

INTRODUCTION

The last century in Europe was marked by the fact that all generations know about war. And there are no wars without prisoners of war (POWs), refugees, and political prisoners of occupied states or otherwise people who suffered reprisals. All of them, very much like soldiers fighting on the fronts, got to know the reality and horrors of war. The war remained deeply etched in the minds of the peoples of Lithuania and other countries. During and after WWII, the land of Lithuania has sunk the blood of many people who were killed and tortured. In Lithuania, both occupiers killed POWs of the opposing side, some of them had to face inhumane living conditions, with the result that by the time the war ended there were about 168,000–172,000 victims of Soviet Union prisoners of war and a considerably smaller number, about 5,000, of German prisoners of war (1944–1949).

The first POW camps appeared at the start of WWII, in September 1939, in German-controlled East Prussia. Later, POW camps were established or liquidated depending on the course of military action on the Eastern Front. After the war, some Nazi Germany camps became places of forced detention for German POWs or USSR political prisoners administered by the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (NKVD) of the USSR. One such place was on the grounds of the former manor in Macikai Village of Šilutė District in Lithuania. It was the site first of the POW camp of Nazi Germany (1941–1944) and then the POW camp of the Soviet Union (1945–1948) and also the Gulag labour camp (1945–1955). The place name of Macikai first appeared in the 16th century. The manor was established in Macikai in the 17th century and was famous for its brewery. In 1924, the Ministry of De-

fence of Lithuania purchased some of the buildings of the former Macikai manor house and adapted them as barracks for the Lithuanian Armed Forces. In 1939, when WWII broke out, the Nazis established several hundred POW camps in Germany and the occupied countries and these were divided according to types. The Wehrmacht (German Armed Forces) were in charge of POW camps. The type of the camp and its sequence number reflected in the name of the camp. The Roman numeral denoted the district; the capital letter of the Latin alphabet denoted the series (or number), which was followed by the name of the geographical area. During WWII the territory of Germany and later the occupied territories were divided into military districts (*Wehrkreis*). There were 17 such military districts. For the purpose of our research the former POW camps of Military District I (*Wehrkreis I, Königsberg*) are most important. Military District I covered East Prussia and later part of occupied Poland and the Royal District of Tilsit-Gumbinnen. The district command headquarters (*Wehrkreiskommando I Ostpreussen*) was based in Königsberg (now the city of Kaliningrad, Russia). The POW camp in Šilutė (Macikai) was called Stalag I C Heydekrug (German *Stalag* short for *Stammlager* – ‘base stationary POW camp’) and was the northernmost place of detention of prisoners of war in Nazi Germany.

The exact date of the establishment of the POW camp in Macikai is not known, but according to the post-war testimonies of German military personnel who served in Macikai camp given to prosecutors of the Federal Republic of Germany, the POW camp in Macikai was established at the start of the war between Germany and the Soviet Union, in late June–early July 1941. However the first prisoners of war in the environs of Šilutė appeared earlier, in autumn 1939. These were Polish soldiers captured by the Nazis. They were accommodated in the villages of Pagryniai, Kalveliškės, Piktaičiai, Šilviai, Pašyšiai, Meišlaukiai and Traksėdžiai. In November 1939, Polish prisoners of war did some road-works on the Šilutė–Užliekniai road section. In summer 1940, after the occupation of France, Belgium and other western European countries by Germany, more prisoners of war – the French and Belgians – were brought to East Prussia. They were used for agriculture, land reclamation and drainage works.

The first official mention of Macikai camp (Stammlager 331 [I C]) was made on 14 August 1941 in Organisational Order No 40 of the Armed Forces High Command (*Oberkommando der Wehrmacht*, OKW). On 25 August 1941, a construction company owned by Stein sent its employees to work at the existing POW camp in Macikai; they were accommodated in the barracks of the Wehrmacht military personnel and did various jobs on site. One of the first references to Macikai POW camp can be found in the archival documents of this time. According to some authors, Šilutė-Macikai camp was initially called Stalag 331, but on 12 December 1941 it was renamed Stalag I C. According to other

sources, however, Stalag 331 was established on 9 April 1941 and was renamed Stalag I C on 10 October 1941¹.

