

**Arūnas Bubnys**

### **Lithuanian Jews in Klooga 1943-1944**

Before the Second World War, Vilnius was one of the most important European centres of Jewish culture, science, education and rabbinical learning. In the wake of the Nazi-Soviet war, the Jewish population of Vilnius was about 58,000. Only a few thousand Jews survived the war and the end of the Nazi occupation. The tragic loss of the “Jerusalem of Lithuania” continues to be of concern to the international and Lithuanian historians and the world at large. This period in the history of Vilnius Jews has been quite extensively covered by the world historiography and memorial-type literature. The majority of publications on the genocide of Vilnius Jews appeared in Israel and the U.S. Recently, Holocaust studies have gathered momentum in Lithuania too and the works of researchers of the Vilna Gaon Jewish State Museum must first of all be mentioned in this respect.

Vilnius Jewish community was one of the oldest and the largest in Lithuania. An official general population census was held in 1931 in Vilnius. According to the census, the population of Vilnius was 195,100, of which Jews accounted for 54,600. According to the data of 1 January 1941 of the Statistics Department, 58,263 Jews (27.78% of the urban population) lived in Vilnius.

Persecution of Jews in Vilnius began in the first days of the Nazi occupation. The majority of Jews did not suspect that worse awaited them in the near future and that only a very small number of Jews would survive the horrific years of the Nazi occupation.

The history of Vilnius Jewish community and the ghetto during the Nazi occupation can be divided into several periods: 1) discrimination against Jews and the killing of Jews prior to the establishment of the ghetto (24 June–August 1941); 2) establishment of the ghettos (No. 1 and No. 2) and mass massacres (September–November 1941); 3) stabilisation period (December 1941–March 1943), 4) liquidation of small ghettos, labour camps and the Vilnius Ghetto (April–September 1943); and 5) imprisonment of the rest of the residents of the Vilnius Ghetto in Estonian concentration camps and Vilnius labour camps (October 1943–September 1944).

The Vilnius Ghetto was the largest ghetto in Lithuania in terms of population. Comparing the history of the Vilnius Ghetto and the history of Kaunas and Šiauliai ghettos, some differences should be noted. The Vilnius Ghetto existed for a shorter period than the ghettos in Kaunas and Šiauliai – just two years (from 6 September 1941 to 23 September 1943), while Kaunas and Šiauliai ghettos – nearly three

years (from mid-August 1941 to mid-July 1944). The ghettos in Kaunas and Šiauliai were liquidated at the end of the Nazi occupation, while the Vilnius Ghetto – in September 1943. Early liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto was probably caused by the strengthening Soviet partisan movement in the region. From the point of view of the German Security Police, the Vilnius Ghetto was a potential source of danger, because young Jews fleeing from the ghetto in relatively large numbers supplemented partisan units operating in the environs of Vilnius. As a result, the occupation authorities decided not to convert the Vilnius Ghetto into an SS concentration camp, as they did in the Kaunas and Šiauliai ghettos, but to liquidate it without delay. Another specific feature of the history of the Vilnius Ghetto is the particularly active cultural life of the ghetto. In the tradition of the “Jerusalem of Lithuania”, prisoners of the Vilnius Ghetto did not stop being interested in the arts, science, literature, and self-education and took care of their spiritual development even in the face of death.

### **Liquidation of the Ghetto**

The period of stabilisation or peaceful period of the Vilnius Ghetto ended in April 1943. Pursuant to the order of Vilnius Regional Commissioner, in March 1943, some of the Jews (about 3,000) from the towns of Švenčionys, Ašmena and other parts of eastern Lithuania were transferred to the Vilnius Ghetto.

In summer 1943, it became the turn of the labour camps of the Vilna Ghetto to be liquidated. On 21 June 1943, Himmler ordered the liquidation of all ghettos in the territory of Ostland and the transfer of employable Jews to SS-controlled concentration camps.

Gradual liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto began in August 1943. In early August, the Gestapo leadership informed the Vilnius Ghetto administration that prisoners of the Vilnius Ghetto would be moved to Estonia and Latvia. In addition, they demanded that Jews voluntarily register to leave to work in Estonia and Latvia and threatened that otherwise the Gestapo would be forced to resort to terror actions. Having learned from bitter experience, the Jews refused to register. On 5 August, Kittel demanded that 2,000 people be assembled for deportation. The Gestapo did not expect to detain such a number of people quickly, so they used treachery: they arrested Jews going to work (to Kirtimai airfield, railway works, etc.). Several hundred Estonian policemen were sent to Vilnius to capture Jews. Jews who were trying to flee were shot. As a result, around 20–50 Jews were shot. Detained Jews were kept in warehouses near the railway station and then put into boxcars. On 6 August 1943, they were taken for work via Riga to Vaivara and other labour camps in Estonia. The total number of people deported was

1,000–1,200. Soon the deportees sent dozen of letters to the Vilnius Ghetto saying that they were alive and living in large barracks by the sea. These letters at least appeased residents of the ghetto. Jews understood that the tragedy of 5 April 1943 had not been repeated this time.

