

THE UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Encyclopedia of CAMPS AND GHETTOS, 1933–1945

VOLUME I

Early Camps, Youth Camps, and Concentration
Camps and Subcamps under the SS-Business
Administration Main Office (WVHA)

Part B

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VAIVARA



Soviet investigators inspect corpses from the Klooga subcamp of Vaivara which have been stacked for mass burning, September 1944.
USHMM WS #98906, COURTESY OF GFH

VAIVARA MAIN CAMP

Vaivara¹ was one of the last concentration camps to be established, at a time when two aims shaped decisions of the Nazi leadership: (1) to implement the final stage in the destruction of European Jewry by liquidating all remaining ghettos and (2) to utilize Jewish labor. On June 21, 1943, Heinrich Himmler decreed the closure of the remaining ghettos in the Baltic states, the transfer of ghetto inmates to newly formed concentration camps, and the deportation of as many able-bodied Jews as possible for work in oil-shale production in Estonia.² Vaivara was established on September 19, 1943, to hold this Jewish workforce.³

The production of oil from shale was the responsibility of the Baltische Öl GmbH or Baltöl (Baltic Oil), a subsidiary of the Kontinentale Öl AG, both operating within the sphere of responsibility of Dr. Krauch, chairman of the board of IG Farben and Generalbevollmächtigter für den Erzeugungsplan der chemischen Industrie (General Plenipotentiary for the Chemical Industry Production Plan). After the German occupation of Estonia in 1941, Baltöl took over and tried to reutilize the oil-mining facilities in northeastern Estonia.⁴ In 1943, Baltöl was facing two important developments: first, the German withdrawal from the Caucasus made alternative sources of oil even more important than before; second, there was an increasing shortage of workers, caused in part by the German army's transfer of prisoners of war (POWs) to fortification and other projects. POWs had been the backbone of the Baltöl workforce. Baltöl needed labor to produce oil for the war effort, and Himmler wanted to dispose of a large remaining group of the Jewish population in the Baltics. Vaivara was the result.

At a July 19, 1943, meeting at the Commander of Security Police and SD offices in Reval, the officers made detailed plans for the establishment of Vaivara. The list of those present reveals that all local players were involved: the civil administration and SS-Police in Estonia; the German army (Wehrmacht); Baltöl; the Organisation Todt (OT); Einsatzgruppe Russland-Nord; and Einsatz Baltöl, which was in charge of construction projects.⁵ The camp personnel were to be provided by the SS-Business Administration Main Office (WVHA) in Berlin; the WVHA in Riga was in charge locally. The initial establishment of the camp (before personnel were transferred to Estonia) was undertaken by SS-Sturmbannführer Wossagk, who was the head of security (Abwehrbeauftragter) of Baltöl, and, under his direction, by the head of the plant protection force (Werkschutzleiter) Hilgenfeld.⁶

Throughout its existence, Vaivara was characterized by diversity. Two main employers, Baltöl and OT, used a multi-ethnic workforce of Soviet POWs, forced laborers, civilian workers, and concentration camp inmates.⁷ Further, several camps at each work site were supervised and administered by

different organizations (POW camps by the Wehrmacht; civilian and forced labor camps by the civil administration, OT, and Baltöl; and the Vaivara subcamps by the SS and Security Police). The Jewish concentration camp inmates were strictly segregated from the others,⁸ and Jews and POWs received worse treatment than other workers.⁹ This mixture caused numerous frictions in the one year of Vaivara's existence.

The commander of Vaivara was Hans Aumeier, formerly Schutzhaftlagerführer in Auschwitz; his administrative staff consisted of eight SS members. Head of administration was Otto Brenneis. Dr. Franz von Bodmann, SS doctor for all camps, was in charge of monitoring the work ability of inmates, which included curing as well as killing. During an illness in December 1943, Bodmann was replaced by Dr. Krebsbach from Riga. Franz Mang was in charge of a dental station. A branch office of the Deutsches Hygiene Institut in Riga was established in Kohtla-Järve. In general, very few and low-ranking Germans were assigned to Vaivara and its subcamps—in most cases, only a commander and a medical orderly (Sanitätsdienstgrad, SDG). The role of SDGs was unusually prominent; often they also took over the function of camp commanders. This was caused by the disastrous hygienic conditions in all Vaivara camps and by outbreaks of illnesses, in particular epidemic typhus (*Fleckfieber*). From January to March 1944, Bodmann got 10 additional Wehrmacht medical orderlies assigned to Vaivara.¹⁰ In the first few weeks, the newly established camps were often run by OT personnel; some smaller camps remained under OT commanders. One characteristic feature of the Vaivara camps is a frequent movement of SS personnel and inmates from one camp to another. In several cases, camp commanders took inmates they knew with them to new assignments, but in most cases the movement was caused by shifting work priorities and short-term assignments. For presumably the same reasons, several camps that were initially planned for Baltöl plants—such as Slanzy—were not set up. While the SS camp staff remained skeletal, the hierarchy of inmate functionaries was fully developed, ranging from camp elders (Lagerälteste) to elders for sections (Blöcke) and rooms (Zimmer), prisoner police, Kapos, prisoner clerks, doctors, and nurses. The camps were guarded by the Estonian Schutzmannschaftsbataillon 287 and the Russian Schutzmannschaftsbataillon 290. These battalions were under the command of the Commander of the Order Police (KdO) and were assigned to the camps by the SS- and Police Leader (SSPF) Reval. The guards also accompanied inmates to the work sites; the foremen were mostly OT. In some cases, OT personnel were armed to take on guarding functions.

Most of the camps were located in the oil-shale region of eastern Estonia. The administrative staff and the main camp were located in Vaivara. In October 1943, subcamps

(*Arbeitslager*) existed in Klooga, Narva, Soski, Auvere, Kerstowa, Ereda, Jõhvi, Kuremäe, Port Kunda, Kiviõli, and Vivikonna.¹¹ The mix between Baltõl production sites and Vaivara camps leads to some confusion about the proper names and locations of subcamps. One example is Kohtla-Järve, one of the centers of Baltõl and OT activity. The company lists 1,163 Jews working at Kohtla-Järve and another 856 at Kohtla; but no corresponding camps can be found in the monthly reports by the Vaivara SS doctor.¹² One has to assume that the inmates of either of the subcamps Ereda or Kiviõli were marched to Kohtla-Järve; former inmates often recall the long distances they had to cover to get to and from work. Because of the advance of the Red Army, the more eastern camps had to be evacuated in February 1944; Aumeier's headquarters were moved to Saka. In the same area, the Aseri, Goldfields, and Sonda subcamps were established, together with a group of temporary camps in southern Estonia and, in the summer of 1944, the Lagedi subcamp near Reval. In August and September 1944, the Germans retreated completely from Estonia, and all camps were evacuated. In addition to the Vaivara camps, the Security Police had its own camp system in Estonia for incarcerating real or perceived political opponents.

The majority of Vaivara inmates were deportees from the Vilnius and Kaunas ghettos in the summer and fall of 1943; in many cases, they comprised whole families. Former inmates often recall how and where one after the other of their family members perished, until only they themselves or maybe another survived to see liberation. By the end of 1943, a small group of German and Czech women, who had been deported to Estonia in September 1942 and had been kept in Security Police camps, were transferred to the Vaivara system. Another group of inmates came from Riga-Kaiserwald, and another from Hungary in the summer of 1944. Prisoner numbers from Bodmann's reports are 6,982 in October 1943, a peak of 9,207 in November 1943, and a decline from 8,210 in February



Soviet investigators inspect corpses from the Klooga subcamp of Vaivara which have been stacked for mass burning, September 1944. USHMM WS #98901, COURTESY OF ESTHER ANCOLI-BARBASCH

1944 to 6,662 in June 1944. According to former inmates, they received a number upon arrival, which they kept during their numerous transfers to other camps. The numbers of individual inmates in the Klooga index confirm this: many are too high for the total number of Klooga inmates, but they add up to roughly 9,000.¹³

The purpose of the Vaivara camp system was the fullest exploitation of the work capacity of the inmates. For this reason, large killings of the able-bodied did not take place before the retreat. Individual killings, most in a gruesome manner, were whimsical killings by specific subcamp commanders, acting out their murderous impulses at whatever camp they were assigned to. Apart from these individual killings, selections and killings of old and weak prisoners took place on a continuous basis. As whole families were deported from Lithuania, many old and sick people and children found their way into the camps. Already in his October 25, 1943, report, Bodmann euphemistically mentioned that mostly old Jews had “died”—that they were those who could not adapt to the changed conditions and that this would constitute a relief for the camps.¹⁴ Apart from ongoing selections and killings—the reason Bodmann visited the Vaivara camps on a regular basis—two large groups of inmates were deported. In February 1944, 907 old and sick inmates and 111 children were deported to the Riga-Kaiserwald concentration camp. Among the inmates, deportation to Riga-Kaiserwald was equated with death. In April 1944, 500 inmates, including children (who had been kept separately), were deported from Ereda and taken over by the SD. Bodmann gives contradictory information about the final destination of the transport, mentioning both Riga-Kaiserwald and Auschwitz; however, one mother had insisted on accompanying her child and testified later that the transport went to Auschwitz.¹⁵ Inmates suffered from disease, cold, hunger, and exhaustion in large numbers. In all camps, facilities to burn corpses were set up, preferably in somewhat hidden places.¹⁶ The medical personnel tried to control the 1943–1944 typhus epidemic through quarantines and hygienic measures like boiling all drinking water, and they also worked at combating lice and vermin. One witness, however, reports that compulsory washing with hot water on the camp square in subzero temperatures was more detrimental than beneficial to the inmates' health.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Aumeier was congratulated for taking initiative during the typhus epidemic.¹⁸

Labor in the camp was very hard and often beyond the strength of the inmates. Not only former inmates recall this, but Baltõl and OT reports mentioned this repeatedly. The Jewish workforce was not considered an adequate replacement for the Soviet POWs, who were often miners by profession. Weakened by malnutrition and cold and lacking shoes and clothing, the Jewish contingents were considered capable of only 50 percent of the POW and civilian work capacity.¹⁹ For this reason, the Baltõl management tried to avoid assigning Jews and refused to deport additional Hungarian Jews to their work sites.²⁰ Some inmates were used as craftsmen in special workshops, producing clothing and shoes. This type of work seemed to have made the most

sense as far as productivity was concerned. As Baltöl was mainly interested in improving productivity, they supplied additional foodstuffs. Most former inmates recall that entirely insufficient portions were given to them, indicating that the problem lay mainly with the SS camp administration. For the October 1943–June 1944 reporting period, Bodmann lists 1,506 deaths in all Vaivara subcamps, with a peak of 296 in November and December and another 245 in March 1944. This was about 16.5 percent of the camp population.

