

My comrade is already dreaming. He is sleeping on his stomach. I understand; he has black stripes on his back!

### ULVEN (THE WOLF)

After a few days we are on the way to Ulven. We say good bye to our small cell. We get five minutes to pack our belongings. Together with thirty other prisoners we are packed into a truck.

A tall skinny man awaits us at Ulven. He yells at us as only a German "Noncom" is able to do. He is the commander of the camp. "Zugführer" is the title. We call him "Suggen"! We pull on old soldiers' uniforms and slide into a different kind of a milieu.

Our stay at Ulven happened to be at the best period in the war history of Ulven. We realized that our next point of destination would be South! One reason that the days at Ulven were somewhat special.

No sunshine for us!

We that are dangerous criminals sentenced to long prison terms are stationed at the woodpile and have to transform the most horrible hard and crooked wood stumps to the finest small pieces for the kitchen stove. The nearest one of the wood choppers is Harald, a young cadet from Fana, a very quiet youngster. He quietly performed his duty, and then some. First with shiny weapons, later with hidden ones.

The scrubwoman in the "Gestapo House" told me about Harald and his fifty- seven days in the "Gestapobasement", up to that time the longest period any prisoner had survived. He had bit his teeth and only one word had escaped: "NO". He repeated this word at any time, conscious or unconscious. He is beginning to be himself again after a month's stay at Ulven. His comrades have taken good care of him.

One day the Gestapo was visiting the camp. Harald was called down for examination. His strong face became pained. His features stiffened and he was dead white.

He was smiling when he returned, no torture this time. With the utmost politeness, the Gestapo put the last trump card on the table, they had appealed to the young man and his love of life. HE WOULD LIVE, if he would cooperate and give the names of his associates. It is understandable that many did fall for this temptation. It is difficult to blame them. There was no choice for Harald, he could not buy his life with his honor!

He was never in doubt what the consequences would be.

He was sentenced to death and shot. Our friendship was short but never forgotten.

Shortly before "midday" (noon) the "farm gang" (probably workers in the vegetable garden) came marching into camp. It was a sight to see, strong and tanned fellows of all ages, recruited from all vocations. Professor next to the student, gymnasiasten (junior college student) next to lecturer, workman and boss, farmers, fisherman and clerks, all of them in Norwegian military uniforms. The Nation's farmers of New Land!

In the evening it was lively in the barracks. All subjects were discussed. Many are carving beautiful fruit bowls from large blocks of wood. Sailboats are made for the little boys at home. There is a small boy in every man!

It is ten o'clock and time for bed. It is time for the German guards to have some fun. If the guard is in a bad humor he will always take it out on the prisoner. Get your feet out for inspection. Get out in coldest of winter and wash off your feet with ice cold water. The boots are not properly shined, which is celebrated with twenty-five knee bends! A few specks of dust on the old worn out floor. Numerous pails of water are thrown on the floor. These are samples of the "mob mentality" of the German guards. It will take more than that to "freeze us down to zero" which, of course, is their intention.

Lights out.. then the stories begin. Here are sailors that have known girls in Honolulu as well as in Laksevaag, Norway. The conversation tapers off. Then comes the usual request, "Jacob, sing the song about Dad!"(Far)

And Jacob is ready. Sentimental and sugar sweet he sings about "Far" and twenty fathers lie under the blanket with a lump in their throats.

Sunday we celebrate with venison (probably reindeer) for dinner. For us newcomers it is a surprise. For the old timers it is usual fare. The farmers donate the food. Strangely enough permission to bring in food was allowed during the first part of the occupation.

At coffee time came another surprise that even shocked the old timers. Served were beautiful large layer cakes, baked with white flour and with real whipped cream, serving for two hundred people. A gift from Sweden. On the cakes a little card saying "From Sven Lindroth on his daughter's sixth birthday"!

Lindroth is chairman of the Swedish Communist Party!

Only a few knew this!