September 1943 was the last and perhaps the most tragic period in the history of the Vilnius Ghetto. On 1–4 September, one more action of deportation to Estonian camps was carried out. On 1 September, at around 5 a.m. Gestapo men and Estonian policemen stormed into the ghetto. They demanded 1,000 healthy men. Since after two hours, the required number of people was not collected, a manhunt started. With the help of the ghetto policemen, soldiers and Estonian policemen searched homes and apartments arresting people they found and exploding ghetto hiding places (*malinas*). Dozens of people were killed under the rubble. The ghetto was like a battlefield. In several places (M. Strašūno and Ašmenos streets) members of the ghetto underground displayed armed resistance against the raging Gestapo soldiers and policemen. The horrendous action lasted four days. Around 500 Jews were killed (the majority under the ruins of buildings). Groups of detainees were transported in trucks to the railway station and put into boxcars. Then the boxcars were wrapped in wires and sealed. When one train was formed, another train was started. During the action of 1–4 September 1943, 7,000–8,000 Jews were deported and around 10,000–12,000 remained in the ghetto. On 5 September, the ghetto was declared a closed zone, so no one without a special permit could either enter or leave. Food prices rose to an unprecedented level and the connection of the ghetto with the outside world ceased. The surviving ghetto residents walked in the ghetto with hunger and fear etched on their faces.

On 14 September 1943, the Representative of the ghetto, Gens, was called to the Gestapo and killed. Gestapo officials Neugebauer and Weiss spread the rumour that allegedly Gens was in contact with the partisans. The mood of ghetto residents further deteriorated. Everybody understood that a rapid death was inevitable. Even Gens' strategy of maneuvering and appeasement failed: when he was no longer needed, the Gestapo had no scruples in shooting him. After Gens' death, the ghetto administration essentially fell apart. Ghetto residents hid in malinas and the younger ones tried to flee from the ghetto in underground sewer and water pipes.

On 23 September 1943, the final liquidation of the Vilnius Ghetto began. On the evening before, Bruno Kittel told ghetto residents about the “evacuation” of the ghetto that would start on the following day: Jews would be transferred to Estonian labour camps. Those who tried to hide would be shot and the ghetto buildings would be blown up. On 23 September, at 11:30 p.m., the Gestapo and Latvian and Ukrainian soldiers surrounded the ghetto. Jews were taken in groups through the gates of the ghetto to Rasų Street. In Subačiaus Street men were separated from the women and children and sent to the

collection point. They were put in boxcars there and transported to camps in Estonia. Women with children were taken to the yard of the Labour Exchange and the adjacent Missionary Church. They were kept there in the open air in the rain for two days. On 25 September, another selection was organised: younger women of working age were separated to the right and older women, old people and children without parents – to the left. Then all of them were taken to Rasu Street and put into boxcars. Most of the detainees, women and children (about 5,000–7,000) were deported to Nazi concentration camps in Poland (Auschwitz, Treblinka, etc.). Several hundred elderly and sick people were shot in Paneriai. Around 1,600–2,000 men were transported to camps in Estonia and 1,400–1,700 young women – to Kaizervald concentration camp near Riga.

On 28<sup>th</sup> October, 1943, the Germans carried out the deportation from the Kaunas ghetto to the Estonians camps<sup>1</sup>.

The report of 11 November 1943 of the German Security Police and SD Vilnius division says that 24,108 Jews were imprisoned in the ghettos in Vilnius region and concentration camps. Up to the date of the report, 8,019 Jews had been killed, 14,000 deported for labour to Estonia, 2,382 remained in Vilnius and 1,720 Jews remained in villages.

On June 1943, Reichsführer-SS Heinrich Himmler issued orders to establish camps in Estonia and in Riga (Mežaparks/Kaiserwald Camp) to meet the needs of the military industry, and, if necessary, to furnish these with Jews from the ghettos of the State Commissariat Ostland<sup>2</sup>.