In July 1941, the administration of Šilutė prisoner of war camp in Macikai, Stalag 331, increased to 100 staff. The administration was based in the building which was the former home of the well-known German writer Hermann Sudermann located about 500 metres from the camp. Some of the officers from the commandant's office lived in private apartments in Šilutė. Some barracks next to the commandant's office were used to accommodate other camp personnel and guards.

When the German-Soviet war broke out, the number of prisoners in Macikai suddenly increased. According to orders and instructions of the German Security Police and Security Service (SD), hostile elements were to be selected and liquidated from among the Soviet prisoners of war – more important Communist Party officials and officials of its branch organisations, people's commissars and their deputies, Soviet intellectuals, political leaders and commissioners of the Red Army, leading employees of economic sectors and Jews. Tilsit Gestapo staff had to select and execute prisoners. In July 1941, there could have been as many as 2,000–3,000 of POWs in Macikai camp, other sources specify 4,000 POWs, later the figure increased to 15,000. Some prisoners were subsequently transferred to other camps². According to German historian Alfred Streim, POWs selected by Tilsit Gestapo at POW camps in Pagėgiai, Šilutė (Macikai) and Ebenrode were shot near Pagėgiai in July–August 1941. About 700–800 Soviet POWs were executed³.

The Germans despised the Soviet prisoners of war. POWs were starving and did hard work, but worst torture was penalties. On the edge of the camp by the gate there were several cages covered with barbed wire where prisoners were put for the slightest offense. The offender would suffer in a half upright position in the cage for a day or often several days. According to witness Dovydas Stučka around 40 Soviet POWs died every day. At first they were buried near the camp, on the other side of the road. Later the bodies were transported further away to the fields of farmer Koblenčas. A particularly high number of Soviet POW deaths were recorded in the winter of 1942–1943. Many prisoners died during the typhus epidemic. They were buried in pits, about 20 bodies in each pit.

- 1 G. Mattiello, W. Vogt, *Deutsche Kriegsgefangenen-und Internierteneinrichtungen 1939–1945. Band 1: Stammlager (Stalag)*, Koblenz–Milano, 1986, S. 9, 42, 43; Letter dated 1 April 1974 from Dortmund Prosecution Service to ZStL, BA B 162/6573, l. 1235.
- 2 Interrogation protocol of 19 March 1975 of Peter Ruth, BA B 162/6574, l. 1361–1363.
- 3 A. Streim, *Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im „Fall Barbarossa“*. Eine Dokumentation, Heidelberg–Karlsruhe, 1981, S. 98–99.

Detention conditions of Russian POWs slightly improved only in 1944. They started receiving wages for their work and were able to buy tobacco and food products for coupons. As the Soviet POWs died in huge numbers they were replaced by new prisoners from the liquidated POW camp in Priekulė (Stalag 63). In July 1942, around 1,200 Russian POWs were brought to Macikai. With the increase in the numbers of air force prisoners of the anti-Hitler coalition countries in July 1943, the Germans established Stalag Luft VI camp (*Stalag Luft [Luftwaffe-Stammlager]* – a base camp for Allied aircrews). It was intended for airmen of the British, American, Canadian, Australian, New Zealand air forces and other Allied aircrews taken prisoner. The requirements of the Geneva Convention were observed in the Luft-type camps. In the first half of 1944, the camp consisted of three compounds A, C and E – for American, British and other POWs. The camp consisted of 10 brick barracks, each with a capacity of 552 people, and 12 wooden barracks with 54 prisoners in each. So the camp could accommodate a total of 6,168 prisoners⁴. The barracks had triple bunks made from wooden boards, desks, lockers and stools. There was also a laundry room, a barrack, which served as chapel and a theatre. Western POWs were not required to work, unless they wanted to. The POWs had the right to correspond with their family members and relatives. Food was poor, but westerners received both food and clothing from the Red Cross. Polish POWs from the corps under the command of General Władysław Anders were also held in Macikai. Before the evacuation on 1 July 1944 there were 3,623 prisoners, including 2,063 Americans⁵. For some time the hospital continued to operate in the depopulated camp.

Later the retreating Wehrmacht brought prisoners of Dulag 379 from Pskov area in the USSR to Šilutė. These were Soviet civilians collected for forced labour.

In early May 1945, former POWs of Stalag Luft VI, who were in the depths of Germany, were freed by anti-Hitler coalition units. The fate of the last remaining Soviet POWs imprisoned in Macikai is not known.