I was called down to the guard room. Visitors! What it means to visit fifteen minutes with your dear ones! The guard room is decorated with guns on the walls. A little five year old boy whispers in my ear. "Is that the guns we are going to shoot the Germans with?" What the kids will say these days!

I was standing alone watching the two wind their way to the farm community. What a distance

between liberty and a fairly comfortable life in prison!

I would rather take "barkebrød" (bread made from bark of a tree mixed with flour) and be a free man than take Swedish Cream Layer Cakes as a prisoner.

Gestapo and the doctor are visiting the camp. That means transport to Germany. The medical examination is highly superficial, it is a demonstration of our naked bodies! We march past a man in a white frock, he does not appear to be overly concerned with our health. He sits there in his white uniform and makes notes in his journal. Is he a doctor or just a clerk?

The next day we are on our way. First a couple of hours layover in Bergen. Good spirits watch over us. The right messages and time tables have gone out ahead of us. We look out from the windows and there are our friends. The pastor from the prison is there with codliver oil, tobacco and chocolate.

The train is in motion, the daily newspaper is thrown into the open window. On the society page we find a little notice. "Det lyses (be announced from the church pulpit) that Hanne Tine Utne and Cand. real. Kristen Hatlevik are to be married". Comrade Kristen is sitting beside me, he says to me with a little forced smile -"She will have to wait a while longer!" We were arrested three weeks ago.

#### COMEDY AND TRAGEDY AT AKERSHUS

To the right! To the left! We run like scared rats back and forth across the courtyard at Akershus National Prison. One of the prisoners has injured his foot and cannot keep up with us. He gets a kick in the ass. It is forbidden to be sick!

Our tobacco, any valuables and knives, have been taken away from us. We are kept in solitary confinement in the basement. Fortunately the panel walls are very thin and it is easy to get in contact with the neighbor.

"What are your doing?" I knock on the wall to my left.

"Washing my feet"!

"And you?" I try my neighbor to the right.

"I am applying for pardon!"

Hopeless!!

I settle down on the lid to the toilet and read the only book in the cell. The hymnal! Time goes on.

The night brings the dreams... They have no bars or solitary confinement... I am free as the bird and

I enjoy my liberty to the utmost.

We do our living at night!!

It feels good to wake up after a "dream night"! A little rubs off for a while! I hear voices outside the window. The black curtain that keeps the light out is pushed aside in a hurry. It is in the early morning hours and still dark, but the prisoners are already in a lively discussion through the barred windows, tap into the network!

The conversation is lively between three stories in two different sections. It is impossible to see each other, our voices and dialects are our faces.

What do we talk about?

Exactly the same that small town ladies will discuss from their kitchen windows! "Small talk!" The contact is the important thing, not the subject.

Occasionally the fishing tackle will surface. The rod and line have mysteriously been smuggled into the cell. Forbidden items are smuggled from window to window. Tobacco, matches, magazines, from window to window with unbelievable deftness.

Iron heels hit the cobblestones... Abra cadabra, as by magic... the morning conversation is over.... All heads have disappeared!

We look forward to the next morning "news hours"!

Absence of reading material is terrible here. A few weekly magazines have been smuggled in and have been "read to shreds" From slimy novels to questions from the readers and "correspondence clubs"! I have to treat myself to a little smile over a small item in "Ship Ahoy"!

"I am despaired to death, yesterday I saw my sweetheart with another girl. Dear Captain, what am I to do?" Signed, "Nordlandsjente". (Girl from Northern Norway)

Beside me are sitting several young men that are waiting execution. One day they will be watching their own coffins being carried into the courtyard.

The commandant is a corpulent red-nosed individual. He reminds us of a director for a third class circus. He is very proud of having learned a few Norwegian words.

His prize performance is giving out the noon rations. We are on our marks inside the cell doors. He blows the whistle and yells:

"Come out!"

We rush out; iron doors close behind us.

"Eat take!"

We take the dish of food by the door.

"Eat down, go in!"

Thirty doors are slammed shut.

