

VAIVARA CONCENTRATION CAMP

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ESTABLISHMENT OF THE CAMPS FOR JEWS IN ESTONIA

In January 1943, the German troops began to retreat from the Caucasus, and in February the Red Army reconquered Rostov at the Don. This meant that the Germans were cut off from the oil resources of the Caspian Sea, and had an urgent need for new alternative fuel supplies to meet the existing demand. On 16 March 1943, *Reichsmarschall* Hermann Göring wrote in his secret orders: "The development and utilisation of the Estonian oil-shale industry is our most important military-economic task in the territories of the former Baltic states".¹ According to the new development plans, two new oil shale plants: one near Ereda and the other near Vaivara, were to be built in the region, in addition to the existing ones.²

The need for increased exploitation of the North-East Estonian oil-shale resources had been stressed in reports ever since the German invasion. In 1941, the German concern *Kontinental Öl AG Berlin*, a subsidiary of the *Baltische Öl G.m.b.H.* (hereinafter *Baltöl*) began to control the entire oil shale industry. A considerable part of the industry had been destroyed by the retreating Soviet troops exercising their "scorched earth" tactics; there were great difficulties with man power, since the work was physically strenuous and required specific training. At first, prisoners-of-war were exploited alongside the few local miners, but their numbers remained many times lower than expected. By May 1942, there were only 2,120 POWs instead of the expected 12,000.³

On 21 June 1943, *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler issued orders to establish camps in Estonia and in Riga (Mežaparks / Kaiserwald Camp)⁴ to meet the needs of the military industry, and, if necessary, to furnish

these with Jews from the ghettos of the State Commissariat *Ostland*.⁵ Accommodation was to be found for the new labour force, and new production buildings were also to be erected. The German Security Police and SD in Estonia began negotiations concerning the fulfilment of Himmler's orders; their partners were *Baltöl* and *Organisation Todt* (hereinafter OT). On 20 July 1943, it was decided, as a result of negotiations chaired by Dr. Martin Sandberger, Chief of the Security Police and SD in Estonia, to dispatch 600 Jews to Kohtla and 400 to Viivikonna as miners, 800 to Slantsy, initially for road construction, and to use 200 Jews for building trenches at Kiviõli. The next 800 men were expected to arrive by 1 September 1943, and it was planned to use them for building anti-aircraft fortifications. OT estimated its need to be 6,000 workers. It was also considered necessary to allocate 100 Jewish craftsmen to *Baltöl* (tailors, shoemakers).⁶ Subsequent negotiations for organising activities in the oil-shale industry district indicate that the General Commissar for Estonia *SA-Obergruppenführer* Karl-Siegfried Litzmann was also involved, and was expected to establish a housing construction enterprise in co-operation with *Baltöl*, work out an administrative code, etc, yet it was explicitly stated that the *SS-Wirtschaftler* would be in charge of the Jews.⁷

According to Dworzecki, the deportation of Jews into Estonia was carried out in four waves: from the ghetto of Vilnius (four deportations between 6 August to 26 September in 1943); from the ghetto of Kaunas (on 28 October 1943), and from the camp of Kaiserwald (Mežaparks in the vicinity of Riga) in December 1943. About 1,000 women were sent to Riga from Bystritza in Transilvania,⁸ of those, 500 were sent to the Estonian camps in July 1944.⁹ Yet there are grave doubts whether the Transilvanian Jews ever reached Estonia – to be specified below. In

1 Der Reichsmarschall des Grossdeutschen Reiches, Beauftragter f. d. Vierjahresplan Hermann Göring. Ausbau der Schieferölgewinnung in Estland. 16.3.1943. Abschrift. The Estonian State Archives (hereinafter ERA) R 187-1-7.

2 Baltöl an die Energiebau Ost. Neuplanung Estland, Anmeldung neuer Kraftwerksvorhaben. 16.6.1943. ERA R 187-1-6. P. 130.

3 See the chapter Soviet Prisoners-of-War in Estonia in 1941–1944. (Ristviide).

4 See: Ezergailis, Andrew. The Holocaust in Latvia, 1941–1944: the missing center. Latvia, 1996. Pp. 363–364.

5 Dworzecki, Mark. The Jewish Camps in Estonia. Yad Vashem, Jerusalem 1970. P. 8.

6 Akten-Notiz an Herrn v. Kursell. Einsatz von Ostjuden im Ölschiefergebiet. ERA R 187-1-33. Pp. 27–28.

7 Öffentliche Aufgaben, Baltöl, 30.8.1943. ERA R 187-1-4. Pp. 44–50; The letter of the General Commissar of Estonia from 14 September 1943, shows which organisations were relevant to the matter of concentration camps: Baltische Öl-Ges. m.b.H., Reval; Organisation Todt, Einsatzgruppenleiter Russland-Nord, Technische Hauptamt, Reval; Mineralölkommando Estland, Kiviõli; SS- und Polizeiführer, Reval; Kommandeur der Sicherheitspolizei und des SD; Kommandeur der Ordnungspolizei; Gebietskommissar in Narwa, Sitz Wesenberg. In addition, there were several smaller department chiefs. ERA R 187-1-4. Pp. 51–54.

8 Obvioulsy Banská Bystrica in the Slovakia.

9 M. Dworzecki. Op. cit. Pp. 69–98.

June 1944, 500 women¹⁰ did arrive in the Vaivara concentration camp network, but we can not be absolutely certain that these are the inmates mentioned by Dworzecki. The testimonies of the Klooga camp survivors corroborate that major transports to Estonia took place at the beginning of September 1943.¹¹

Deceit, terror, inciting conflicts between Jews, isolating the underground of the ghetto from the rest, and unexpected raids were all used to conduct the deportations with more efficiency. Those expected to resort to physical resistance were the first ones to be deported. Also people brought to the ghetto of Vilnius from small provincial towns were deported before the others, men were deported before women.¹²

VAIVARA CONCENTRATION CAMP

On *Reichsführer-SS* Heinrich Himmler's orders, the camps established in Main Administration of Economy and Administration (*SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt*, hereinafter the WVHA) jurisdiction were subordinated directly to the concentration camps inspector (*Inspekteur der Konzentrationslager*) *SS-Gruppenführer* Richard Glück, who himself answered directly to Himmler. In order to make more intensive use of labour in the camps, the concentration camps inspector was appointed Chief of Group D of the WVHA (*WVHA Amtsgruppenchef der Amtsgruppe D*).¹³ Vaivara Concentration Camp was the only WVHA administered concentration camp in Estonia. Earlier work and education camps (*Arbeitserziehungslager*, AEL) in Estonia were subordinated via Security Police and SD institutions in Estonia to the State Security Main Administration (*Reichssicherheitshauptamt*). The concentration camp at Vaivara was established in August 1943.¹⁴ The Vaivara main camp has been mentioned as a distribution and transit camp where the physical condition of the arriving inmates was examined; also the concentration camp commandant's headquarters was situated at Vaivara.

At Vaivara, men were separated from women and children. Some of the men were left at Vaivara; the others were sent to other camps. Children were, at first, retained at Vaivara and were accommodated

in a separate block. In September 1943 there were 450 children at Vaivara; in November, 202; their subsequent fate is unknown.¹⁵

According to the reports of the camp physician dr. Franz von Bodman, before 1 November 1943, there were 3 subsidiary camps to Vaivara (1,100 Jewish inmates in Vaivara, 900 in the Viivikonna Baltöl camp, and 1,300 in the Viivikonna II camp) housing a total of 3,300 inmates, including those unfit for work and children. In addition 1,500 SS front labourers (*SS-Frontarbeiter*; a special category of prisoners) were also housed in the camp.¹⁶ Bodman submitted a report to *SS-Standartenführer* Enno Lolling, the Chief of the III Department of Group D (*Sanitätswesen und Lagerhygiene*) of the WVHA on the 25th day of every month, commenting among other things on catering, hygiene, epidemics, death rates, sabotage and working conditions.

CAMP NETWORK AND MANAGEMENT

The staff of the Vaivara Concentration Camp commandant's headquarters consisted of three SS officers and several non-commissioned SS officers and soldiers, who were divided into three independent units. In addition to the SS personnel German staff at the camp also included SS-followers (*SS-Gefolge*) or auxiliary staff. These were guards (some of them women) and civilian staff dispatched to Vaivara from other camps.¹⁷

The Vaivara concentration camp was controlled by *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Hans Aumeier, the Commandant of Vaivara and chief of the labour commandos department, a man with almost 10 years experience of working in concentration camps. *SS-Hauptsturmführer* Otto Jozef Philipp Brennais was the deputy commandant and head of the administrative department (responsible for accommodation, catering and uniforms), and *SS-Obersturmführer* Dr. Franz von Bodman, head of the medical service, who was also in charge of determining the working capacity of inmates and the selection of those incapacitated for work.¹⁸ A camp leader (*Lagerführer*) was appointed from the SS for each subsidiary camp, although in the first months not all these positions could be filled in all the subsidiary camps. Usually there were only 1–2

10 Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt (hereinafter WVHA). Monatsbericht. 26.6.1944. Estonian History Museum (Eesti Ajaloomuuseum, hereinafter AM) D 152-2-40. P. 74.

11 The testimonies of the Klooga camp survivors. Materials of the ESSR Extraordinary Commission. ERA R 4215-1-1.

12 M. Dworzecki. Op. cit. P. VIII.

13 Ideologie und Selbstverständnis der SS-Totenkopfverbände.

<http://home.arcor.de/tbiegel/science/fuehrg/frame.htm?tbiegel/science/fuehrg/ikl.htm> [14 February 2005].

14 M. Dworzecki. Op. cit. P. 102; Dmitri Terav, who had served in the 287th police battalion testified that he had served in the Vaivara concentration camp from 7 August 1943. Report on the basis of Dimitri Terav's investigation file of the ESSR KGB. 7 July 1969. The Department of Estonian State Archives (Eesti Riigiarhiivi Osakond, hereinafter ERAF) 133-1-2. P. 104.

15 Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA, 25.9., 25.11.1943. AM D 152-2-40. Pp. 2, 20.

16 Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Aufgabengebiet. 25.9.1943. AM D 152-2-40. Pp. 1–2.

17 Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsbericht. 25.11.1943. AM D 152-2-40. P. 15.

18 Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Aufgabengebiet. 25.9.1943. Op. cit.



Ruins of the shale oil production building of the former Goldfields Concern at Kohtla-Nõmme. Photographed by Riho Västriik, May 2003



Ruins of the shale oil production building of the former Goldfields Concern at Kohtla-Nõmme. The reinforced concrete structure is typical of building work during the period of the German occupation. Photographed by Riho Västriik, May 2003

members of the SS in every camp in addition to the camp guards, and a medical orderly (*SDG-Sanitätsdienstgrad*), who was subordinated to the surgeon-general, Dr. Bodman. Due to a lack of staff, *SDG SS-Unterscharführer* Scharfetter for instance also fulfilled the duties of camp leader in the Narva-Jõesuu (Hungerburg in German documents) Labour Camp. At any one time there were about 45 Germans who were counted as members of the SS troops (*SS-Truppe*) employed in the Vaivara network.¹⁹

The network of camps began to be extended after 1 October 1943. If, until then, Vaivara Concentration Camp had had only three subsidiary camps, then now it was to have 10. Pressure to rapidly establish the new camps came from above in order to quickly start up oil shale production. The camp physician's mainly used the threat of possible loss of production to obtain medicines, auxiliary personnel, etc. from the higher authorities.²⁰ In the autumn and winter of 1943 and in 1944 new field and subsidiary camps were established, of which some, those established to fulfill specific tasks, may have been in existence for only a few weeks. Over time the status of the camps varied (after the evacuation of Vaivara, the command centre was moved to Saka, but in September 1944 everything was concentrated at Klooga).