Evacuations of camps took place several times, causing inmates to endure difficult marches. Only occasionally was transportation provided; during most of the evacuations, prisoners were forced to march without sufficient shoes, clothes, or food. Large numbers of inmates died from exhaustion or, when they were incapable of moving on, were killed. From the German administrative perspective, evacuations were complicated by the fact that different organizations were responsible for different types of inmates. The army moved the POWs, the companies moved their workforce, and the SS moved the Jewish concentration camp inmates. This added considerably to the already existing chaos; but, as usual, Jews and POWs were treated worse than others. Evacuation plans from March 1944 actually detail the plan to march 5,000 Jewish inmates from eastern Estonia via Ereda, Kohtla, and Kiviõli to Riga—a march estimated to take three weeks.²¹ In August and September 1944, the final evacuation from Estonia was planned, but it was delayed by a series of conflicting orders from Hitler, first forbidding and then finally allowing evacuation.²² In this period, inmates were moved further to the west and finally loaded on ships or, because there was not enough ship space, crowded into the Klooga subcamp and a makeshift camp in Lagedi, near Tallinn. During the voyage along the Baltic coast, several ships sank. Most of the inmates were brought to Stutthof near Danzig and after that to other camps in Germany. Some actually ended up in another shale mining facility in Dautmergen, a subcamp of Natzweiler, where they encountered the former commander of Vivikonna and Ereda again. Not all inmates were supposed to be deported, however. In the last days of July 1944, presumably on July 20 and days following, Bodmann conducted particularly strict selections in one camp after another. Former inmates refer to it as the “10 percent selection,” since fully 10 percent of the inmates were loaded on trucks and taken away. In several camps, the already suspicious remaining inmates asked the selected inmates to leave information on the trucks. The trucks returned with blood-stained clothes and messages that the deportees were to be shot near Ereda. All the SS personnel went away for this action and returned in a drunken stupor with bloodstained uniforms. Former OT personnel in Ereda witnessed the mass executions on July 23 and 24, 1944.²³ On September 19, 1944, the last day before the final evacuation, the remaining inmates of Klooga were also shot.

Most of the major perpetrators in Vaivara served in a number of concentration camps during the war and were sentenced after the war for their activities in camps other than Vaivara. Aumeier was sentenced and executed in Poland in 1948; Dr. Krebsbach was sentenced to death in 1946 in Dachau. Some of the minor figures received jail sentences from U.S., Polish, and Soviet authorities. Bodmann committed suicide in May 1945; Brenneis was killed in the last days of the war. The Soviets conducted a trial in 1951 against members of the Schutzmannschaftsbattalion 287.²⁴ The German authorities conducted a number of investigations against former camp personnel, some of which led to trials. Helmut Schnabel received a life sentence in 1977; former SDG Rolf Klicker received a reduced sentence of six years, because he had been a minor during the war.²⁵ Ernst Runde was indicted but committed suicide in 1967 in prison. Oskar Helbig was indicted as well, but in the 1970s he was declared unfit to stand trial. Erich Scharfetter fled to Egypt in 1960, when the investigation against him commenced, but returned in 1977 and was given a life sentence in 1980.²⁶ Wilhelm Werle and Wilhelm Genth were investigated and died in the 1960s; others, like Alfred Engst, died in the 1950s, before the investigations of events in Estonia took a serious turn after the establishment of the Central Office for State Justice Administrations (ZdL) in 1958. Other perpetrators could not be identified, often because witnesses could only remember a last name. The only perpetrator about whom numerous serious allegations were made, who was never located, is Kurt Pannicke. He came from Wittenberg, later in the Soviet occupied zone, and neither the German Democratic Republic (GDR) nor the West German authorities could trace him.

SOURCES The most important sources are the reports from the SS camp doctor (Lagerarzt), which cover the period from September 1943 to June 1944. The reports were only discovered in the summer of 2002 in the EHM, holding documents 152/2/40. In the ESTA, the following records have been preserved: R 187 Baltöl, R 169 OT/Einsatzgruppe Rusland-Nord, Einsatz Baltöl, R 966 AL Narva-Ost, R 170 AL Klooga. Witness testimony can be found in German trial records, the most comprehensive at the ZdL case numbers AR-Z 246/59 and AR-Z 233/59. Witness statements can also be found in the oral history collections in YVA.

Not much has been published on Vaivara. The most comprehensive study was written by Mark Dworzecki, who was an inmate himself and conducted postwar interviews with other former inmates: *Jewish Camps in Estonia* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: YV, 1970). An article by Alfred Streim gives an overview of the findings of German courts: “Konzentrationslager auf dem Gebiet der Sowjetunion,” *Datte* 5, (1989). A recent, unpublished study by an Estonian historian uses newly accessible material in Estonian archives: Riho Västriik, “KL Vaivara” (unpub. MSS, Tallinn). The diary of an inmate of Klooga has been published: Herman Kruk, *The Last Days of the Jerusalem of Lithuania: Chronicles from the Vilna Ghetto and the Camps, 1939–1944*, ed. and introd. Benjamin Harshav and

trans. Barbara Harshav (New Haven, CT: YIVO Institute for Jewish Research, 2002).

Ruth Bettina Birn

NOTES

1. In the following, reference to any of the sources used will only be made if part of the text is quoted verbatim or a statement warrants special attention.

2. June 6, 1943, RFSS an HSSPF Ostland, Chef WVHA, BA, NS 19/1740.

3. October 2, 1943, RSHA an Verteiler, BA, R 58/264.

4. See March 4, 1944, Mathy, Direktor der Baltischen Öl GmbH, Bericht, ESTA, R 187/1/1.

5. July 21, 1943, Wossagk, Abwehrbeauftragter Baltöl, Aktennotiz, ESTA, R 187/1/33.

6. Ibid.

7. See January 15, 1943, OT, Bestand Ostländerlager Falkenhorst, ESTA, R 167/1/5.

8. September 30, 1943, Baltöl, Arbeitseinsatz den [*sic*] Juden, ESTA, R 187/1/33.

9. June 26, 1944, OT/Russland-Nord/Baltöl, ESTA, R 169/1/3.

10. January 26, 1944, Monatsbericht SS Arzt, EHM, 152/2/40. The author wishes to thank Meelis Maripuu and Riho Västriik for making these reports available.

11. October 25, 1943, Monatsbericht SS Arzt, EHM, 152/2/40.

12. N.d., Belegschaft Neubauprogramme; July 19, 1944, Baltöl Aktennotiz—both: ESTA R187/1/24.

13. Card index, ESTA, R 170; 1992, Benjamin Anolik, YVA, 03/6548; January 20, 1944, SS Wirtschaftler Riga, Beurteilung Aumeier, BA, Aumeier SS file.

14. October 25, 1943, Monatsbericht SS Lagerarzt, EHM, 152/2/40.

15. February 20, 1944, March 26, 1944, April 25, 1944, SS Lagerarzt Berichte, EHM, 152/2/40; October 27, 1964, Molly In., vol. 12; March 22, 1965, Molly In., vol. 13; July 27, 1965, Molly In., vol. 14—all: ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

16. November 25, 1943, Monatsbericht SS Arzt, EHM, 152/2/40.

17. July 15, 1965, Nissan An., vol. 14, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

18. January 20, 1944, SS Wirtschaftler Riga, Beurteilung Aumeier, BA, Aumeier SS file.

19. February 2, 1944, Baltöl Aktennotiz; February 20, 1944, OT/Einsatz Baltöl, Aktenvermerk; July 19, 1944, Baltöl, Aktennotiz—all: ESTA, R 187/1/24.

20. June 2, 1944, Baltöl an Arbeitseinsatzstelle Baltöl, ESTA, R 187/1/32; June 27, 1944, Beauftragter für den Arbeitseinsatz, ESTA, R 187/1/33.

21. March 5, 1944, Mineralölkommando an Heeresgruppe Russland-Nord, ESTA, R 187/1/67.

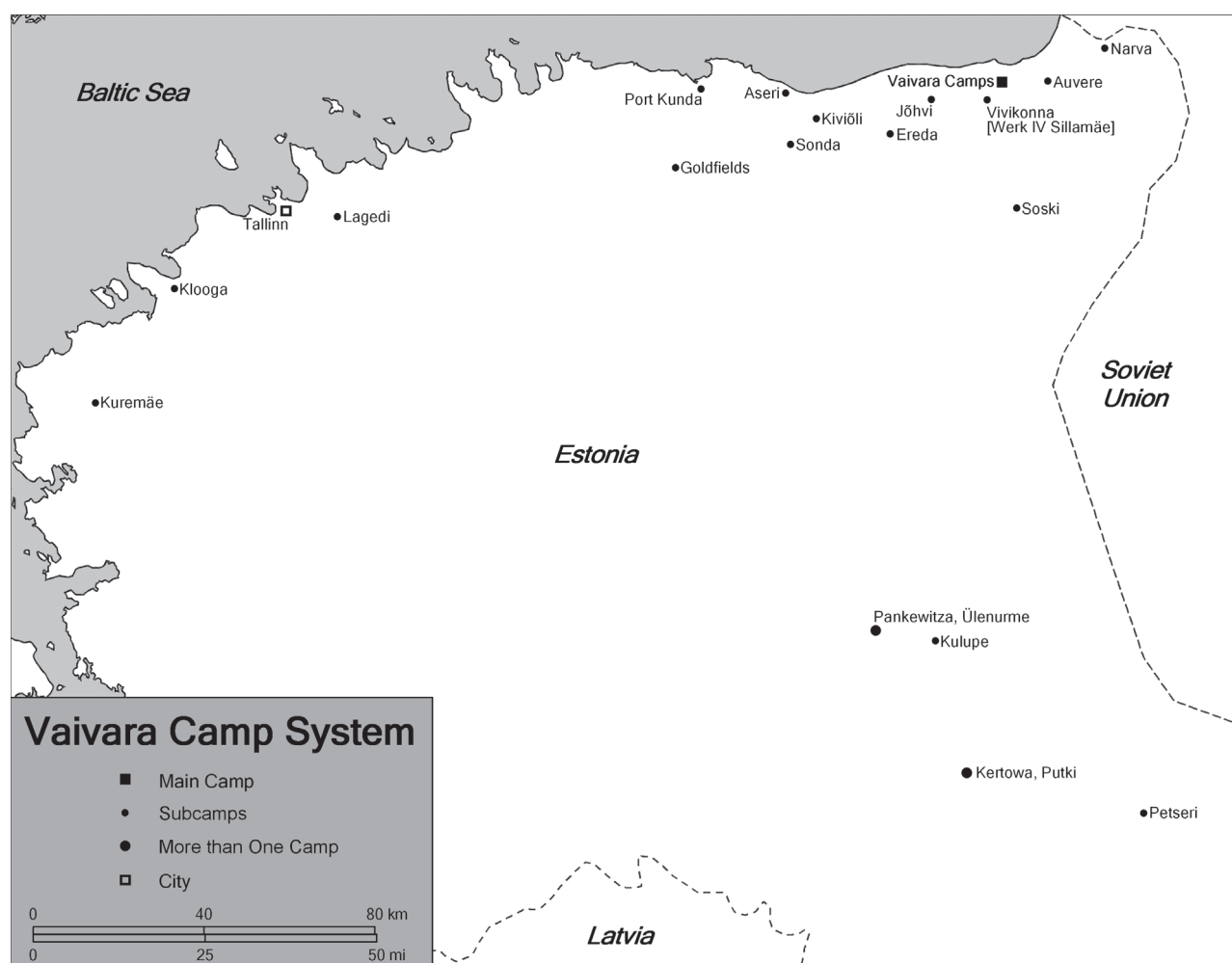
22. N.d., Übersicht über die Weisungen; conflicting Hitler orders from August 9, 1944, August 11, 1944, August 13, 1944—all: ESTA, R 187/1/24.