### **Jews of Vilnius Ghetto in Estonian camps**

A small community of Estonian Jews (about 1000 people) was exterminated by the Nazi as far back as 1941. In September of 1942, Jews from Theresienstadt (Czech: Terezin) and Germany were started to be deported. 90 per cent of these Jews were also killed. In the autumn of 1943, about 20 thousand Lithuanian Jews from Vilnius and Kaunas were brought to Estonian camps. They were deported from Vilnius in four stages: on the 6th and the 24th of August, on 1-3 September and on 23-26 September 1943<sup>3</sup>. Jews were needed in Estonia as an important work force because on 11 August 1943, Hitler issued an order to start building the “eastern wall”, which had to protect German positions southwest of Leningrad. Jewish workers had to start building this German defensive line<sup>4</sup>. The largest camps were in Vaivara, Klooga and Lagedi. A total of one-two thousand prisoners worked in each camp. During several months 600 out of a thousand prisoners died in Vaivara camp<sup>5</sup>.

Selections of prisoners were carried out routinely in the camps. Old people, sick people and children were selected to be sent to gas chambers to die. In February of 1944, about 800 children, elderly and sick Jews from Vilnius were taken to be exterminated in the concentration camps located in Poland<sup>6</sup>. The majority of the camps were established in the eastern part of Estonia, in swampy, wooded and sparsely populated places. It was almost impossible to escape from the camps. Nonetheless, prisoners of Vilnius Ghetto who were in the Estonian concentration camps managed to set up underground groups and tried in every possible way to keep up the spirit of solidarity and assistance among themselves. Sometimes prisoners tried to escape from the camp. Fourteen prisoners escaped from Ereda camp. They had been hiding in a forest for 56 days until the arrival of the Red Army<sup>7</sup>.

### **Vaivara**

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 commandants, headquarters was situated at Vaivara<sup>8</sup>. It had 27 subsidiary camps (branches) in different locations in Estonia. The Vaivara concentration camps Commandant was SS-Hauptsturmführer Hans Aumeier. Before 1 October 1943 there were 3 subsidiary camps to Vaivara, housing a total of 3,300 inmates, including those unfit for work and children. The network of camps began to be extended after 1 October 1943<sup>9</sup>. The largest camps were in Vaivara, Klooga and Lagedi. A total of one-two thousand prisoners worked in each camp. During several months 600 out of a thousand prisoners died in Vaivara camp<sup>10</sup>.

Herman Kruk wrote that there were three camps in Vaivara: camp No. 1 near the railway station, camp No. 2 in Viivikonna, 10 kilometres from Vaivara, camp No. 3 five kilometres further, in a gas factory. Vaivara was a transit camp. Groups of prisoners stayed there for 1-2 months and afterwards they were transferred to other camps. The administration of the camp consisted of about 130 workers. The Jews that were brought from Vilnius Ghetto spent two weeks in Vaivada, then, on 7 October 1943, about 1600 men were moved to Narva<sup>11</sup>.

Dimitri Terav, who served in the 287<sup>th</sup> Estonian Defence Battalion (headed by a German captain, Vicenti), said in his testimony that he had been guarding the Vaivara concentration camp. Terav 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<sup>12</sup>. Vaivara concentration camp was liquidated at the end of February 1944.

### **Narva**

There were all in all about 1250 prisoners in Narva camp. There were no children in that camp. The prisoners dug anti-tank ditches and shelters, fell trees and did other work. Living conditions were difficult and unsanitary: the prisoners slept on the ground, could not have a bath, they were attacked by lice. Vilnius Jews stayed in Narva until 1 February 1944<sup>13</sup>. The Elder of the camp was Jew Zyler from Galicia, the Secretary was Broido from Vilnius. Small groups of prisoners, mainly enfeebled and unable to work, were deported to other camps; people said that they were taken there to be exterminated. Around the New Year the epidemic of typhus broke out in Narva camp. Each day 8-12 prisoners died. All in all, 400 people died in Narva camp of diseases<sup>14</sup>. Well-known inmates of Vilnius Ghetto Zelig Hirsch Kalmanovich, Moische Lerer, Naftol Veining, Dr. Yitskhok Rivkind died in Narva camp. Narva camp was begun to be evacuated on 1 February 1944. Old and sickly inmates were the first to be sent to Vaivara. The remaining 800 men were driven out on foot and on 2 February arrived in Vaivara. Two days later they were transferred to other Estonian camps: Ereda, Kochtla Järve and Kiviõli<sup>15</sup>.