The following field or subsidiary camps are known as subordinate camps to Vaivara:

(Two Vaivara camps: near the railway station, and 5 km further, near the fuel refinery)

- 1) Klooga (with an auxiliary camp at Laoküla, which only existed for some weeks in the summer of 1944, and the labour department at Paldiski)
- 2) Narva – Ost
- 3) Hungerburg (the German name of Narva-Jõesuu)
- 4) Soski (Viru County, Vasknarva rural municipality)
- 5) Auvere

- 6) Kerstova/Putki (Viru County, Kose rural municipality)
- 7) Ereda (with labour department at Kohtla, near Ereda)
- 8) Jõhvi
- 9) Kuremäe
- 10) Kunda
- 11) Kiviõli
- 12) Viivikonna (at the disposal of *Baltöl*)
- 13) Viivikonna (at the disposal of OT)
- 14) Pankjavitsa (Southwest Estonia)
- 15) Petseri (Southwest Estonia)
- 16) Ülenurme (Tartu County)
- 17) Kudupe (Latvia)
- 18) Goldfields (from the name of the Goldfields Concern – Kohtla shale oil plant)
- 19) Sonda
- 20) Aseri
- 21) Lagedi (two periods of evacuation of the Vaivara camp network from Estonia)
 - a) 22 July to 19 August 1944
 - b) from 22 August to 17 September 1944
- 22) Kukruse (Viru County, Järve rural municipality)
- 23) Saka

The concentration camps were subordinated to the Chief of the III Department of Group D of the WVHA, which was situated in Oranienburg near Berlin. To that group, Vaivara surgeon-general Bodman submitted detailed monthly reports on each camp: the total number of inmates, the number of the diseased and the dead.²¹

Even though the camps were subordinated to the WVHA, several institutions were involved in the oil-shale industry. One possible list is: *Baltische Öl G. m. b. H.* (at Kiviõli) *OT-Einsatzstab Baltöl* (at Kiviõli) *Dulag 377* (at Kohtla-Järve) *Mineralölkommando Estland* (at Kiviõli).²²

¹⁹ Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsberichte 25.10.1943 – 26.6.1944. AM D 152-2-40. P. 3–90.

²⁰ Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Aufgabengebiet. 25.9.1943. Op. cit.; Monatsbericht 25.10.1944. AM D 152-2-40. Pp. 1, 4.

²¹ Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsberichte 25.10.1943 – 26.06.1944. Op. cit.

²² Arbeitseinsatzstelle Baltöl. Vermerk. 26.6.1944. ERA R 187-1-33. P. 61.

Table 1. "SS-Truppe" members in the Vaivara camp network from September 1943 to September 1944

Name	Rank	Date of birth	Position
Aumeier, Hans	SS-Sturmbannführer	20 August 1906	Commandant of the main camp
Brennais, Otto	SS-Hauptsturmführer	3 June 1900	Deputy commandant and head of the administrative department
Heinrich, Kurt	SS-Obersturmführer	23 August 1911	adjutant (Vaivara)
Helbig (Helvig)	SS-Oberscharführer		Stores manager (Vaivara)
Schwartze, Walter	SS-Hauptsturmführer		26 March 1909
Bock	SS-Obersturmführer		Camp leader (Klooga)
Werle, Wilhelm	SS-Untersturmführer	10 May 1907	Camp leader (Kiviõli)
Stiewitz, Fritz			Camp leader (Goldfields)
Dalman, Max	SS-Hauptscharführer	19 November 1912	Director of the camp office (Klooga)
Gelwick	SS-Oberscharführer		Financial director at Klooga
Reissig, Arno	SS-Oberscharführer	13 August 1914	
Pannicke, Kurt	SS-Hauptscharführer	5 February 1917	Camp leader Narva-Ost, Aseri
Drohsin, Heinz	SS-Unterscharführer		Camp leader (Ereda)
Klee	SS-Unterscharführer		
Reichel	SS-Rottenführer		
Schnabel, Helmut	SS-Oberscharführer	26 August 1912	
Kruth, Stefan	SS-Unterscharführer	1918	
Hofmann, Fritz		1907	
Wurth, Eugen		1918	
Einget			Camp leader (Kuremäe)
Fruwirth, Karl	SS-Oberscharführer	1 June 1917	Vaivara headquarters
Hiekst	SS-Oberscharführer		Camp leader (Lagedi)
Hollai, Theodor	SS-Unterscharführer	22 July 1906	
Rutenberg, Armin	SS-Rottenführer	20 July 1890	
Schtahe, Paul	SS-Oberscharführer	31 December 1883	
Steinberg(er)	SS-Sturmführer		
Wagner	SS-Unterscharführer		Supply detachment
Ge(?)trine			Supervisor (Klooga)
Vocke	Supervisor (Klooga)		
Medical service			
Bodman,	SS-Sturmbannführer	23 March 1909	Camp doctor
Franz Freiherr von			
Knappe, Wener	SS-Hauptsturmführer	22 March 1909	Camp doctor
Scharfetter, Erich	SS-Unterscharführer	27 May 1908	Medical service orderly
Runde, Ernst	SS-Unterscharführer	12 August 1905	Medical service orderly / Camp leader (Auvère)
Bahr, Wilhelm	SS-Unterscharführer	25 April 1907	Medical service orderly
Schmitz, Theo	SS-Unterscharführer	4 February 1904	Medical service orderly (Viivikonna OT)
Genth, Wilhelm	SS-Unterscharführer	6 May 1894	Medical service orderly
Theiner, Karl	S-Unterscharführer	19 May 1914	Medical service orderly
Klicker, Rudolf	SS-Sturmmann, SS-Unterscharführer	12 February 1924	Medical service orderly
Helmlinge, Heinrich	SS-Sturmmann	14 January 1918	Medical Service orderly
Schattkus, Heinrich	SS-Hauptscharführer	11 February 1898	Medical service orderly
Bethmann, Fritz	SS-Unterscharführer	27 September 1912	Medical service orderly
Lanze, Kurt	SS-Rottenführer	17 May 1898	Medical service orderly
Kramer	Obergefreiter		San.-Personnel (Vaivara)
Rabl	Obergefreiter		San.-Personnel (Putki, Vaivara)
Brand	Obergefreiter		San.-Personnel (Vaivara)
Karst	Obergefreiter		San.-Personnel (Vaivara, Viivikonna OT)
Humann	Obergefreiter		San.-Personnel (Vaivara)
Lingg	Obergefreiter		San.-Personnel
Kromast	Obergefreiter		San.-Personnel (Viivikonna Baltöl)

WORK IN THE CAMPS

The inmates were used in the oil-shale industry, fortification works, and logging, but also in stone quarries, tar making, for construction work in the companies subordinated to OT, road and railway construction, etc. The Third Reich's need to radically increase the production also necessitated the construction of new facilities and infrastructure.

In his report Bodman tried, stressing the importance of prisoner labour, to illustrate how important it was to provide supplies and medicines for his service and clothes and footwear for the inmates. He describes the losses arising from one prisoner becoming unavailable for work: "Each inmate extracts 2 m³ of oil shale daily, and, in 2 hours, this will give us 100 litres oil".²³

Until the arrival of the Jews, *Baltöl* had, for example, been stuck in a "vicious circle". When *Baltöl* asked for manpower, they were refused under the pretext that, first, they would have to create the conditions for receiving the manpower, which in turn made additional manpower necessary.²⁴ In many cases, the Jews brought to Estonia in autumn 1943 had to begin by building a camp for themselves. On 4 October 1943, Camp Commandant Aumeier announced the priority list of the *Baltöl* expansion works:

- 1) to extend and strengthen the wire fence;
- 2) to build new barracks for guards outside the wire fence; the old guards barrack that would remain inside the fence was to be utilised as a workshop;
- 3) to finish the construction of the service barrack;
- 4) to install a water pipe (so far, buckets had been used for the transport of catering and washing water; this enabled the Jews to make contact with local inhabitants. To prevent this, water was usually brought early in the mornings, which in turn enabled the prisoners to escape);
- 5) to build a sewerage system and a barrack with a laundry, a sauna, and a toilet;
- 6) to build 2 new accommodation barracks.²⁵

Despite a serious labour deficit, racial restrictions were still applied to the use of Jewish labour. At *Baltöl*, it was forbidden to have the Jews working in contact with prisoners-of-war and civilians, nor could they be allowed to work alone. For instance at Viivikonna, orders were given to concentrate all prisoners-of-war into one shift, and the other shift



One of the *Baltöl* shale oil production buildings in Kiviõli. Built 1942–1944. Photographed by Riho Västriik, May 2003

was made up of Jews. For all departments where the Jews were used, lists of supervisors were to be drawn up, and all the supervisors had to be sent to the Security Police and SD Local Office in Kiviõli for instruction. As the *Werkschutz* was short of guards, the supervisors were also used as guards.²⁶

As time passed, the labour deficit became more and more pronounced in industry too. Endless negotiations concerning the re-dispatchment of different categories of manpower (prisoners-of-war, Jews, eastern labourers) became a daily routine. In addition to the need to build new production facilities and the accommodation they necessitated, people were also needed for fortification works near the front-line area. In general, the entrepreneurs preferred prisoners-of-war to Jews, since there were qualified labourers and also physically stronger men among the POWs.²⁷ In the mines, the quality of Jewish manpower was estimated to be 50% of that of the prisoners-of-war.²⁸

23 Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsbericht. 25.10.1943. AM D 152-2-40. Pp. 3–12.

24 Bericht, *Baltöl* Hauptgef.Abt. Mathy. 3.03.1944. ERA R 187-1-1.

25 Ausbau – Judenlager. *Baltöl* Hauptwerksdirektion. 4.10.1943. ERA R 187-1-33. P. 35.

26 Aktenvermerk an Herr Direktor Schön. Besondere Bestimmungen für den Arbeitseinsatz. 30.9.1943. Besprechungsbericht, *Baltöl* 24.11.1943. ERA R 187-1-33. Pp. 32–34, 36.

27 Aktenvermerk. OT Einsatz *Baltöl*. 20.2.1944. ERA R 187-1-24. P. 17.

28 Abstellung von 5000 Arbeitskräften aus dem OT-*Baltöl*einsatz für den Stellungbau. 19.7.1944. ERA R 187-1-24. P. 41.

Some examples of the documents indicating the employment of prisoners. On 1 January 1944, 1,210 Jews (850 men and 360 women) were working in *Baltöl*; 399 of those (including 126 women) were engaged in mining works. All in all, *Baltöl* employed 30,354 people – Germans, Estonians, eastern labourers, Russian civilians, POW's, and Jews.²⁹ In new-building programmes, 105 Jews (4% of the total number of those used for work) worked in the *Baltöl* installations sector at Kiviõli and Ereda; and 3,319 Jews (25% of the total number) worked for *OT-Einsatz-Baltöl*. In both sectors, the largest share of the workforce was made up of POWs (1,260 – 49,5% and 5,389 – 41% respectively).³⁰ In February 1944, 5,000 Jews were used in the Kiviõli oil-shale area, while the total number of people employed was 33,000.³¹

On 1 March 1944, *Mineralölkommando Estland* promises to provide 3,000 Jews from Narva for fortification works.³² On 31 March 1944, there were 162 Jews (132 men and 30 women) participating in the *Baltöl* building programme; there were no Jews in the mines.³³ Between March and July in 1944, 1,210 Jews, 859 men and 360 women, were used in different mines.³⁴ On 19 July 1944, *Baltöl* calculations state that after the Kohtla-Järve and Ereda new-buildings have been closed down, there will be 7,960 people on the Kiviõli and Jõhvi lists, and 47% of those were Jews. Thus, there were an additional 3,614 Jews at Kiviõli and Jõhvi (or perhaps this figure included Kohtla-Järve and Ereda).³⁵

According to Dworzecki, the inmates at Jõhvi were engaged in building a German military hospital, making foundations for buildings, transportation works, discharging coal wagons, building the railway and the Veski-Narva-Soski road in the forests, and working in the sawmill. A road was also being built in the Putki marsh.³⁶ This neither corroborates nor excludes the possibility that the inmates were working at the *Baltöl* new-building sites.