23. April 25, 1963, Franz Le., vol. 11A; July 21, 1976, Fritz Se., vol. 30—both: ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

24. ESTA, Fond 129/16210jv, information courtesy of Riho Västriik.

25. LG Hannover, 11Ks 2/75.

26. LG Stade, 9 Ks 1/78-23/78.



ASERI [AKA OT OSTLÄNDER LAGER]

The Aseri subcamp was established on May 8, 1944. It held 225 inmates and was monitored by 23 guards. The camp commander was Kurt Pannicke; witnesses recall a deputy nicknamed “Boxer” or “Giraffe.” The SS medic (SDG) assigned to Aseri was Erich Scharfetter. The camp elder was Diller. One witness stated that there were Dutch personnel in the camp, one of whom helped inmates; another, Wilhelm Genth, beat many of them.¹ Inmates either worked in a quarry or laid down railway tracks. Housing consisted of wooden barracks. Even according to the reports of the SS camp doctor, Bodmann, hygienic conditions and food supply in Aseri were inadequate.²

In September 1943, French, Spanish, and Dutch forced laborers were working in Aseri; in February 1944, the camp was still referred to as “OT [Organisation Todt] Ostländer Lager.” Vaivara inmates were marched to Aseri and remained there until August. In typical Vaivara fashion, Pannicke was transferred from one camp to another, and he took a group of Jewish inmates he selected with him.³ According to witness statements, Pannicke knew inmates individually and exhib-

ited a godlike attitude, as expressed in his saying, “I am killing my Jews myself.”⁴ Inmates were beaten on a special bench for stealing food during work assignments outside the camp. One witness related a rather unusual experience: a German army colonel requested a daily work detail of 20 inmates for the sole purpose of giving them food.⁵

Bodmann “selected” 10 percent of the Aseri inmates, including children that the inmates had previously been able to protect. After the selection, the remaining inmates heard machine-gun fire near the camp. One witness stated that a wounded survivor came back to report that the victims were shot near Erede; this account would be consistent with the overall pattern of killings after the big selection in the summer of 1944. Pannicke returned with a bloodstained uniform, and when asked what had happened by the inmates who were requested to wash it, he joked that he had been involved in a duel.⁶ Some inmates were deported by ship from Aseri via Kiviõli to Stutthof in the summer of 1944; others remained in the Vaivara camp system.

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”
Ruth Bettina Birn

NOTES

1. October 4, 1965, Sima Sk., vol. 14, BA-L, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
2. May 26, 1944 and June 26, 1944, Monatsberichte SS Lagerarzt, EHM, 152/2/40.
3. October 4, 1965, Sima Sk., vol. 14; October 6, 1968, Iccak Zo., vol. 24—both: BA-L, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
4. August 19, 1965, Szabatai Ge., vol. 14; October 4, 1965, Sima Sk., vol. 14—both: BA-L, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
5. September 19, 1962, Efim. Ko., vol. 14, BA-L, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
6. October 4, 1965, Sima Sk., vol. 14; October 22, 1968, Sima Sk., vol. 24; July 1, 1971, Herschel Dr., vol. 27—all: BA-L, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

AUVERE

The Auvere subcamp, which the Germans established in the fall of 1943, was one of the smaller camps. In October 1943, it contained 406 inmates; in November, it held 542 prisoners and was considered overcrowded. In January 1943, the number of inmates was 531, but 487 of those inmates were sent on an evacuation march in February 1943. On February 4, 1944, the camp was considered closed.

The first inmates were transferred to Auvere immediately after deportation from Vilnius and Kaunas; others arrived later via Vivikonna. The first camp commander was an Organisation Todt (OT) member; he was replaced by a German police officer, remembered by inmates as Wittner. He was succeeded by Ernst Runde around Christmas of 1943, who also acted as SS medic (SDG). The camp elder was called Jankelewicz. The work was very hard, consisting of building a narrow-gauge railway in a swampy area, which meant that the inmates were standing up to their ankles in ice-cold water. Others worked at woodcutting. OT supervised the work. The inmates were first housed in a former school building; later *Tonnenzelte*, a sort of emergency barracks, were added.

The typhoid epidemic of the winter of 1943–1944 reached Auvere, and in December 1943, 35 inmates had died and 123 were in quarantine. In January 1944, another 12 deaths were registered. The SS camp doctor, Bodmann, fell ill himself in the December period and was temporarily replaced by Dr. Krebsbach. An inmate acted as grave digger. The food situation was as bad here as in other Vaivara camps. Inmates who worked outside the camp were always trying to obtain supplementary food; 1 inmate, who was apprehended with a piece of bread, was killed by the SDG. Another witness recalled how the SDG shot an unnamed inmate who had fallen to his knees, begging for his life. This inmate had been given a few fish by an Estonian.¹

Due to the approach of the Red Army, Auvere was evacuated on February 4, 1944, and 487 inmates were forced to march via Vaivara to Kiviõli, a considerable distance in the middle of winter with plenty of snow on the ground. On January 29, 1944, 40 sick inmates had been transported to

Vaivara. The march was supervised by Runde and a Wehrmacht SDG. Runde himself recalled that the marching column stretched to 3 kilometers (1.9 miles) and was guarded by the Estonian police. Most witnesses recall the terrible circumstances of the march, during which feeble inmates were thrown into a lake.

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

Ruth Bettina Birn

NOTE

1. March 14, 1971, Aron Sch., vol. 27, BA-L, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

EREDA

Ereda was operated by Baltische Öl GmbH, or Baltöl (Baltic Oil), as production site (*Werk*) number X. Before the Germans established the main Vaivara camp, the workforce at Ereda consisted of a mix of civilian laborers, prisoners of war (POWs), and forced laborers. A Waffen-SS depot (*Reservelager*) was nearby. In the vicinity of Ereda, there were a number of work sites, such as mines for oil shale, coal pits, refineries (in nearby Kohtla-Järve), and several building sites run by the Organisation Todt (OT).¹ Ereda was one of the first Vaivara camps to be set up, initially only on a temporary basis, and it contained 245 inmates in October 1943. In November, plans were changed, and the number of inmates was raised to 630. They were supposed to build a new camp 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) away. In December, this plan was dropped, and Ereda continued to consist of two, close-by camps, referred to as the lower camp and the upper camp. In December and January, 752 inmates were incarcerated in Ereda, but the number rose sharply with the influx of evacuees, which brought the total up to 1,600 in February and 1,907 in March. In May 1944, there were 1,497 inmates guarded by 61 Russian guards. As of July 19, 1944, 1,132 Jews worked on OT construction sites. The companies considered the number of Jewish inmates to be too high for acceptable productivity.²

When the first Jewish prisoners arrived, Ereda was still run by OT. After the takeover by the SS administration, the first camp commander was Heinz Drosihn, with Becker as deputy. Drosihn was succeeded by Helmut Schnabel. Erich Scharfetter was in Ereda during the December 1943–January 1944 period of the typhus epidemic; later Rolf Klicker was SS medic (SDG). Former inmates mention as camp elders Lehmann, Rauch, and Glaser. Some witnesses have bad recollections of some of the camp functionaries, and they commented on the lack of solidarity in the camp.³ Drs. Konjurski, Ponwaski, and Konis were mentioned as camp doctors. Roughly 1,000 Jewish inmates were sent to Ereda directly after their deportation from Lithuania in August–September 1943, some of whom were moved to Narva (see Vaivara/Narva) after roughly one month. In the winter of 1943–1944, a small number of Jewish women, who had been deported to Estonia from Germany and Theresienstadt in 1942,

were transferred from the Reval prison to Ereda, presumably in an effort to separate all Jewish from non-Jewish inmates, though 1 of them held that this was meant as punishment for maintaining contact with their families at home with the help of German workmen.⁴ In February 1944, when the more eastern subcamps of Vaivara were evacuated, Ereda became one of the reception camps. The inmates of Narva, for instance, were marched to Ereda under Schnabel's command, and many of them were shot on the way. Some inmates thus encountered family or friends from whom they had been separated. In the early summer of 1944, Hungarian women were deported to Ereda. According to German witnesses from OT, Ereda was liquidated by the end of July 1944, and—as in Aseri and other subcamps—shortly afterward the victims of the “10 percent action” were shot there.⁵

The most dramatic incident in the history of Ereda is connected with the transfer of the group of women from Reval to Ereda. Camp commander Drosihn fell in love with one of the young women, leading to an improvement in the inmates' living conditions. One witness recalls a New Year's Eve celebration where Drosihn was drinking toasts to the inmates and wishing that everybody would be home the following year.⁶ The relationship was discovered, and Drosihn, who must have been aware that the penalty for *Rassenschande* (racial defilement) was death, sought the assistance of his friends in the OT, who helped him to escape and hide. After a few days, however, both Drosihn and the woman were apprehended—either they were shot or they committed suicide. This took place at the end of February or in early March 1944. The episode had a profound effect on the SS camp administration, and strict regulations were implemented to avoid another occurrence. Schnabel took over as camp commander.

Ereda consisted of an upper and a lower camp built on swampy ground. The first inmates had to build their own accommodations; even essentials like a camp kitchen were missing. The housing situation was unsatisfactory, consisting initially of Quonset-type huts, which provided no shelter from the cold. The inmates referred to these huts as “dog-houses.” Inmates' hair sometimes froze to the ground during the night, and they had to cut it off in order to be punctual for roll call. Only in June 1944 was the camp connected to running water, which allowed the inmates to wash daily. The death toll due to the bad living conditions was high: 109 deaths in February 1944 and 161 in March 1944. Because of the numerous construction sites in the vicinity, inmates had to march considerable distances to their workplaces, in the winter and with wooden clogs, which exhausted them even more. After February 1944, the camp became so overcrowded that inmates hardly had room to lie down. In the January–February period, an epidemic of typhus broke out, which added to the general chaos in the camp. Corpses were regularly burned in pits in a clearing in the woods nearby. The sick and the children were confined to the lower camp, where conditions were even more atrocious. On February 14, 1944, all the sick people, together with doctors and nurses and 184 children from the lower camp, were deported. Ereda continued to be used as a collection point for sick inmates; in April

1944, another large group was deported. In July 1944, the “10 percent selection” took place in Ereda as in other subcamps (see “Vaivara Main Camp”), and the camp was evacuated. The inmates were transported by rail, with the exception of roughly 100 people who were left behind, supposedly to clean up the camp.

