinction between ordinary Norwegians and those members of the Hird who tortured them in the camps. A large number of testimonies confirm the fact that the Norwegians helped the Yugoslavs in the camp. The aforementioned Pirić (who had learned Norwegian in the camp), for example, said that he had received a “warm welcome” from Norwegian civilians on trying to escape,⁵⁸ while the embassy’s documentation proves that “during their flight the Norwegians helped them [sic] everywhere and in every way”.⁵⁹ Although there are cases of Norwegians handing prisoners over to the German authorities, the statement of the previously mentioned Šuman from Zagreb on the escape from Korgen can serve as a display of the generally very positive view of Norwegians:

I travelled eight days to the Swedish border. I didn’t hurry. Norwegians helped me [sic] all the way. They gave me some food, clothed me and gave me shoes, instructed me how to get to the Swedish border. Norwegians are really good people. I will never forget their kindness.⁶⁰

Additionally, the material testifies to the fact that the Swedish authorities also treated the prisoners well. Pirić, for example, stated that “we were positively welcomed by

56 Miodrag Zečević and Jovan P. Popović, eds., *Dokumenti iz istorije Jugoslavije*, vol. III, Beograd: Arhiv Jugoslavije, 1999, 325.

57 AJ, 103-108-435, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Government in London to the Yugoslav embassy in Bern, 30 February 1942.

58 AJ, 103-114-717, Letter by Života Pirić to the Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm, no date.

59 AJ, 382-1-485, Letter from the Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm to the government in exile in London, 5 August 1942.

60 AJ, 382-1-503, Statement by Ivan Šuman for the Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm, 3 August 1942.

the Swedes, especially by the soldiers”,⁶¹ and Šuman said that after spending a day at the police station, “which was like a hotel,” they were free to go and report to the Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm.⁶² Another example is Milorad Mitrović, who stated that “we were so surprised when we came to Sweden. We were so kindly welcomed by the Swedish people that I’ve not experienced such a thing since then [sic]. Everything was served on time and in abundance, which I am very grateful for. “

IMPRESSIONS FROM SWEDEN

The conflicts that had settled down during Norwegian captivity broke out again after the transfer of prisoners to Sweden. They were due, among other things, to the fact that a dispute arose between the communists and the Stockholm embassy, which must be considered in the light of their long-term goal to take power in Yugoslavia after the war. One group from Uppsala and the town Enköping were especially active so they established *The Free Yugoslavia*, a republican and revolutionary organisation that campaigned against the government in exile in London. This fact is confirmed by the organisation’s internal documents and also the letter from the activist Radovan Đuričić from the town of Torshälla of May 4th 1944. After concluding that “at most” 60 of the 80 refugees in Sweden accepted to work for the goals of the association, he noted the following:

Reading the book I received from you, “The History of the Communist Party,” I see that a tough fight awaits us and that there’s still a long way to go to get to freedom. Freedom is not so easily acquired, because these capitalist thieves will fight against national freedom now and always, to their last breath-until death. They, those capitalist crooks, long for the benefits that they enjoyed in our former homeland and which they enjoyed at the expense of our tortured and tormented people [sic].⁶³

The majority of Swedish companies and organisations refused to support the organisation. The main trade union in Sweden (Lands organisationen, LO), for example, reported that it could not provide financial assistance to *the Free Yugoslavia*, since “your

61 AJ, 103-II4-717, Letter by Života Pirić to the Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm, no date.

62 AJ, 382-I-503, Statement by Ivan Šuman for the Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm, 3 August 1942.

63 AJ, 382-15-495, Letter from Radovan Đuričić to comrades during the conference in Uppsala, 4 May 1944. Djuričić also sent a letter to the embassy, claiming that the government in exile in London was made up of traitors, and that he was therefore severing all relations with the government in exile; AJ, 382-15-103, Letter from Radovan Đuričić to the Royal embassy in Stockholm, 13 March 1944. Political disagreements within the refugee groups led several refugees in Enköping to decide to send letters to the embassy, complaining that there were, “as the Royal embassy already knows”, some groups within the refugee group who were not loyal to King Peter II. This group therefore wanted to show that they were loyal, and that they wanted help obtain UK visas; AJ, 382-15-103, a letter from a group of Yugoslav refugees in Enköping to the Royal Yugoslav embassy in Stockholm, 21 January 1944.