The chronic labour deficit continued also after the establishment of the camps for Jews. In June 1944, the possibility to use also Hungarian Jews in the *Baltöl* and in the OT camps was considered. On paper, 2,310

men and 240 women had already been distributed. In June 1944, 500 women did indeed arrive in the Vaivara network,³⁷ who may have been the Bystritza Jews that Dworzecki mentions. On 27 June 1944, the representative of the German Labour Deployment Commissar General in the Reich Commissariat Ostland and of the Economics Inspection “Nord” and “Mitte” – Labour Deployment Office *Baltöl*, (*Der Beauftragte des Generalbevollmächtigten für den Arbeitseinsatz für das Reichskommissariat Ostland und die Wirtschaftsinspektionen Nord und Mitte – Arbeitseinsatzstelle Baltöl*) announced that due to low effectiveness and poor prospects, further plans to bring in Hungarian Jews had been discarded.³⁸

It was quite common for inmates to be transferred from camp to camp, from one employer to another.³⁹

HOW MANY INMATES WERE THERE IN THE VAIVARA NETWORK?

The number of inmates in the Vaivara camp has been a matter of protracted debate. The KGB also tried to find an answer to this question. On 26 October 1968, the Administration of Archives of the Estonian SSR wrote that the Central State Archives of the October Revolution and Socialist Development of ESSR (*ENSV Oktoobrirevolutsiooni ja Sotsialistliku Ülesehitustöö Riiklik Keskarhiiv*, hereinafter the ORKA) has no documentary sources for identifying the number of prisoners at the Vaivara camp, or the prisoners' names.⁴⁰

In general, the total number of inmates can also be extrapolated on the basis of the Klooga concentration camp holding, preserved in the Estonian State Archives (former ORKA), which also includes a file with file cards. When analysing the sex, the social background and the geographical origin of the persons entered on the cards of the Klooga file, it appears that at Klooga, there were more women among inmates (1,239), and that most of them (1,177) belonged to the social group of workers and craftsmen. Most of the women came from Vilnius (671), a little fewer came from Kaunas (439). The average age of women (27) was slightly junior to that of men (32).

29 Stand der Belegschaft am 31.1.1944, *Baltöl*. ERA R 187-1-24. P. 1, 2.

30 Belegschaftszahlen der Neubauprogramme I und II a. *Baltöl*, Februar 1944. ERA R 187-1-24. P. 21.

31 Mineralölkommando Estland an Heeresgruppe Nord Räumung des Ölschifergebietes. 5.3.1944. ERA R 187-1-67. P. 30.

32 Ferngespräch mit Direktor Schön. Mineralölkommando Estland. 1.3.1944. ERA R 187-1-24. P. 29.

33 Stand der Brutto-Belegschaft bei den Bauvorhaben. Stand der Brutto-Belegschaft am der Grubenbetriebe. *Baltöl*. ERA R 187-1-25. Pp. 160, 161.

34 Auf den werken Beschäftigte. *Baltöl*. March-July 1944. ERA R 187-1-24. P. 36.

35 Abstellung von 5000 Arbeitskräften aus dem OT-Baltöleinsatz für den Stellungbau. 19.7.1944. Op. cit.

36 M. Dworzecki. Op. cit. Pp. 185, 190.

37 Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt. Monatsbericht 26.06.1944. AM D 152-2-40. P. 74.

38 Einsatz von Kriegsgefangenen, Arbeitseinsatzstelle *Baltöl*, 27.06.1944. ERA R 187-1-33. P. 60.

39 After the evacuation of the 4th *Baltöl* mine from Viivikonna, part of the Jews were transferred to the Ereda camp, where OT started to utilise them (Ibid. P. 61).

40 Administration of Archives of the ESSR to the ESSR KGB. 26 October 1968. ERAF 133-1-1. P. 171.



Buildings of the former Narva prisoner-of-war camp (after the war it was partially rebuilt). Photographed 1977 (ERAF)

Of the 916 men, 719 came from Vilnius, 59 from Kaunas, 14 from Warsaw. Also men were mostly workers and craftsmen. Only a couple of dozens were intellectuals – physicians and dentists (16) and engineers (12). The number of medium-level specialists – electricians, technicians, etc. – was about one hundred. Among men, the number of cabinetmakers was the greatest (137), followed by locksmiths (98), electricians or electric engineers (50), shoemakers (44), glaziers (39), various workers (from sawmills, transport and concrete industry, etc. (136). As to women, the number of seamstresses was the greatest – 516 women, in addition there were 73 linen sewers and 51 fur tailors, a couple of sewers of felt boots and 7 auxiliaries to seamstresses. There were 10 representatives of intelligentsia: 4 physicians, 2 economists, 2 correspondents, 1 pharmacist and 1 chemist among the women. The number of medium-level specialists was about the same.⁴¹ The file cards contain data on 2,156 people. In addition to the Klooga concentration camp file, there is also a file on the Narva camp.⁴²

It is probable that people were given their numbers at the Vaivara distribution camp, and bore the same number from camp to camp, at least the comparison of inmate numbers of the Narva and Klooga camps seems to corroborate this. According to Slotskin's testimony, part of the men were sent directly from Vaivara to the Narva concentration camp, which functioned until January 1944.

In January, the Valga camp was liquidated, and at least part of the inmates were sent to Kiviõli.⁴³ Still the

witnesses' testimonies give reason to conclude that part of the inmates reached Klooga directly, not through North-East Estonia.⁴⁴ There are a few exceptions also to the general rule of coincidence between the inmate numbers of the Narva and Klooga camps.

As the names and numbers coincide, it can be said that the following persons came from Narva to Klooga:

Kassin (Kosin), Jakob	2521
Rotschild, Ber	2710
Kuritzki, Jonas	2718
Chorat, Meier	2725
Matzkin, Moses	2763
Gorfinkel, Josef	2817
Kruschanski, Eliasch	2941
Kaplan, Samuel (Solomon)	3117
Kaminezki, Isaak	3131
Edelstein, Judel	3173
Chaikin, Josef	3396
Grüner (Goldberg), Ber	3555
Himmelfarb, Judel	3572
Kanter, Moses	3747
Posnanski, Jakob	3759
Nementschinski, Samuel (Solomon)	4814
Silberberg, Jakob	4899

The largest number indicating a male inmate ever recorded in documents is 6,821 – Gliot, (C)Haim in Narva. At Klooga, the largest number indicating a male inmate is 6,328; for women, the largest number is 3,004. This gives reasons to assume that there were *ca* 10,000 Jewish inmates in the system.

Dworzecki has a different opinion. According to him, 20,000 people were deported to Estonia from the Vilnius ghetto alone. To this, he adds people deported to Estonia from the ghetto of Kaunas, 300 people from the Kaiserwald camp in Latvia, and 500 women, who reached Estonia after 20 June 1944, from Bystrica, Transilvania. No documentary proof of the figures presented by Dworzecki has been discovered.

Bodman's reports had allegedly been left at Klooga.⁴⁵ So far, the originals of these documents have not been found long time, but the Estonian State Archives have a collection of microfilms with the records of the abovementioned extraordinary committee, and those are kept in Moscow.⁴⁶ The microfilmed materials include the translations and

⁴¹ Holding "SD Klooga koonduslaager" (Klooga Concentration Camp of SD). ERA R 170, 5 files included file cards of prisoners.

⁴² Holding Narva koonduslaager (Narva Concentration Camp). ERA R 966.

⁴³ Slotskin's testimony. ERA 4215-1-1.

⁴⁴ The testimonies of the Klooga camp survivors. ERA 4215-1-1.

⁴⁵ Saksa fašistlik okupatsioon Eestis aastail 1941–1944 (The German Fascist Occupation in Estonia in 1941–1944). Editorial college: M. Laosson, E. Päll, J. Saat. Tallinn 1947. P. 441.

⁴⁶ In 1965, when the microfilms were made, those archives were called Архив Октябрьской Революции Высших органов государственной власти и органов государственного управления СССР, today Государственной Архив Российской Федерации (State Archives of the Russian Federation – GARF). The records of the Extraordinary Commission are preserved in the holding no. 7021, series no. 97.

summaries of Bodman's reports made especially for the Extraordinary Committee.⁴⁷ At the same time, the abovementioned holding no. 7021 in Moscow allegedly contains tables on the number of inmates, drawn up according to Bodman's reports for each camp on monthly basis.

In the course of this work, after the extrapolation of the overall number of inmates, Bodman's original reports that were still in Estonia were found, and the data they contain is presented below (see table 2).⁴⁸

On the basis of the data in Bodman's reports we can say that the number of inmates in the Vaivara network did not exceed 10,000. Due to the nature of the reports, we can not generally use them to track the movements of inmates out of the system and back in again, nor the arrival of new inmates, although there are some data about this also. For instance there is mention of the arrival of 500 new women inmates in June 1944, who were divided equally between the Kiviõli and Goldfields camps. However, as a result, the overall number of inmates in the Goldfields camp fell.⁴⁹

The witness statements of Markus Gordon, who managed to escape from Ereda camp, generally coincide with the data recorded in the reports submitted by Bodman. Thus, it is apparent from Gordon's testimony that at the beginning of October 1943, 250 Jews were taken to Soski, where there were then 500 inmates including those Jews, 495 according to Bodman. In January 1944, when the Soski inmates were transferred to Kuremäe, 110 people had died as a result of inhuman treatment, according to Bodman only 30. Also Bodman's reports record the arrival 400 additional people, although there is a difference in the initial number of Kuremäe inmates before the arrival of new admissions from Soski – according to Bodman it was 444, while Gordon speaks of 800. In February 1944, the Kuremäe inmates were transferred to Goldfields, so that, according to Bodman, the number of Goldfields inmates becomes 1,200 (0 until then). At the same time, Gordon suggests the number of inmates at Goldfields to have been 2,200, which makes a difference of a thousand inmates. The transfer of 150 people from Goldfields to Ereda in April 1944, of which Gordon speaks in his statement, is also evident from Bodman's reports.⁵⁰

Data on the number of Jews held in the Vaivara Camp between July and September 1944 is patchy.

On 20 July 1944 there were 1,510 Jews at Kiviõli,⁵¹ thus there must have been 2,104 of them at Jõhvi (or Jõhvi, Kohtla-Järve and Ereda). Bodman states the number of Jews at Jõhvi to have been zero already in March, which gives reason to assume that we are talking about Kohtla-Järve and Ereda.

A document from 7 August 1944, specifies that 1,500 Jews had remained at the disposal of the *Baltöl* at Kiviõli. 1,960 Jews from Ereda were transferred to fortification works in Eastern Prussia;⁵² thus, there are reasons to believe that there were no more Jews at Kohtla-Järve either.

MORBIDITY AND MORTALITY AMONG INMATES FROM 25 OCTOBER 1943 TO 25 JUNE 1944

On 25 October 1943, Bodman wrote that there were old Jews incapacitated for work in each camp, because whole families had been handed over to the Vaivara camp. Elderly Jews, who were unable to bear the conditions and the changed circumstances, were the only ones to die during the first month of imprisonment. The number of the dead has not been indicated. On 25 January 1944, Bodman admitted that the situation in the Narva East camp was unsatisfactory, because there were still very many old and weak Jews remaining.

