

The concentration camp of RAB

History

According to historian **Tone Ferenc** (see [2000, p. 20](#)), the idea of building a large **concentration camp on the island of Rab** dates back to **May 1942**, when the camps in [Lovran](#), [Bakar](#) and [Kraljevica](#) were becoming saturated.

The site chosen for the construction of the **concentration camp** is located in **Kampor**, not far from the town of Rab, and extends along a large esplanade enclosed between two inlets ([see satellite photo](#)).

The project ([see the original plan](#)) includes the construction of **four** different sectors ([field 1](#), [field 2](#), [field 3](#), [field 4](#)), for a total capacity of over **sixteen thousand seats** (see the photos of the first construction works [FRA07](#) and [FRA08](#))

But, between the end of July and the first days of August, when the first internees arrived from **Ljubljana** and the **Cabar (Čabar)** area, only a few service huts had been built and small six-person tents had been set up in the first camp (see [FRA11](#) and [FRA13](#)). Later (September 1942) camp 3 was opened, where the women and children from camp 1 were moved. In the autumn of 1942, the construction of the first wooden huts began. While in the spring of 1943, work began on camp 2, intended to accommodate the Jews already interned in the [Kraljevica camp](#) and in various [other locations in Dalmatia](#) (see [Capogreco, 2004, pp. 268-269](#)).

The historical military diary of August 1942 (see [DRA40](#)) written by **Luigi Brucchiotti**, commander of the **XII Battalion of the Royal Carabinieri**, notes the following first arrivals of internees in **Rab** :

3 August - **380** people from Ljubljana

August 4 - **860** people from Cabar

5 August - **796** people from Ljubljana

6 August - **1,194** people from Ljubljana

August 7 - **428** people from Cabar

August 8 - **811** people from Ljubljana

August 9 - **272** people from various locations in Slovenia.

All things considered, in just seven days, 4,747 people were interned in **Rab**.

Even in the month of September the arrivals continued with great intensity. Again in the diary of the **XII Battalion of the CC. RR.** another **10 transports** are reported (one also from [the concentration camp of Buccari](#)), for a total of 2,970 new internees (see [DRA38](#)).

Probably, the highest number of internees present at the same time was recorded at the end of **October 1942**, when, adding all the arrivals reported by Lieutenant Colonel **Luigi**

Brucchiatti , the **internees** would be **8,260** (see [DRA38](#)).

From that moment on, the **number of internees** was destined to **decrease significantly** , for several reasons. First of all because the command of the **II Army** - which managed the camp - decided to reduce its capacity and to make it more of a place of **transit and sorting** rather than of actual internment. A decision also taken because of the difficulty of reaching the island with the necessary supplies (see [Capogreco, 2004, p. 268](#)).

The first **transfers** began in November **1942**. For example, on 24 November 250 men left for construction work on the new [concentration camp at Renicci](#) , in the province of Arezzo (see [DRA30](#) and [DRA36](#)). But the most numerous transfers were those of **women and children** transported in the winter of 1942 to the [concentration camp at Gonars](#) (see for example [DRA31](#) , [DRA32](#) and [DRA33](#) and total number of transfers in the month of November in [AC00462](#) and end of December in [AC00664](#)).

Thus, the number of internees dropped to 6,577 on 16 December 1942 (see [DCC08](#)) and to 2,857 on 1 February of the following year (see [DVA36](#)).

The aspect that immediately characterized the **living conditions** of the inmates of the **Rab concentration camp** was the **scarcity of food** and its consequences in terms of **illnesses and deaths** .

On November 17, just over three months after its opening, the [camp commander Vincenzo Cujuli](#) communicated the names and causes of death of about ten internees, including a premature baby girl (see [DRA07](#) and [DRA08](#)). This was followed on December 21 by a communication from **medical captain Leandro Miccolis** with the names of the **37 who died** between December 11 and 20 (see [DRA15](#)). The **causes of death** were mainly **cardiac failure** , **bronchopneumonia** and **cacti** (organic wasting).