Schnabel committed numerous acts of atrocity and murder and was considered a sadist. Even former OT personnel commented on the terrible conditions in the camp, the frequent floggings, and the daily deaths of inmates. Several of the killings that Schnabel committed were talked about throughout the camp: one was the killing of two inmates who had asked for a second helping of soup; another, the drowning or starvation (accounts differ) of a newborn baby. Another incident concerned an inmate who, due to illness, could not reach the camp latrines in time and was shot by Schnabel with the words: “Damn dog, you are soiling the white snow.” A young girl was ordered by Schnabel to clean his boots while he was walking around in them, forcing her to crawl on her knees after him while he kicked her in the head.⁷ One of the former Jewish camp doctors commented that Schnabel liked to see blood. Only when the treatment by the Jewish doctors gave Schnabel relief from his arthritis did he treat the inmates somewhat better. Schnabel used a great deal of alcohol; to procure it, two youngsters from the camp bartered food supplies for alcohol in the nearby village. Dealings of this nature seem to have made Schnabel somewhat approachable; at times, both he and the SDG could be bribed with valuables.⁸ Most of the former inmates comment more favorably on the behavior of the OT men, who tried to improve the food situation.

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

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NOTES

1. September 20, 1943, OT/Einsatzgruppenleiter Russland-Nord, Gieseler an Leiter OT Zentrale, Dorsch, ESTA, R 187/1/7.
2. June 27, 1944, Bevollmächtigter für den Arbeitseinsatz, ESTA, R 1887/1/33.
3. Gerszon Karapansa, YV, 03/1780; Rosalie Szoszana Harten, YVA, 03/2262; Se'adya Bahat, YVA, 03/8657; Aharon Nahimowicz, YVA, 03/3957.
4. July 13, 1965, Hilda Le., vol. 14, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
5. April 17, 1963, Franz Le., vol. 11A, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
6. Simon Tubiaszewicz, YVA, 04/396.
7. June 9, 1966, Sara Mi., vol. 22, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
8. July 11, 1973, Yakov Pe., vol. 28, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

GOLDFIELDS (“GOLDFELD”)

Goldfields was part of the Baltische Öl GmbH, or Baltöl (Baltic Oil) concern, named such by a British company in the interwar years. Jewish workers were used for several Baltöl building projects. In February 1944, the Goldfields subcamp opened with 1,200 inmates. In March the number rose to

1,543, but in May there were only 889 inmates in the camp. In July 1944, Baltöl statistics show 405 Jewish workers on Goldfields construction sites.

The camp commander at Goldfields was Fritz Stiewitz. According to one witness, Stiewitz originated from Frankfurt, and some of the female inmates knew him from school (this in reference to the Frankfurt deportees, who came via the Reval prison to the Vaivara camps). According to the same witness, Stiewitz was not so bad by himself, but became cruel under group pressure from other SS soldiers.¹ Inmates remember SS medic (SDG) Erich Scharfetter, nicknamed “Kirkennik,” who was routinely assigned to camps to combat typhus epidemics. In May 1944, the SDGs were Heinrich Helmlinger and Theodor Schmitz. Some inmates remember Raphael Oster as camp elder; others recall somebody named Dipante.² In the final period, Kurt Pannicke, who had marched some of the inmates of Aseri to Goldfields, presumably in preparation for the final evacuation, took over as camp commander.

Inmates of Ereda report that they were marched daily to nearby Goldfields to work on construction. When the new camp opened, Stiewitz selected the first group of inmates from those he knew in Ereda. They were housed in unused barracks and worked building railway tracks and on other construction sites. Goldfields was one of the camps to receive the populations of the already evacuated camps. In March 1944, the inmates of Kuremäe arrived in Goldfields, leading to a sharp deterioration in hygienic conditions. All of the inmates were infested with lice. In April 1944, 150 inmates were sent to Klooga, bringing some relief from the overcrowding. Inmates from Aseri recall arriving as late as August 1944. In this period, no productive work was conducted, as everybody knew that the end was near.³ A large group of inmates managed to escape, but Pannicke organized a search, during which many of the escapees were shot.⁴ The final evacuation took place in part by truck. A truck loaded with 50 SS men in black leather coats accompanied them. After an error in direction, panic seized the already apprehensive inmates, who jumped off the trucks and tried to hide. Shots were fired, a few people were killed, but the rest came back and were finally deported from Reval to Stutthof by ship.⁵

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

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NOTES

1. January 7, 1970, Malka Ba., vol. 26, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

2. March 1, 1966, Israel Polizei, Bericht 10, statement by Meir Mark Dworzecki, vol. 16, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59; Abraham Halpern, YVA, 03/3201.

3. August 17, 1965, Alan We., vol. 14, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

4. Heshl Drabkin, Shmuel Drabkin, Arie Orbach, YVA, 03/3843.

5. August 17, 1965, Alan We., vol. 14, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

JÖHVI (JEWE)

Apart from oil-shale mining, Organisation Todt (OT) was engaged in multiple projects at Jöhvi, which was listed as Werk IV of Baltische Öl GmbH, or Baltöl (Baltic Oil). The other projects included building fortifications and digging antitank trenches; constructing a power station, a hospital, and barracks; and cutting wood for the construction projects. Jöhvi housed a number of German offices, an Estonian security police outpost, a local army commander (Standortkommandant), and a field hospital (*Hauptverbandsplatz*) located next to a hospital under construction and a big cemetery. It must have been a place of some importance, for when Reichskommissar Lohse inspected the Baltöl and OT sites on September 1, 1943, he visited Kiviõli and Jöhvi.

In October 1943, the first 201 inmates of Jöhvi were placed in unused barracks. While their number slightly increased to 264 in December, the camp never physically grew bigger. It was obviously meant as a temporary camp, because by the end of December, it was closed. One witness recalls that he remained behind with a group to clean up.¹ In February 1944, it was reopened for a short period, this time containing 190 inmates. The barracks for Jewish inmates were close to a Russian camp but strictly separated by barbed wire. OT personnel recalled that the Jews were later replaced by prisoners of war (POWs).

When deportees from the first transport from Vilnius arrived in Jöhvi, the camp was not yet incorporated into the Vaivara system. Even afterward, no SS commander was assigned to Jöhvi, but the camp was run by OT and a camp elder. The OT also supplied the camp guards. Former inmates have positive recollections of the OT supervisor, who on one occasion tore a picture of Hitler from the wall.² SS medic (SDG) Erich Scharfetter, nicknamed “Kirkennik,” was the only SS member active in Jöhvi for lengthy periods of time due to his function in disinfecting inmates.³ In December 1943, an epidemic of typhus erupted. Scharfetter killed sick inmates through injections and shot others who were running a fever, causing widespread panic and several suicides among the inmates. The remaining sick inmates were sent to a hospital in Vaivara.

Jewish female inmates from the Jöhvi camp worked as cleaning personnel in OT offices. A female German office worker, in charge of payment of salaries, recalls that they were pale, malnourished, and insufficiently clad and that she gave them food.⁴ Former OT men mentioned that the Jewish cleaners cried because their hair had been cut and that the Jews working on construction complained about hunger.

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

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NOTES

1. July 11, 1973, Yakov Pe., vol. 28, ZdL, AR-Z 233/5; July 11, 73, Fajwel Mi., vol. 28, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

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2. Izhak Kaufman, in a 1964 symposium on Estonian camps, YVA, 03/2810.

3. Urteil LG Stade gegen Erich Scharfetter, February 1, 1980, 9 Ks I/78-23/78.

4. October 20, 1960, Erna Ho., vol. 3, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

KERSTOWA AND PUTKI

The Germans established Kerstowa as a temporary camp in October 1943. Its 348 inmates had to work on a demolition project that was supposed to last for one or two weeks. The camp was not run by SS personnel and was far away from the other Vaivara camps. In November, the camp was dissolved, and the remaining 159 inmates were transferred via Narva to a new camp, Putki.

Putki was located in an area of forest and swamp, housed 145 inmates, and was run entirely by the Organisation Todt (OT). In January 1944, 198 inmates were transferred from Narva, bringing the camp population to 340. The camp operated until February 4, 1944, when the Red Army's advance made the OT retreat. The 334 remaining inmates were marched by Wehrmacht medic Rabel to Vaivara, under terrible conditions, through forests and swamps.¹

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

Ruth Bettina Birn

NOTE

1. Reports of the SS-Lagerarzt, October 25, 1943, November 25, 1943, December 29, 1943, January 26, 1944, February 20, 1944—all: EHM, 152/2/40.

KIVIÖLI I AND II

Kiviõli was a center of industrial activity: the headquarters of Baltische Öl GmbH, or Baltöl (Baltic Oil), had its office there, and the Mineral Oil Command (Mineralölkommando) and the General Labor Leader (Generalsarbeitsführer) of the Organisation Todt (OT) Industrial Protective Service (Werkschutz, supervised by the gendarmerie detachment leader, Gendarmeriegebietsführer) were stationed there.¹ In addition, a German gendarmerie post and a local headquarters (*Ortskommandantur*) of the German army were located there. The commander of the Security Police of Estonia had a branch office there, headed by Heinz Zielfeld. The various construction projects at Kiviõli were considered of great importance.²

In October 1943, Kiviõli contained 448 inmates; they were housed in temporary barracks until additional facilities were built. The number of inmates rose steadily, from 698 in November to 1,300 in February 1944, and to 1,689 in May and June. On July 19, 1944, 1,462 inmates worked at Baltöl construction sites in Kiviõli.³ In February 1944, 104 old and sick inmates were deported to the Riga-Kaiserwald concentration

camp; in May, 250 sick people from Ereda were brought to the camp; and in June, 200 inmates from Goldfields were transferred to Kiviõli.

Two camps existed—Kiviõli I and II—but they were administered as one. The commander of Kiviõli I was Wilhelm Werle; the deputy commander and SS medic (SDG) was Ernst Runde. A dental station was run by Franz Mang. In March 1944, after the Germans had to leave Vaivara, Oskar Helbig became deputy commander. The camp doctors have been identified as Dr. Wolkowyski and Dr. Naftali Resnik; the camp elder, as Zepelewicz (or Cypelewicz). At a later point, Reissig took over as the commander. The commander of Kiviõli II was Wirker, although Erich Scharfetter acted for him occasionally. In May 1944, 71 guards monitored 1,689 inmates. Some female inmates recall female army auxiliaries (*Blitzmüdel*) as their guards.⁴

Sanitary conditions were initially bad but slowly improved, in part because of security considerations. Baltlöl considered the installation of running water a necessity because the use of a common well increased the risk of escapes and undermined the separation of Jewish inmates from others.⁵ Communication between the two camps seems to have been possible, and, to a certain degree, contact between male and female inmates was also possible. Kiviõli I was considered the better place; former inmates recall sufficient food—even kosher (without meat)—and celebration of Jewish holidays was possible.⁶ The Jewish criminals (*Shtarke*) held a strong influence in the camp.⁷

Former inmates of Kiviõli I recall that Runde harassed them at roll call; they also describe Helbig as a sadist, whereas the commander was seen as a moderating influence. One former inmate, who was deported directly from Vilnius to Kiviõli I and stayed there until mid-1944, describes Runde as the main negative influence in the camp.⁸ Both Runde and Helbig are alleged to have killed inmates on big piles of hot slag; Helbig actually had several feeble inmates thrown on it, so that they burned alive.⁹ Inmates of Kiviõli II reported that Wirker was quite active in the camp, supervising activities in the sickroom, ordering specific roll calls to be conducted on Sundays, and committing a number of atrocities. The ongoing selections claimed victims from among Hungarian Jewish women, many of whom arrived in the camp pregnant.