At the end of 1943, an epidemic of spotted fever broke out in Vaivara, the outbreak was sudden and the disease spread very fast. On 24 December 1943, the epidemic reached its peak, with 264 cases, which was 20% of the inmates. 37 deaths are recorded. The spotted fever also spread in Narva, where 16.5% of the inmates were infected, the mortality was 10%. This was more than three times higher than in Vaivara (see table 2). In the OT administered Narva Hungerburg field camp (Narva-Jõesuu), the mortality due to the conditions in the camp alone was around 13% and it was decided to close the camp down. One month later, on 25 January 1944, there were still 195 cases at Vaivara, but only one more new occurrence during the week. In Auvere, the epidemic had faded out, the last case was discovered on 20 December 1943. There were a few cases also in the Kuremäe camp.⁵³

On 25 March 1944, Bodman estimated the health of the inmates to be bad and the death rate very high. The causes of death were injuries, and also an epidemic of flu, with pneumonia and other complications. Bodman also complained of the low standard of

47 Translations and summaries of Bodman's reports for the Extraordinary Commission. ERA 4215-1-17a. Part I.

48 Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsberichte. Op. cit.

49 Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsbericht. 25.6.1944. AM D 152-2-40. Pp. 74–77.

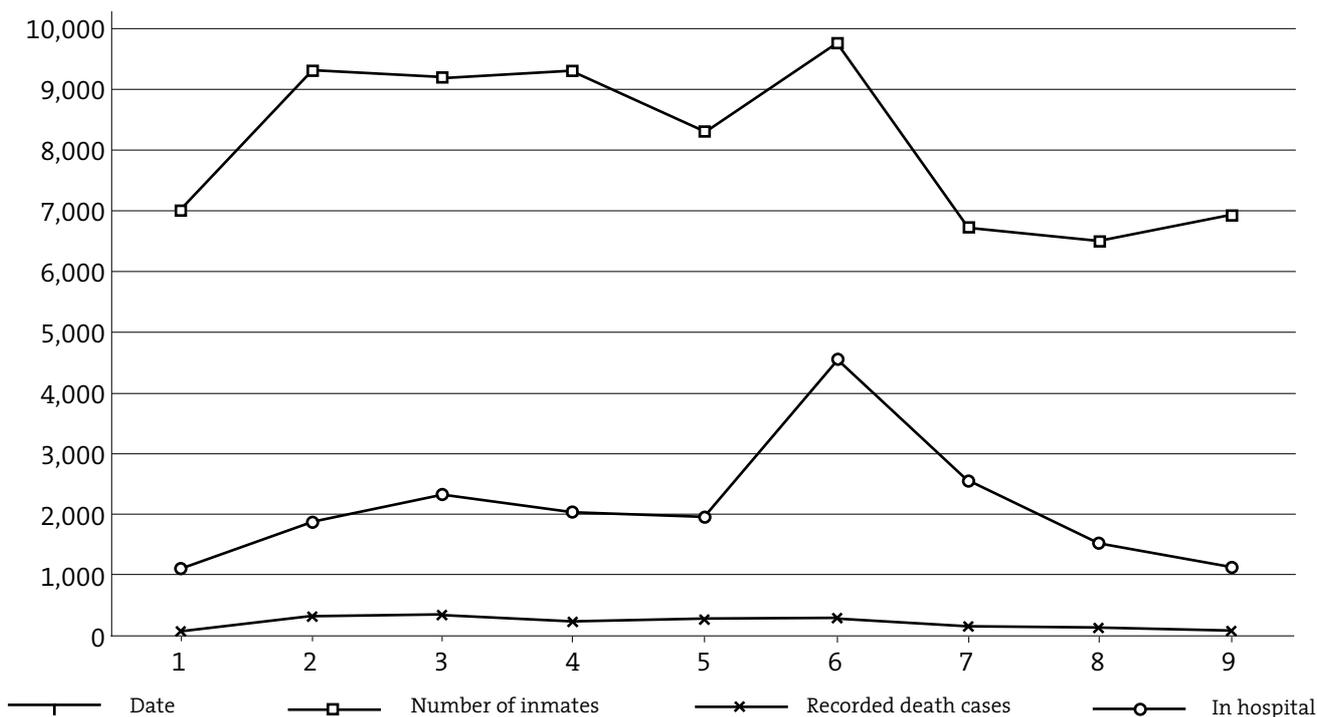
50 Markus Gordon, copy of the ESSR NKGB interrogation protocol. 3 October 1944. ERAF 133-1-10. P. 134; Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsberichte. Op. cit.

51 Arbeitskräfte der Baltöl und OT. Stand per 20.7.1944. ERA R 187-1-24. P. 50.

52 Gesamt-Belegschaft im Neubau-Sektor der Baltöl. Stand vom 7. 8.1944. ERA R 187-1-30. Pp. 13, 14.

53 Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsberichte. 29.12.1943, 26.1.1944. AM D 152-2-40. Pp. 32–52.

Graph 1. Number of prisoners and their mortality in the Vaivara Camp network from 25 October 1943 to 25 June 1944



* Dates: 1 = 25 October 1943; 2 = 25 November 1943; 3 = 29 December 1943; 4 = 26 January 1944; 5 = 20 February 1944; 6 = 25 March 1944; 7 = 25 April 1944; 8 = 26 May 1944; 9 = 26 June 1944.

** The graph is based on the largest figures for the respective categories in Bodman's reports.

the inmates' food, which was caused by inefficient transport and lack of potatoes. The lack of potatoes continued in April, and there was a proposal to replace them with groats or flour.⁵⁴

Part of Ereda Camp was assigned to be the central hospital camp of the Vaivara network. It was primarily the inmates who stood a chance of recovery that were sent here. In January 1944 all the Jews evacuated from camps due to the withdrawal of the front, who were not able to march on foot were brought here. On 14 February 1944 907 diseased, old, and weak inmates, including children, have been sent to the Riga concentration camp; they included 104 sick and elderly from Kiviõli, and 705 sick and 184 children, 2 inmates in the capacity of physicians, and 5 medical orderlies from Ereda. The inmates gathered at Ereda hospital camp were to be sent to some camp in Germany, but there is no information about whether this took place. However, 500 inmates who were unfit for work were sent to Riga in April, where they were handed over to the Security Police and SD. In May 250 inmates were temporarily moved from Ereda to the Kiviõli Camp. As they were suffering mainly from physical infirmity, they were placed in the recovery block (*Schonblock*) for 14 days.⁵⁵

It is not known to what extent the Jews who died on the march while evacuating the camps are represented in Bodman's reports. Of the 2,466 Jews sent out on foot from the Vaivara, Narva-Ost, Auvere, Putki and Viivikonna OT camps on the 4th and 5th of February, 44 died on the road, but were not included in the monthly reports. According to Bodman there were only a few isolated deaths during the marches to evacuate the other camps, since the sick had been transported to Ereda.⁵⁶

Bodman presents data on 1 513 inmates who died in the Vaivara camp network between October 1943 and 26 June 1944 (see table 2). However, the data presumably does not include all the deaths during that period. The number of deaths in the camps in Estonia was kept relatively low by the fact that at this time the camps in question were primarily labour camps, from which inmates unfit for work were sent away to other camps outside Estonia. There is no accurate data concerning the fate of the inmates sent to Riga; none are known to have survived the war. Survivors of the Vaivara Camp have described the sending away of their incapacitated companions to Riga in February 1944 as the largest extermination operation.⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsbericht. 25.3.1944. AM D 152-2-40. Pp. 60–66.

⁵⁵ Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsberichte. 26.1.1944–26.5.1944. AM D 152-2-40. Pp. 43–73.

⁵⁶ Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsbericht. 20.2.1944. AM D 152-2-40. Pp. 53–59.

⁵⁷ Pfißl, Lukáš. Die Geschichte des Theresienstädter Transports "B" nach Estland. In: Theresienstädter Studien und Dokumente 2001 (Institut Theresienstädter Initiative). Metropol Verlag Berlin, 2001, Pp. 148–229.

WHO GUARDED THE VAIVARA CAMP?

According to Bodman, in October 1943 the guard squads of the camps in the Vaivara network were composed mainly of the 3rd Company (170 men, major Jaan Koort) of the 287th Estonian Defence Battalion, subordinated to the Commander of the German Order Police in Estonia, who were divided up among the camps. He also mentions an Estonian-Latvian guard squad at the Narva camp. On 1 November 1943 one company from the 290th (Estonian) Defence Battalion (headed by a German captain, Vincenti), which was made up of Estonian Russians, was added and they were detached to guard the Ereda and Kunda camps. The guarding of some camps was not organised by the Vaivara commandant and these were guarded by the men of the OT service.⁵⁸

E. g. Dmitri Terav, who served in the 287th Battalion, said in his testimony that he had been guarding the Vaivara concentration camp. Terav (died in 1946 in Soviet Union in Vorkuta prison camp) served as a guard at Vaivara from 7 August 1943 to 7 February 1944. In the camp, there were mostly Jews from Vilnius. The camp commandant was a German called Schnabel, he also instructed the guards. The guards were not allowed to approach the inmates closer than 6 steps; if an inmate tried to escape, the guards first had to fire a warning shot in the air, and then shoot at the escaping inmate.⁵⁹

At Klooga, the 3rd Company of the 287th battalion was in charge of guarding. In September 1943, the 3rd platoon of this company was dispatched to Klooga led by NCO Mihkel Raudsepp. At the time, there were about 1,000 inmates in the camp, but their number increased. In October 1943, 1st Lieutenant Elmar Kuklane, the commander of the 3rd platoon, arrived at Klooga, but Raudsepp continued in charge of the guards.⁶⁰

At the end of January or in the beginning of February 1944, all the 3rd company (3 platoons altogether) arrived at Klooga since the camp was being expanded. The company commander was 1st Lieutenant Alfred Hendrikson.⁶¹ The 2nd platoon, formed of the newcomers, was the largest (41 men). It was probably brought to Klooga at the beginning of March 1944. On 10 March 1944, Zugwachtmeister Aleksander Kask, who had been mobilised in

February, was also posted to Klooga and given the command of the 2nd platoon. Alfred Käit was recruited at Kose, on 13 or 15 February 1944, and posted to Tallinn. At first, he and those who shared his fate spent a week in some kind of gym, then they were taken to Toompea, where uniforms were distributed. At the beginning of March, Käit was posted to Klooga, where he became the squad commander of the 2nd platoon, and his duties also included service as the commander of the guard.⁶² The 1st and 3rd platoons consisted of experienced guards (about 35 men in each). Thus, there were about 110 men in the 3rd company.⁶³ The 2nd platoon swore its oath only in May 1944.⁶⁴

ORGANISATION OF THE GUARDING/WATCH

We will use the example of the Klooga camp to get an idea of the structure of the guarding system. The area of the camp, which was enclosed within a 4 metre high barbed wire fence, was about 1000 x 500 metres, at the centre there were 3 two-storey stone houses. Two of the stone houses were fenced with barbed wire and accommodated the inmates; the third one contained the office and the camp administration. A sawmill, a reinforced concrete plant, and several other workshops had been built on the camp territory by the inmates. About 200 metres from the workshops there was a separate barrack for POWs, also fenced with barbed wire. The camp could be entered through two entrance booths on the northern and eastern sides of the camp. About 200 metres from the entrance booths, there were 2 barracks to accommodate the 3rd company. The northern part of the camp stretched to the railway, and a railway branch had also been built to the sawmill in the camp. Allegedly, there was a separate guard for the POWs, and the 287th police battalion had nothing to do with them.⁶⁵

The guards had been divided into two shifts, one of them keeping watch while the other was resting, and there was a change of shift every 24 hours. 5–7 watchtowers were manned day and night, and at night there were 5 additional posts inside the camp, guarding the inmates' barracks and the stores. The watchmen were exchanged every 4 hours. Simultaneously, there were 12–14 men keeping watch, so that, all in all, there were 24–28 men in a shift. The watchtowers had been built around the camp, at a distance of 100–200 metres from each other.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Captain L. Nikitin, ESR KGB investigator of especially important cases. Report on the basis of Dimitri Terav's interrogation transcripts. 7 July 1969. ERAF 133-1-2. P. 104.