The food and hygiene conditions in the camp were terrible. On 19 January 1943, **Brigadier General Umberto Giglio** wrote a long report on the health care provided by the military in the **Rab concentration camp** . The document called for " *all measures to be taken to improve the conditions of significant organic impoverishment of the internees resulting from both the hardships and deprivations prior to their arrest and the psychological trauma of the arrest itself and the attacks by the rebels suffered during the transfer journey* " (see [DRA19](#)). In short, according to the military, the blame for the deaths from hunger in the Rab concentration camp was to be attributed to the Yugoslav partisans. The report also included a **graph** showing the trend in deaths in relation to temperature and wind (the bora). In the graph, the peak was reached on 25 November with **24 deaths** .

Some pictures taken by the **Photographic Section of the High Command of the II Army** , show the hotels of Rab transformed into clean hospital rooms (see [FRA47](#) and [FRA48](#)), and doctors visiting patients with scrupulous care (see [FRA40](#)).

Of a completely different nature are the **photos by anonymous authors** that have reached us from the **Rab concentration camp** and which show people reduced to skeletons and rows of corpses (see [FRA33](#) and [FRA37](#)).

On March 25, 1943, the internees in Rab were 2,654, of whom 358 were hospitalized in various hospitals and another 851 in the "preventors", barracks inside the camp where the internees who did not have a specific pathology, but were "only" **malnourished** were placed

(see again [DRA19](#)). In other words, just under **half of the internees were ill** .

In a document dated June 26, 1943, the **command of the II Army** summarizes the **number of deaths** in the various **concentration camps** under its management (see [DVA09](#)). As regards **Rab** , it is clearly visible how the decrease recorded after January and February 1943 also coincides with the massive transfers of internees to other concentration camps.

The **Rab concentration camp** has its own cemetery, located at the far end of the plain. According to witnesses, in the worst periods, when dozens of **people die** every day, the bodies are buried in the same graves.

To date, the **number of internees who died** in the camp or in the various hospitals has not yet been established with certainty. [Herman Janež](#) has compiled, on the basis of his own and others' research, a list of the names of **1,477 deceased** (see [DRA48](#)).

[Herman Janež](#) was a child when, together with his family, he was interned first in the **Rab camp** and then in the [Gonars](#) camp .



Rab concentration camp. Internees at work

Archive - Provenance

Muzej novejšje zgodovine Slovenije. National Museum of Contemporary History, Slovenia

Place

Rab - Concentration camp

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Some internees work on the arrangement of the land under the surveillance of the military. In the background the field of small tents

