## NATIONAL MUSEUM NIŠ



Nebojša Ozimić Aleksandar Dinčić

# CONCENTRATION CAMP AT RED CROSS

Niš, 2014.

#### Publisher: National museum of Niš

For publisher: Slaviša Popović

Editor: Slaviša Popović

Authors: Nebojša Ozimić Aleksandar Dinčić

*Proofreaders:*Aleksandra Petrović
Marija Jovanović

Tecnical editor: Željko Cajić

Cover design: Srdjan Trucić

Prepress:
Dejan Rinčić

Pieces: 1000

Printing by MEDIVEST KT Niš

#### CAMP ESTABLISHMENT AND LOCATION

Concentration camp Niš, in German Anhaltelager Nisch (Transit camp Niš), located in the depot building of the Cavalry Regiment "Miloš Obilić". It was established in April, 1941, for the temporary accommodation of the Yugoslav Royal Army prisoners of war. From June, 1941 the future concentration camp for the enemies of the Reich had the function of prison. It was officially formed in mid-June by the SS Captain Heinrich Brandt, who served as Head of the Niš Gestapo and a connection officer with the main apartment in Belgrade. The camp was unofficially under the command of Aussenkommando Nisch and directly under the command of Befehlshaber und des SD (BDS) administration and its other section, which was responsible for creating a camp network throughout the occupied Serbia.



Heinrich Brandt

In the period from April to 22nd June, 1941, with the outbreak of the German-Soviet war, the camp was used for the nationalists confinement of the following: pre-war members of the democratic parties, as the proponents of anti-German politics, members of the Chetnik organizations, priests as national leaders from the time of Toplica uprising of 1917, active royal officers, who organized the first military battalions which did not surrender, the followers of 27th March , Anglophiles, members of the Masonic Lodge, Rotary clubs and others. They were the first political prisoners in camps in Serbia, which changed from detention into forced-labor (concentration) camps or prisons for political opponents of the Third Reich.

The main building of the Niš camp was built in 1930 and it had been used as a military depot before the war. The Germans fully adapted it for the camp needs in September, 1941. The camp complex was large; it had a rectangular building with the ground floor, first floor and the attic. There were four large and two small premises rooms on the ground floor. The large rooms were labeled with numbers 11, 12, 13, and 14, which were used to accommodate prisoners, while the smaller rooms were without any number labels and one of them was used for interrogation and torture, while the other was used for the guard commander. The first floor layout was as follows: a dispensary, a barber's room for German soldiers, and rooms numbered 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 and 9. In the attic, facing the appel platz (a roll call square) there were 20 solitary confinement rooms labeled with numbers from 1 to 20.

The yard of the camp had a square shape and it was divided into two parts. The smaller part behind the building, to the east, served as a "promenade", and a larger part as the appel platz, where the prisoners were lined up for the counting and roll call every morning and evening. The yard was illuminated by electric lights from several strong reflector bulbs and it was enclosed with a double row of barbed wire. The inner fence was two meters away and slightly lower from the outside one, while the space

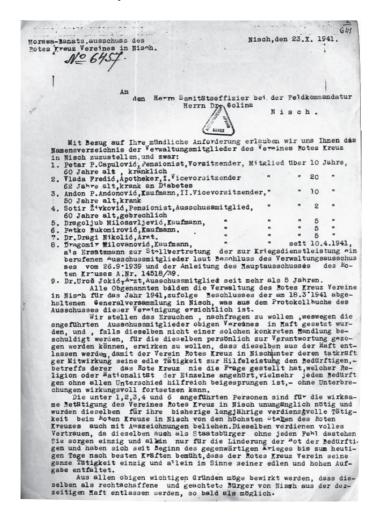
between the wire fences was filled with coils of barbed wire. Before the escape there was an unsanitary kitchen and bathroom in the courtyard, and after the escape on 12th February 1942 the now existing objects were built, which served for the needs of the camp.

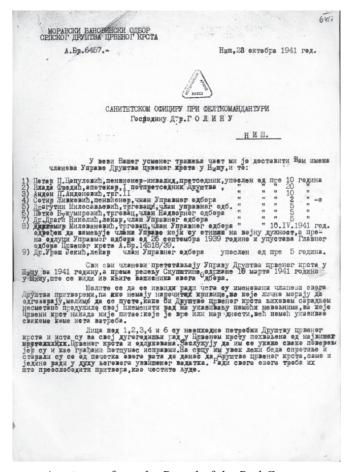
The camp had two permanent guard posts. One was on the left and the other opposite the main entrance just next to the room 12. The guards were doubled during the "walk" of inmates. The two towers had two guards with machine guns on duty around the clock. The towers were also supplied with reflectors.

The wire fence separated the camp from the barracks full of German, and since January, 1942 the Bulgarian soldiers, whose task was to come to help the camp guards in case of need.

### THE PREVENTIVE ARREST OF THE NIŠ ELITE

Not all the prisoners in the camp were treated equally. There were categories whose members had different fate. Hostages were used for execution in case of reprisal, 100 of them were executed for one killed soldier of the occupying troops and 50 for one wounded soldier. More prominent citizens, the so-called "flower of the Niš town", were repeatedly brought as hostages. In mid-October ,1941 a mass arrests of prominent citizens was carried out. The following were arrested and incarcerated: Petar Capulović. chairman of the General Committee of the Red Cross, Vlada Fredić, a pharmacist, vice president of the Red Cross, members of the Board: Andon Andonović, a color trader, Sotir Živković, reserve infantry lieutenant colonel, Dragutin Milosavljević, a trader, Petko Bukumirović, dr. Dragi Nikolić, MD, Dragomir Milovanović, a trader, dr. Uros Jekić, MD, Radovan Dimitrijević, the head of the gymnastics "Sokol" Society, Dragutin Veličković, a pharmacist, Djordje Jovanović, a respectable fur trader and a prominent furrier, Slobodan Jelić, the owner of the pharmacy "Jelić", Vlastimir Mihajlović, a trader, Milorad Tasić, a lawyer, Čedomir Stojanović, a director of Smederevo Credit Bank, Nikola Drezgić, head of the foundry in the factory "Pejić", Života Janković, a priest and a catechist, Svetislav Zojić, a retailer, and many others.