⁶⁰ Summary of the events in the Klooga camp based on the ESR Extraordinary Commission documents. ERAF 133-1-1. Pp. 23–37.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Alfred Käit's NKGB investigation file. ERAF 129-16210. Vol. 1.

⁶³ Ibid. P. 185.

⁶⁴ According to Alfred Käit's testimony, the whole of the 3rd company gave an oath. Ibid. P. 257.

⁶⁵ Ibid. Pp. 182–183, 188.

The watch was also in charge of escorting the inmates to work sites outside the camp, and guarding them there. The orders to dispatch inmates to work outside the camp came from the camp manager. The inmates working inside the camp were guarded by the OT supervisors.⁶⁶

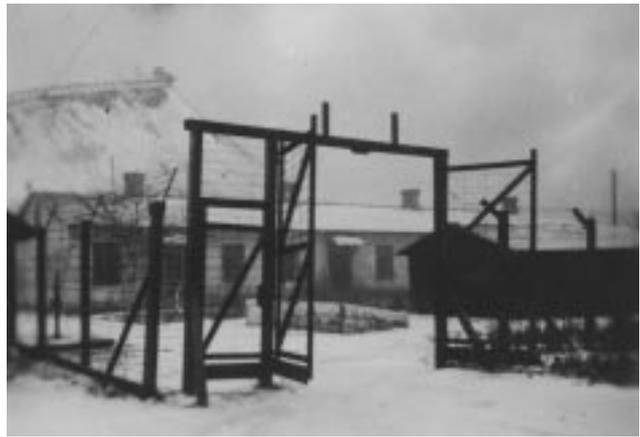
VIOLENCE

According to the testimony of Abram Krein, in January 1944, the German medical orderly Einert (presumably *SDG SS-Unterscharführer* Karl Theiner, see table 1) ordered one of the inmates to undress, and let him stand in the cold for 2 hours, after which he shot the inmate. Einert shot inmates a couple of hundred metres' away from the camp, after which he ordered other inmates to burn the bodies after having removed the dentures. It sometimes also happened that Einert first had a fire lit, then brought out an inmate, undressed him, and removed any dentures. After that, he ordered the victim to walk towards the fire, and when the victim reached the fire, hit him across the head with his left hand. The Jew bowed down, and, at that moment, Einert fired a bullet into the back of the victim's head and the body fell directly into the fire.⁶⁷ Witnesses speak of corporal punishments and different cruel ways of execution, e.g. with a pickaxe, injections of poison, etc. In North-Eastern Estonia people recount that during the evacuation, weakened Jews were cast down the cliffs or drowned. Sometimes weakened individuals were just shot and cast by the roadside.

There were also occurrences of violence among inmates. For instance, in Soski, Mordechai Goldman from Vilnius was the elder of the Jews, and his assistants were Abram Epstein and Schneider; the latter was in charge of provisions. Shaja Kumjanski and Menasher Gesh were policemen. Allegedly those men methodically beat the inmates, robbed them of their valuables and stole the food meant for them. The brothers Stein from Vilnius were beaten to death by a Jewish policeman.⁶⁸

EVACUATION OF THE CAMPS

As the front approached in Januar 1944, eastern camps at Narva (31 January), Auvere (4 February), Putki (4 February), Viivikonna OT (4 February) were evacuated first to Vaivara. Two inmates evacuated from Auvere were shot dead by Wehrmacht soldiers while attempting to escape. In order to speed up the evacuation, 604 sick inmates and 185 children were



Camp for Jews at Kiviõli. Photograph from the Extraordinary Commission's album. 1944–1945 (ERA)

transported from Vaivara to Ereda sick camp on the 2nd of February. One inmate died on the way. Due to the Red Army's breakthrough at the front, 2,466 inmates who had been gathered at Vaivara were evacuated on foot on to the Kiviõli, Ereda, Jõhvi, and Goldfields camps.

44 inmates died during the three day march and were buried on the spot. 23 sick inmates were evacuated on horseback and 414 on foot from the Soski camp to the Kuremäe camp under Red Army fire on the 3–4 February. Some inmates died as a result of the exertion after arriving at the Kuremäe camp. The Viivikonna Baltöl camp was evacuated due to the approaching front on 13 February. The sick had been evacuated earlier; 698 inmates were marched to the Ereda camp, arriving the next evening. The staff of the command centre was moved to Saka. The evacuation plan foresaw the evacuation of ca. 5,000 Jews working in the oil shale region on foot as far as Riga in Latvia if necessary (ca. 350 km), but this never happened in reality.⁶⁹

The evacuations in January – February 1944 were not accompanied by mass executions of inmates. When reporting on the evacuation, Bodman mentions that during the evacuation of the Viivikonna Baltöl camp, the *Wehrmacht* car picked up a sick Jewish woman on the way and took her to a civilian hospital, from where she must now be brought back.⁷⁰

Simultaneously with the Red Army's offensive, preparations were begun for the possible destruction of the industries, while, at the same time, attempts were made to convince the public that everything was going on as usual. On 14 February

⁶⁶ Ibid. Pp. 80, 81, 184.

⁶⁷ Abram Krein's ESSR NKGB interrogation protocol. Copy. 4.10.1944. ERAF 133-1-10. P. 134.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsberichte 26.1.1944, 20.2.1944. AM D 152-2-40. Pp. 43–59; Mineralölkommando Estland an Heeresgruppe Nord. Räumung des Ölschiefergebietes. 5.3.1944. ERA R 187-1-67. Pp. 30–37.

⁷⁰ Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsbericht. 20.2.1944. Op. cit. Pp. 53–59.

1944, General Field Marshal Wilhelm Keitel had announced: “All measures must be taken to prevent the civilians or military units from getting the impression that the region is going to be abandoned”.⁷¹ By 5 March 1944, a detailed plan for the March evacuation of all the Kiviõli oil-shale industry area had been worked out. All in all, this involved 33,000 people. Following orders, *Dulag 377* drafted a March evacuation plan for both the POWs and the Jews in the *Waffen-SS* concentration camps. *Baltöl* itself planned an evacuation of “free” [inverted commas from the original document, R. V.] labour force.⁷² It is interesting to point out that, here, the camps for Jews have been mentioned as being under the command of the *Waffen-SS* – so far, no other reference of this kind has been encountered.

On 12 May 1944, 150 Jews from Kiviõli were sent to Klooga, where by that time there were about 2,000 Jews (1,200 men and 800 women).⁷³ The front stabilised and on 22 May 1944, Hitler prohibited the evacuation of labour forces from Estonia and demanded the fast launching of new shale-oil plants. Even on 8 August 1944, the launching of three new facilities was planned. The orders were to continue production until the last moment.

Until that time there were 16,000 men still working in the building sector of OT and *Baltöl*. By 7 August about 5,000 of them had begun evacuating to East Prussia. Among the evacuees, there were 1,960 Jews from the Ereda camp and less from the other camps, 2,050 all together. On the 8th of August the *Mineralöl-Kommando Estland* was still planning to evacuate another 2,500 Jews to East Prussia, for which Hitler’s consent had been requested. The Army Detachment “*Narwa*”, which exercised military control in North Estonia, was also expecting the Hitler’s orders for the evacuation of 4,500 Jews.⁷⁴ On 9 August the Vaivara commandant, Aumeier gave a secret order by telephone to prepare the next 900 *Baltöl* Jews for evacuation by midday.⁷⁵ But already on the same day, Hitler’s orders came to stop the evacuation of all kinds of manpower (including Jews). Two days later, on 11 August, the orders came

to dispatch 4,500 Jews immediately.⁷⁶ For reasons unknown, the planned dispatch of 2,080 Jews from Tallinn harbour to Danzig on the “*Isar*” on 10 August was nevertheless called off.⁷⁷ Notwithstanding the cancelled transportation there is evidence of about 1,000 evacuated Jews from Vaivara network camps arriving at Stutthof already on 9 August 1944.⁷⁸ There is no information about organising transport for this purpose in Estonia.

On 28 July 1944, the inmates from Ereda and Kohtla (Goldfields) were evacuated to Lagedi, (7 km from Tallinn), in order to transfer them to Tallinn harbour, to be put on board ships and sent to Stutthof. The Jews from Ereda and Kohtla arrived in Tallinn and even managed to get on board ships, but had to get off again due to the decision to halt the evacuation. Through Klooga and Tallinn, they were moved back to Lagedi. More than 2,000 Jews stayed at Lagedi for about 3 weeks. At first they were not given any work, but had to stand in lines for one hour, and could then sit for one hour again, and so all day long. On the last days before evacuation, the inmates were used for fortification works.⁷⁹

At their second attempt, they managed to reach Stutthof through Tallinn. They set sail from Tallinn on the “*Donau*” and “*Mar del Plata*” on 19 August and calling in Riga arrived at Danzig harbour five days later.⁸⁰ A group of inmates that came directly from Goldfields (inmates from Aseri, who had reached Goldfields after the rest had already been transferred to Lagedi), and several elderly and weak women from Klooga all sailed to Stutthof on board the same ship (according to another version, there were two ships).⁸¹ The Referent of the Estonian Security Police and SD complained that, since the Jews were loaded on to the trains carrying them to the harbour without any luggage, their belongings were left scattered on the field between the barracks. “The guard commando and OT men wander among the heaps of rags and look out for loot; they claim to have found silk linen, etc.” The Referent admits that the passengers passing by, who had full view of the scene, since the camp was situated oppo-

71 Aktenvermerk über Ferngespräch Chef Wi Stab Ost mit Generalfeldmarschall Keitel am 14.2.1944. ERA R 187-1-68. P.16.

72 Mineralölkommando Estland an Heeresgruppe Nord. Räumung des Ölschiefergebietes. Op. cit. P. 30.

73 Slotskin’s testimony. ERA 4215-1-1.

74 Gesamt-Belegschaft im Neubau-Sektor der *Baltöl*. Stand vom 7.8.1944. ERA R 187-1-30. P. 13; Fernspruch Nr. 1798, Rittmeister Scheferhoff an Mineralölkommando Estland. 8.8.1944. ERA R 187-1-24. P. 62; Fernspruch vom 8.8.1944, Mineralölkommando Estland an Wehrwirtschaftsinspektion Ostland. ERA R 187-1-67. P. 43.

75 Vermerk. Judenabzug. *Baltöl*. 9.8.1944. ERA R 187-1-24. P. 65.

76 Direktor Schön an Wirtschaftsstab Ost. Fernsreiben. *Baltöl*. 12.8.1944. ERA R 187-1-7. P. 185.

77 Kommandierender Admiral östliche Ostsee Vizeadmiral Burchardi. Geleitlage 10., 11.8.1944. Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv (BA MA), RM 45 I / 246.

78 Drywa, Danuta. *The Extermination of Jews in Stutthof Concentration Camp 1939-1945*. Gdansk 2004. P. 86.

79 Sipo B III Daily report, 21.08.1944. ERA R 64-1-16. P. 35; L. Pfiibyl. Op. cit. P. 208.

80 Kommandierender Admiral östliche Ostsee Vizeadmiral Burchardi. Geleitlage 19.-20.8.1944. Military Archives of the German Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv Militärarchiv, hereinafter BA MA) RM 45 I / 246; L. Pfiibyl. Op. cit. P. 208; Sipo B III Daily report, 21.08.1944. ERA R 64-1-16. P. 35.