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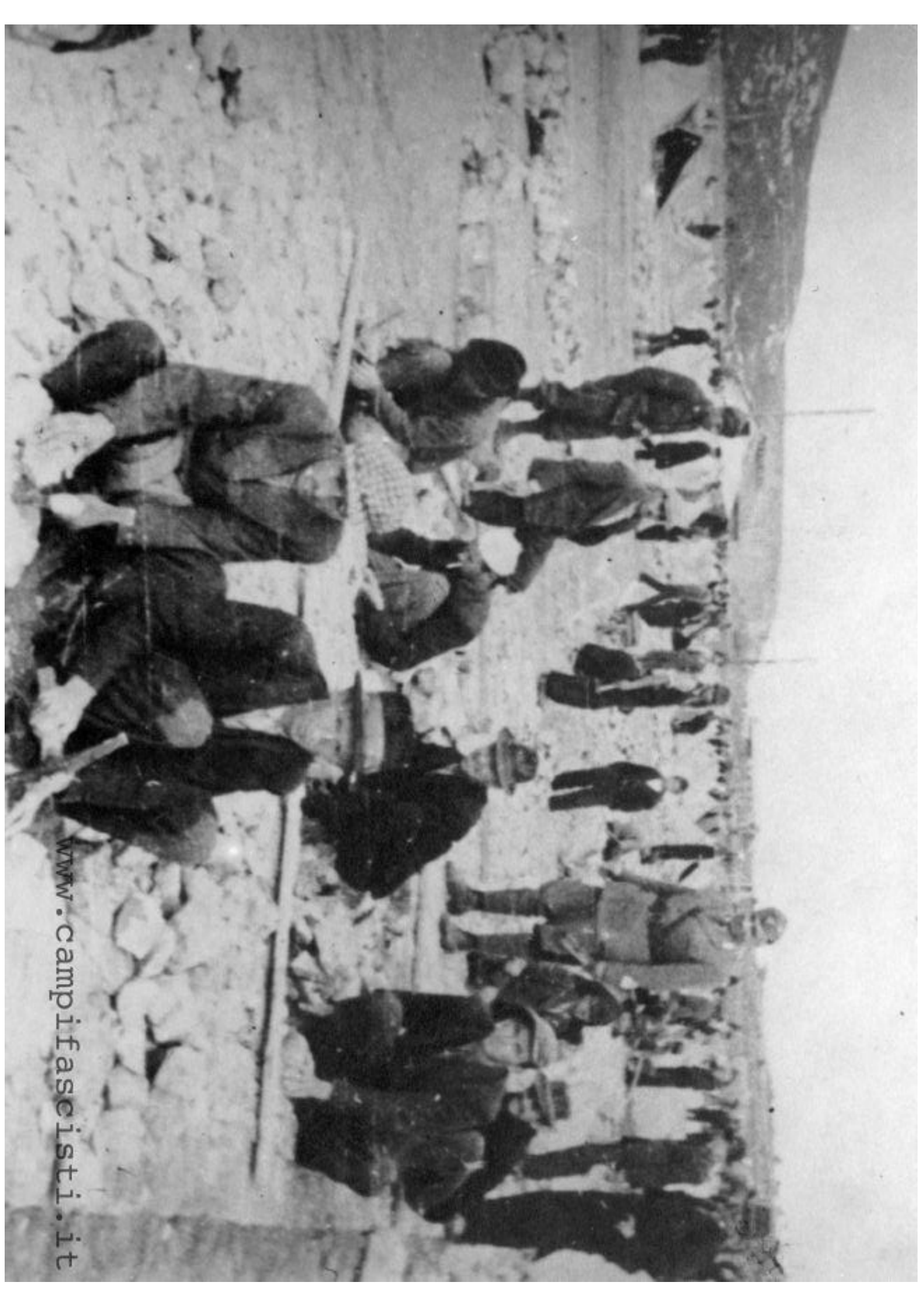
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poss



- 1) The two people in front. Who am I? How old are they? What position am I in? What do they do? To what end? For what purposes? What expression do they have? How are they dressed? Why are they dressed like this?
- 2) The standing type. Who is it? How is he dressed? What expression does it have? Why does he have that expression? (possible answers: masochism, embarrassment, posing for the photo) Is he helped in his task? How is his helper on the left dressed?
- 3) The other people. Who am I? How old are they? What position am I in? What do they do? To what end? For what purposes? What expression do they have? How are they dressed? Why are they dressed like this?
- 4) The background. What terrain is it? What can you see in the background? What are tents used for? What are people doing?

Possible questions: What is deportation? How do you imagine it? What is forced labor? Differences between forced labor and forced labor? The first takes place because you are considered inferior, the second because you are punished for a crime. Are they in forced labor or forced labor? What should they do?