"Come out, eat take, set dish down, go in!" It is repeated three to four times a day. Amusing for some, not for us.

Once in a while in the afternoon we have what the commandant calls "sport". (Athletics) It gives us an opportunity to exchange a few words with the comrades we speak with 'through the windows' in the morning. When we are finished the commandant yells in Norwegian:

"Men of Norway, come in!"

At that time we are almost proud of his Norwegian!

Monday afternoon is a special festive occasion... We line up, hair combed and all spruced up like a bunch of school boys and ready to go to church. It is the highlight of the week.

The old Akershus Church is beautifully decorated. From the balcony comes soft organ and violin music. Andreas, a twenty year old medical student sits next to me. His good looking eyes are alert and full of life, but the peaceful lines around his mouth tell the story....he is not afraid to die!

"Fengselsprest" - (Pastor of the prison) talks fearlessly about Jesus Christ before Pilatus, the poor carpenter against the rich representative from the State of Rome, the world's mightiest military powerhouse. The difference in power seems enormous. But who has history decided was the largest one of them? For us sitting on the benches it is not difficult to draw the parallel!

"Goodbye," Anders puts an apple in my hand when we stand up.

"You must eat the apple yourself."

"I have fruit enough for the rest of my life!"

He was right....twenty years old, medical student. SHOT!

My neighbor knocks on the wall, look out the window, one, two, three, four, five. There will be five prisoners shot tomorrow... Plain wooden coffins are taken out of storage and lined up in the

courtyard. A German soldier with a cigarette in his mouth is loitering nearby.

I know that in the story above me sit five of my comrades looking at the same scenery. The scene is set with absolutely no respect for humanity. Tragedy was never as clear to me as on that afternoon in the fall at Akershus...

The next day we lined up in the yard and the commandant gave us the last greetings from our five executed friends.

- "They died like men", he said with a tear in his eyes. Did he feel the accusing sting from two hundred eyes? And he adds "You know you cannot blame me!"

We are boiling inside, first brutality, then firing squad, then bragging, then in the end, blaming it on somebody else!

Eleven comrades have faced the firing squad during the two weeks we have been at Akershus. Eight more are waiting to die. It is unbearable to see so many of our comrades being executed. This is the front yard of death! We have received notice that we travel to Germany with the next transport. It is a relief.

### GOING ABROAD

The tramp steamer Donau is docked at Pipervik - pier. Thirty Norwegians are standing on deck with a loaf of bread under one arm and a woolen blanket under the other. It is raw and cold December weather. It was a miserable farewell to the capital city! The ship is changed over to transport soldiers and horses. We are under the category of horses! The horse barn is located in the stern. A sailor tries to comfort us by the fact that the mines generally hit the ship midways! The horses that come before us have made certain that we would know that they were here first! We swept as well as we could; it looks a little better.

The mattresses are nothing but dirty bags of straw.

The Donau is steaming out Oslofjord. It is time for "ersatz coffee" and the huge "military loaf". No cups or knives! We found a couple of "fish ball tin cans", we send them around like the Vikings did when they passed the "mead bowl"!

It is getting late and we crawl over to the bags of straw. We keep warm by laying close together in small groups. We can sleep without fear, the rats stay watch! We hear them running sheep over our heads. We pull clothes and rags over our heads.

It sounds as if we are being bombed. A couple of German prisoners are already on the way to the deck, the others are jumping up from the straw bags. It is our 10,000 ton ship dropping anchor at Horten harbor.

In the morning we head for the open sea in convoy with seven other ships, protected by a fishing vessel with cannons, an airplane, thirty Norwegian prisoners and the coast of Sweden!

All hands on deck are issued huge "swimming vests", we are assigned a small life raft for our safety, if needed - one square meter size for ten people, ten square decimeter per person! Our eyes look at this generous proposition and down to the ice cold, black sea! One blast from the siren is torpedo attack, all hands on deck. Two blasts is attack by bombers - everybody remains below!

Everything is O.K., come torpedoes or bombs we are ready!