### **Klooga**

The first train with the inmates of Vilnius Ghetto was directed towards Klooga camp. Klooga camp was founded in the southern part of the railway Tallinn – Paldiski (38 kilometres west of Tallinn) in September of 1943. The concentration camp was fenced with 2.4-meter high barbed wire. There were residential barracks, several workshops and a sawmill in the territory of the camp<sup>16</sup>. The inmates were given numbers, which they wore on the left side of their chest. At that time about 400 men and 150 women were imprisoned in the camp. The inmates were divided into brigades and did hard physical work. Men carried packs of cement from the plant to the railway station (about 150 meters from the plant). The supervisors beat the inmates with sticks. Other inmates worked in the cement plant, shale quarries, and fell forests. Women did the same hard work as men. The work day lasted 10-12 hours. For the slightest violation of the regime the inmates received 25 lashes. Each inmate had his/her own number. Food was very bad in the camp. Every day each inmates received 340 grams of bread, some thin soup and a coffee substitute (Germ. Ersatzkoffe). Due to the unbearable living conditions diseases started to spread in the camps. The inmates who fell ill were not given any treatment. The German doctor Franz Bodman worked as a chief hospital attendant in Klooga camp. Under his direction the patients were poisoned by injecting poison ampoules<sup>17</sup>. In 25 October 1943 there were 1453 Jews at

Klooga. According to a survivor, 750 people arrived at Klooga on 29 September 1943. After some time, another 500 women arrived from Kaunas<sup>18</sup>. At Klooga concentration camp most of women came from Vilnius (671) and from Kaunas (439). The average of women (27) was slightly junior to that of men (32). Of the 916 men, 719 came from Vilnius, 59, from Kaunas, 14 from Warsaw. Also men were mostly workers and craftsmen. 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 10000 Jewish inmates in the system. According to Dworzecki, 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, and 300 people from the Kaiserwald camp in Latvia<sup>19</sup>.

On 12 May 1944, 150 Jews from Kivioli were sent to Klooga, where there were already 2000 Jews (1200 men and 800 women) by that time. The number of Jews at the Klooga camp from November 1943 to June 1944 remained between 1800 and 2100<sup>20</sup>. The inmates in Klooga lived in stone houses with running water. Men and women were housed in separate blocks. The weekly bread ration for inmates was 2450 grams (350 g/day). The living conditions of the inmates at Klooga were the best of all the labour camps in Estonia. The inmates were used for building barracks and the production of concrete submarine signal mines. 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. 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. The work was supervised by civilian supervisors, among whom there were also Estonians and women<sup>21</sup>. At Klooga, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Company of the 287<sup>th</sup> battalion was in charge of guarding. The area of the Klooga camp, which was enclosed within a 4 metre high barbed wire fence, was about 1000x500 metres, at the centre 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<sup>22</sup>.

According to the chronicler of Vilnius Ghetto Herman Kruk, *'Klooga is the largest of all Jewish camps in Estonia. The camp of Klooga is considered the best organised camp; there is a laundry, two bath-houses (one for males, the other for females), two disinfection stations, two clinics, two hospitals, a dental clinic, the interior dress-making shop, a joinery workshop, a hairdresser's/barber's shop and the Social Assistance Committee, which helps the poor and starving.*

*Everything is simply in full swing in Klooga: the day is passed at work and the night is spent among one's own people. The Germans get drunk and hold parties, eat food meant for the Jews, and the*

*Jews look for bread, form groups and think seriously about the war, which is already knocking on the Estonia's gate. Dispirited and emaciated Jews do not want to be slaves in Hitler's cart. Some say that the moment has come for them to liberate themselves*<sup>23</sup>. There were separate camps for males and females in Klooga. Men were prohibited to maintain any relations with women. Nonetheless, the inmates tried to circumvent these prohibitions and tried as far as possible to communicate and help one another especially with foodstuffs<sup>24</sup>.

A large number of Vilnius Jews intellectuals died in Klooga camp: the former Director of Vilnius Philharmonic Society conductor Vulf Durmashkin, the Director of the Yiddish Technical Institute engineer Mathias Shreiber, the poet Leiba Rozenthal, the artistic director and a man of letters Bostomski, the Director of the Tuberculosis Hospital Vladimir Pochter, the well-known physicians Jehoshua (Osip) Zalkindson, Leiba Pomeranc, Rommas and others<sup>25</sup>. On 5 July 1944, the actor Isroel Rotblium (1902-1944) died in Klooga, two days later he was burned on a fire<sup>26</sup>. On 15 August 1944, the long-time Vilna JIVO librarian Moshe Kantor died in the camp<sup>27</sup>.

On May 1944 several elderly and weak women from Klooga all sailed to Stutthof with ship<sup>28</sup>. On 23 August 1944 4408 Jews arrived at the Stutthof camp, of whom over 2000 were Jews from the Vaivara camp who had been evacuated from Tallinn<sup>29</sup>. On 22 August 1944, some part of the inmates were transferred from Klooga to Lagedi concentration camp ( Herman Kruk was among them)<sup>30</sup>.