## A write-up from the Board of the Red Cross (translation)

Petar Vuković, the president of Ljotić organization "Zbor" in Niš informs Dimitrije Ljotić in a letter dated 23rd October, 1941:

German authorities have arrested a large number of the so-called prominent citizens in the last two days. On the first day those who were arrested were mostly masons and partly communists, who were still free, thanks to protection from all sides. About 150 people were arrested last night, again from the posh and, as they say here, "the flower of the Niš town was arrested".



Andon Andonović makes a speech in the centre of Niš



Sotir Blagojević

Reprisals against the hostages was performed for both killing and wounding the soldiers and officers who were in the apparatus of the President of the Serbian government of General Milan Nedić, but the number was smaller; for a killed soldier 10 hostages were executed, and for the wounded one five hostages. Among the hostages was Trajko Ristić, a prominent trader from Niš, who remembered those days:

Life in the camp lasted up to 30th November 1941, on which day the criminal Hamer came into our room with his interpreter Francezi and started to roll call, announcing that somebody killed a German officer, and that the one

who was called out was to be executed. After every one of us was called out, he took us outside, lined us up in threes, and commanded us to go towards the gate. Germans commanded the squad to fill the rifles and lined us up when we got to the gate. Then a young assistant shouted, "Get back!" When we turned to the left, the squad began to shoot above us, and we returned to the room. Hamer ordered us to take our things and go home. A mirror factory owner Koen, a Jew from Niš and a young man from Kruševac region were shot while we were in the camp. They were executed in the camp at night. We heard when Koen just shouted: Oh, Mother!

The second category of prisoners were the Jews who were brought to the camp for the mental and physical destruction as a "lower non-Aryan races". They were in the camp temporarily, waiting for further deportation or mostly for a mass liquidation on Bubanj hill. They performed various tasks in the camp, and they were especially assigned to dig the mass graves on Bubanj hill. After their destruction, the Romanis replaced them doing this job.



Moša P. Gedalja



A three-year-old Saša Goldstein (Goldštajn)

The third group of prisoners were people arrested on suspicion of belonging to or collaborating with the National Liberation (Partisan) Movement (NOP) and their military units. Prisoners from this category were taken for execution in reprisal and contingents were prepared for internation to Germany or Norway. The captured partisans were constantly day and night under strict surveillance by guards and as a rule executed with the first mass executions. The fight against the members and supporters of the National Liberation Movement was led by the Police headquarters and its separate part - Special Police, and very rarely the German military police or the Gestapo.

The fourth group of prisoners was made up of those arrested and under charges of belonging to or collaborating with the Ravna Gora Chetnik Movement, under the command of a Defense Minister Army General Dragoljub Draža Mihailović, and Royal Yugoslav Army, which was located in the enslaved homeland (JVUO). The Germans and The Bulgarians generally brought this group of prisoners after the hearings in the police and military prisons or right from the fights in which they had been captured or arrested. The Niš section for the fight against the organization of General Mihailović (DM section) at the Gestapo was located in the camp itself. The SS Captain Heinrich Brandt first led it, then the SS Lieutenant Erich Winnecke, the Gestapo leader, the camp commander and supporter of the uncompromising struggle against the Chetnik Movement in Niš and Niš district Winnecke's section was subordinated to the main section of Captain Brant in Belgrade and had the label "IVA /2". His first assistant was Ervin Francessi, who took part in the executions on Bubani, and later in Jajinci near Belgrade. After him, it was the SS Sergeant Karl Ungar (Carl Hunghardt), the Niš Volksdeutsche also the participant of the executions, who stayed until the end. The process of executions and arrests by the Bulgarian military or police authorities as well as by the Special Police and its third section in Belgrade for the fight against the DM organization, was not subject to the Gestapo. The

Bulgarians had the right to take prisoners and shoot them in the event of their soldiers and officers' death or wounding. There was a part of the camp used by the Bulgarian police and military services agents, while Lieutenant Colonels Alexander Dočev and Angel Popov led the section for fight against the illegal movements. Members of JVUO had the same status as the captured partisans and their associates.

There were occasionally foreigners at the camp. When it comes to the Poles, the French, the Greeks, and others, it is not known where from and why they were brought. During 1943 and 1944, there was a small group of Englishmen and Russians who were captured after the air combats. This category of prisoners was the smallest one and they were not executed because the Germans respected the Geneva and the Hague Convention on the procedure for prisoners of war. They were mainly taken to detention camps in Germany via Banjica. For a while, there were also German soldiers who refused to go to the Eastern Front and later the officers of the Abver service, which had become a threat to the Gestapo after the removal of the first man of the German Secret Police, Reinhard Heydrich. There was also a large number of women among the arrested, often with young children. The regime was the same for them as for all the other inmates. Many of them were executed or internated

People from different parts of Yugoslavia were brought to the Niš camp. Therefore, in mid-1944, several larger groups of inmates, who were executed on Bubanj hill the same year, were transferred from the camp at Banjica. People from various cities were among them: from Loznica, Šabac, Čačak, Valjevo, Kosovo, Vojvodina, and other places. The camp area included almost the entire southern and eastern, and partly even western Serbia.