The “10 percent selection” (see “Vaivara Main Camp”) took place at both camps, conducted by the SS camp doctor, Bodmann. The camp elder and doctors of Kiviõli I were among those selected. It appears that the lists of “unfit” inmates had been prepared in advance.¹⁰ As in other camps, the inmate in charge of vehicle maintenance looked on the returning truck and found indications in several languages that those selected were being shot close to Ereda.¹¹ An SS driver returned with his arm wounded and his rifle broken, complaining about “the Jews” who had done that to him; the other SS officers had bloodied and dirtied uniforms and boots; the SS dentist brought a box with gold teeth back. According to a former German police officer, Kiviõli was also the site of the elimination of mass graves by Sonderkommando 1005.¹²

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

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NOTES

1. Otto Me., p. 146, vol. 1, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
2. September 20, 1943, OT/Einsatzgruppe Russland Nord, Gieseler an Reichsminister für Bewaffnung und Munition, Speer; OT/Einsatzgruppe Russland Nord, Gieseler an Leiter OT Zentrale, Dorsch—both: ESTA, R 187/1/7.
3. July 19, 1944, Baustellenplanung, ESTA, R 187/1/124.
4. Nechama Leibiski, YVA, M1E/2444.
5. October 4, 1943, Baltöl, Überwachung der Juden, ESTA, R 187/1/33.
6. Arye Rubinstein, YVA, 03/9681; Arie Orbach, YVA, 04/2733; Chienna Yakobson, YVA, 03/5988; Gerszon Karapansa, YVA, 03/1780.
7. Gerszon Karapansa, YVA, 03/1780.
8. October 20, 1965, Hirsz An., vol. 14, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
9. Alfred Streim, “Konzentrationslager auf dem Gebiet der Sowjetunion,” *DaHe* 5 (1989): 181.
10. Mira Brojdo, YVA, 04/396.
11. November 10, 1967, Joseph Le., vol. 23, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
12. July 3, 1968, Josef Sch., vol. 7, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

KLOOGA

The subcamp at Klooga was located west of the city of Tallinn, outside the northeastern mining and oil-shale district, and it was not connected with Baltische Öl GmbH, or Baltöl (Baltic Oil). In 1942, camps for resettlers from the army area “Russia-North,” in Klooga-Lodensee, Polküla, Pakri, and Baltisch-Port, were based at Klooga. In 1943–1944, Klooga was a camp for Russian forced laborers; from 1943 on, it was the barracks grounds and administrative offices of the 20th Estonian Waffen-SS division; and then it became a subcamp



Soviet investigators inspect corpses from the Klooga subcamp of Vaivara which have been stacked for mass burning, September 1944.

USHMM WS #98905, COURTESY OF ESTHER ANCOLI-BARBASCH

of Vaivara. A work detail (Aussenkommando) was located in nearby Laoküla.

The camp population in Klooga was more stable than in other Vaivara camps. Many former inmates stated that they had been deported directly from Lithuania to Klooga and remained there until August–September 1944. In October 1943, Klooga already contained 1,453 inmates; in November, 1,854; and in April 1944, 2,080. In May 1944, there were 2,122 inmates and 112 guards. In November 1943, 250 inmates were sent to work camps near Dorpat; in April 1944, 250 were received from Ereda and Goldfields; and in May, more inmates were received from Kiviõli. Men and women were housed in solid barracks in separate parts of the camp. Running water and elementary sanitary facilities existed; the Vaivara SS camp doctor, Bodmann, considered the conditions in Klooga better than those in any other camp. In the final stages of German occupation of Estonia, many inmates from other camps and the SS camp administration—including Aumeier, Brenneis, and Bodmann—crowded into Klooga, waiting for transport by ship to Germany.

The camp commander was Bock, though it is unclear whether he held that position for the whole period. For the last few weeks in the summer of 1944, he was replaced by Wilhelm Werle. The SS medics (SDGs) were Wilhelm Bahr and Karl Theiner (confirmed for May 1944); inmates name others, among them Wilhelm Genth. Female inmates were guarded by female SS guards, one of whom was transferred from Ravensbrück. Sources mention Melzer and Frieda Beiwill as camp elders; others mention Fried and Muskat. Jewish camp police were present, and inmates were assigned as work supervisors. Former inmates also speak about the presence of organized Jewish criminals from Vilnius (*Die Shtarken, unsere Unterwelt*), which, contrary to the other inmates’ apprehensions, turned out to be a positive element, organizing the stealing and distribution of food.¹ Witnesses also speak positively about an SS man in charge of supplies, who would give them the opportunity to steal or barter for food and bring it back to the camp.² This story is confirmed by the former cook of a navy work detail in Klooga.³ Dutch civilian laborers working close by also supplied inmates with food.⁴ According to criminal investigations conducted by the Estonian security police, a lively trade bartering clothes for food took place between Klooga inmates working outside the camp and the local population, in particular Russians from the resettlement camp.⁵

Work consisted of the production of concrete mines supervised by the Organisation Todt (OT) and a special command of the German navy, construction activities under the OT, or work at a sawmill. The OT also worked with non-Jewish forced laborers. A card index of inmates of Klooga and their work assignments gives an overview of the work details, which included pouring concrete, construction, transport, the sawmill, craft shops, cleaning details, and the army supply depot Reval (*Truppenwirtschaftslager*).⁶

Former inmates recall few instances of killings before September 1944. One scene that many remembered took place upon arrival of the deportation train. After disembarking, in-

mates had to line up in front of a long table and deliver their valuables or money to the SS. One former Jewish Vilnius ghetto policeman obviously tried to conceal money and was shot on the spot in public view. Bodmann and the medical personnel repeatedly killed sick inmates with injections. Corporal punishment was meted out; on one occasion, an inmate was beaten to death by three SS men. Different variants exist about the killing of a newborn baby, which a medic with the nickname “Antek” burned in the oven of the sawmill. Other atrocities are attributed to Antek as well; and several inmates claim that he was in fact Wilhelm Genth. However, many of the allegations do not coincide with the established stages of Genth’s camp career. Other sources claim that Wilhelm Bahr murdered the baby; Bahr was confirmed as a medic in Klooga.

Klooga was liquidated on September 19, 1944. Inmates from outside work details were brought back to the main camp, which was cordoned off with the help of units of the 20th Waffen-SS Division under the command of Sturmbannführer Georg Ahlemann.⁷ The SS tried hard to avoid a panic among the inmates and promised that everybody would be evacuated to other camps in Germany. They even provided a particularly good meal. It cannot be ascertained who was in command on that day; the obvious person would be the then-camp commander Werle, although he denied this and claimed that the (higher-ranking) Verwaltungsführer Brenneis had taken over. Apart from the Vaivara personnel present in Klooga, a group of 20 or 30 people from the Commander of Security Police and Security Service in Reval arrived on the morning of September 19 to carry out a mass killing. All the inmates had to sit down cross-legged on the camp ground. Several hundred young men were then called up and had to carry stout pieces of wood out of the camp. After that, inmates were marched out of the camp in small groups. At some point, the sound of gunfire confirmed the suspicions of the waiting inmates; in addition, 1 man came running back and shouted warnings before he was shot. In the ensuing panic, over 100 inmates were able to flee and hide. The wood that the inmates had carried had been used to form pyres. People were shot and fell onto them, then a new layer of wood was added and the next group shot. Other inmates were shot in a shed, but several people escaped before it was doused with gasoline and burned. The pyres were also set on fire. Russian prisoners were shot as well.

At the end of the day, the Germans left the camp. The inmates in hiding were liberated by the Red Army a few days later. The Red Army widely reported on what had happened and took pictures of the execution site, and the Klooga mass murder was introduced in the Soviet trial against Friedrich Jeckeln and others in Riga in 1945–1946. For these reasons, this mass killing and Klooga itself have become more widely known than other subcamps where similar events took place—for instance, Ereda.

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

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NOTES

1. Abraham Aharonson, YVA, 03/2926; manuscript by L. Buzhanski, YVA, M 1-E/822; Israel Segal, YVA, 03/2669.
2. Abraham Aharonson, YVA, 03/2926.
3. July 12, 196?, Wilhelm Fö., vol. 17, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
4. Abraham Aharonson, YVA, 03/2926.
5. Individual cases in ESTA, R 64/1/159-167.
6. See R 170, ESTA. A full evaluation of the index was done by Riho Västriik and kindly made available to the author.
7. July 9, 1974, Anklageschrift Georg Ahlemann, LG Köln, 130 24 Js 14/70.

KUREMÄE

The first 150 inmates of the Kuremäe subcamp were housed in a former community center (*Gemeindehaus*). Everything was lacking: food, water, latrines, shoes, and clothes. Even the Vaivara SS camp doctor, Bodmann, remarked on the desolate conditions. The inmates had to build the fences enclosing the camp themselves; later a few emergency barracks (*Tonnenzelte*) were erected. Some people were directly deported from Kaunas to Kuremäe; others arrived later via other camps. Inmates worked on a narrow-gauge railway. In November 1943, the number of inmates increased to 462. Bodmann complained about the high percentage of people unfit for work but mentioned that the numbers had “decreased.”¹ From this remark one can conclude that the 33 deaths registered in November were not due to natural causes. In December 1943 and January 1944, the number of inmates was slightly lower, and 10 and 14 deaths occurred, respectively. In February 1944, the population sharply increased to about 850, due to the transfer of 437 inmates from Soski. On February 8 and February 16, inmates were killed by Soviet artillery at their work sites. Kuremäe was closed in March 1944.

The camp commander was Alfred Engst; the SS medic (SDG) was Knott. SDG Erich Scharfetter was also present. The guards were Russians or Ukrainians. Dr. Dworzecki was the camp doctor. Later, at the time of the evacuation of most eastern camps, Wilhelm Genth, who was acting as commander in Soski, marched the Soski inmates to Kuremäe with the help of the Estonian guards. The inmates recall having “been driven like cattle” and that Scharfetter killed several people on the way.² After Kuremäe was evacuated, the inmates were absorbed into other camps. Several witnesses list Goldfields as the next station.

Scharfetter was infamous for his acts of cruelty; he killed inmates with injections but also by cutting their throats or with a pickax. An inmate recalls the murder of 19 sick inmates; later, that inmate, who had to burn the corpses, recounted that all 19 had wounds inflicted by a pickax.³ A German court sentenced Scharfetter to life imprisonment for 18 counts of murder.⁴

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

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NOTES

1. November 25, 1943, Monatsbericht SS Lagerarzt, EHM, 152/2/40.
2. June 7, 1967, Abraham Kr., vol. 4, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
3. Iser Zak, YVA, 04/400.
4. February 1, 1980, Urteil Scharfetter, LG Stade, 9 Ks 1/78-23/78.