In the midst of this confusion, a package from the Red Cross is thrown below. With the smoke screen comes the small talk. We have made a cozy corner in one part of the horse barn. We have all been under the same prison roof for some time but never had the opportunity to socialize with each other! We all lived in one room cells! These men come from all parts of Norway with dialects from Kirkenes to Kristiansand, and colleague Jerdal from Gula Tidend is the spokesman for the radical New-Norwegian Language group.

Only seven or eight of us are political prisoners. Some are sentenced because of stealing from the Germans, others for very minor offenses. It is the "bagatelle's group" that serve up the best stories!

A former Arctic Ocean Skipper is the senior of the group. He has been out in stormy weather many a time, but has never experienced anything as weird as this. He was sentenced to six months in prison and three months already have been served in Norway. Most of his time will be served traveling, first the long trip from Kirkenes to Oslo, then from Oslo to Hamburg. According to his papers he is supposed to be set free at Kirkenes. He will barely have time to get to Hamburg before he has to turn his nose towards home again! That is some voyage to be able to serve three months in prison! A quick trip to Germany! This can only happen in a country where documents and paper work have taken over the functions of the human mind.

Another fellow from the North of Norway was sentenced because he was drunk in a cafe and said Hitler was crazy. He came to regret this bitterly! He had a story to tell that characterizes him as well as the judicial system.

When the judge pronounced the sentence of one year in prison I threw myself on the floor and called to God... "Help me!"

"What did the judge say about that?"

"He gave me two years!"

From the deck comes the wonderful aroma of pea soup and meat. What a treat on the ocean! The military kitchen is placed near the hatch. Our happiness is short lived! The dinner is for the crew and the soldiers. That is as close as we came to get a dinner each day. We had to seek our comfort

with the old "fish ball tin" with the ersatz coffee"!

"They can take everything away from us, but they will never get our sense of humor!", says one of our comrades.

We live by those words.

On this voyage we received something that was much better than a boiled dinner! We received the news that America had entered the war. The largest trump card has been put on the table!

"Take a walk up on deck". One of my comrades gives me a little push. I stagger up the ladder to the deck. The soldier on watch is a nice fellow and lets us stay there awhile.

Soria Moria. First hundreds of lights (from homes), the middle searchlights scanning the dark horizon. We are at Øresund, the lights are from Helsingborg, Sweden. We turn and look towards Denmark. It is pitch dark, we know that the lights are on in Denmark also; they are hidden behind dark curtains! This is a war in total darkness. Never has a war been characterized any better.

The night in Øresund shows life and death. The beam of lights from the coast of Sweden mean more to us than lights from streets and stores, they are the lights of freedom.

"It isn't far across Øresund," remarks a friend that just came on deck.

Today it is an eternity.... I hit the hay!

After about three days we arrive in Stettin and will be transported to Hamburg by train. We are waiting for the train late in the evening. At last. A cattle car!!

No improvement in our way of transportation. The thermometer is well under zero Celsius. Forty men packed into a cattle car, no heat, no light, no place to sit or lie down. We are singing.... A Norwegian folksong... Living high in the mountains at a small place where nobody would believe anybody could live! We have a large repertoire and there is time for all of it!

"Sing me home if you can, I want to die in my homeland!" This came from our friend from Trondheim. He is in the middle of the fifth act of the tragedy... It came early!

We roll into Hamburg after twenty-four hours in the cattle car.

At last we are about to get decent transportation, intended for human beings, (Svartemarja) the black police van... It is announced we are going to Fuhlsbüttel - near the airport at Hamburg. It is not one of the largest prison complexes, but there is room for four to five thousand prisoners we are told.

We are in the land of prisoners!



In front of the van is a German prisoner, he is sentenced for stealing. He is crying hard. It was too much for him to see his hometown again. We are sitting in the back and would rather cry because we were taken away from our hometown. The world is upside down.

We pull up along a high, massive wall and a huge, heavy gate opens up.