Towards the end of the war, in spring 1945, the USSR NKVD sent the detained Germans and their allies to Macikai camp – mainly Wehrmacht soldiers and soldiers of other Nazi repressive military-police troops captured after the so-called Courland Pocket battle. Following the reoccupation of Lithuania by the USSR, the POW camp in Macikai was renamed USSR NKVD Šilutė POW camp 184. The prisoners worked on rebuilding the towns of Šilutė and Insterburg (from 1946 – Chernyakhovsk, Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia) and did agricultural work supplying food to POWs of the camp and the special POW hospital on the site of the POW camp. In the production zone of the camp POWs produced

4 Stalag Luft 6 [available from www.b24.net, accessed 2014-12-15].

5 Z. Lietz, *Obozy jenieckie w Prusach Wschodnich 1939–1945*, Warszawa, 1982, s. 98.

consumer goods and various other products. On average, there were 3,000 POWs in the camp. Since there were no industries or other places of economic interest close by where the prisoner work force could be used, in early 1946 Macikai camp was reorganised into a health improvement camp and POWs from all camps in Lithuania with various diseases were brought to the camp; while patients with very serious health conditions were admitted to the special POW hospital. In January 1947, the independence of Macikai camp was formally abolished; responsibility for the camp was transferred to Klaipėda POW camp 57 and in 1948 – to Vilnius POW camp 195. The POW camp in Macikai was officially closed on 15 July 1948.

Between 1945 and 1948, the autonomous special POW hospital 2562 (with the status of the camp) was located on the site of Macikai POW camp. It was used for treating seriously or hopelessly ill prisoners of war. The death rate at the hospital was very high (almost 500 prisoners died in this hospital), so it is no coincidence that the local residents called it the 'House of death'. The prisoner-patients suffered from dystrophy, dysentery, pneumonia, tuberculosis, typhoid, typhus and other diseases.

Unlike the Nazis, the Soviets did not deliberately starve or execute the German prisoners of war (only war criminals were tried and imprisoned), but due to mass food thefts and embezzlement of property by the camp personnel, prisoners lived under very difficult conditions: they worked hard, were constantly short of food, endured very cold conditions, and many did not have appropriate clothing or bedding during the cold season. The barracks were poorly heated. The most challenging period was between 1945 and 1946 when more than 300 POWs died.

Between 1945 and 1955, there was also a Gulag division of the USSR NKVD (later MVD) on the site of the POW camp in Macikai. The unit was called the 3rd corrective labour colony – later separate unit 3 of the labour camp and unit 3 of the labour camp. It was one of the biggest Soviet labour camps in Lithuania. Between 2,000 and 3,000 prisoners were held at any one time in the camp, a third of them Lithuanians. This unit of the Gulag was established in spring 1945. The first civilian Lithuanian political prisoners (120 men and 80 women) were brought to the camp from Šiauliai prison and held in the small zone of the camp. The majority were convicted under invariably trumped-up political charges. Subsequently, the number of prisoners steadily increased – they included not only political prisoners, but also victims of Soviet economic compulsion – mostly farmers unable to pay mandatory taxes to the state or donate the required amount of food products. The prisoners also included criminals (thieves, rapists, thugs, etc.) and Red Army soldiers (Russians and Ukrainians who fell out of favour of the political authorities

and were convicted)⁶. A large number of those imprisoned in the Gulag unit in Macikai were ill and disabled. Women and children under the age of two born in prison or in the labour camp were also imprisoned in the Gulag unit. The camp had a hospital and the Mother and Child Home.

Literature and sources

There has been little attention in Lithuanian historiography to research on the activities of the Nazi repressive structures and their role in organising POW camps in the territory of Lithuania during WWII, the situation of POWs of the Soviet Union and the other countries of the anti-Hitler coalition in these camps, and their massacre in these camps. Christoph Dieckmann, a German historian, was one of the first researchers who submitted his study ‘The Killing of Prisoners of War’ to the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania in 2001. He established that around 3,000–5,000 Soviet prisoners of war could have perished in Macikai camp⁷. Historians Arūnas Bubnys⁸, Kazys Rukšėnas⁹ and Petras Stankeras¹⁰, lawyer Juozas Bulavas¹¹ and some others wrote about the tragic fate of WWII prisoners of war in a fragmentary manner, but until 2014 nobody studied in detail the history of POWs imprisoned in the environs of Šilutė between 1939 and 1945. Publications of local journalists in Šilutė district have revealed certain facts of the past history of Macikai camp¹².