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Rab concentration camp. Interior of the women's interned barrack

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Place

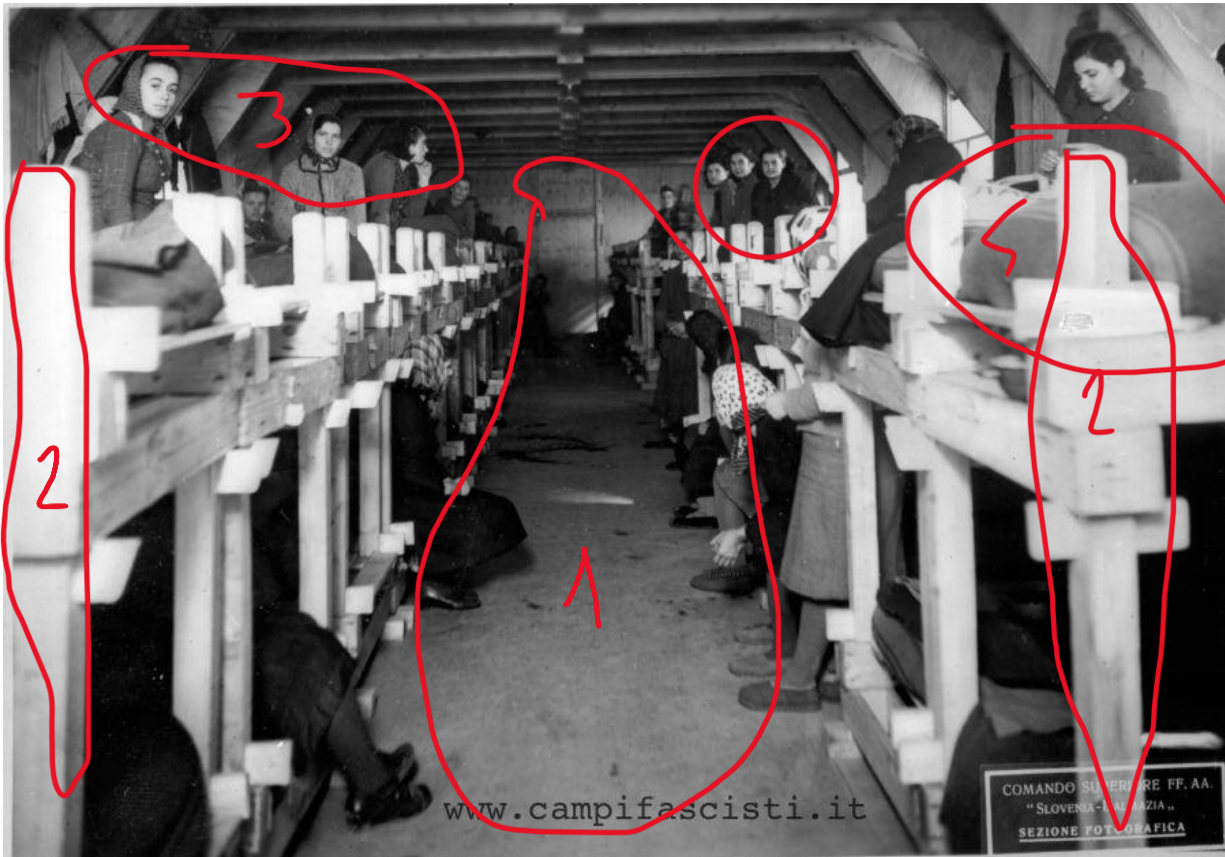
Rab - Concentration camp

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Interior of a barrack of only women interned in the Rab concentration camp. Image taken by the Supersloda Command Photo Service

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possible segmentation

- 1) Long corridor in the center. How many beds could there be? How do you imagine sleeping in such a situation?
- 2) new beds. What are your beds like? What do you need when you go to bed?
- 3) Women. What expression do they have? Where do they look?
- 4) Details. What season is it? Is there visible heating? How are the women dressed? What shoes do they have? What wardrobe do they have?

Possible questions: Who took the photo? Why? Does it reflect reality?



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Task for the teachers and educators. Do it yourself: try to be the first to segment and contextualize this picture. If it works let do it to the pupils.