According to severity of the crime, inmates were classified and accordingly arranged into the rooms. Thus, in room 12 were mostly the captured Partisans, in room 11 political prisoners, and in rooms 13 and 14, mostly members of the local Partisan squad, councilors, Partisan activ-

ists, parents of the active Partisans and prominent citizens as hostages from the city and its surroundings, and occasionally the Jews. In October 1942, the arrested Niš Romani were brought to room 14; according to the testimonies of the survivors there were about 100 of them. Upstairs, in addition to men there were also women with children. The arrangement in the rooms here also depended on the severity of the alleged crime. Rooms 3 and 4 were reserved for death-sentenced prisoners. In room 5 there were mostly pupils, clerks, and students, which is why the inmates called this room "the intellectual". Hostages were mostly located in room 6, women in 7, JVUO members and their associates in 8. The followers of General Mihailović who had been the railway workers and officials in the city were also in room 7, which the Germans called "the sabotage room" because these people together with the Chetnik headquarters took part in railway sabotages and diversions in order to stop the enemy's traffic. They were also in room 3 (Petar Petrović's group), and they were later put down to room 11, before being taken to Germany. A number of them was located in the solitary confinement during the investigation.



The camp building



Bubanj Memorial Park

The regime in the camp was hard. Torture started as soon as the prisoners entered the yard. One of the surviving inmates, Dušan Tomović, remembers:

They lined us up in threse, one person behind the other. We had never been lined up that way before. A nose that stood out was quickly brought back with a whip. Lagging behind or tour the tip of the Gestapo boots were driven forward. All this is accompanied by vulgar curse or ridicule.

Political and military prisoners were subjected to daily torture. The hearing began and ended with the beating up, very often until the inmates fainted. The props for them were poles, prepared and brought so that the prisoners could see, then batons and sometimes a ring which was placed on the head and tightened so that the prisoner felt as if his head was going to burst. When they were unable to obtain the confessions, the Gestapo officers beat the prisoners with boots, fists, pistol grips, or they pulled their hair. The Germans had many prisoners taken to a Gestapo prison for the hearing and then they brought them back to the camp. Some inmates were killed during the hearing. The Bulgarians also brought the beaten prisoners from their prison and continued to investigate them in the camp. Members of the

National Liberation Movement were subjected to torture in the prisons of the Special Police from where they were, at the request of the Germans, taken to the camp. A teacher Žarko Jovanović from Ostrovica was beaten to death by the Gestapo after being beaten by the Special Police. They carried him into room 14, where he barely showed any signs of life. His internal organs were injured, he wheezed, at times he returned to consciousness from the agony, and died on 9th March, 1942, before the eyes of the inmates. Someone wrote on the table in the room: Žarko died here in the camp. Such was the fate of teacher Jevrem Dulović, the father of two Partisan veterans. The Bulgarians brought him to the camp after the execution and burning of schools in Gornja Stražava, on 21st February, 1942. Soon his son Ljubomir Dulović was brought to the camp. The father was in room 11 and the son in the room 5. Dr. Velizar Pijade saw that Jevrem's days were numbered, and one evening he took Ljubomir to see his dying father. Soon he died in great pain. His son was internated to Norway, and at the end of 1942, his daughter Radmila Dulović-Tale was captured and brought to the camp with his wife Jakša. Both were shot on Bubanj hill. Svetislav Stanković, a persecuted pre-war Toplica teacher, the member of the Communist Party and organizer of the uprising in Toplica, also died in the gratest torments

Miroslav Zotović, a pre-war owner of Niš newspaper "Pregled", who lived at number 3, Kralj Aleksandar Square, was also killed at the camp. He was a member of Gora Headquarters 43 in Nis, a connection with the Prime Minister Dragiša Cvetković and Ravna Gora. The Bulgarians arrested him in Niška Banja and deported to the camp. A prisoner Vlastimir Vuković remembers his death:

While I was still in Crveni Krst camp the Gestapo brought Miroslav Zotović, a Lieutenant of DM organization in Pirot. The Bulgarians probably arrested him because it was the Bulgarian occupation zone. He was brought to the camp and tortured. Three days after he was brought to the camp, the Germans brought a trader, who had a shop near

the pub "Solun" in Niš, to make an iron cage with wire spikes, into which the mentioned Zotović was closed. The cage was placed in the attic, since there were no cells then. He remained in this cage for some time, and he was probably later transferred to a cell in the attic where he was executed. He was buried in the garbage of the camp appel platz. Miroslav Zotović, Lieutenant of the former Yugoslav Army or DM organization, was also a journalist. He comes from the village Đurevac near Prokuplje. His father, Mihajlo Zotović was a captain in Nedić's Army and was a terror to the whole region, as well as all the places where he and his army passed through.

During his stay in the camp his a daughter, Katherine, was born, but she died of tuberculosis the following year.





Pictures of the killed: Miroslav Zotović, Sreten Radaković

Dobrivoje Denčić, a teacher of Technical High school in Niš and the organizer of the Ravna Gora Movement, received so many blows with sticks by the Gestapo officers that his flesh separated from the skin. The prisoner Iva Andjelković remembers that after the roll call the guards carried him to the truck that drove prisoners to Gornja Lokošnica near Leskovac where they were all

shot. The airforce sergeant - pilot Sreten Radaković was also killed at the hearing in the Gestapo prison in Niš. The Police authorities arrested him on December 3, 1942 in Niš as the member of the Ravna Gora Movement. Dragoljub Crvenić-Gandhi, the organizer of the Ravna Gora Movement in the city and the financier of the JVUO headquarters, had his jaw broken by the Gestapo at the hearing, while his wife was repeatedly put on the list for execution.



Dragoljub Crvenić- Gandhi

One of the ways to torture the prisoners was the solitary confinement punishment. Solitary cells were located in the attic of the camp buildings. 20 solitary sells were made on the north side, while the other - the south side, remained empty. The entrance to the hole went through a massively built door. Six iron bars arranged horizontally

were located on this door, apart from each other for about 3 cm. Over these bars, there were also three lids, which could be opened as needed. There were also two strong iron bolts with two padlocks at the door. The height of the solitary confinement was 2 m and 74 cm at the entrance, and 90 cm on the opposite side, its length was 3 m and 4 cm and its width 1 m and 55 cm. There were inscriptions of the prisoners in some solitary cells and on the doors.

