

then were transferred to Hodschag as slave laborers. Given the fact that within a few days 27 people died in Hodschag alone - many in the marshes - lead to a very high death rate in the district. The symptoms of those afflicted in camp Hodschag were of a peculiar and curious nature. The very first indication was a fixed and ghostly stare; then very noticeable physical changes occurred on both head and feet; next came complete indifference and apathy; the afflicted neglected to take care of themselves – did not even care to eat the little they received. Then, in the end they became completely insane and died within a few days. Their curious physical appearance was attributed to malnutrition, the constant heavy labor demands, but most of all to the deep depressions that were rooted in the pain at having been separated from their children.

Many times whole colonies of wagons returned from the marshes with woman too weak and exhausted to sit up in the wagons, much less perform any kind of work. Most of them suffered from diarrhea and red dysentery. Before long, typhus broke out in the marshes and in the central camp. Once, after a case of severe typhus, a humane attempt was made and all people in the camp “hospital” were immunized, but this did not help. Within a few days of being immunized all but a small number, died.

The camp Commandant – a Partisan from Deronje – was a hateful and dangerous individual. Transgressions of any kind were brutally punished. As a rule the punishment consisted of locking the prisoners in a basement until he (the Commandant) or one of his men had time on his hands and a desire to vent his rage. Such victims were oftentimes confined in the basements for days, without seeing daylight or getting anything to eat. When the time came and a Partisan wanted to amuse himself he had the victims brought before him. He beat them or he let others torture them. Riding whips, belts, heavy wooden cudgels, chairs, shovel handles and similar tools were found to be useful during these maltreatments. Once the victims were rendered unconscious from pain and collapsed, the Partisans worked on them with their boot heels. Those people that were caught escaping or found to be too far from their respective camps, without permission, were brought to Hodschag and there received special inhumane punishment.

The nourishment in the camp was such that you could neither live nor die by it, to say nothing about giving any strength for the hard

work demanded (especially in the terrific summer heat). In the morning the prisoners received one ladle of tee, which was made from leaves of unknown origin. There was no sugar, ever. At noon came bean soup which contained neither fat nor salt. The same fare served as “dinner” in the evening. In the summer of 1945 1,400 persons were fed in the camp. The camp commander provided a little more than 2kg (4-5lbs.) of beans for these two meals and this had to suffice to feed all prisoners. In the afternoon or in the evening each person received a piece of bread made from corn mash. This was about the size of two matchboxes; again without salt. It was baked in pans until it was stiff and most times it remained still wet on the inside. In cases where it was baked dry, it crumbled into small crumbs, which were then given out with a spoon.

The “hospital” in the camp was a hospital in name only. It housed only those that could no longer get up. These people were totally emaciated from malnutrition, heavy work, diarrhea and dysentery and all looked like human skeletons. No care was given to the sick, but beatings from the Camp Commandant were common occurrences. The hospital served mostly as the station before the cemetery. In the spring of 1945 one village after another (in the Hodschager district) were “cleansed” of all Germans. While during this “ethnic cleansing” all Germans capable of work were kept in the village camp, or were moved to the Hodschag Central Camp as slave laborers, the children and all others unfit for work were first brought to Filipovo and then to Gakovo and Kruschevlje.

In the fall of 1945 German girls and young women from all the workplaces within the Hodschager district were driven together and gathered in the Central Camp in Hodschag. Everyone assumed that they too would be deported to Russia. Many mothers who heard about this tried to get to their daughters any which way they could and those who were in the same camp with their daughters, did not want to be separated from them. Most of these women were subjected to the sadistic maltreatments of the Camp Commandant. With the girls and young women a “Stoßarbeiter-Brigade” (workers brigade) was formed, which had to go out into the frozen fields and break corn the entire winter, day after day. From sunrise to sunset they had to tramp over the snow covered fields and bring in the corn, with no breaks and no exceptions, even in the strongest snowstorms. After just a few days,

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