In 2014, Stasys Mėlinauskas, the prominent local journalist, published his book *Macikai: Sugrįžimas atminties takais* (Macikai: A return down memory lane)¹³. For the first time the author revealed in detail and summarised the past history of the camps in Macikai. The

- 6 L. Alekna, *Atsiminimai. Šilutės muziejus, Macikų lagerio kaliniai A–M*, b. 1; S. Mėlinauskas, *Macikai: Sugrįžimas atminties takais*, p. 105.
- 7 Ch. Dieckmann, *Karo belaisvių žudymas, Totalitarinių režimų nusikaltimai Lietuvoje. Nacių okupacija*, t. 2, Vilnius, 2005, p. 42.
- 8 A. Bubnys, *Vokiečių okupuota Lietuva (1944–1944)*, Vilnius, 1998.
- 9 K. Rukšėnas, *Hitlerininkų politika Lietuvoje 1944–1944 m.*, Vilnius, 1970. Rankraštis.
- 10 P. Stankeras, *Lietuvių policija 1941–1944 metais*, Vilnius, 1998.
- 11 J. Bulavas, *Vokiškųjų fašistų okupacinis Lietuvos valdymas*, Vilnius, 1969.
- 12 „Pėdsakai neišblėso“, *Komunistinis darbas*, 1963 11 19, Nr. 136; „Šilutės r. turėsime savo Raudų sieną“ [available from <http://www.delfi.lt/news/daily/lithuania/silutes-r-turesime-savo-raudu-siena.d?id=22763974>].
- 13 S. Mėlinauskas, *Macikai: Sugrįžimas atminties takais*, Šilutė, 2014.

book is about the POW and Gulag camps that operated in Macikai. POWs of the USSR, Poland, France, USA, Great Britain, and Germany and soldiers of other countries and also Lithuanians imprisoned by the Soviet government were held in Macikai. Based on archival documents, information from Šilutė Museum, testimonies of prisoners and local residents, and the journalistic material accumulated over the years by the author, the publication provides quite a broad historical background against which the events in Macikai took place resulting in the loss of many lives. The book is divided into three parts. The first two parts focus on prisoners of war in Macikai and part three – on unit 3 of the Gulag. Most of the book is dedicated to the Nazi period which was least known to people. In contrast, a relatively short part is dedicated to the German POWs in 1945–1948. The past few decades have seen extensive publication of scientific and popular literature and memoirs abroad, especially in Germany, Great Britain, Poland, Russia, the US and elsewhere, about WWII prisoners of war. This allows us to understand better the whole structure and system of the Nazi POW camps. However, there is little information about Šilutė (Macikai) camp, although some publications deserve attention. For example, the work by Polish historian Zygmunt Lietz on the POW camps in East Prussia in 1939–1945¹⁴, Gianfranco Mattiello and Wolfgang Vogt's publication on German prisoners of war and interned persons¹⁵ or Alfred Streim's work on the situation of Soviet prisoners of war after the fall of the Operation Barbarossa¹⁶. John Dominy wrote about escapes of prisoners from Macikai camp¹⁷. Information about the Nazi POW camp in Macikai is also available online www.stalagluft6.org.

The topic of German soldiers and soldiers of German allies taken prisoners is another grey area in the Lithuanian historiography of modern times. Arno Schulze, a medical doctor who was a German POW working in POW special hospital 2652 in Macikai, wrote about this hospital in his memoirs¹⁸. The doctor revealed the treatment and care conditions of the prisoners of war and mentioned other important details. The memoirs of Bronius Antanaitis about the Gulag unit in Macikai, which was established in the former

14 Z. Lietz, *Obozy jenieckie w Prusach Wschodnich 1939–1945*, Warszawa, 1982.

15 G. Mattiello, W. Vogt, *Deutsche Kriegsgefangenen- und Internierteneinrichtungen 1939–1945. Band 1: Stammlager (Stalag)*, Koblenz–Milano, 1986.