### THE PRISON

A narrow basement passage with arched ceiling with heavy columns, no windows, poor lights. Catacombs... On both sides are openings recessed like rooms, like small shops, filled with wooden clogs and clothing.

It is called the "storeroom" (kammeret). A small well built man stands in the middle of the room. He barks! It sounds a little "put on". Years of association with used clothing has given him a congenial style in both stature and walking.

He is the "house father". His job is to take care of all worldly goods, what belongs to the prison and ours. All about him he has five "prison spirits" as his helpers. Their eyes shift from us to the house father. Their conversation and movements "go on rubber soles"! They are "hofservants", high above the other inmates, but on bended knees under the Nazi Government.

Watches, wedding rings, photos, all our personal items are taken away from us. Everything is stashed in a sack.

To the showers!

Uniforms on! The outer garments are black, stiff material, coat with a high stiff collar, yellow stripes on the sleeves and along the pants, symbol of being a traitor. Head gear something in between a boy's round sailor cap and a clerical headpiece a la Martin Luther! Really a weird looking wonder! It is forbidden to tilt this thing to one side...straight on the head, two fingers above the eyebrows. Eventual intelligence will never be fairly judged under this horrible headpiece! With the old "I" in the bag over our shoulders, we take our first stumbling steps in the wooden clogs back to "kammeret". No more shirt and tie, title or name. In waddles Prisoner Number 536/41.

We have been fleeced to the skin but not farther! Next we move to "sentralen" (apparently the central part of the prison). This is the brain of the prison, if such a thing exists. All prison activities are directed from here. The impression is overpowering; a confusion of balconies, railings, stairways and hundreds of cell doors with solid iron locks. The ceiling is really very high. In the middle of the "sentral" is an elevated "command bridge" where a guard is directing the traffic.

The prison is built in the shape of a "starfish" with the sentral in a circle in the center.... four sections are crowded with cells, the fifth has a church and administration offices.

In the corridor on the first floor prisoners are standing in a long row beside long tables. They are gluing together bags from a dull grey paper. They are very thin and their faces have taken the color of the paper.

"Norwegians?"

"Yes."

"News from home?"

"In good spirits!"

The same question. The same answer. No chance for conversation, only a few words in a whisper. A large number of fellow countrymen have arrived before us. Some of the faces I recognize. But even the unknown stands out. They are smiling!

We are placed in cells, three men in each. But declares the guard, only for one night. Anyone sentenced for long terms must sit in solitary confinement the first five years. The first five years!! We are clobbered down to our wooden clogs!

My warm thoughts go to the soldier on board Donau, he told me we would be working on German farms and live almost as free men.

Shortly before bedtime we receive our first instructions in the fine art of prison life! The clothes are to be folded neatly and placed on the stool, everything except the short nightshirt given us.

The stool is placed outside the cell door at the command of the guard. In the morning it is returned to the cell at the command of the guard.

We line up in ramrod position in the hallway in our short shirts, thirty bare rumps in the air as the stools are put in place by the door. Then, turn about and - attention --

It is impossible not to see the comical situation in all this misery. It does not take long, however, before I consider it the most natural thing in the world to place my clothes on a stool outside the cell door! "Nasen an der Wand" - "The nose against the wall" - this regulation is strictly enforced in all prisons. But, even that becomes a natural habit for me.

On the "commando bridge" is a corpulent "bull dog faced" guard. He yells, we are not able to understand. We file past him on our way to the medical examination. It is of the same type we had previously.

One of our friends protests. He wants a regular examination. He has T.B. and the doctor at Grini, Norway, confirmed he had not completely recovered before he was transported to Germany. There

was a short exchange of words, the Bulldog had the last word:

"Get his coffin ready, may as well get it now as later, we have no use for cadavers!"

He was one that set the tune at Fuhlsbüttel, a former colonial soldier in Africa. He is now standing on the "watch bridge" with "shiny stars", but the colonial soldier is still alive.