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 1500 people, were lined up on the roll-calling square in front of the womens block as usual. The camp commandant SS-Unterschurmführer Werle announced that they would be evacuated to Germany. At about five p. m. the special commandos of the SS and the SD 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. 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. First, men were shot, and then women. Everybody understood that the inmates were on death row. Those who were left in the camp rushed to hide themselves. In this way some part of the inmates of Klooga camp saved themselves<sup>31</sup>. Abram Vainik and the nurse Genia Olkenickaja were among the inmates who managed to survive<sup>32</sup>.

The soviet extraordinary commission discovered 79 bodies in the narrow passage between the bunks: there were 64 men, 14 women and one baby of the age 3 months. According R. Västriik and M. Maripuu, 1800 as the number of the executed Jews in the Vaivara camp network<sup>33</sup>. According to the



witnesses' evidence, about 2.5-3 thousand inmates were killed in Klooga camp, including 800 Russian prisoners of war, 700 political prisoners and 1500 Jews. Bodies of the victims were burned on several large bonfires. Only 82 inmates managed to save themselves<sup>34</sup>. According Vaivara camp doctor Bodman between October 1943 and 26 June 1944 1513 inmates died in the Vaivara camp network<sup>35</sup>.

Presented below are several stories from the life of the inmates of Klooga camp.

The resident of Vilnius Dora Shtraks (born in 1916) was imprisoned in Klooga. Later, together with other inmates, she was evacuated to Germany. At first she worked in a plant in Hamburg, later she was imprisoned in Bergen-Belsen concentration camp, and was liberated in April 1945. Her father Abram Romarovski remained to live in Germany and her mother Nechama and her brothers Grigorij and Jefim were killed during the war years<sup>36</sup>.

The resident of Vilnius Mejer Trinapolski (born in 1916) studied at the Faculty of Medicine of Vilnius University and worked as a manager of *Rūta* shop until the Nazi war. During the years of the German occupation he was imprisoned in Vilnius Ghetto, and after it had been liquidated, together with Solomon (aged 18), was taken to Klooga camp. They managed to survive and live to see the liberation. In 1946, Meyer Trinapolski left for Poland<sup>37</sup>. Mejer Trinapolski testified to the Soviet Commission to Investigate Nazi Crimes in Klooga that he had been brought to Estonia and imprisoned in Klooga camp on 23 September 1943. He did hard physical work in the swamp 12 hours per day there. Since he failed to fulfil the established work norms all the same, he had to work overtime until 10-11 hours in the evening and at night<sup>38</sup>.

The resident of Vilnius Ida Turgel (born in 1919) studied chemistry at Vilnius University until the Nazi-Soviet war. During the years of the German occupation she was imprisoned in Vilnius Ghetto, in September 1943, together with her mother Maria Turgel and sister Rachel Turgel (born in 1942) was transferred to Klooga camp. They all lived to see the liberation<sup>39</sup>.

Peisach Rubanovich (born in 1929) was imprisoned in Vilnius Ghetto and together with other inmates was brought to Klooga on 29 September 1943 and was imprisoned there right until the liberation. His elder brother Chaim Rubanovich and his sister Sara Rubanovich ran away to join Soviet partisans before the liquidation of Vilnius Ghetto on 8 September 1943. The fate of other members of the family is unknown<sup>40</sup>.

When the Soviets returned, the Soviet Public Prosecutor's Office and the Extraordinary State Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes investigated Nazi crimes committed in Klooga camp. The protocol of the Estonian SSR Public Prosecutor's Office of 29 September 1944 writes that 79 dead bodies were found in one of the buildings of the camp; the majority of them were murdered by a

shot in the back of the head. About 200 meters north of the camp 133 burned corpses were discovered. Many skulls and bones were found in the former place of burning. Since the majority of the corpses were completely burned, it was impossible to establish the exact number of victims. 700 meters north of the camp, in the forest clearing, the Commission discovered four large bonfires, three bonfires were burned down. The remains of 254 corpses were found there. Individual and group corpses were found in different places of the camp; it could be assumed that some part of the inmates tried to run away but were shot dead by the guards<sup>41</sup>. In 1944, the Soviet officials discovered a card index of the inmates in the office of Klooga camp. According to the data therein, it was established that a total of 2300 people, 1136 males and 1194 females, were imprisoned in Klooga. As many as 1564 inmates were from Vilnius and 1664 were from Kaunas, 175 inmates were from other places in Lithuania. By profession the largest majority were tailors/dress-makers (651), workers (441), weavers (263) and carpenters (147)<sup>42</sup>.