In a solitary confinement number 15 Mihajlo Vorobjev, the captured Red Army soldier, wrote the initials with his closest family's years of birth. Below that, it says: *I'm sorry for all of you, but nothing can help. Let whoever sits here read Mihajlo Vorobjev was.* In the solitary confinement 5, on the right wall, one prisoner spoon carved a figure of the Greek god of beauty Apollo, while in solitary confinement 10, on the wall under one inscription, a heart pierced with a knife was drown.

The commanders, political leaders, and notable contributors to both resistance movement were most often brought to the solitary confinement. Nada Stanisavljević, who was brought to the camp with her mother because she cooperated with the partisans, remembers her time in a solitary confinement:

There was one small hole through which a slice of sky could be seen on the ceiling of the solitary confinement. That was the only connection with the outside world. For days like that in isolation. I shivered. Exhausted, I could not sleep. I tried to warm up in vain and I wrapped in a rug that an inmate pushed into my hands as I was going to the solitary confinement. When we were brought to the camp, it was still warm, so we were easily dressed, but the cold winter days came, and we in solitary confinement were still lightly dressed.

This was written in the solitary number 11:

Stay here, the foreign sky's sun
Will not heat like this one

Heats ...

#### And someone added on:

God forbid such a heating

When will you disappear, oh, human tomb when will you stop shortening the life of man

Signed Raka Tanasković

The priest Ilija Stojković, Jašunjska's pastor, was imprisoned in a solitary confinement, too, brought to the camp because of the cooperation with Babička's partisan battalion. He was taken out of the solitary and executed on Bubanj. Captain Petar Novaković, Adjutant of the second Assault Squad SDS in Niš, suffered the same fate, who came to the camp because of the cooperation with the Chetnik Lieutenant Draža Petrović. Gestapo tortured him for days in a solitary confinement, but he admitted to nothing, because he did not want the others to get hurt. In the end, he was shot on Bubanj. Žarko Popović from Tešica, his courier, whom the Bulgarians arrested in April 1943 on Tešica station when he was returning from Niš. On the wall of the solitary confinement he wrote that he had been lying for 78 days. Gestapo tortured him and eventually also executed.

The horrible anguish and suffering the inmates experienced daily were often finished on Bubanj scaffold near Niš. During the occupation, the following were executed on Bubanj: military-political culprits (members and supporters of the Chetnik and Partisan movements), the Jews, the Romani, hostages, and others, primarily prisoners of Niš Criminal Bureau, who had been serving their sentences for the offences before the war.

Bubanj had been used as a place where the Royal Yugoslav Army carried out live firing. The shooting range was given its new shape by building the barracks during the occupation.



Petar Novaković



Solitary confinement



The overview of Bubanj (framed) from the jet recording, May 1944

# **OVER THE BARBED WIRES TO FREEDOM** - February 12, 1942

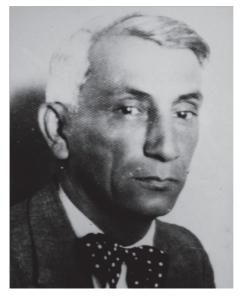
The Germans executed prisoners on Tuesdays and Fridays as a rule. The shot people were burried in burial pits that went in a zig-zag. There were no poster announcements about all the reprisal shootings, neither for the communists (komunissten) nor for the supporters of Draža Mihailović (D.M Anhânger). The occupying authorities put them up only when they thought it would have an effect on the citizenship or if it had been expressly required by General in Command of Serbia, or Head of the Security police. There were only a few of them when it comes to reprisal made during the occupation of Niš.

The first mass executions of inmates and prisoners was committed during the period from 16th to 20th February 1942. The German General Paul Bader in his ten-day report dated 10th February, ordered 3,484 people to be shot in reprisal. That is the number the Nazis needed for each of their victim killed during the uprising of 1941, holding up to the proportion of one hundred for one. Out of this number, 700 were planned to be shot in Niš.

Notified in time that a huge retaliation was being prepared, the hardest culprits from room 12 organized a plan of escape. Two successful escapes were organized at the camp during the occupation. The central place in the history of the camp is an attack on the camp guards and a breakout on 12th February 1942. On 9th February 1942, in front of the lined prisoners, a Gestapo officer read the names of 81 prisoners from room 12 chosen for execution. Announcing the decision a few days before the shooting was just another deceitful method of torturing the prisoners. The roll call included a larger number of the organizers and participants of the future breaktout. Upon returning to the room, the leadership of the conspiracy decided that the breakout was to be done the next day, 10th February, as well as to inform the political culprits from room 11, because the plan was to open the doors of other rooms of the camp and to allow the escape of other prisoners. The main organizer of the breakout was Branko Bjegović, a student from Glina He notified his co-sufferers of the action which was to be performed. There was a noticeable nervousness among the prisoners in the room. During an evening walk, the guards noticed anxiety of the inmates and enhanced alertness.

One of the guards went along the roew of people with a weapon pointed at them and threatened with machinegun. Upon entering the room, the Germans invited all the organizers of the escape to the camp administration: Dušan Tomović, Branko Bjegović, Brana Ćurčić, Sreten Vučković and Vule Vukasinović. Everyone suspected that thez found out about the escape plan. However, a typography worker from room number 11, to whom Branko Bjegović passed on the attack plan, carelessly allowed some morally weak people to find out about the plot. One of them was a law clerk who told the Germans about the whole thing. Boža said something vaguely about Branko at the hearing, the data were very scarce, and so everything was finished only in the beating up. The next day, 10th February 1942, during the lunch, the camp physician Dr.