activities do not have a trade-union character". Ragnar Wåhlin from the famous Swedish rolling bearings manufacturer SKF- who was, in the interwar period, the head of operations in Yugoslavia and left the country in 1943 - states that "I helped provide the financial resources for the purchase of medicines and the like, primarily intended for people who lost their place of residence because of the bombing," but gave up financial assistance. Swedish revolutionary organisations, however, were more willing help out *the Free Yugoslavia*, so *the Revolutionary Workers of Norrköping* (*Norrköpingsrevolutionärarbetare*) organisation gave 25 crowns to the organisation for its work on "establishing a free and democratic Yugoslavia."

The activities of *the Free Yugoslavia* also caused diplomatic problems for Ambassador Alexander Avakumović, who repeatedly complained to the government in exile about various problems. In one letter, for example, he explains that the refugees "express opinions that are not particularly pleasant to local authorities" and that "some of these people could, perhaps for ideological reasons, be drawn into espionage or sabotage." Avakumović further considered that "possible preventive internment" would undermine the reputation of Yugoslavia and that it would therefore be wise to transfer refugees to the UK. The Ambassador also asked the Swedish Institute for Social Welfare (*Socialstyrelsen*) "not to give our refugees the right to stay in cities where there are universities, such as Stockholm, Uppsala and Lund, given the fact that they showed tendencies for campaigning with Swedes for their own goals".

Discussion

It goes without saying that it is not possible to give a comprehensive picture of life in Norwegian camps as part of an article and there is a lot of work ahead in order to reach deeper understanding of the situation from the one we have shown here. However, the source material from the Archives of Yugoslavia allows us to conclude that the prisoners gave almost exclusively positive recounts of the help they had received during their attempts to escape from the camp. There is of course another aspect that we need to consider, which is that the support of the Norwegian population may be explained by the fact that Norway and Yugoslavia were both under occupation; that both countries were under the control of various fascist and collaborationist regimes (the regimes of Ante Pavelić and Milan Nedić in the ISC and Serbia; the rule of Vidkun Quisling in Norway, who also became a symbol of the collaboration and treachery during World War II); and that the legitimate governments of both regimes operated from London. This means that the Norwegians shared certain experiences with the Yugoslavs, who, like the Norwegians with their organisation *Hjemmefronten*, fought against the occupying and collaborationist forces. It is possible that these factors affected the Yugoslavs, combined with the apparently positive experiences that some of them had with Norwegian civilians. Such a view of the situation can be added to Christie's conclusion that interaction leads to a lower level of stereotyping and psychological distance. In the eyes of Yugoslavs, extreme guards simply became Norwegian exceptions, just as those guards who were in contact with the inmates made distinctions between the "kapos" and Yugoslavs in general.

Archive material also confirms the notion that there were conflicts within the camps' communities which later spilled over to Sweden, although it is not quite clear to what extent. However, the fact that the division produced violence among inmates led to the conclusion among some guards that Yugoslavs had no sense of loyalty to each other, that they behaved in accordance with their "southern" temperament and were in some cases something between humans and animals. It is also clear that the living conditions slowly but surely brought prisoners to a situation where moral values could no longer come to the fore. In such a situation, the prisoners were left with very little alternatives. One was to somehow try to endure captivity, disease and hunger. This often led to the situation where the prisoners had a more or less conscious tendency to believe in "personal immortality" and the hope that they would somehow survive. Others, however, did not have the ability to face violence, hunger and disease in ways other than falling into deep apathy. An additional means of survival was making oneself "useful" to the perpetrators of the crimes, for example by taking on various roles in the camp, such as an interpreter or even a "kapo". This often confronted the prisoners with a dilemma between exploiting their new positions in order to survive, on the one hand, and the ability to help their comrades on the other. Attempting to escape was the fourth alternative. However, those who did try to escape often had a difficult choice, because escape attempts and especially murder of guards led to severe reprisals against the prisoners who remained in the camp. Nevertheless, the documents clearly show that the prisoners who fled were greatly aided by the Norwegian population. Most probably, without this assistance, a lot more of them would have perished in the Scandinavian wilderness.

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