81 M. Dworzecki. Op. cit. P. 104.

site the railway station, are openly talking about the Jews having been taken “to execution, or to be sunk to the bottom of the sea in some old wreck”.⁸² On 23 August 4,408 Jews⁸³ arrived at the Stutthof camp, of whom over 2,000 were Jews from the Vaivara camp who had been evacuated from Tallinn.

The Baltöl evacuation list on 10 September 1944 contains no Jews.⁸⁴

Dworzecki mentions repressions that started after the attempt on Hitler’s life on 20 July 1944. It has been said that 10% were selected for execution.⁸⁵ Dworzecki does not mention the fact of the execution itself, and no relevant documents have been found.

MASS MURDERS

In this subsection, we will speak of three mass murders: at Ereda, Lagedi, and Klooga. In addition to the specific massacres, I will give a short summary of the establishment and functioning of the named camps.

EREDA

According to the testimony August Zakerman, the Ereda camp was built on his Kaasiku farm land in July 1943. A rye field was chosen for the camp, and light barracks were erected there.⁸⁶ On 6 October 1944, the Soviet extraordinary committee that had been surveying the camp territory established that the camp with all its buildings covered an area of about 1 sq. km. In the northern part of the camp there were 14 barracks of planks and 11 of cardboard for the inmates. The barracks were surrounded by one (in places two) layers of barbed wire fence, with a height of 2.5 metres.⁸⁷

On 4 September 1943, 1,000 Jews from Vilnius arrived at the Kohtla railway station, 500 were taken to the Ereda camp and the rest to Vaivara. Thus, there were 1,000 male Jews at Ereda (or perhaps 500, it is impossible to understand).⁸⁸ In two days’ time, 1,000 more Jews from Vilnius arrived at Ereda. At

first, the camp commandant was a German from OT, and the inmates were informed that they were in a labour camp. Soon, a man called Reisin (the survivor remembered his name incorrectly; it is in fact Heinz Drohsin) from the SS became the camp commandant, and it was announced that the camp was a concentration camp. The work was first guarded by Dutch guards, and later by the Estonian police. On 2 October 1943, 750 people from the Ereda camp were sent on to Narva, where 500 of them stayed, and the remaining 250 were sent to Jaama village on the bank of the Narva river, to the Soski camp.⁸⁹ Presumably inmates continued to be sent on to other camps. According to Bodman’s reports, on 25 October 1943 there were 245 inmates at the Ereda camp (see table 2).

The Ereda inmates worked at the restoration of roads and railways, some of them also in the fields. The guards, mostly Germans, wore black uniforms with a cross on the sleeve. There were also Estonian guards.⁹⁰

According to former inmates the Ereda camp was divided in two: Upper-Ereda on drier soil, where the *Lagerältester* Lehmann and the more privileged inmates lived, and Lower-Ereda on boggy ground, which mostly housed the wounded, the sick, and the elderly and ordinary inmates too.⁹¹ The camp doctor, Bodman treated this part of the Ereda camp as the central sick camp, where sick inmates with no hope of recovery were gathered since January-February 1944.⁹²

According to Dworzecki, the following jobs were carried out at Ereda:⁹³

The inmates of Upper-Ereda were constructing the narrow-gauge railway, building roads for the mines, and barracks. The construction works were organised by the company “Robert Bekker”, as well as “Han”. The inmates also participated in the building of a pumping station on the coast of the Gulf of Finland. Later on, also the “not kosher” (here meaning unfit for work) female inmates from Alam-Ereda were set to work. Those remaining fit for work were

82 Sipo B III Daily report, 21.08.1944. ERA R 64-1-16. P. 35.

83 Malcher, Rita. Stutthof. Das Konzentrationslager. Gdansk 1996. P. 309.

84 Belegschaftsstärkemeldung. Stand vom 10.9.1944. Org. Todt Oberbauleitung Baltöl. ERA R 187-1-24. P. 74.

85 M. Dworzecki. Op. cit. P. 103.

86 Zakerman’s testimony. ERAF 133-1-10. P. 134.

87 Ibid. P. 133.

88 Also August Zakerman’s testimony confirms that there were 2,000 prisoners at Ereda (ERAF 133-1-10. P. 134). Although there was also movement of prisoners, there were nearly 2,000 prisoners at Ereda again by July 1944, as according to the documents, 1,960 Jews were evacuated from Ereda. (ERA R 187-1-30. Pp. 13, 14).

89 Zakerman’s testimony. ERAF 133-1-10. P. 134.

90 Ibid.

91 L. Pfiibyl. Op. cit. P. 197.

92 Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsberichte 26.1.1944–20.2.1944. Op. cit. Pp. 43–59.

93 Dworzecki. Op. cit. Pp. 187, 188.

dispatched to logging. The women worked in the building group erecting barracks for the Germans. Allegedly, only the Ereda inmates were involved in the production of synthetic fuel. The distances between working sites and the camp were quite long for walking back and forth. For instance, the inmates had to walk 10 kilometres to Kohtla-Järve from the Ereda camp every day.

About 50 people worked as locksmiths and mechanics at Kohtla, and fulfilled auxiliary tasks in producing equipment. The inmates also dismantled the equipment and machinery brought from the Russian factory near Pskov. The equipment was repaired and reassembled to be taken to Germany. In the railway workshop near Ereda, the company “Han” was in charge of organising the work.

About 400 people worked in one of the mines, some also worked in another. The inmates also worked on the building of Ereda-Kohtla road, in the sawmill, in the sewing workshop, as carpenters, cleaned the apartments of the SS-men, built barracks and houses, and loaded the wagons at Kohtla.

The female inmates from Tallinn prison (female inmates from Jägala) had to log trees in the forest, to transport them, to build barracks, to do plumbing work, to load the wagons and to work in oil shale production. The camp administration and guards were slightly more favourably disposed towards the Czechoslovakian Jewish women who reached Ereda via the Jägala camp and Tallinn prison. They had, until then, been kept in considerably better conditions than those at Ereda. They were in better physical condition, and therefore more fit for work; they wore neat clothes and were better educated. The camp commandant Drohsin’s love affair with the Czechoslovakian Jew Inge Syltenová played an important role, and her mediation resulted in certain concessions for the inmates. The commandant fled the camp at the beginning of 1944, when his illicit affair came to light. Syltenová followed after him in a few days, escaping through a tunnel dug by her fellow inmates. They planned to escape together to Scandinavia. At the end of February or in March the apprehended fugitives committed suicide. The incident was followed by a wave of terror in the camp, under the command of Erich Scharfetter. Helmut Schnabel was shortly appointed the new commandant.⁹⁴

According to Gordon’s statement, an echelon of sick Jews (about 500 people) was sent to Riga from Ereda in March 1944. (He probably means the dis-

patch that took place in April, see earlier). Those staying at Ereda thought that the others had been taken to execution. Gordon spoke of two echelons. According to Abram Grein’s testimony, three echelons of sick Jews, 1,500 people all in all, had been sent “ostensibly” to Riga.⁹⁵ Whether and how many were actually sent there remains unclear from the testimonies of witnesses.

On 19 July 1944, there are 1,132 Jews at Ereda according to the records of the *Baltöl* building department.⁹⁶ The dispatching of 5,000 Germans and POWs from the building department to the fortification works was discussed. It was concluded that at Kiviõli and Jõhvi, the continuation of construction works would be possible at a slow pace, but that the construction works at Ereda and Kohtla-Järve would have to be discontinued.

The Ereda camp was liquidated on 28 July 1944.⁹⁷ 1,960 Jews were evacuated from Ereda, but remained at the Lagedi camp at first. But according to the testimony of A. Zakerman, the inmates were brought back to the camp one week before the end of July and placed in one of the barracks.

According to A. Zakerman, the shootings started on a Saturday evening, he did not remember the date. In groups consisting of 10–15 people, the inmates were taken to a site 80–100 metres from the fence and shot there. Shots could be heard until Monday. Trucks were constantly bringing more people. At the time of the shots black smoke could be seen and people could smell the burning of flesh.

Immediately after the Red Army’s arrival at Ereda a joint camp inspection report was drawn up by the local inhabitants and the Red Army on 20 September, in which the dates of the executions were marked as 3–5 September 1944.⁹⁸

The Soviet extraordinary commission described five places where human remains had been found:

1. 50 metres from the camp there was a grave, 50 metres long, 2–3 metres wide, where buried remains of burnt bodies were discovered. The examination of the mass found in the grave revealed fragments of human skulls, vertebrae and pelvic bones.
2. 100 metres from the camp there is a grave, length 12 m, width 2–3 m, where there are also traces of burnt bodies.
3. 150 metres to the north-east from the camp there is a burnt site of 5 x 2 metres, where fragments of

⁹⁴ L. Pfiibyl. Op. cit. Pp. 198–200; Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsbericht. 25.3.1944 Op. cit. P. 61.

⁹⁵ Grein’s testimony. ERAF 133-1-10. P. 134.

⁹⁶ Abstellung von 5000 Arbeitskräften aus dem OT-Baltöleinsatz für den Stellungsbau. 19.7.1944. ERA R 187-1-24. P. 41.

⁹⁷ Gordon’s testimony. ERA 4215-1-1.

⁹⁸ Ereda camp and execution sites inspection report. Copy. 20 September 1944. ERAF 133-1-10. P. 134.

burnt human skulls, vertebrae, and hip bones were discovered in a layer 10 cm thick.

4. 200 m from the camp there is a burnt area of 1 metre in diameter, where there are remains of charcoal, and burnt bones; the deposited layer is about 8 cm thick.
5. Also 200 m from the camp, there is a burnt spot with a diameter of 1.75 x 2 metres, with 2 metre long and 25 cm thick logs on the northern and western sides. There are logs, also 2 m long and 25cm in diameter, placed in the north-south direction, with their upper ends about 50 cm from the earth. In the area between the logs there is a layer of ash about 15 cm thick, containing human bones. When examining the remains of the bones, human skulls, ribs, vertebrae and pelvic bones were discovered.

The path leading to the scorched sites is about 200 m long and 75 centimetres broad. It has no cover, but the earth has been trodden, which shows that many people have walked there. All this ends about 5 cm from the last burnt site. Farther off, the path had overgrown with grass. This shows the end of the intensive human traffic.

In the report about Ereda, Major Aavik, assistant to the Head of Department of the NKVD (People's Commissariat of the Internal Affairs) of the ESSR, wrote on 12 October 1944: "The official records of the Germans indicate that, in July 1944, there were 1,497 people detained in the Vaivara camp. According to witness statements, the number of inmates in the camp was about 2,500. Thus, the Germans exterminated about 2,000 people at Ereda."⁹⁹

This statement disregards the fact that the Ereda camp was evacuated already in July, and people from other camps were brought there in trucks for execution. The exact number of victims is not known.

LAGEDI

After the evacuation of the Jews on 19 August from Lagedi to Stutthof, 500 Jews (250 men and 250 women) were dispatched to Lagedi from the Klooga camp on 22 August 1944. The new inmates were set to work to build bunkers and trenches for the defence of Tallinn. Until the arrival of the 500 Jews from Klooga, there had been 20 inmates in the Lagedi camp.¹⁰⁰

At Lagedi, the next alleged evacuation to Germany started on 18 September 1944. The evacuation of Tallinn began on the same day. The inmates were removed from the camp in trucks, 50 people at a time. Simanovitch, who had been in the third truck, said in his statement that he had been in the third truck that took the inmates into the woods, 7–8 kilometres away, where they were shot. New victims were ordered to lie down on the dead bodies of the previous victims. Simanovitch got a bullet in the back of his head, but survived.