Velizar Pijade learned from Blagoje Stanković from Nis that graves were being dug on Bubanj hill for prisoners sentenced to death. Dr. Pijade passed the received news to the inmates in room 12.



Dr. Velizar Pijade

According to the recollection of a prisoner Rade Djordjević from Prokuplje, it looked differently:

Draža's supporters were, mainly thanks to the Jews, informed that pits were being prepared in the vicinity of the camp, as well as somewhere else, actually the inmates were digging those pits, they just did not know what they were digging.

This news made the inmates even more determined that the plan had to be carried out. Hours between lunch and the evening walks were passing by slowly, but the long-awaited moment finally arrived. The door opened and the inmates of the "white bread" ran into the yard, but the rest of the people from the room arrived slowly which revolted the guards. However, another factor made the action more difficult. Head of the Gestapo, Hamer, brought

a few soldiers from the city. All this hindered the plan of the attack. The report was over and the Germans ordered going back to the room. General disappointment and indignation spread among the inmates. The situation was excruciating. Those who had not been called for execution proposed running from the truck while being transported to Bubanj, believing that this way they would be less in danger. The Germans were cunning here, too, so during the roll call they separated a brother from a brother, a father from a son, thus wanting to break the unity among them and thwart any attempt of the conspirators in room 12. Something had to be done to restore morale and faith in people. Having this in mind, discussions were held and people calmed down a little. The execution of the plan was being prepared for the next day, 11th February, but the Germans did not let them for a walk because of the situation from the previous day. 12th February arrived. At lunchtime, a Jew Đurika Gros who was delivering food, informed the inmates that there was going to be an execution at four o'clock the following morning. There could not be any more delays. The inmates decided that if they did not let them out that night, they would attack the German guards. There was nothing to lose. As the evening was approaching, impatience and nervousness grew. Because of the straw that was being changed in the rooms, it seemed there would be no going out. However, in the unusual time for the camp conditions, around 07:30 pm, the door opened. People rushed to the part of the yard behind the building. In anticipation of the sign to attack, nervousness among people grew. According to the recollection of a number of inmates, due to some waverers who went to the camp administration, for fear that the operation would be fully revealed, Branko Bjegović shouted to the others before it was time: Brothers, betrayal! Go! The official report says that the prisoners were being escorted for personal needs, that they seized the opportunity, attacked the guard, took him his gun and shot him, then opened the door and let the other inmates out, who started to escape. According to the memories of inmates participants of the outbreak, some Germans were terrified, some were even running away from the barehanded people. Room 11 was opened, too, but people from that room did not want to escape. There were some protests because of the act itself and secure German reprisal. The Germans collected themselves and opened a strong machine gun fire from the towers, and the neighboring barracks with Bulgarian soldiers was alerted. A number of inmates was killed in the yard. Some changed their minds, returned to the room and were killed there. Since they could not pass through the gate, the inmates rushed behind the building to the wires. A group after group was jumping onto the wires, until at one point an opening was made due to the inrush and pressure and where a number of inmates passed. Naked, barefoot, and exhausted prisoners from Room 12 went out to the field towards Vinik (a hill near Niš). There, in the courtvard, on the wires and in the rooms, 42 inmates were killed. However, 105 managed to escape and most of them joined the partisans. There were new fighters in Ozren, Syrljig and Jastrebac battalion. A smaller number, led by Captain Ivan Vujisić, who took part in the camp breakout as a Chetnik culprit, went to Veliki Jastrebac and Kopaonik to the JVUO unit. Among others, Chetnik duke Vule Vukašinović died on the wires, while his son Rade managed to escape and join JVUO units in Žiča county. Bogdan Panović from Ratina near Kraljevo and some others ran away with the Chetniks. One German guard was killed during the escape from the camp.

This event is historiographically recorded as the first major escape from a Nazi concentration camp in the area of the occupied Europe. It still has not been proven that there another escape from a Nazi concentration camp had been made before that time.

In a big February shooting from 16th to 19th February 1942, in reprisal for the losses during the uprising and the killing of a German guard during the escape of prisoners, 800 prisoners from the camp and the Criminal Bureau, mostly Jews, were executed on Bubanj hill. Also, the prisoners who were arrested for listening to the foreign radio stations as well as prominent people such as Vojislav Ilić, president of the municipality of Leskovac, were shot then.

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German report on the second breakout estimate

The second outbreak was organised on 2nd December,1942. Taking into account the number of inmates , it was not so huge though in terms of organisation it was very complex one since it was necessary to coordinate male and female rooms which was not so easy under very rigid surveillance. Nevertheless, partisans, under command of Vidak Milović managed to organise the second breakout on 2nd December, 1942 that had a very strong political and moral impact both among the prisoners and citizens of Niš. In reprisal for the outbreak, the Germans shot Milica Šuvaković – Maša and Ana Stojković – Vesna as well as eight more prisoners on Bubanj hill on 15th December, 1942.

During the roll call and transportation to Bubanj hill some rare deeds of courage, spite and defiance were noticed among the mere mortals who already anticipated their destiny. The first such example was Jelisaveta Aneta Andrejević who was a captured solider from Toplica Partisan Battalion. In the National Museum Niš it is possible to see the written document describing her execution on Bubanj hill. In January, 1943 the trucks from the camp transporting the inmates sentenced to death arrived at 8:00 am. Six of them got out of the truck and so did Aneta singing. The

Germans pushed the inmates forward to the trenches where they were supposed to be executued with their backs facing the Germans. Aneta was the last one to be pushed forward; she was looking and shouting at them spitefully while she could see the pieces of skulls and tufts of hair floating in the air. It was her turn, at last. She was asked to turn backwards but she refused to do so. She stood proudly and said to them: You, bastards I don't want to turn round, why are you ashamed to shoot right into my chest. It is not my blood that will help you win or lose the war. The victory is ours! she said and continued singing.