### **Ereda**

The camp of Ereda was established in July 1943. Inmates of Vilnius Ghetto were settled in Finnish barracks. On 4 September 1943, 1000 Jews from Vilnius arrived at the Kohtla railway station, 500 were taken to the Ereda camp and the rest to Vaivara. In two days time, 1000 more Jews from Vilnius arrived at Ereda. In the autumn inmates from Ereda to be sent on to other camps. On 25 October 1943 there were 245 inmates at the Ereda camp<sup>43</sup>. The camp of Ereda consisted of Lower Ereda and Upper Ereda. The distance between the two camps was about 50 metres. The latter stood on a hill; wooden barracks with plank-beds were installed in it. The inmates were divided into brigades to carry out different kind of work: to pave gravel roads, to build barracks, to work on the railway. The workers were short of food because the Chief of the camp and the administrative staff stole food meant for the Jews. Dutch and Estonian policemen guarded the camp and the inmates. On 5 October 1943, the camp was disbanded, 750 inmates, including sick and disabled people, were sent to Narva; 245 healthy inmates were left in Ereda<sup>44</sup>. The number of the inmates gradually increased in Ereda camp: according to the data of 10 October 1943, the number of the inmates there was 245 people, on 25 November 1943 their number reached 630<sup>45</sup>.

At the beginning of November 1943, as many as 140 women were brought to Ereda from Kaunas Ghetto, in the middle of December about 250 men and 50 women were brought to Ereda from the camp of Kaizerwal (Keizermežs) near Riga. There were many Jews from Germany, several people from Vilnius and Kaunas Ghettoes among them. In the middle of January 1944, about 300 Jews were sent to

the camp of Goldfiels to work in shale mines. About 300 inmates remained in Ereda, the death rate was low, about 20 inmates died, mainly Jews from Germany. When at the beginning of February 1944 the front came near Vaivara, about 1600 inmates of the camp were transferred to Ereda, and approximately another 1200 people were transferred to Goldfiels and the same number of inmates was taken to Kivioli. There were many ailing people among the inmates of Vaivara camp transferred to Ereda, the death rate was high, every day about 20 people died. A part of the ailing was sent to other camps. New groups of Jews were also brought to Ereda – from Viivikonna (about 700 people), Kochtla Järve (over a hundred), and from Kuremäe (several hundred). On 17 April 1944, one hundred inmates of Ereda camp were sent to the camp of Klooga<sup>46</sup>. On July 1944, there are 1132 Jews at Ereda. The camp of Ereda was liquidated on 28 July 1944. In 1960, the Jews were taken away from the camp; at first they were transferred to the camp of Lagedi. The Jews of Lagedi camp were exterminated on 3-5 September 1944<sup>47</sup>. The shootings started on a Saturday evening. 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. After the Red Army 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. The exact number of victims is not known<sup>48</sup>.

The former inmate of Vilnius Ghetto Naum Krugman (born in 1923) was taken to the camp of Ereda. He managed to live to see the liberation and survive. In October 1944, Naum Krugman got into the NKVD inspecting-screening post in Narva, and later he returned to Vilnius. In 1946, Naum Krugman, as the former citizen of Poland, left for Poland<sup>49</sup>.

The resident of Vilnius Alexander Shuster (born in 1928) was imprisoned in Vilnius Ghetto in the years of the German occupation, and after the Ghetto was liquidated in 1943, together with other inmates, was taken to Estonian camps. Alexander Shuster cut down trees in the forest of the settlement of Sonda. When the camps of Estonian Jews were liquidated he was transferred to the concentration camp of Stuttgart near Danzig and remained there until the liberation. After the liberation Shuster worked as a forwarding agent and a brigade-leader in a military division for some time. In June 1947, he returned to Vilnius. During the German occupation (1941-1942) Shuster's father Isaac Shuster (aged 52), his mother Genia Shuster (aged 35) and his sister Sonia Shuster (12 years old) were killed. Alexander Shuster's eldest sister Sara Zubalskaja (26 years old) survived and stayed to live in Vilnius after the war<sup>50</sup>.

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### **Lagedi**

The camp of Lagedi was 7 kilometres away from Tallinn and 130 kilometres away from the city of Tartu. The writer Herman Kruk was imprisoned in Lagedi camp (from 22 August 1944). He wrote a diary of Vilnius Ghetto clandestinely. Before the liquidation of the camp, Herman Kruk showed his friend the place where he had buried the diary. After the liberation Nisan Anolik took the diary and handed it over to Aba Kovner who took it to Israel<sup>52</sup>. At the end of 1944, about 2 thousand inmates from different camps of Estonia in evacuation were concentrated in Lagedi<sup>53</sup>. 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. Until their arrival of the 500 Jews from Klooga, there had been 20 inmates in the Lagedi camp. The last group of inmates, consisting of 34 men, was driven to Tallinn in the evening of September 18. According to Dworzecki 426 people were executed at Lagedi<sup>54</sup>.