The last group of inmates, consisting of 34 men, was driven to Tallinn in the evening of September 18; on their way, they passed a truck where there were 40 women. In Tallinn, the inmates heard their convoy being told that "it was already too late" [to shoot them]. Thus, at first, 74 people escaped shooting, also the figure 76 has been mentioned.¹⁰¹ According to Dworzecki 426 people¹⁰² were executed at Lagedi. No documented evidence of the number of victims executed at Lagedi, nor of the location of the executions has been found by investigators.

They spent the night in prison. Early next morning, the Jews were taken to Klooga, allegedly accompanied by 20 armed Germans from the SS.¹⁰³ The Jews reached the camp at 9 o'clock in the morning, but had to wait one and a half hours at the gate before they were let in.

KLOOGA

FOUNDING OF THE KLOOGA CONCENTRATION CAMP

It is claimed in the KGB files, that, in summer 1942, the Germans organised the "A.I.K." and OT camps at Klooga, where initially about 100 Soviet POWs were detained and used for building works. The camp had been guarded by the local *Omakaitse*.¹⁰⁴

Initially there were plans to house 2,000 inmates in the Klooga camp by 1 October 1943. On 25 October 1943 there were 1,453 Jews at Klooga.¹⁰⁵ According to a survivor, 750 people arrived at Klooga on 29 September 1943; before, there had already been 500 Jews,¹⁰⁶ or 650 Jews, according to another source – 600 women and 50 men, who had been brought in on 8 September 1943. After some time, another 500 women arrived from Kaunas.¹⁰⁷

⁹⁹ The report on the investigation of the atrocities committed by the German occupants in the Ereda camp, Major Aavik, assistant to the Head of Department of the NKVD of the ESSR. 12 October 1944. ERAF 133-1-10. P. 134.

¹⁰⁰ Simanovitch's testimony ERA, 4215-1-1.

¹⁰¹ Rabinovitch's testimony. ERA, 4215-1-1.

¹⁰² L. Pfiibyl. Op. cit. P.209 (Dworzecki, Machanot haJehudim beEstonia. Pp. 330–337).

¹⁰³ Bolberitski's and Opalik's testimonies. ERA, 4215-1-1.

¹⁰⁴ Summary of the events in the Klooga camp based on the documents of the ESSR Extraordinary Commission. ERAF 133-1-1. P. 23.

¹⁰⁵ Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Aufgabegebiet 25.9.1943, Monatsbericht 25.10.1943. Op. cit. Pp. 1, 7.

¹⁰⁶ Testimony of Abram Vainik. ERA 4215-1-1.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. Bolberitski's testimony.

According to the testimony of Rosa Zalkind, Klooga had been пустынное закропненное место – an empty waste land – before the arrival of the Jews. Allegedly, some dozens of Estonian criminal inmates had been kept in the camp before the arrival of the Jews; thereafter they became the guards of the Jews, although still remaining inmates themselves.¹⁰⁸

According to a survivor, in winter 1943/1944, Russians and Finns [so-called Ingrians] evacuated from the Leningrad oblast were brought to Klooga in addition to the Jews. The general orders for the evacuation of the civilians residing in Ingria and in the districts on the other side of Lake Peipsi were given by the Commander-in-Chief of the Army Group “Nord”, General Field Marshal Ferdinand Schörner. The orders to start evacuation in the regions adjacent to Estonia were issued by Lieutenant General Erich Hofmann, Commander of the 207th Security Division, on 23 September 1943. The evacuation had a code name “Roboter”. The aim of the evacuation was to evacuate all civilian population from the territory remaining between the then frontline and the Narva River – Lake Peipsi line. The evacuated Russians and Ingrian Finns were brought to Estonia. The evacuees were not inmates like the Jews, but lived in the camp of war refugees and worked at the Klooga concentration camp.¹⁰⁹

In addition to Klooga, there were camps for war refugees at Põllküla and Paldiski; in Paldiski, there was also a quarantine for war refugees. The concentration camp was meant only for Jews.¹¹⁰ On 12 May 1944, 150 Jews from Kiviõli were sent to Klooga, where there were already 2,000 Jews (1,200 men and 800 women) by that time.¹¹¹ The number of Jews at the Klooga camp from November 1943 to June 1944 remained between 1,800 and 2,100 (see table 2).

WORK AT THE KLOOGA CONCENTRATION CAMP

The inmates themselves lived in stone houses with running water. Men and women were housed in separate blocks. Bodman considered the living conditions of the inmates at Klooga to be the highest of all the labour camps. As an exception, Klooga was not supplied by the Army Food Supply Administration (*Heeres-Verpflegungsamt*), but via the *Waffen-SS* Army Supply Depots (*Truppenwirt-*

schaftslager, TWL). Obtaining the necessary equipment for inmates via the latter was not a problem, and Bodman rated the care of inmates as “very good”. The weekly bread ration for inmates was 2450 grams (350g/day). The army supply corps on the other hand initially consented to supply a weekly ration of only 1700 grams. The inmates were used for building barracks and the production of concrete submarine signal mines.¹¹² The production of signal mines was supervised by the OT official Steinberger.¹¹³

The inmates were divided into groups according to their work. In September 1944, all the inmates were accommodated into one block, the so-called women’s block. Women lived on the ground floor, men on the first floor and in the attic.

According to a survivor, the day started at five, when all the inmates were lined up on the square in front of the women’s block. Banging of the iron rail hung on the door of the block served as a signal. The breakfast consisted of black coffee, during the day the inmates got 350 grams of bread and some German margarine; for lunch they had one litre of groat soup; once a week they were given 25 grams of sugar or German marmalade. As the surviving inmates said, malnutrition caused swelling and diseases.

The working day started at 6 in the morning and lasted until 6 in the evening with one hour (from noon till 1 p.m.) for lunch. The Jews were distributed into groups consisting of 100 people, and each group had a brigadier appointed by the Germans. From July 1944, also the OT and the Estonian company “A.I.K.” used the labour force of the camp.¹¹⁴ The work was supervised by civilian supervisors, among whom there were also Estonians and women.

In addition to Jews, Estonians dispatched by the *Arbeitsamt* also went to work at Klooga.¹¹⁵ After the camp had been fenced with barbed wire, the sawmill that had functioned at Klooga also appeared to be on the camp territory. The sawmill belonged to the joint stock company A.I.K. Part of the contractors employing the inmates lived in a barrack outside the camp,¹¹⁶ part of them arrived daily from Tallinn by train. In June 1944, the joint stock company A.I.K. submitted applications to the regional commander of Klooga to get permits for traffic between Tallinn and Põllküla to 16 people: “I hereby enclose the list of

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Bolberitski’s and Berskind’s testimony. ERA 4215-1-1.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. Ratner’s testimony.

¹¹¹ Ibid. Slotskin’s testimony.

¹¹² Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsbericht. 25.10.1943. Op. cit. Pp. 3–12.

¹¹³ Bolberitski’s testimony. ERA 4215-1-1.

¹¹⁴ Ibid. Rosa Zalkind’s testimony.

¹¹⁵ Albert Väljak from the Lagedi estate.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. Trillo’s testimony.

our workers who have been obligated to work at the Klooga lumber industry every day until they get different orders. As we work in three shifts and the workers' permanent residence is in Tallinn, we request you to issue us the relevant permits to board each passenger train moving between Tallinn and Põllküla. The named officials do not have provision cards, as their meals are supplied by *Kriegsmarine*. Signed on behalf of the director of the industry, Mänd, executive of the office."¹¹⁷

MANAGEMENT OF THE KLOOGA CAMP

The size of the camp administration and the division of duties depended on the number of SS members, which was subject to change. The camp commandant had two deputies – one for economic affairs, and another for hygiene. In addition there were 2–3 SS members as supervisors (*Aufseher*); at Klooga there were 3 women supervisors.¹¹⁸ In April 1944, the camp commandant was Bock, at the end of August, Werle (sometimes Verlee) was appointed the camp commandant.¹¹⁹ Assistants in hygiene matters in May 1944 was *SS-Unterscharführers* Karl Theiner and Wilhelm Bahr.¹²⁰ According to the testimony of Lazar Buzhaiski, the commandants of other, liquidated, camps also arrived at Klooga in September 1944.

HEALTHCARE

Separate dispensaries for the men's and women's camps were set up. One heated room was set aside for inpatients. Two women and one male doctor from among the inmates worked in the women's dispensary. The number of inmates working as nurses was changed as required, since there were sufficient numbers of suitable candidates among the Jewish inmates. Jews worked at the hospital under the supervision of Dr. Pomerants; Buzhaiski and Salkinson worked as physicians in the hospital and in the ambulance. The hospital was (at least during the last period of the camp's existence) on the second floor of the men's block. To be hospitalised, the inmates had to have a temperature over 38sC, or according to some, even 40sC.¹²¹

LIQUIDATION OF THE CAMP ON 19 SEPTEMBER 1944

The Commander-in-Chief of the Army Detachment "Narwa" already gave the order to begin pulling the German armed forces out of

Estonia on 17 September. On 18 September the evacuation from Klooga to Tallinn, 40 km to the east, had begun and was completed by the morning of 22 September, after which Red Army units arrived in the town. In the morning of 19 September 1944, all the inmates, about 1,500 people, were lined up on the roll-calling square in front of the women's block as usual. The camp commandant *SS-Untersturmführer* Werle announced that they would be evacuated to Germany.

After two hours, the camp commandant's assistant *SS-Unterscharführer* Schwarze and the office manager *SS-Hauptscharführer* Max Dalman selected 300 physically stronger men ostensibly to prepare for the evacuation. In fact, the men were used for carrying logs from the camp territory to an opening in the woods, which was about one kilometre away from the north side of the camp. Allegedly, 700 Estonians arrested for avoiding mobilisation were ordered to assist the 300 Jews,¹²² but no proof has been found to corroborate this statement.

One day before the shootings, NCO Raudsepp, the commander of the guard team of the 3rd platoon of the 3rd company of the 287th battalion, took over the 24-hour shift without receiving any specific or extraordinary orders. According to Raudsepp, he posted the guards as usual. On 19 September, at noon, when the inmates had been standing at the roll-calling square from the morning, Aleksander Kask, assistant to the commander of the 2nd platoon took over the shift and the guarding was taken over by the 2nd platoon. Platoon commander Elmar Kuklane ordered Kask to put out additional guards to the places where attempted escape would be more probable, and a machine gun was set up in the neighbourhood of the inmates' barrack.¹²³ On the orders of company commander Alfred Hendrikson, part of the 3rd platoon had to stay on duty to reinforce the guard; at the same time, he is reported to have ordered the free shift not to leave the barracks.¹²⁴

At lunchtime, the inmates sitting on the square were given soup, and a very good soup at that, as Bolberitski has testified. The camp commander Werle also asked the cooks to leave soup for those 300 that had been taken to the woods. Yet this did not extinguish the panic and distress of the people on the square, so that the inmates had to be lined up and left standing in line. The inmates had not failed to notice

¹¹⁷ Materials of the ESSR Extraordinary Commission. ERA 4215-1-17a. Part I.

¹¹⁸ Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsberichte. Op. cit.

¹¹⁹ Lazar Buzhaiski's testimony. ERA 4215-1-1.

¹²⁰ Der SS Lagerarzt K.L. Waiwara an das SS-WVHA. Monatsbericht. 26.05.1944. AM D 152-2-40. P. 90.

¹²¹ Bolberitski's testimony. ERA 4215-1-1.

¹²² Summary of the events in the Klooga camp based on the EEC documents ERAF 133-1-1. P. 26.