Aneta Andrejević

There was also a group of prisoners that after the roll call started singing in a loud voice: "Who wants to die young, he should join our division". Stevan Veselinović from Niš, a captain intendant and an illegal commander of Ravna Gora movement was transfered to the camp from the Gestapo prison and on 23rd February his name was on shooting roll call list. When aked whether he felt sorry for acting against the Germans he said in a calm voice: "I don't feel sorry for this! Long- lived Draža Mihajlović!" The puzzeled Gestapo officers wanted to shake hands with him but he rejected. His life ended on Bubanj hill.

The most patriotic act of courage and spite towards the enemy was noticed on Bubanj hill when an unknown prisoner, just before there was a fusillade had clenched his fist, raised it to the sky and welcomed the freedom that was about to come. Thus, the sculptor Ivan Sabolić was inspired by this act to design a monument representing three fists and symbolising reistance to the Germans. Nowadays, visitors have opportunity to see it on Bubanj hill.

The citizens of Niš described the crimes committed during the occupation in many national poems and songs:

There, below, near Niš,

Blood is pouring like rain,

In Serbia grave to grave,

Mother is looking for her son.

At the grave she's stood and thinks:

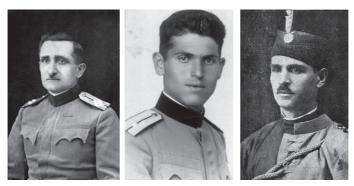
"Oh the grave, whose are you?"

And from the grave the voice is heard;

"Don't cry, mother, I feel bad."



The photos of the shot prisoners: Zdravka Vučković, Milovan Kostić – Jablan, Milica Pecarski (upper row), Nada Tomić, Živojin Stojanović, All of them ended their lives on Bubanj hill as members of the National Liberation Movement (NOP) (lower row)



Milo Rolović, Velimir Dimitrijević, Dobrivoje Mihajlović Takić, members of Ravna Gora movement were shot together on Bubanj hill.

The camp could accommodate new prisoners very soon no matter the executions were done so frequently. Those who had not been killed here were deported to the camps all over Europe, especially to Germany, Austria and Norway. By the end of March 1942, the prisoners from occupied Serbia and Niš were conceded to German maltreatments. A lot of them had lost their lives in numerous reprisals even before it was ordered to be taken to some of the camps abroad. The last week of April, 1942 was marked by a directive stating that first internment of partisans and chetniks in German labor force camps was about to start. The internment commenced from Banjica camp in Belgrade and Sajmište camp but the captives were also transferred directly from the military – police camps.

Many captives (750 of them) from Niš camp were taken to the camps in Norway (Botn, Osen, Korgen, Eisand, Trondheim, etc.) while 300 of them lost their lives there.

The concentration camp Mauthausen was another place where a lot of prisoners from Niš were deported starting from November, 1942. These groups of prisoners were accused of either cooperating with or belonging to the National Liberation Movement (NOP) and The Yugoslav Royal Army (JVUO). Instead of death sentence the Gestapo sent them abroad to endure forced labour that would probably kill them due to the harsh living conditions there. The personal documents of these prisoners contained a note: The return is unwanted (Rückkehr unerwünscht) and each of them was written off both by the Gestapo and SS. Those seriously ill and unable to work were burnt in the crematoriums. The mortality rate increased on the account of the numerous injuries the inmates faced while transporting the wagons for the camp construction especially on the site known as "Stairs of Death" in Wiener Graben. The

prisoners from Niš were mainly placed in Gusen, a satellite camp where they occasionally underwent various experiments including testing of vaccines for plague, typhoid, tuberculosis and some other diseases.





Vidosav Mitković and Zvezdan Stanković, young communists from Kuršumlija executed in Mauthausen as members of the National Liberation Movement (NOP)





Doko Vujičić and Mirko Backović, lieutenants from Niš executed as members of Ravna Gora Movement



Heinrich Himmler and Franz Ziereis visiting the concentration camp Mauthausen

The largest group was transported from Niš in spring 1943. Then on 6th April, 298 prisoners from Leskovac and its surroundings (Slišane, Orane, Ivanje, Bučumet.etc.) who were confined in Banjica arrived in Mauthausen. This group was arrested by Bulgarian crime expedtions in reprisal for the killed Bulgarian soliders near the mine site Lece. Another transport of the large group of prisoners from Niš confined in Banjica took place on 15th April and it counted 303 of them mainly from Toplica region. The third group being transported on 31st August, 1944 consisted of inmates accused of collaboration with or belonging to Ravnagora Movement or the Royal Yugoslav Army (JVUO). Many of these accused were workers in railway industry and thus responsible for numerous divisions and sabotage. The third group also included soliders-members of the National Liberation Movement (NOP) from Kravlje and Cerije captured on 20July, 1944 by the German crime expedition. In Belgrade, the Red Cross donated cigarettes to prisoners from Niš and saw them off at Topčidar station. The majority of prisoners transferred to Mauthausen actually never returned. The total number equalled 1200 and 500 of them were executed there.

The inmates from Niš were also interned into force labour camps in Germany (Buchenwald, Dachau, Neuengamme, Flossenburg, Sachsenhausen, Ravensbrück- a women's camp), France (Metz, Yerville), Sweden (Berg), Austria (Linz, Krems, Kindberg), etc. After 1942, many lieutenants, loyal to the Royal Yugoslav Army were deported to the camps in Germany and Poland (Moosburg, Luckenwalde, Fallingbostel, Steyr, Dulag, Osnabrück, etc.). Unlike force labour camps, in detention camps prisoners were treated in accordance with regulations stated in Geneva and Hague Conventions.