LAGEDI

The subcamp at Lagedi existed only briefly, approximately from July to September of 1944. Entries on transfers in the Klooga card index indicate that it was considered a work camp.¹ When the transports of inmates coming from camps evacuated in the second stage of the retreat could not be housed in Klooga, a camp was erected close to Reval in Lagedi near the railway line. Inmates were initially living in the open; later they constructed temporary shelter. In August 1944, material to erect barracks was supplied by Klooga. The camp commander was Helmut Schnabel. SS medic (SDG) Scharfetter seems also to have been present at one stage, and there are allegations against him of killings of inmates in pairs. At one point the camp was bombarded by the Soviets, and some inmates were wounded. In the final evacuation, the inmates were transported by ship to the Stutthof concentration camp. When they left, only a group of approximately 80 inmates remained to clean up. Former inmates later heard that the 80 were killed after they performed the work. The German camp personnel shot them after the Estonian guards refused to do it.

On August 18, 1944, 500 inmates from Klooga were brought to Lagedi, which was at that point empty except for camp commander Alfred Engst and two Jews. Some inmates have positive recollections of Engst; for instance, he allowed them to bathe once a week. The inmates had to dig antitank trenches. Shortly before the evacuation, the Vaivara SS camp doctor, Bodmann, conducted a final selection. On September 18, 1944, Krebsbach, Brenneis, and other SS officers arrived to tell Engst that the camp inmates would be evacuated to another location. Inmates were driven away by truck. The last truck containing members of work details was delayed, and upon arrival at its destination—a clearing in a wooded area—the inmates overheard the driver being told that he was too late. They were taken to Reval, where they spent the night in the prison, and then they were brought to Klooga on September 19. Later they realized that all the others had been shot in the woods, but they were brought back to be killed in the big action in Klooga. A truck with female inmates also arrived too late for the execution in the forest, and they were then transported back to Klooga via the Reval prison.

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”
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NOTE

1. R 170, ESTA. A full evaluation of the index was done by Riho Västriik and kindly made available to the author.

NARVA [AKA NARVA-OST]
(AND HUNGERBURG)

The Germans established the Vaivara subcamp Narva-Ost (as the official letterhead stated) in the fall of 1943, when Kurt Pannicke was transferred there with 500 inmates. Other inmates arrived from Vivikonna or, at later points, from other camps. One former inmate recalls that he volunteered for Narva in order to get away from the terrible conditions in Ereda.¹ In October 1943, the Vaivara SS camp doctor, Bodmann, listed 1,548 persons at Narva; in November, 1,693. In November 1943, 300 inmates were sent to a work detail (Auslenkommando) in Hungerburg (Estonian: Narva-Jõesuu). Consequently, the population decreased to 1,290 in December, then to 1,004 in January. In February 1944, Narva was evacuated, and 733 inmates had to march for 20 hours to Vaivara.

The Narva camp was located in a former factory; the inmates lived in factory buildings, men and women in separate sections. The SS medic (SDG) was Ernst Runde. Helmut Schnabel acted for Pannicke in January 1944 when the latter was ill. Diller was named as camp elder. The camp clerk (Schreiber), a man called Brojde, or Broido, was well known among the inmates from Vilnius, because he had once been a Lithuanian consul. The guards were Estonians and Latvians. From the reports on the shooting of two inmates—who were allegedly trying to escape—the guard figures as a “Schutzmann.”² Dutch laborers worked close by; their food was prepared in the so-called Dutch kitchen.

Work consisted of building fortifications and digging anti-tank trenches for the Pantherstellung, an army defensive network, as well as roadwork, woodcutting, and construction projects by various companies under the auspices of the Organisation Todt (OT). The Pantherstellung was given high priority; on March 1, 1944, the army planned to assign 3,000 Jewish workers to this project.³ Surviving OT invoices for compensation paid for the laborers working on their construction sites show an 11-hour workday.⁴ Inmates in the Hungerburg camp did forestry work. This camp was run by OT. When a typhus epidemic struck, however, SDG Scharfetter was temporarily transferred there. In January 1944, the subcamp was closed.

The surviving records show that the camp was organized in sections (*Blöcke*) and rooms (*Zimmer*); transfers from one room to another were recorded, as well as the number of sick inmates in the sickroom (*Revier*) or the amounts of wooden clogs or pieces of clothing distributed to inmates.⁵ The recollections of former inmates create a not-so-orderly picture of a world of hunger, cold, exhaustion, sickness, lice, and typhus. Food was entirely inadequate; inmates recall receiving a daily ration of 200 grams (7 ounces) of bread and 0.5 liters (2 cups) of soup. Even Bodmann admitted that the work at Narva was extraordinarily hard and the conditions bad. The number of deaths was high—125 in December 1943 alone. The few surviving camp records report several cases of inmates leaving their workplace to beg for food. Malnutrition led to famine

edema, and typhus was rampant. As early as November 16, 1943, inmates attempted to escape. (The Estonian Security Police helped track down escapees, as a warrant indicates.)⁶ One former inmate recalled that he escaped and went to town, where he tried to find work, but he was ferreted out by an informer and was returned to the camp via the police prison.⁷

On top of the overall bad conditions, the SS officers running Narva were of a particularly murderous disposition. Pannicke was only 26 years old, and he exhibited a strange mix of favoritism toward certain inmates and, at the same time, extreme cruelty. He seems to have enjoyed the limitless power his position gave him, telling inmates that their lives were entirely in his hands.⁸ At other times he could joke with them and show concern for their well-being. During marches he made them sing Jewish songs.⁹ Pannicke also enjoyed his material advantages: he forced an inmate shoemaker to steal leather from the OT to make boots for his girlfriends, and he gave jewelry or gold to the camp elder to buy him additional food.¹⁰ Mimicking the sound of his name, inmates nicknamed him “Peiniger” (Torturer).

Runde had the nickname “Meine Herren!” (Gentlemen!) because he used to publicly address inmates this way. Helmut Schnabel was not stationed in Narva but visited his friend Pannicke often. On these visits, excessive consumption of alcohol and murderous rampages were common. One of the worst episodes occurred around Christmas 1943 or New Year’s Eve 1944, when Pannicke and his friends walked onto the camp ground and beat and trampled several inmates to death in full view of the prisoners standing to attention. Many witnesses also recall the deportation of Brodje, one of Pannicke’s former favorites, presumably during the “10 percent selection.” When Pannicke gave Brodje’s leather jacket to another inmate, everybody knew what his fate had been.

Pannicke regularly beat inmates at roll call, forced them to stand overly long at attention as punishment, killed weak people or threw them into a canal adjoining the camp grounds, and drilled them to remove their caps and put them back on with military precision. Runde regularly checked the camp infirmary and throttled sick inmates. The room elder (Stubenältester) then removed the corpses and took them off the list of inmates, which Runde then countersigned. Sick people were also killed through injections. The background for this can be found in Bodmann’s reports: in November 1943, he complained about the high number of old inmates but hoped that by the “harsher measures” (*bärteren Masstab*) applied by Runde the numbers could be decreased. In December, most old Jews were reported to have died. At the time when the typhus epidemic was rampant, one of the inmates recalls Bodmann saying that the best thing would be to raze the entire infested camp.¹¹ Corpses were burned in a factory oven on a regular basis. Feeble inmates were also “finished off” by the work supervisors.

In February 1944, Narva was evacuated due to the advancing front line; the inmates were marched via Vaivara to Ereda. Schnabel may have supervised the march; other witnesses recalled Pannicke as supervisor. The march claimed many victims.

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF CAMPS AND GHETTOS, 1933–1945

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”
Ruth Bettina Birn

NOTES

1. June 7, 1961, Abraham Kr., vol. 6, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
2. Undated handwritten fragments, ESTA, R 966/1/1.
3. March 1, 1944, Mineralölkommando Estland, Aktennotiz, ESTA, R 187/1/24.
4. Lohnstundenachweis für Baustellenlohnempfänger, ESTA, R 966/1/1.
5. See ESTA, R 966.
6. November 16, 1943, Viks, Suchbefehl, ESTA, R 62/1/25.
7. Mordechai Rosenberg, YVA, 03/3085.
8. October 14, 1965, Sima Sk., vol. 14, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
9. July 1, 1971, Herschel-Chane Dr., vol. 27, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
10. November 5, 1962, Zelik Gu., vol. 12, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
11. October 25, 1965, Joseph Ba., p. 1848, 1. Ausfertigung, Bd 12A, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

PANKEWITZA

The Germans established a camp at Pankewitza, 50 kilometers (about 31 miles) west of Pleskau, in November 1943. Two hundred and fifty inmates from Klooga were transferred there on November 11 and housed in barracks. For December, the same numbers are listed.

No further information on this camp is available.

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

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PETSERI, ÜLENURME, KULUPE

In January 1944, 198 inmates were registered at the work camp at Petseri; 3 deaths occurred during that month. There were 127 inmates in the nearby camp at Ülenurme, and 299 in Kulupe. These camps were too far away from the headquarters in Vaivara to be inspected regularly by the SS doctor. The SS medic (SDG) Karl Theiner was in charge of all three camps. In March 1944, 513 inmates from all three camps were deported, and after a German army unit refused to allow Jews into their delousing facilities, the prisoners were brought to Riga-Kaiserwald. Former inmates recalled that they worked on a railway originating in Dorpat and that camps were shifted according to the progress of construction.¹

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

Ruth Bettina Birn

NOTE

1. 1949, Affidavit Mirkin Le., vol. 15, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59; 30.8.1967, Ela Ko, vol. 26, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

PORT KUNDA

A subcamp of Vaivara, at Port Kunda, was established in the autumn of 1943 with the purpose of supplying the Port Kunda cement factory with manpower. The factory was situated on the north coast of Estonia between Tallinn and Narva. It was built in the 1890s by the then-largest Danish industrial corporation FL Smidth & Co., which took over the ownership of Port Kunda in 1922 in cooperation with Swedish interests. Port Kunda Cement, with approximately 1,200 workers, was self-sufficient in all raw materials. It was run by Danish engineers until 1940, when the factory was nationalized in the wake of the Soviet occupation of Estonia. Soon after the German attack on the Soviet Union in 1941 and the subsequent occupation of Estonia, negotiations between the German and the Danish governments were initiated concerning a Danish takeover of Port Kunda. On the Danish side, negotiations were conducted by Minister of Public Works Gunnar Larsen, who was able to utilize his personal connections with German Minister of Armaments and War Production Fritz Todt. In alliance with Todt, Larsen bypassed the German Foreign Ministry and instead approached newly appointed Minister of the Occupied Eastern Territories Alfred Rosenberg, who was eager to produce political results. Negotiations were probably facilitated by the fact that, in 1935, Larsen, an engineer who studied at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, had taken over the leadership of FL Smidth & Co. and was now both director and chairman of the board of that corporation. Thus, already in the autumn of 1941, the former director of Port Kunda, Theodor Hansen, returned to the factory; and during Larsen's official visit to the Baltic lands, the Reichskommissariat Ostland, in April–May 1942, the factory was formally handed over to the Danes. The reinstatement of the former owners was one of the few tangible results of the work accomplished by Larsen and the so-called Danish Committee for the Eastern Areas, initiated by him and established under the auspices of the Danish Foreign Ministry.