I feel like a caged animal - a horrible cage, smeared with a dirty yellow color. The toilet and dining table are next to each other. It is difficult for me to overcome the feeling of disappointment to be placed in solitary confinement, forced into a passive existence. Being alone is not the worst part, it is the feeling of being absolutely powerless in time of war that hurts. One wish we all have: to fight. It ends up in a cage!

### ALONE

Doors are slammed down the hall. Suddenly there is a prisoner at the cell door with a huge can of food and calling "los"! I have to get my tray. It is an old basin, similar to a smaller version of a regular washbasin. It is cabbage soup for dinner. (Dinner usually at noon) cabbage and water - one liter. I struggle to finish it all and say to myself with a ration that large it will be O.K. That was before my stomach understood that it would take many, many liters of cabbage and water to replace one loaf of bread. Knife, fork and spoon are made of wood. Dangerous criminals cannot be allowed tools of metal.

In the afternoon it is work training. I am to sit in my cell and "glue small paper bags". (Apparently patterns have been cut out first) Bags for Ata washing powder, 1200 per day is the quota to be glued. The alternate is punishment. The first afternoon I worked like a slave and could hardly make fifty! My fingers helplessly stuck in the glue. The only consolation is the color photo of the girl on the Ata package. For supper a non descriptive thin sauce with three potatoes floating around!

The stool is placed outside with the clothes neatly folded, same ceremony as the night before and I look forward to do some reading of a book I had got hold of. Oh - sure - before I have reached my bunk, the lights are out. Workday is over at six, supper 6:30, lights out at seven.

Next morning I am standing in my ridiculous shirt, teeth chattering, waiting for the guard to open up the door so I can pick up the clothes. At last it swings open.

- I say, "Good morning," and bow from the waist like a school boy.

-"You do not say good morning in prison.... You report!"

In the afternoon the chief guard pays me a visit to reprimand me for my undisciplined behavior this morning. Then he gives me instructions in prisoner behavior.

"You never say 'good morning', But:

'Prisoner Number 536, sentenced to twelve years for assisting the enemy, (Norwegians were the enemy!) and treason. To be set free on November 9, 1953.' This must be repeated every time a new guard comes for replacement during the day".

"Yes, Sir!"

"When you greet the guard you do not bow your head, you back up to the wall and stand in attention, your head straight back."

"Yes, Sir!"

"When you are in the hallway, face always against the wall. Do not ever forget! Understand?"

"Yes, Sir! Is it permissible to say good night, Herr Guard?"

"It is compulsory. But remember, stand in attention!"

### THE NEIGHBORS

Every day we get one half hour of "airing" in the prison yard. As we walk down the corridor, I am curious to see what kind of neighbors I have. It is like reading street names in a foreign city:

Careful --- Escaper  
Careful --- Murderer  
Careful --- Tries to escape  
Bombsquad --- Defuser

It appears that I have "solid neighbors"! In the stories below are the regular cells, one nameplate says:

"One Catholic - one evangelist - one Norwegian"

A strange new world!

In the yard is a large circle with a lawn in the center. It looks like a "circus ring". We march around this ring, ten paces apart. We, the newcomers, take pride in keeping up the tempo in the unaccustomed wooden clogs, while the guard, standing on the steps, continually barks his inspiring orders! "Keep up the pace, keep in step!" It is strictly forbidden to talk, but we do get a chance to exchange a few words once in a while. We are just two Norwegians in this section. My "landsman" is Kjell, twenty years old and from Drammen. A happy, happy young man in every sense of the word. (He has been a sailor and knows how to adjust. The other prisoners are regular German criminals.)

We are going to be photographed and enrolled in the criminal album. We are lined up, noses against the wall. We stand like misbehaving small boys. It is a bit unusual and we grin openly.

"Do you find it amusing to sit in prison, since you are smiling?"

"People with a good conscience always have good humor, Herr Guard!"

Nothing is more offensive to the guard than a smile!