The German document signed on 21st June, 1944 suggested that at that time there were a lot of inmates loyal to the Royal Yugoslav Army and its commander Draža Mihajlović. This document also implied that a liuetenant called Mirko Ćirković from Čegar corps of the Royal Yugosalv Army had had an idea to break into the camp and liberate his friends. According to his plan, twenty-four chetniks were supposed to be disguised in the Germans and the moment when they would enter the camp the Germans would be attacked. We are not sure whether this daring plan was successful but it also indicates the relationship the Germans had with the Royal Yugoslav Army soliders.

K IV 1 b

Belgrad, den 10.7.44.

#### Vfg.

1. Abschrift eines Tagesberichtes der Aussendienststelle Nisch vom 19.6.44.

Betr.: Cegarski-Stab, Hptm. Cirkcvic, 15, SO Nisch.

D.M. Cegarski-Stab Hptm. C i k'o v i o, 15 80 Nisch beschloss am 17.6. D.M. Sabotage und Spionage sowie Exekutionshaeftlinge des Anhaltelagers, zu befreien.

In Nisch und Nischka Bazia 2 Doppeltrojkas zur Liquidierung fuehrender deutscher und bulgarischer Offiziere eingesetzt. Hptm. C. ist verantwortlicher Befehlsbeber der durchgefuehrten Morde an Reichsdeutscher Auguste Rogalla, Direktor Srdie und weiteren 6 Serben aus kriegsmichtigen Gebieten.

Renzleiangestellte.

- Der Vorgang wurde bei K IV 1 b ausgewertet. Abschriften wurden den entsprechenden Fers. und Sachakten beigegeben. Das Original befindet sich im G2. L IV.
- 3. Reg.: Zur Pers. Akte " O 456 Hptm. Cirkovic"



33 Sturmscharfuehrer

Transcription of the lieutenant Mirko Ćirković's plan Melde tmpp 125 br. lool/44. pov. oznaka spisa Mld.

Olovkom: IV 1 b paraf: Sa(ttler) 4/7.

1./ Militaerbefehlshaber Jugoistok

odjeljenje I.

2./ Melde kommando 111 3./ Befehlshaber Sipo-a i SD-e

Beograd

POVJERLJIVO

Položaj 26. juna 1944 Befehlshaber Sipo-a i SD-e

Beograd Primljeno 30. 6. 44. paraf: BR...

br. 1747/44. pov. odjeljenje referat obradjivač III IV paraf: neč.

Melde-kopf Niš javlja dne 21. 6. 44. od povjerenika Miko:

DM poručnik Mirko ČIRKOVIĆ ima plan ,da sa odprilike 60 DM pripadnika izvrši napad na prihvatni logor SD-ea u Nišu kako bi oslobodio tamo zatvorene Da pripadnike , koji će navodno idućih dana biti odpremljeni za Njema-

Plan o prepadu je slijedeći : Odprilike 20 DM pripadnika u njemačkih uniformama imali bi nekih 40 DM pripadnika u seljačkim nošnjama ( ka muflirane kao zarobljenike ) dovesti u prihvatni logor

gdje bi zatim imao da zajednički uslijedi prepad .

Prema rasporedu kod Melde kopf Niš-SD-e Niš i Leskovac imaju .

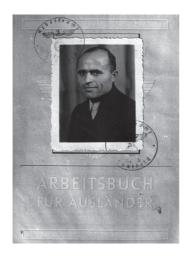
podpis nečitak poručnik

Štambilja:

I o dnevní izvještaj rješen I e područna kartoteka rješena BdS-u na daljnje raspolaganje



Translation of the lieutenant Mirko Ćirković's plan





Inmates' identifications: Vita Stojanović, a doctor from Donji Dušnik and a member of the National Liberation Movement (NOP) deported to a German camp near Berlin and Dušan Sretenović, a pharmacist from Soko banja and a member of Ravnogora Movement deported to Stalag VII A Moosburg camp

Just before the Gestapo left the city of Niš, the penultimate but one group of prisoners was executed in the north part of the camp area where the bomb formed a big crater after the explosion. It was on 14th September when the camp officialy was closed and the Gestapo left the city. On that same day another group of prisoners was shot near Đuza meadows. Their names were: Živojin Stojanović, Čedomir Acković, Jordan Zdravković, Petar Koković and Lazar Živković. The last group was executed on Bubanj hill on 20th September, 1944 and and then the fire burning the corpses buried there was extinguished. The corpses were taken out of the ground and then burnt in order to disguise the proof of atrocities the Germans had performed. The prisoners from Banjica camp dug the ground before they were shot and later on it was done by the prisoners from Niš and a group of Italian captives. They also dug the holes all around the city looking for non-exploded bombs. This squad also known as the *death squad* was under the command of 1005 Special Unit (*Sonderkommando*).

After the war ended the local committee of the National Liberation Movement did excavations and exhumations of thirty-six corpses buried in the camp yard on 14th September. According to the reports of the local board, there were ten women and twenty-six men among them. It was possible to identify the names and surnames of twenty-five people as well as an Italian of Romani origin. Eleven corpses (two women and nine men) were not identified. In the Red Cross Concentration Camp museum it is possible to see the skulls of those inmates whose families or relatives could not identify. Since 1949, every year on 12th February there has been a ceremony in commemoration of the breakout in 1942.

According to the report of the Commission in charge of the war damage estimate, the camp housed more than 30000 people during the World War II though the precise number of executed prisoners either from the camp itself or the Crimainal Bureau has never been determined.

The Concentration Camp in Niš can not be ranked as Banjica ,Jasenovac or some other but in terms of atrocities and brutalities there were not any differences. Among numerous camps all over Europe, the camp in Niš is also positioned in the system related to the Nazi destruction.



The commemoration of the executed inmates (1949)

# THE CAMP AS A MUSEUM

The camp building was turned into Memorial Complex "12 February" in 1969 and then its managers were at first Branko Nožica, an associate of the National Museum and later on Branko Milentijević, a curator. At that time, a permanent exibition, displaying personal belongings and objects was set up. There were very few changes concerning the exibition up to 2011 when some preparatory action were performed in commencement of the seventieth anniversary of the breakout (1942 -2012).