At Port Kunda, cement production had already commenced in August 1942, but it was seriously hampered by a chronic shortage of labor, and Hansen repeatedly asked the local German authorities for extra manpower—specifically, 200 men for the oil-shale quarry at Ubja.¹ At the same time, the FL Smidth & Co. headquarters in Copenhagen urged Reichskommissar Hinrich Lohse to solve the problem. The Technisches Hauptamt Estland regarded Port Kunda Cement—Estonia's only cement factory—as crucial for the supplying of cement for the Organisation Todt (OT); and in the summer of 1943, Port Kunda Cement was characterized as an armaments concern (*Rüstungsausbau*) of decisive importance to the war (*kriegsentscheidender Bedeutung*). The same year, the factory produced 49.3 tons of cement, covering 90 percent of the minimum demand in the Generalbezirk Estland.² In September 1942, 40 local Roma (Gypsies), who had been interned by the occupation authorities, more than half of whom were women, were set to work at the factory. Later that year, an extra 62 refugees and settlers from the Leningrad

area arrived with their families. When in April 1943 these people were shipped to Finland as part of a German-Finnish settlement program, production at the factory came to a standstill.³

Heinrich Himmler's order of June 21, 1943, to dissolve the Jewish ghettos of the Reichskommissariat Ostland and set the prisoners to work in the camps of the Estonian oil-shale areas helped solve the problem. On September 15, 1943, Vaivara was established at Narva as the main camp for 27 work camps in northern Estonia. A few weeks later, a camp connected to Port Kunda Cement was set up. On October 10, 1943, the first contingent of Jewish prisoners—approximately 60 men and 10 women—arrived from the ghetto of Vilnius and were put behind barbed wire. Shortly thereafter, they were joined by up to 200 Jewish prisoners who were among those evacuated from the Kaunas ghetto on October 28.⁴ Thus, from October 1943, there were two camps at Port Kunda. One was the “Jewish Camp” situated in the woods at a closed-down oil-shale quarry at Vainamoisa, approximately 11 kilometers (6.8 miles) outside Port Kunda. Every day, the Jews were marched from their wooden barracks to the limestone quarries at Arro and Allofer and the oil-shale quarry at Ubja, where they worked under inhuman conditions. The limestone and oil shale they mined were transported by train to the cement plant at Port Kunda. At times, some of the Jewish prisoners were sent to Port Kunda to assist in cement production. The camp at Vainamoisa was guarded by the Training and Reserve Battalion 20 of the Estonian SS, commanded by the German SS-Unterscharführer B. and a few other German SS. Information is unavailable about whether any of these people were ever tried before a court after the war.⁵

The other camp was a stone house (still standing in 2006) on the factory grounds, where the Gypsy families lived. Guarded by Estonians, they carried out the most exhausting work at the plant, reloading the oil shale as it arrived from the quarries outside Port Kunda. At the time of the Danish administration from 1941 to 1944, one Gypsy was shot while trying to escape. The surviving Gypsies were released on the day before the arrival of the Red Army in the summer of 1944.

The Jews and Roma at Port Kunda's two camps endured hard physical labor. According to survivors, the commandant would often hit and threaten the prisoners, leaving them to wait for hours in the cold when they had finished work. Hansen left Port Kunda immediately after the arrival of the Jews, leaving the administration of the factory to the remaining five Danish engineers. According to an interview with one of the engineers, the inmates were given the same quantities of food and cigarettes as the staff.⁶ In February 1944, as the German-Soviet front drew near, production facilities were taken over by the German authorities.

As many as 500 people might have worked at Port Kunda's limestone and oil-shale quarries when the factory was abandoned in July or August 1944. Shortly before the evacuation, elderly people and children were taken away and shot in the woods. The surviving prisoners were sent to Tallinn and were

taken by ship to Danzig/Gdańsk, where they were set to work in the Stutthof concentration camp. The few survivors were finally marched to Germany, where they were liberated in the spring of 1945.⁷

The FL Smidth & Co., later FLS Industries, was partially compensated for its loss of property by the Soviet authorities in the 1960s, but in 1997 the corporation again claimed compensation, this time against the newly reestablished Estonian state. The claim was given up when shortly thereafter it was revealed in the Danish media that the corporation had been involved in the use of forced labor during the war. FLS Industries then initiated a search for survivors. A total of 12 surviving Jews and Roma from Port Kunda were thus compensated economically for their suffering during World War II.

SOURCES The history of the FL Smidth & Co., the Danish Committee for the Eastern Areas, and the cement plant and labor camp at Port Kunda is treated extensively in Joachim Lund, *Hitlers spisekammer* (Gyldendal: Copenhagen, 2005), a summary of which can be found in Joachim Lund, “Denmark and the ‘European New Order,’ 1940–1942,” *CEH* 13:3 (August 2004): 305–321. On the Estonian camps, see International Red Cross, *Catalogue of Camps and Prisons in Germany and German Occupied Territories*, vols. 1–3 (Arosen, 1949–1959); *Die deutsch-faschistische Okkupation in Estland. Aus der Mitteilung der staatlichen Sonderkommission für die Feststellung und Untersuchung der Missetaten deutsch-faschistischer Eindringlinge und deren Helfershelfer*, 29.11.1944 (Tallinn, 1963); Roswitha Czollek, *Faschismus und Okkupation* (Berlin, 1974); M. Dworzecki, *Jewish Camps in Estonia 1942–1944* (Jerusalem, 1970); Franz W. Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt. Bauen für Staat und Wehrmacht 1938–1945* (Koblenz, 1987); and Alfred Streim, “Konzentrationslager auf dem Gebiet der Sowjetunion,” *DaHe* 5 (1989).

On the early history and geographic details of Port Kunda Cement, see “Cementfabriken ‘Port-Kunda’ med tilhørende bivirksomheder” (unpub., FL Smidth, 1932). Figures on cement production in the Reichskommissariat Ostland are given in “Abschlussbericht des Wirtschaftsstabes Ost 1944–1945,” printed in Rolf-Dieter Müller, ed., *Die deutsche Wirtschaftspolitik in den besetzten sowjetischen Gebieten 1941–1945* (Boppard, 1991). Survivors’ accounts from the Estonian camps are published in Ilya Ehrenburg and Vasily Grossman, eds., *The Black Book* (New York, 1981), pp. 390–398.

Primary source material on the labor camp and production at Port Kunda include Danish as well as German archival sources. The DNA in Copenhagen holds the archives of the Committee for the Eastern Areas of the Danish Foreign Ministry as well as the diary of Minister Gunnar Larsen. Details of the labor camp are given most extensively in the postwar trial of the director of Port Kunda, Theodor Hansen, in the ACCC, 21. Dept. No. 477, 1946 (RA-ZMLF, Copenhagen). Additional information on Port Kunda Cement is found in the archives of FLS Industries (Copenhagen). Internal correspondence of the German authorities and their correspondence with the Danish counterpart are to be found in the PAAA, Büro Staatssekretär I (Berlin), and the archives of the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories (BA, R 6, Berlin). Part of the documents are printed in German as well as in Danish in *Beretning til Folketinget*, afgivet af den Parlamentariske Kommission, etc. (Copenhagen, 1945–1953). The BA branch in Aachen holds the

Tätigkeitsberichte of Technisches Hauptamt Estland, Gruppe Bauwirtschaft, as well as Hauptamt IV (Technik) beim Generalkommissar in Reval [Tallinn] and the Organisation Todt/Einsatzgruppe Russland Nord (esp. R 50 I/391–396). See also Kriegstagebuch für das Wehrwirtschaftskommando Reval (BA, R 91, Reval/2, Berlin). A few surviving documents of the Sipo in Reval regarding the Jewish camps exist in Osobyj Archiv (RGVA) 504 K/2/8 (Moscow).

Additional information was given in interviews with former engineer at Port Kunda Tage D. (Copenhagen, 1993 and 1994) and surviving prisoners Abram Majerowitj Krein in 1944 (ZSL-L, 110 AR 1409/97). In 1997, William Kagan and Charles Lubock, both living in the United States and located with the help of the USHMM, were interviewed by Danish journalist Lisbeth Jessen, as was the daughter of Lejb Radzelis, also a former Port Kunda prisoner (Dahlin et al. 2002; Lund 2005), as well as Port Kunda residents Pauline Kroon, Ursel Onk, and Arnold Emme (cited in Lisbeth Jessen, “F.L. Smidth i Estland,” in *Magtens bog*, ed. Ulrik Dahlin et al. [Aschehoug: Copenhagen, 2002], pp. 876–896).

Joachim Lund

NOTES

1. See Theodor Hansen to FL Smidth & Co., Copenhagen, August 15, 1943, FLS, “Fortroligt indhold. Beretninger fra dir. Theodor Hansen samt dokumenter ang. Retssagen.”
2. Questioning of Theodor Hansen in the Copenhagen City Court, 21. Dept. No. 477 / 1946 (RA-ZMLF).
3. Memorandum, Theodor Hansen, May 1943, pp. 10–12. FLS, “Fortroligt indhold. Beretninger fra dir. Theodor Hansen samt dokumenter ang. retssagen” (Confidential. Reports of Dir. Theodor Hansen and documents concerning the trial).
4. Questioning of Theodor Hansen in the Copenhagen City Court, 21. Dept. No. 477/ 1946 (RA-ZMLF, Copenhagen).
5. Information given by DRM-BK, 1998.
6. Interviews with civil engineer Tage D., Copenhagen, 23.04.1993 and 02.06.1994. Tage D. was stationed by FL Smidth & Co. at Port Kunda in spring 1943.
7. Interviews with William Kagan and Charles Lubock, October 1997.

SONDA

The Germans established the camp at Sonda with 200 inmates on February 20–22, 1944, during the second phase of the existence of the Vaivara camp system. Sources show 293 inmates in March 1944; the number declined to 270 by June. Inmates were transferred to Sonda from Narva or from other camps after their closure (see Vaivara/Narva). Witnesses recall Wirker as the first commander, and then Reissig. Prisoner work consisted of clearing forests. The Vaivara SS camp doctor, Bodmann, considered this light work, requiring little strength, while former inmates recall deaths caused by exhaustion and illness.¹ In May, sick inmates from the camp hospital (*Krankensammellager*) in Ereda were transferred to Sonda. Camp statistics show 6 deaths in March, 8 in April, and

7 in May and in June. On May 26, 1944, the SS medic (SDG) was Wilhelm Genth, and the camp guards numbered 25.