On 18 September 1944, the SS Hauptsturmführer and Chief of the central administrative board of the camps in Estonian Otto Brenneisen arrived in Lagedi and announced that all the Jews would be transferred to a better camp. However, it was another of the Nazi's deception. The inmates were put into trucks and taken 40 kilometres outside Lagedi. There were large piles of logs there. The Nazi tied the Jews with ropes, 10-12 people together, laid them down on the pile and shot dead. The massacre lasted from 11 a.m. till nightfall. Very few of them managed to save themselves<sup>55</sup>. The last group of inmates, consisting of 34 men, was driven to Tallinn in the evening of September 18. According to Dworzecki 426 people were executed at Lagedi<sup>56</sup>.

### **Kiviõli**

Kiviõli was a well-equipped concentration camp. Newly brought Jews (about 650 people) were settled at a distance of 2 kilometres from the main camp, in the so-called East camp. It was established in a soap factory. Nearby there was a small camp for the Jews from Germany and Riga (about 120 people)<sup>57</sup>. According to the data of 25 October 1943, a total of 448 people were imprisoned in Kiviõli, on 25 November 1943 this figure stood at 698 people<sup>58</sup>.

### **Goldfiels**

In the middle of 1944, a part of Kochtla Järve inmates, as well as those from Vilnius, were moved to Goldfiels. Upon arrival the inmates found an empty field. They built eight barracks in which about 170 males and females settled. Later a part of the inmates from the camp of Klooga and its branches (Viivikonna, Narva, Kuremäe and others) were moved there. In the middle of March 1944, the number of Goldfiels inmates increased up to 1700. The death rate of the inmates in this camp was rather high – every day 3-4 people died. The inmates worked on the railway, in the mines and carried out construction works. In the middle of April 1944, the inmates were transferred from Goldfiels to the camp of Klooga<sup>59</sup>.

### Viivikonna

A total of 800 men from Vilnius Ghetto at first were brought to Viivikonna camp and accommodated in Finnish barracks. Forty people shared a barrack; they had to sleep on the hard ground. Women and children lived in separate barracks. Two camps were equipped in Viivikonna – the First Viivikonna and the Second Viivikonna. The inmates carried out road works and worked in the mines, later they worked in the oil refinery in Sillamäe, 12 kilometres away from Viivikonna, in the forests, near the railway Viivikonna-Vaivara. At first the Estonians were in charge of the camp, later the camp was taken over by the SS (Schutzstaffel; German: ‘Protective Echelon’). After the SS had taken over the camp, the regime became stricter. There were 900 inmates in Viivikonna – 600 males and 300 females, all of them were from Vilnius. Five inmates died within six months. A part of the inmates were sent to the camp of Ereda<sup>60</sup>.

Inmates of Vilnius Ghetto were imprisoned in different branches of the concentration camp of Vaivara. It is known that they were imprisoned in Klooga, Kivioli, Auvers, Lagedi, Ereda and other camps. In the summer of 1944, the liquidation of the camps of Ereda started. A part of the inmates were sent to the concentration camp in Stuttgart and the camps in East Prussia. The majority of them perished there<sup>61</sup>. In July 1944, all old and sick people of Kivioli camp were exterminated. Prior to that, the camp of Ereda was liquidated. When the Red Army approached, the Nazi liquidated all the remaining camps.

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<sup>1</sup> M. Dworzecki, *The Jewish Camps in Estonia, 1942-1944*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1970, p. XI.

<sup>2</sup> R. Västriik, M. Maripuu, „Vaivara Concentration Camp in 1943-1944“, *Estonia 1940-1945. Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity*, Tallinn, 2006, p. 719.

<sup>3</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, V., 2004, p. XLV.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. XLVI.