### THE DAILY LIFE

The days go on. One like the other. All ringing in the corridors that appeared confusing the first days, with the other regular occurrences, tells us the time of the day and the day of the week. It is a new way of reckoning. Monday is marmalade day, a very small teaspoon of this stuff. Tuesday is book day, Wednesday is butter day, Friday to the barber.

It is like a fresh breath of air when a man comes after the ready made bags. At first it was Per, he was in middle school in Bergen when he was arrested... Later it was Viggo, the flyer. (Peculiarly enough I was with Viggo Videro in the Naval Air service at Horten in 1925!) This is the high point of the day. Always an exchange of news behind the back of the guards.

It is impossible to shirk the work. The fingers are busy with the bags all day long. Through the little spy hole in the door, the guard is watching us all day long.

"The shower day" is a great day. We get "five minutes shower" on our bodies! On our way to the showers we pass the "central control area". Many Norwegians are working in the area. We get a friendly handshake or a quick smile, it means so much. On the return to the cell often times we pick up a small piece of paper from their table. It is the news, or prison rumors, our illegal newspaper!

"Shaving day" is also a considerable departure from routine. It is a blood bath that takes place once a week. Two "barbers" assigned to keep a thousand prisoners "beardless"! It is not altogether an impossible task, but it surely requires dexterity and great speed. We sit on a small stool outside the cell door and the first "barber" - "flying along" with a stiff paint brush, cold water, and laundry soap. The same brush lathers all faces! Next operation: the barber himself. With a dull knife he pulls the beard off. Nobody expects this operation to take place without a bloodbath!

A new guard sticks his head into the door. "Good morning," comes from a friendly face, this friendly person, "loses" a piece of chewing tobacco on the floor. There are a few like that, but they are only so far in between!

### CHRISTMAS

Oh, yes, If I have to say it myself - and who else would say it? The Christmas house cleaning is

beyond criticism. Everything has been scrubbed from ceiling to floor. The water tap, the only metal in the cell is shining like a small sun.

If I only could visit with Kjell for a while. We decided while out for the airing that I should ask the guard.

-Darf Ich Bitte ---- I have thought of what to say when he opens up the cell door. I march back and forth in the cell while in sharp training. It has to be in a humble voice and perfect German. He certainly cannot refuse on Christmas Eve.

At last, the door opens and I reel off the question:

- "NO" -

- "But it is Christmas Eve!"

- "Regulations are Regulations!"

There went the Christmas party!

I mope, sorrow and mind unites. Damn the Germans!

Heilige Nacht (Holy Night) the familiar Christmas music comes through the corridors. A choir is singing at "sentralen" (the central area). The words are like sharp daggers hitting the body. Christmas: Children, the lights, the feast of peace.

Alone in a cold cell, empty stomach. Outside a war of Hell....

A noise from the corridor... The German prisoners are returning from their Christmas Service in church. A small package is thrown into the cell. An apple and two small fig breads. It is the guard that throws the package to us.

The German prisoners had been permitted, as old prisoners, to make a few purchases before Christmas, we received the little gift from them....A small episode....looking from the outside...It was more than a taste of sweets to us....

Peace and a happy mind. The thoughts are flying over the ocean to my homeland and all the dear ones. I am "talking to them tonight"!

I blend my voice with the choir. I feel as if I am a part of it!

"You have to come in and ask your friend to be quiet, he is singing and it disturbs the peace of the prison!" It is Christmas Day. It is the guard with "the friendly eyes".

Kjell is sitting on the edge of his cot with his hymnal and singing Christmas Carols at the top of his voice! He is completely unaware of prison regulations and guards of this world! In the afternoon came a second surprise: Norwegian Christmas Service in the prison church.

### FIREWORKS

The sirens penetrate marrow and bones! The bombs are falling. The thunder is coming closer and closer. Here on the top of the old building we are on "the rough ocean"! I reach for my cell's only air defense, my wool blanket, and pull it over my head! But my curiosity gets the best of me. We are on the top floor and have the advantage of all the prisoners sitting in the bomb shelter, we can see what is going on!