¹²³ MGB interrogation protocol of Aleksander Kask. 21 March 1951. ERAF 129-26210-1. P. 212.

¹²⁴ Ibid. Pp. 104–106.



Jews killed on 19 September 1944 at Klooga (Estonian Film Archives)

the camp gates that had been blocked by trucks, and the omnipresent convoys.¹²⁵ About 4 o'clock in the afternoon, 6 strong men were called out to load 2 barrels of petrol or diesel fuel on a truck; probably that was meant for immersing the bodies later on.¹²⁶

After the first shooting, Schwarze, who is reported to have been in charge of the shootings, came for the next victims.¹²⁷ At about five p.m., they started to take people into the forest in groups of 50–100. The people to be shot were escorted into the forest by a reinforced convoy.¹²⁸

It remains unclear who commanded the commando of executors that had arrived on a truck. The special commandos of the SS and the SD have both been mentioned. Allegedly, the Germans drove away immediately after the shootings were over.

The victims were ordered to lie down face down on the pyre and then killed with a shot in the back of the head. The bodies were in a long, tight row all along the pyre. When all the length of the pyre had been filled with bodies, a 0.75 m layer of logs was placed on top of them, making a new surface; altogether there were three or four layers. Of the pyres thus built, the fourth one remained unused. First, men were shot, and then women.¹²⁹

The Soviet extraordinary commission that surveyed the execution site gives the following description of the main site of the killings in its records: The execution site was situated 0.7 kilometres north of the concentration camp, on the other side of the railway. The pyres had been built to destroy the bodies, they were at a distance of 3.5 to 4 metres from each other, and 27 metres from the forest path.



Memorial at Klooga to Jews killed in Estonia from 1941–1944. Photographed by Silja Kõnsa 1997 (Estonian National Heritage Board Archives)

The pyre: logs had been sparsely placed on the ground, and there were planks across the logs. On top of the planks, there were fir and pine logs, 75 cm long. In the middle of the pyre there were 4 vertical planks in 4 directions, fixed with sparse pieces of wood. This was obviously meant to be a draught chimney for the pyre, the area of which, at the base, was 6x6,5 metres. Around the pyres, 5–200 metres away, there were 18 scattered male corpses. They had bullet wounds in the back – obviously shot while attempting to escape. Their names were identified by their numbers.¹³⁰

In the meantime, Schwartz called out 42 men who were to be driven off with him. These were the camp personnel – hairdressers, cooks, shoemakers, etc. Those 42 people were reportedly shot on the ground floor of the women's block.¹³¹ All in all, the extraordinary commission discovered 79 bodies in the narrow passage between the bunks: there were

¹²⁵ Bolberitski's testimony. ERA 4215-1-1.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid. Buzhaiski's testimony.

¹²⁸ Ibid. Opalik's and Bolberitski's testimony.

¹²⁹ Summary of the events in the Klooga camp based on the EEC documents. ERAF 133-1-1. Pp. 26, 27.

¹³⁰ Materials of the ESSR Extraordinary Commission. ERA 4215-1-17a. Part I.

¹³¹ Bolberitski's testimony. ERA 4215-1-1.

64 men, 14 women and one baby of the age of 3 months. The bodies were stacked tightly like roof tiles, in twos or threes.

The second execution site was situated a couple of hundred metres from the centre of the concentration camp. The foundation of a burnt house with two chimneys was discovered near the forest ditch. On the corner of the foundation there was a date carved in a stone: 21 July 1944 (the house had still been under construction). In the ashes containing a lot of different human bones and half-burnt parts of the body, the commission separated 133 charred corpses, while admitting that some of the bodies had burned to ashes.

The glow of the pyres had been visible from the forest at about 8 p.m. About 40–50 people managed to conceal themselves on the attic of the men's block; according to other data, there were 80 of them;¹³² some of them stayed there for 5 days and nights before they dared to come out. The more courageous ones slipped out at night and looked for the bread that the executed people had left on the square, and brought water.¹³³

WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE EXECUTIONS?

The most widespread opinion is that the inmates were executed by the team brought to the site in a truck; but also the team of Estonian guards and the members of the 20th reserve and training regiment of the Waffen-SS Estonian units have been suspected. Ahlemann prepared a unit consisting of 60–70 members of the Estonian Waffen-SS, and some German NCOs to guard the inmates and surround the camp. In the afternoon of the execution day, Ahlemann was in the camp.¹³⁴ In later interrogations, Ahlemann denied his presence in the camp and any participation in the executions.¹³⁵ Jewish victims testified about the arrival of a special unit from Tallinn and also confirmed the participation of Estonian Waffen-SS personnel in encirclement of the camp.¹³⁶

Arved Viirlaid, who underwent additional training in the 20th Waffen-SS Estonian reserve and training regiment as an ensign of the former Estonian regiment of the Finnish Army JR 200, denied all accusations of Estonian Waffen-SS men having participated in the shootings.¹³⁷

In his interrogations, Kask, who was in command of the guards during the shootings, did not exclude the possibility that part of the guards had participated in the shootings themselves.¹³⁸ Alfred Käit, who had been guarding the camp with the 2nd platoon all day, claimed that the Jews had been taken to the execution site by German soldiers; Käit did not see who performed the executions.¹³⁹ Raudsepp, the commander of the off-duty platoon, claimed that his men had been told to sit in the barracks and not to come outside, and followed these orders.

On 9–11 July 1951 the War Tribunal of the Leningrad Military District tried in Tallinn eleven members of the 3rd company of the 287th battalion. All 11 had been arrested in Tallinn between December 1950 and April 1951. 10 of them were sentenced to imprisonment in camps for 25 years. Those who had been present at Klooga on 19 September were also accused of the mass murder of Soviet citizens.¹⁴⁰

About 2 or 3 a.m., the commander of the 3rd company of the 287th battalion Hendrikson gave orders to release the men guarding the camp.¹⁴¹ The last men of the team of guards (about 50 people) left the camp in the morning of 20 September 1944; the rest had left during the night. According to Käit's testimony, the guards were informed in the early hours of 20 September that they would be evacuated to Germany, whereafter he, unwilling to continue his service in the German Army, escaped with a group of other guards to Kose.¹⁴² About 50 men, who stayed until morning, were taken to the Järve railway station on a train and released to their homes.¹⁴³ The first Red Army troops presumably arrived at Klooga on 22 September.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Ibid. Rosa Zalkind's testimony.

¹³⁴ The indictment against the chief of SS-Ausbildungs- und Ersatzeinheiten 20 (estn. Nr. 1) Georg Ahlemann (b. 1911). The unit was posted to Klooga by Prosecutor's Office of Kolen, 130 (24) Js 14/70 (Z), 9 July 1974. The copy is in the *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen* in Ludwigsburg (hereinafter ZStL), 408 AR-Z 233/59, Vol. 29, pp. 5618–5638. The case never reached the court as it was claimed that Ahlemann would not survive the trial.

¹³⁵ Vernehmungsniederschrift, Ahlemann, Georg. *Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen*, 14.7.1966. ZStL 408 AR-Z 233/59, Vol. 17, pp. 2937–2947.

¹³⁶ Aussagen: Genia Burg, Zwi (Hirsch) Abelewicz, Josef Rabinowitz, Benjamin Anolik, Mina Ilem, Abram Wapnik. *Ermittlungsverfahren gegen Georg Ahlemann*. Tel Aviv, 12. – 26.5.1970. ZStL 408 AR-Z 233/59, Vol. 1, pp. 68–77.

¹³⁷ See: Viirlaid, Arved. *Paluu juutalaisten murhapaikalle Virossa (Back to the Place of Murder of Jews in Estonia)*. Helsingin Sanomat. 29 November 1998.

¹³⁸ MGB interrogation protocol of Aleksander Kask. Op. cit. P. 212.

¹³⁹ Ibid. P. 258.

¹⁴⁰ Alfred Käit's NKGB investigation file. ERAF 129-16210 (see supervision file).

¹⁴¹ MGB interrogation protocol of Aleksander Kask. Op. cit. P. 214.

¹⁴² Ibid. Pp. 258–259.

¹⁴³ Ibid. P. 105.

Table 3. The termination of the Vaivara network camps from July to September 1944

26 June	6662	The number of Jews in the Vaivara network concentration camps
9 August	ca 1000	Evacuated to Stutthof Concentration Camp
19 August	2,079 (?)	Evacuated to Stutthof Concentration Camp
9 September	?	The execution of Jews at Ereda
18 September	426	According to Dworzecki, Jews executed at Lagedi
19 September	ca 1800	Jews executed at Klooga

DIFFERENT ESTIMATES OF THE NUMBER OF VICTIMS

Buzhaiski, a physician who escaped from the Klooga prison, estimated the number of executed Jews to have been about 1,500; according to Frieda Schapiro, it was between 1,500 and 1,700. The Soviet extraordinary commission managed to discover the remains of 491 people from all the execution sites; of those, the bodies of 153 men, 31 women and 1 baby were identified. The committee admitted that the medical survey could not establish the actual number of the executed, as some of the bodies had been burned to ashes. The extraordinary committee established that considering the results of the investigation, the number of the executed could have been between 1,800 and 2,000.

If there had been 2,300 Jews at Klooga before 500 Jews were sent to Lagedi,¹⁴⁴ and the number of those who returned from Klooga was about the same as the number of those who ultimately escaped execution,¹⁴⁵ 1,800 seems to be quite probable as the number of victims. The shooting of 73 Estonians and Russians who were brought from Tallinn Central Prison has also been mentioned,¹⁴⁶ but no documentary proof of this has been identified. It is possible that such a version was generated by the Jews brought back from the Lagedi camp.

SUMMARY

The Vaivara camp network was part of Germany's concentration camp network. In Germany and the occupied territories there were ca 20 such camp networks in all. The main camp (*Stammlager*), which housed the commandant's headquarters, supported a number of branch detachments and labour camps of different sizes that operated for different periods of time. The camp administration, about 40–50 SS members and SS-followers, were dispatched to Estonia from other already operating concentration camps. The commandant of the Vaivara network, Aumeier, and the camp doctor, Bodman, had earlier served in Dachau, Buchenwald, Auschwitz, Majdanek and Natzweiler concentration camps. The personnel at Vaivara also rotated to other camps and vice versa.

The original documents (transport lists) needed to ascertain the number of Jews brought to the Vaivara camp are missing. According to the available data, around 10,000 Jews were brought to the Vaivara camp. Written sources and the testimonies of survivors agree that no mass exterminations of Jews took place in the Vaivara camp network until the beginning of the evacuations in July 1944. Inmates were kept alive and received healthcare due to the acute shortage of labour. Due to the frequent dispatch of inmates who were unfit for work to camps outside Estonia, the mortality rate due to sickness and exhaustion in the camps remained below 15%. According to Bodman's reports 1,513 inmates died in the Vaivara camp network between October 1943 and 26 June 1944. The reports probably do not include those who died during the evacuations.

From July 1944 the situation changed. When the Red Army advanced into Estonia, inmates working in areas of strategic military importance were kept working until the last moment. With the rapid advance of the front, transport could not be arranged for the evacuation of all the inmates, and the execution of Jews on the spot was begun. As far as possible the bodies of those executed earlier (Tartu and Jägala camps) as well as those being executed at the time (at Ereda and Klooga) were burnt on pyres, which has made it impossible to determine the number of victims.

¹⁴⁴ Senior Assistant Krimm to the Leader of the B-Group of the Security Police and SD in Estonia. Report. 29.7.1944. ERA R 64-1-197. P. 346.

¹⁴⁵ Materials of the ESSR Extraordinary Commission. ERA 4215-1-1.

¹⁴⁶ Summary of the events in the Klooga camp based on the EEC documents. ERAF 133-1-1. P. 27.