Rab concentration camp. Men's shack interior

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Place

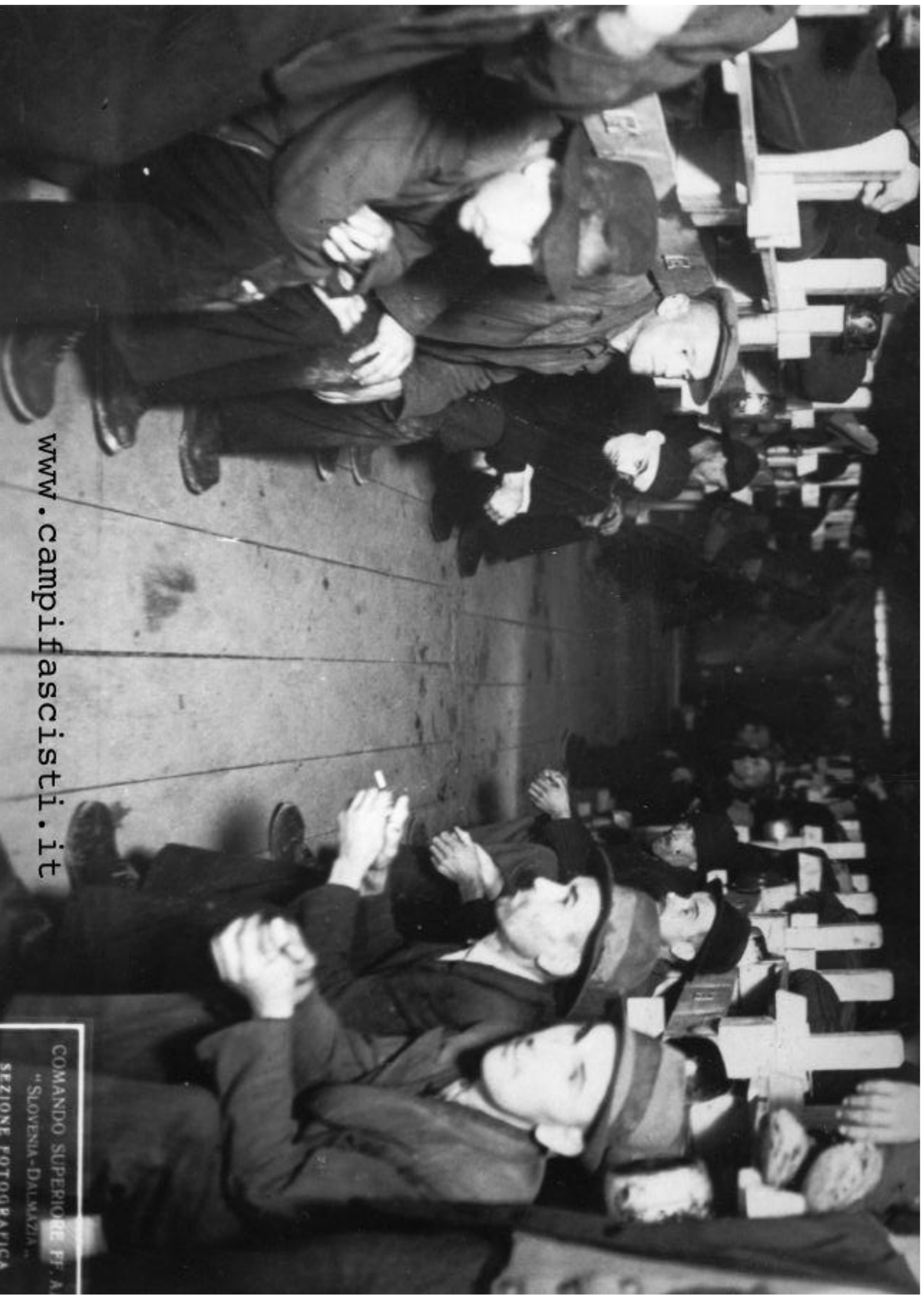
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Interior of a barrack with only male inmates in the Rab concentration camp. Image taken by the Supersloda Command Photo Service

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