- <sup>5</sup> “Лагерь в Клоога”, *Черная книга*, с. 397.
- <sup>6</sup> Y. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames: The Struggle and Destruction of the Jews in Vilna in the Holocaust*, New York, 1982, p. 477.
- <sup>7</sup> B. Anolik, “Nacių koncentracijos stovyklos Estijoje”, *Atminties dienos*, V., 1995, p. 203, 206.
- <sup>8</sup> R. Västriik, M. Maripuu, „Vaivara Concentration Camp in 1943-1944“, *Estonia 1940-1945. Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity*, p. 720.
- <sup>9</sup> R. Västriik, M. Maripuu, „Vaivara Concentration Camp in 1943-1944“, *Estonia 1940-1945. Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity*, p. 720-721.
- <sup>10</sup> “Лагерь в Клоога”, *Черная книга*, с. 397.
- <sup>11</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, V., 2004, p. 685.
- <sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 728.
- <sup>13</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, p. 685.
- <sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 686.
- <sup>15</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, p. 686, 687.
- <sup>16</sup> *Эстония. Кровавый след нацизма: 1941-1944 годы*, Москва, 2006, с. 42.
- <sup>17</sup> “Лагерь в Клоога”, *Черная книга*, с. 395-396.
- <sup>18</sup> R. Västriik, M. Maripuu, „Vaivara Concentration Camp in 1943-1944“, *Estonia 1940-1945. Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity*, p. 733.
- <sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 727, 725.
- <sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 734.
- <sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 734.
- <sup>22</sup> R. Västriik, M. Maripuu, „Vaivara Concentration Camp in 1943-1944“, *Estonia 1940-1945. Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity*, p. 728.
- <sup>23</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, p. 698.
- <sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 700.
- <sup>25</sup> *Эстония. Кровавый след нацизма: 1941-1944 годы*, с. 52.
- <sup>26</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, p. 717.
- <sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 723.
- <sup>28</sup> M. Dworzecki, *The Jewish Camps in Estonia, 1942-1944*, Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, 1970, p. 104.
- <sup>29</sup> Rita Malcher, *Stutthof: Das Konzentrationslager*, Gdansk, 1996, p. 309.
- <sup>30</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, p. 715.
- <sup>31</sup> “Лагерь в Клоога”, *Черная книга*, с. 397.
- <sup>32</sup> *Эстония. Кровавый след нацизма: 1941-1944 годы*, с. 54.
- <sup>33</sup> R. Västriik, M. Maripuu, „Vaivara Concentration Camp in 1943-1944“, *Estonia 1940-1945. Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity*, p. 738.
- <sup>34</sup> Ibid., s. 399; B. Anolik, “Nacių koncentracijos stovyklos Estijoje”, *Atminties dienos*, p. 208; *Эстония. Кровавый след нацизма: 1941-1944 годы*, с. 54.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid., p. 727.
- <sup>36</sup> D. Štraks registracijos lapas, data nenurodyta, LYA, f. K-1, ap. 59, b. 36568, l. 1.
- <sup>37</sup> M. Trīnarpolskio 1944 10 26 d. anketa, LYA, f. K-1, ap. 59, b. 33087, l. 1-2 a. p., 6.
- <sup>38</sup> *Эстония. Кровавый след нацизма: 1941-1944 годы*, с. 62.
- <sup>39</sup> I. Turgel 1944 10 27 d. anketa, LYA, f. K-1, ap. 59, b. 33094, l. 1-2 a. p.
- <sup>40</sup> P. Rubanovičiaus 1944 11 03 d. anketa, LYA, f. K-1, ap. 59, b. 33721, l. 1-2 a. p.
- <sup>41</sup> *Эстония. Кровавый след нацизма: 1941-1944 годы*, Москва, 2006, с. 43, 44.
- <sup>42</sup> *Эстония. Кровавый след нацизма: 1941-1944 годы*, с. 46, 47.
- <sup>43</sup> Ibid., p. 731.
- <sup>44</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, p. 688.
- <sup>45</sup> *Эстония. Кровавый след нацизма: 1941-1944 годы*, с. 58.
- <sup>46</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, p. 689, 690.
- <sup>47</sup> R. Västriik, M. Maripuu, „Vaivara Concentration Camp in 1943-1944“, *Estonia 1940-1945. Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity*, Tallinn, 2006, p. 732, 733.
- <sup>48</sup> R. Västriik, M. Maripuu, „Vaivara Concentration Camp in 1943-1944“, *Estonia 1940-1945. Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity*, p. 732, 733.
- <sup>49</sup> N. Krugmano 1944 10 30 d. anketa, LYA, f. K-1, ap. 59, b. 32100, l. 1-2 a. p.
- <sup>50</sup> A. Šusterio 1947 06 14 d. anketa, LYA, f. K-1, ap. 59, b. 17149, l. 1-2 a. p.
- <sup>51</sup> R. Västriik, M. Maripuu, „Vaivara Concentration Camp in 1943-1944“, *Estonia 1940-1945. Reports of the Estonian International Commission for the Investigation of Crimes against Humanity*, p. 732, 733.
- <sup>52</sup> B. Anolik, “Nacių koncentracijos stovyklos Estijoje”, *Atminties dienos*, V., 1995, p. 205, 206.

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<sup>53</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, p. 725.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 733.

<sup>55</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, p. XLVI.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 733.

<sup>57</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, p. 687.

<sup>58</sup> Эстония. Кровавый след нацизма: 1941-1944 годы, с. 58.

<sup>59</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, p. 694.

<sup>60</sup> H. Kruk, *Paskutinės Lietuvos Jeruzalės dienos: Vilniaus geto ir stovyklų kronikos, 1939-1944*, p. 694, 695.

<sup>61</sup> Y. Arad, *Ghetto in Flames*, p. 449.