The camp breakout inspired the director Miodrag Miki Stamenković to shoot the film Lager Niš thus gathering a wide range of famous actors such as Ljubiša Samardžić.

According to the decison brought by the Executive Council in 1979, The Memorial complex Red Cross in Niš was categorised as the monument of great significance for the Republic of Serbia. In 1979 and 2004 some restoration and conservation works were done but the most complex works related to revitalisation and reconstruction of the camp started in 2007. At that time Sima Gušić, an architect created for the National museum Niš a new design representing a modern outlook on displays and it is, for sure a significant progress in the presentation of this important museum complex.

# THE LIST OF ARRESTED PEOPLE BY THE SS POLICE from 10th to 20th October 1941<sup>1</sup>

- 1. Uroš Jekić
- 2. Tihomir Rakić
- 3. Miodrag Stanković
- 4. Andon Andonović
- 5. Pera Nikolić
- 6. Dr Dragan Nikolić
- 7. Vasa Taušanović
- 8. Slavko Bajčetić
- 9. Milorad Stevanović
- 10. Nikola Đorđević
- 11. Milivoje Ivanović
- 12. Aleksandar Stefanović
- 13. Branislav Stojanović
- 14. Đorđe Lukić
- 15. Slavoljub Đorđević
- 16. Milisav Krunić
- 17. Dragoljub Joksimović
- 18. Stanko Petković
- 19. Predrag Vučković
- 20. Vlasta Aranđelović
- 21. Božidar Petrović
- 22. Bogoljub Lazarević
- 23. Slobodan Tomić
- 24. Čedomir Živić
- 25. Luka Obradović
- 26. Dragutin Gvozdenović
- 27. Dragica Gvozdenović
- 28. Dušan Vitorović
- 29. Đorđe Dimirijević
- 30. Svetolik Todorović
- 31. Milan Živić
- 32. Svetozar M.Jovanović

<sup>1</sup> NmNiš, book 22 statement of Hranislav Gvozdenović. List made Hranislav Gvozdenović and priest of Života Janković

- 33. Vlajko Tomašević
- 34. Aleksandar Milenković
- 35. Dobrosav Lukić
- 36. Vlada Marković
- 37. Dušan Jovanović
- 38. Sava Kosanović
- 39. Milan Mijović
- 40. Đorđe Pešić
- 41. Sreten Ivanković
- 42. Vojislav Stojković
- 43. Vukadin Đorđević
- 44. Todor Kostić
- 45. Aleksandar Jovanović
- 46. Živojin Ignjatović
- 47. Branislav Veljković
- 48. Predrag Konstantinović
- 49. Slobodan Lozančić
- 50. Danilo Bukiš
- 51. Jelena Radulović
- 52. Svetislav Koković
- 53. Krsta Stefanović
- 54. Vojislav Pavlović
- 55. Sekula Stanimirović
- 56. Albert Gorjanić
- 57. Slobodan Popović
- 58. Dr Aleksandar Petrović
- 59. Vojislav Đorđević
- 60. Stojan Stojiljković
- 61. Radovan Dimitrijević
- 62. Nikola Petrović "Morena"
- 63. Dragomir Milovanović
- 64. Dragomir A. Milosavljević
- 65. Petko Bukumirović
- 66. Milorad Vukadinović
- 67. Svetomir Šumarac
- 68. Fefzija Milović
- 69. Dimitrije Stanković
- 70. Spasoje Prvulović

- 71. Ljubomir Krstić
- 72. Dr Milan Sokolović
- 73. Katarina Dr. Sokolović
- 74. Dragoljub Mitić
- 75. Vasa Milojković
- 76. Vasa Tričković
- 77. Petar Capulović
- 78. Sotir Živković
- 79. Iga Dimitrijević
- 80. Milan Stojiljković
- 81. Dragutin Đoković
- 82. Đoka Ćermilov
- 83. Vladimir Fredić
- 84. Svetislav Zojić
- 85. Dr Vojislav Lazarević
- 86. Mirko Popović
- 87. Velimir Veselinović
- 88. Dušan Stojanović
- 89. Jordan Cvetković
- 90. Ješa Đorđević
- 91. Hranislav Gvozdenović
- 92. Katarina H.Gvozdenović
- 93. Sotir Blagojević
- 94. Tadija Stefanović
- 95. Mija Momirović
- 96. Dragutin Veličković
- 97. Momčilo Veličković
- 98. Miivoje Sinđelić
- 99. Čeda Stamenković
- 100. Boža Petrović
- 101. Dušan Kocić
- 102. Vukašin Antić
- 103. Aleksandar Slepčević
- 104. Jova Jovanović
- 105. Ilija Đorđević
- 106. Stojiljko Stojiljković
- 107. Andra Starčević
- 108. Žika Milosavljević

- 109. Toma Sekulić
- 110. Dušan Mišković
- 111. Nikola Mišković
- 112. Žika Stanković
- 113. Aleksandar Hadži-Pešić
- 114. Dragomir Pejić
- 115. Dragoljub Dačić
- 116. Osman Balić
- 117. Rade Vučković
- 118. Đoka Veličković
- 119. Vladimir Popović
- 120. Bora Dimitrijević
- 121. Vujica Pantelić
- 122. Trajko Ristić
- 123. Vlastimir Mihajlović
- 124. Zorica Milunković
- 125. Svetozar Lalić
- 126. Mile Vasić
- 127. Voja Dinić
- 128. Mile Konjušanin
- 129. Čeda Stojanović
- 130. Blagoje Ristić
- 131. Dr Lazar Jovanović
- 132. Života Janković
- 133. Tasa Ilić
- 134. Milorad Tasić
- 135. Lazar Tomić

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