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

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NOTE

1. Zyusman So., p. 1670, vol. 11A, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

SOSKI

Soski was located near Lake Peipu in a densely forested, swampy area in Estonia. In October 1943, 495 inmates were housed there in makeshift barracks, sleeping on the bare ground. The number of inmates remained roughly the same until the camp's evacuation. In December 1943, the camp commander was Reissig. Some former inmates report arriving in a first group of 150 people from Ereda (see, Vaivara/Ereda) with Reissig and that Alfred Engst became his deputy. Others recall Engst as the first commander. All seem to remember that Engst was much worse than Reissig. In the winter of 1943–1944, SS medic (SDG) Wilhelm Genth arrived for a short period, presumably to act for Reissig, who had contracted typhus and was transferred to the military hospital in Narva (see Vaivara/Narva) on December 21, 1943. According to reports from the Vaivara SS camp doctor, Bodmann, Genth had already made an unsuccessful attempt to reach Soski in November.

Witnesses recall laying railway tracks and loading and unloading boats on the nearby river and that no Organisation Todt (OT) personnel were present in the camp. Work was very hard. One inmate remembers Soski as the worst camp in which he had ever been imprisoned.¹ While no organized killings took place, inmates died slowly of starvation. In December 1943, 23 deaths were registered. An inmate died after a severe beating. On February 3, 1944, the Red Army was only 4 or 5 kilometers (2.5 to 3.1 miles) away, and the Germans suspected Jewish inmates of contacting Soviet partisans. Bodmann received the order to go to Soski and organize a retreat. SDGs Genth and Lingg led the march over frozen swamps to Kuremäe (see Vaivara/Kuremäe). Several inmates died due to the harsh conditions.

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

Ruth Bettina Birn

NOTE

1. June 6, 1962, Abraham Kr., Anlageband IV, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

VAIVARA SUBCAMP

Vaivara was home to the staff of the entire Vaivara main camp under Hans Aumeier and also to a subcamp that served as a transit camp for newly arriving inmates before their transfer to other subcamps. In September 1943, this camp held 202

inmates; in October, 1,237; and in February 1944, 1,292. Because of its function as a transit camp, the Vaivara subcamp contained a high number of old and infirm inmates, as well as children. The main camp's SS doctor, Bodmann, mentions 202 children in October 1943, crammed into a barrack, which he saw as an inevitable burden on the camp for “security reasons.”

The first inmates arrived in the Vaivara subcamp during the summer of 1943; one inmate remembers the date as August 6.¹ For a brief period, an Organisation Todt (OT) man was in command; after a few weeks, Kurt Pannicke took over, until he was transferred to Narva (see Vaivara/Narva) at the end of September. In that period, inmates recall Diller as camp elder, who went with a number of other inmates to Narva with Pannicke.² From the end of September or early October 1943 until the evacuation of the camp in February 1944, Helmut Schnabel was commander. He brought inmates with him from his previous camp, Vivikonna (see Vaivara/Vivikonna). Oskar Helbig was Schnabel's deputy. Other inmates recollect Fritz Stiewitz and Adolf Kley acting for Schnabel toward the end. SS medics (SDGs) named were Heinrich Hemlinger, Rolf Klicker, and Heinrich Schattkus. Several SDGs were assigned to supervise the evacuation marches, where female guards were also present. The camp elder under Schnabel was called Meir Zwei; other inmates say it was Isaak Jutan. The SS personnel from nearby headquarters also made appearances in the work camp.

Inmates did labor in the forest, on the railway line, or at construction sites. Work was organized by the OT. Dutch workers were housed close by, and some female camp inmates worked in the so-called Dutch kitchen. The Vaivara subcamp was a central point for other camps, with a camp pharmacy delivering medicine to all the affiliated work subcamps. Inmates who attempted to escape had to wear a piece of red cloth on their chest and were moved from their individual camps to Vaivara.³ In December 1943, typhus broke out; 20 percent of the inmates succumbed to the epidemic, and sick inmates from other camps were transferred to quarantine in the Vaivara camp hospital.

Food was insufficient in Vaivara. Former inmates recall receiving 125 grams (4.4 ounces) of bread and some soup and tea each day, leading to hunger-induced illnesses. Craftsmen were in a better position because they arranged to trade food for their products, making use of those in the work details outside of the camp. Several SS men and Germans from other organizations working close by had caps or garments custom made by Jewish craftsmen.⁴ A former Vaivara cap maker could still remember Aumeier's and Bodmann's head sizes in his postwar statement.⁵

Continuous selections were conducted; though they were considered a secret, inmates found out that those selected were shot 5 kilometers (3.1 miles) away from the camp, in the woods.⁶ Sick inmates in the camp hospital were killed with injections. A special command for burning the corpses was set up.

Both Pannicke and Schnabel inflicted continuous punishment and torture on the inmates. Pannicke used to drill in-

mates during roll call; Diller gave the commands for the “caps on, caps off” game. One former inmate had no positive recollections of Diller in general; he is alleged to have stolen valuables.⁷ Schnabel was zealously active in Vaivara as in his other assignments, searching the barracks for inmates dodging work, beating inmates who spilled their soup, forcing the whole camp to do demeaning exercises during roll call, and killing inmates who had stolen potatoes or received a second helping of soup.

Many former inmates recalled two particular atrocities. One was the killing of Dr. Katz, a dentist, who as an older man could not work anymore and was hiding during the day in the barracks. Schnabel found him, beat him, and while he was lying on the ground, poured a bottle of Lysol into his mouth.⁸ The second incident was the killing by Pannicke of an inmate who had been an official of the Jewish council in Vilnius. During roll call, the whole camp was made to stand to attention and watch while the inmate was slowly tortured by having to do “exercises” (*Sport treiben*), leading to his death.

In January 1944, inmates were sent to the Vivikonna subcamp, thus relieving Vaivara’s overcrowded conditions; in the same month, however, the inmates of the closed camps Hungerburg and Jõhvi (see Vaivara/Narva and Vaivara/Jõhvi) arrived at the Vaivara subcamp. In February 1944, 604 sick people and 185 children were sent to Ereda (see Vaivara/Ereda). By this time, the first wave of evacuations from the East had arrived in the Vaivara subcamp, including inmates of Narva, Auvere, Putki, and Vivikonna. Moreover, the Vaivara subcamp itself had to be evacuated immediately, on February 4 and 5, 1944. There were 2,466 inmates that marched to the new Vaivara subcamps Kiviõli, Ereda, Jõhvi, and Goldfields. During the evacuation march from Vaivara, inmates had to cover long distances: 65 kilometers (40.4 miles) to Kiviõli, 45 kilometers (28 miles) to Ereda, 50 kilometers (31 miles) to Goldfields, and 28 kilometers (17.4 miles) to Jõhvi. The marches took three days in bad weather conditions. Soviet planes bombarded the prisoner columns, causing casualties, while others died due to exhaustion or were shot.

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”

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NOTES

1. Sania Janiska, YVA, M-49-E/4257.
2. August 19, 1965, Szabatai Ge., August 10, 1965, Zelik, Gu.—both: vol. 14, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
3. February 26, 1971, Mendel Kr., vol. 27, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
4. May 12, 1974, Gita-Ita Ba., vol. 28, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
5. August 10, 1961, Mosze Da., vol. 11, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
6. Ibid.
7. Sania Janiska, YVA, M-49-E/4257.
8. August 18, 1965, Hirsch Kl., vol. 14, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.

VIVIKONNA OT AND VIVIKONNA BALTÖL [AKA WERK IV SILLAMÄE]

The mining facilities at Vivikonna were an important part of the Baltische Öl GmbH, or Baltöl (Baltic Oil), operation. In the first meeting between the Security Police and Baltöl representatives on July 19, 1943, 400 Jewish concentration camp inmates were promised to the Vivikonna mine. Organisation Todt (OT) planned several construction projects in Vivikonna, including building barracks for the Jewish Camp Vivikond (Judenlager Vivikond). Vivikonna consisted of three camps, the first of which was already closed in October 1943. There were 1,300 inmates assigned to this camp, housed in very inadequate barracks. For the November–December 1943 period, the Vaivara SS camp doctor, Bodmann, mentioned two new camps, one called “Vivikonna OT,” the other, “Vivikonna Baltöl.” The Baltöl camp contained 699 people, and the population remained constant. In the Baltöl organization, this work site was referred to as Werk IV Sillamäe. Inmates mined shale in open pits doing alternating shifts with Russian prisoners of war (POWs). Baltöl set strict rules to ensure a separation between Jewish and Russian workers.¹ Vivikonna OT was set up with 100 inmates transferred from Vaivara; inmates transferred from the Jõhvi subcamp increased the number to 474 by January 1944. The camp was located in an isolated spot in the woods. In February 1944, plans were made for evacuation; the SS and Police Leader was in charge of the Vaivara inmates, who represented roughly one-third of the Baltöl workforce.² Workers were to be marched toward Kiviõli, Kohtla-Järve, and Ereda. On February 2, 1944, 872 inmates from the OT camp were evacuated; on February 12, 698 inmates from the Baltöl camp followed.

As no original documents have survived indicating the names of camp commanders, it is somewhat difficult to differentiate between the camps, based on witness testimony only. Helmut Schnabel is mentioned as commander of the first camp, after a brief transition period under OT. He had a deputy with a glass eye. Camp elders named were Jutan, Heiman, and Szczibuk (phonetic spelling). When Schnabel was transferred to Vaivara, inmates were transferred with him and to other camps. The inmates did forestry work, built railroad tracks, or dug trenches under the supervision of the OT. Initially there was no running water, the ground was swampy, and barracks were built on stilts.

Bock, who later became the commander of Klooga, was mentioned as commander of one of the camps.³ This camp was presumably Vivikonna Baltöl, as it was described as relatively big, and inmates worked in a quarry, mining coal and shale. The medical orderly (SDG) was Schattkus. The camp elder was Aranowicz; doctors named were Buzhanski and Fried.⁴ Overall, inmates recall conditions in this camp as relatively good, particularly in comparison to the other one. It is not clear who the commander of Vivikonna OT was.

Former inmates from the camp under Schnabel’s command remember selections and shootings of the elderly and

the infirm. The children in the camp were gathered together at one point and taken away on trucks. This led to heart-breaking scenes. For example, one child was hammering at the window of the barracks in which she was locked up, but when her mother tried to get close, Schnabel shot the mother. Inmates recall that OT men were appalled by these scenes. Schnabel tortured the inmates; he tried to extort valuables from them, and he shot some of them afterward. He ordered an old man, who had fallen in the swampy ground and could not get up, to be shot. He beat a mentally disabled youngster and put him in a ditch full with water overnight. Schnabel is reported to have said that Jews were not human beings.⁵

SOURCES For all relevant sources, see “Vaivara Main Camp.”
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NOTES

1. November 22, 1943, Baltöl, Arbeitseinsatz der Juden, ESTA, R 187/1/33.
2. February 27, 1944, Bericht zur Räumung Werk IV Sil-lamäe, ESTA, R 187/1/7.
3. October 1, 1965, Eliezer Bu., vol. 14, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59; January 25, 1967, Lea Pe., vol. 22, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.
4. Raya Golembo, YVA, 03/3200.
5. August 25, 1965, Harry Hirsch Ka., vol. 14, ZdL, AR-Z 233/59.