It is a magnificent fireworks when the air defense of this large city goes into action. Like red and green pearls on a string the projectiles are spewed out into the night, from the great air defense an ocean of fire. Parachutes with firebombs make it light as day for a while. From my cell window I am able to see the contours of towers in Hamburg. Colossal searchlights scan the dark sky and attempt to trap the airplanes in the circle of light, first sporadic lights, then fused in a center point in the sky. The little "silver bird" is the main attraction. But the Tommies "sail easily out of the searchlight zone".

This is the "picture postcard" of the war we see night after night: fear and death illuminated by a fantastic display of lights.

The bombardment is farther and farther away, then it becomes total silence. Only the red glow from the fires of the attack are visible.

To be sitting on top of a building behind bars.... alone.... demonstrates how powerless one can be... if the explanation is needed!!

After the first attack, one consoles himself with the story of the "street urchin" from Bergen when he was pushed away from the street by a German soldier for protection while the city was bombed: "Look out for yourself soldier, they are NOT AIMING AT ME!"

The cold weather is penetrating. The mercury has dropped to a point between minus 20 and 30 centigrade. It isn't just the soldiers on the East Front that are freezing. I would never have believed it possible to be so cold inside four walls. The washbasin has permanent ice! The window is covered with ice and impossible to see through. Two fingers and two fingers are blue with frost. When the door opens up the wonderful warm air "streams in"! This is a strange world, the corridors are warm and the rooms without heat!

Day and night in this icebox: something has to be thought of to get out. I request to see the doctor and the dentist.

There is a long line of prisoners with frozen fingers and feet outside the doctor's office. The treatment is the same principle as the auto production line: A man in a white gown smears a brown "substance" on the frost sores. One smear - treatment completed - OUT!

The treatment by the dentist is nearly without pain. He has an ancient, spin rock type of a "foot pedal drill" for cavities, I do not get to see it in use. A piece of cotton is forced into the cavity and cement is placed on top. It takes no time at all. I am impressed. Two weeks later the filling gave up! It went out with a piece of hard bread!

### THE GREAT HUNGER

One day after another. All alike. The only comforting thought is that little by little days will be weeks and months. From December 1941 to Spring 1942 the food rations have gradually been reduced. The hunger follows the cold of winter like a wolf. Watered down soup with cabbage and "cabbage roots", twice a week a couple of potatoes, floating in brown sauce. All vegetables are frozen. The ration of frozen food is 1/4 liter of brown-black kohlrabi "soup" and a few potatoes. In addition one slice of bread in the morning and one in the evening. One does not need a lot when sitting quiet in a cell. But this is not sufficient.

The potatoes, half rotten, go into the cabbage stew, peel and all! Our pigs at home would have wrinkled their noses and said: "No, thank you!" We eat it with a hearty appetite!

The hunger is devastating, not just before the meals, but twenty-four hours a day. Especially having nightmares: a horrible fight to get to a table with food that one can never reach!

It becomes a struggle between hunger and willpower. The willpower wins - barely - One has to pretend to be satisfied as a matter of principle. It is tough. But we survive the five months it is at its worst. That was about the limit of our endurance. The time for air in the yard has been changed to "grazing time". The grass is disappearing! In the showers it shows, the bones are protruding. Skeletons....

From the military supply depot came the saviour one day. The courtyard is piled high sacks with peas, beans and cabbage. Oh well, we don't get everything at once. But we had reached the very bottom. The prisoners were useless for any kind of work, we were below the minimum standard.

I have such a difficult time expressing the hunger with words. Perhaps some numbers will help tell the story. The average loss of weight during these months 15 to 20 kilogram (33 to 50 pounds), a few went down 50 kilograms. It was especially difficult for the elderly that had acquired a small potbelly at home. They lost that and a whole lot more. Many comrades totally changed in physical appearance during the winter and spring months.

In the footsteps of hunger followed illness and death. Practically every prisoner suffered from boils, open sores that would not heal.