

Molin Camp

By Mile Vučić



This article is dedicated to "My three Magdalenas": Magdalena, my mother, Magdalena my grandmother and Magdalena, my great-grandmother who survived the horrors of the Camp. And in the memory of all the survivors who witnessed the horror of the Camp, and for those who did not survive.

- Founded in September 1945 for the ethnic Germans (Volksdeutsche) from the northern and central Banat
- The initial population of the community: 1,200
- Number of inmates: 5,000-7,000
- Duration of the camp: September 1945 to April 1947 (20 months or 610 days)
- The victims: 3,000 (2,012 documented by name)
- The main causes of death: starvation, typhus and malaria

The ethnic Germans (Volksdeutsche) in Molin/Molidorf had to suffer the sadistic brutality of the local partisan chiefs even before the creation of death camps. With the robbery by the Red Army, partisans, and especially residents of the surrounding Serbian villages, they immediately began to arrest and torture the ethnic German men and the rape of the women women. Mayor Georg Haferkorn (Haberhorn) and four men were brutally beaten to death. At Christmas time 1945, 58 women and 8 men were deported to Russia.

Between September and November 1945 the Yugoslav authorities began clearing out some of the 20 local labor camps of elderly men and women unfit for work, mothers with small children and infants, who were herded in long marching columns into death camp Molin. A municipality that originally had only 1,200 inhabitants was now overcrowded with 5,000 to 7,000 internees.

The camp management often denied food for days. Breakfast usually consisted of boiled water with ground corn meal, which contained no fat or salt. Lunch was always a thin soup of peas or beans, also lacking fat and salt. Dinner: 150 grams of coarse corn bread, fat-free. The hunger forced the prisoners to hunt down and eat the cats in the village. At night some desperate internees dared to go to neighboring villages (Torda & Hungarian Zerne) to beg for food. Whoever was caught by partisans, was either brutally tortured, or executed on the spot. This sad fate was suffered by two mothers with children.

Hunger starvation, scurvy, and lice infestation caused many prisoners to perish. The end for many more was still to come in the same way, first the feet began to swell, then the face, a few days afterwards death appeared.

Those who were able to work were completely separated from the unfit, and they were forced to perform hard labor during the day or night. Whenever the church bell rang, they had to report to work. Shifts often lasted up to 20 hours in duration. They also had to carry all the wood, bags of corn flour for the bread and all the supplies for the camp from the train stations in neighboring municipalities. Many had to bear the brunt of loads up to 30 kilograms, insufficiently clothed, in bad shoes on snow and ice covered roads. These were the slave caravans. If someone collapsed and fell, which happened often, compassionate men and women who wanted to help were beaten with rifle butts and brutalized.

The camp inmates did not only have to suffer just hunger and lack of other necessities, but perpetual torment and abuse. They were abused not only by the camp commander and guards, but also Serbs who came to the camp and selected their victims. In one case, Mariane Haberhorn was four times beaten to a pulp by her former field worker(farmhand) who shouted: "Now we subordinates are the masters."

The camp commander was a sadist. His name was Daniel Kesic and he was reportedly from Banatski Dvor. Here's an example of his sadistic behavior: 18 February 1946 at five o'clock in the morning 30 women, for no apparent reason, were forced into the water ditch, where they had to remain for half an hour in the icy water and mud. Then they were forced to report to work in their wet clothes. Some of these women had to go as far as 7 km to Neu-Zerne/Nova Crnja for their work assignment. They did not receive any food, and after work, about 5:30 pm, were forced back into camp. Three of the women were so weak that they collapsed on the way. The first two were simply left where they had fallen and died the same night. The third was able to reach the outskirts of the camp where the internees were able to hear her desperate cries for help for a long time. The first two were women 25 and 27 years old respectively and had left behind

three young children. The last exhausted woman finally reached the Molidorf camp with the last of her strength at 11 pm. Seven other women became very sick.

According to a statement of Dr. Jenö Heger, himself a prisoner, who was permitted to work as a camp doctor between 1 January and 22 February 1946, the health of the inmates had been extremely poor. There were no toilets; people did not have soap or other cleaning products for personal hygiene. Rashes and other skin diseases were prevalent. Among infectious diseases especially typhus required attention, because it spread rapidly due to weakened immunity of the inmates. While he was acting as camp doctor, the death rate was between six and seven per day.

Given the hopelessness of their position and the inhuman torments, many inmates attempted to escape to Romania. During one such attempt, a young woman from Kesic was killed. Since Dr. Heger was no longer able to tolerate the barbaric punishment of the women and reckless use of firearms by the camp commander, he filed a complaint against him and also fled to Romania.

Dr. Steiner, who was from Nova Crnja then temporarily worked as a camp doctor, trying to help the sick internees, but his options were severely limited. The only drugs available were some aspirin, quinine, and carbon dust for diarrhea and skin cream against skin diseases. Cold compresses were general treatment for all diseases.

It is said that in Molin there were no mass graves, since some sources which had not been corrected until decades later are still in circulation, but we have received updated information to the contrary from several eye-witness sources. Initially twenty-four old men were designated as grave diggers who had to dig the graves need for each day, and in addition they also dug pits as a reserve for the following day. The dead were wrapped into old blankets and buried without ceremony. As the death rate steadily increased, and the older gravediggers had also died out, young male internees, boys aged 14 were assigned to the grave digging and burial work group. One of these young men, now an elderly pensioner, living in Canada, is still so traumatized by his experiences from his youth that he is unable to speak about the horror he witnessed and becomes upset just to hear the words Molin or Molidorf mentioned. We did receive some detailed information from his younger brother who was also interned at this same time, but was too young to be forced to work in the cemetery. We learned that the mass graves are located next to the older (original) cemetery which is also the site chosen for the memorial constructed in July 2008.

If we start with Dr. Heger's mortality figures as a base, the total number of victims for 20 months (610 days) would be about 4,000. After concluding intensive studies, the assessment by Mr. Karl Weber of 3,000 deaths is also within the framework of the calculation. 2012 victims were documented by name in the fourth volume of the documentary series *Leidensweg der Deutschen im kommunistischen Jugoslawien*.

In late April, the 1947 the partisans disbanded the Molidorf liquidation camp and took the prisoners to the camp Gakovo/Gakowa in the Backa/Batschka. Only about 300 inmates who were younger and despite the abuse, were still able to work, were retained and used for agricultural work in the vicinity Molin. This place of horror was nearly totally destroyed in the flood of 1955/56, as if even nature wanted to erase any memory of it.

References:

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