16 A. Streim, *Die Behandlung sowjetischer Kriegsgefangener im „Fall Barbarossa“. Eine Dokumentation*, Heidelberg–Karlsruhe, 1981.

17 J. Dominy, *The Sergeant Escapers*, London, 1974.

18 A. Schulze, *Führung und Bewahrung; Impressions of the German prisoner of war from the Macikai camp*, manuscript, Šilutė, 2009, Šilutė Museum. Reminiscences published in the newspaper *Šilokarčiama* and its edition online were prepared by director of the museum Roza Šikšnienė [available from www.silokarciama.lt, accessed 2014-09-20].

POW camp 184 area are no less important¹⁹. Judging from memoirs by Schulze and Antanaitis, POWs and prisoners in Macikai lived and suffered under very similar conditions, the difference being that prisoners of war were not convicted and expected to return home soon, while political prisoners who were sentenced to long years in prison were doomed to die there, wait to be released or be deported to the USSR and imprisoned in the 'real Gulag tradition'.

The information about those imprisoned and who died in the Gulag unit can be found in the Nominal List of Genocide Victims published by the Genocide and Resistance Research Centre of Lithuania, which provides details about the Lithuanian victims of the occupations²⁰.

Archival sources. Documents found at the German Federal Archives (*Bundesarchiv*) were used in researching the history of the POW camp in Macikai in the Nazi period. Statements and reports of German medics who inspected the POW camp in Macikai in 1943 were discovered in the Federal Military Archives Division in Freiburg (*Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg*). Although these documents cover a relatively short period (mainly summer 1943), they give a fair amount of detail about the sanitary-hygienic condition of the camp and prisoners, premises for medical examination and treatment of prisoners, German administrative staff, medical staff, available medical treatment, etc. One of the reports describes the general structure of the POW camp and also the western and Soviet sectors of the camp. More documents about the Macikai camp were discovered at the former Central Office of the State Justice Administrations for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Ludwigsburg (*Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen von zur Aufklärung NS-Gewaltverbrechen in Ludwigsburg*). This institution has now been reorganised into the division of German Federal Archives in Ludwigsburg. The archives in Ludwigsburg contain files of the interrogation and judicial proceedings concerning the Nazi war criminals. Among these files, were files on German officers and administrative staff of the Macikai POW camp (the proceedings concerning Konstantin Canaris and the massacre of Soviet prisoners of war in Military District I [East Prussia] were of particular importance). Although the prosecutors were most interested in the annihilation of Soviet prisoners of war in various camps of East Prussia, information on the general situation in the camps, including in Macikai, can be found. According to the testimonies of suspects and witnesses it was established that the camp in Macikai was not set up before the war between Germany and Soviet Union, but at the beginning of the war, i. e. late June–early July 1941

19 B. Antanaitis, *Žodžiai iš pragaro*, Vilnius, 1991.

20 *Lietuvos gyventojų genocidas*, t. 2, Vilnius, 1998–2005; t. 3, Vilnius, 2007–2009; t. 4, Vilnius, 2012–2014.

rather than in autumn 1939 as thought by quite a few authors. The documents of court cases contain information about the administration and managers of the Macikai camp, visits of the Tilsit Gestapo to the camp, camp structure, the situation and transfers of POWs, medical care, selection of Soviet POWs according to the Nazi ideological principles and their transportation for execution near Pagėgiai.

Documents for the investigation of the history of the Nazi period in the Macikai camp of Šilutė County can be found in the Lithuanian Central State Archives (LCVA). First of all, these are document collections of Šilutė County court (Ger. *Amtsgericht*) (f. 1573), Šilutė County administration (f. 1577) and the authorities of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (*Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, NSDAP) of Šilutė County (f. 1684). The first collection contains financial documents which reveal that in autumn 1939 several dozen Polish prisoners of war did roadworks in Šilutė County. In mid-1940 they were replaced with French and Belgian prisoners of war. The other two collections contain mainly legal documents from Šilutė County. As far as our topic is concerned, the court cases where local residents are accused of inappropriate behaviour with POWs, which was prohibited by the Nazis (eating at the same table with the prisoners, intimate relationships of women with prisoners of war, etc.), are of interest. In villages, farmers often maintained normal human relationships with French and Belgian POWs working on their farms (they ate at the same table, exchanged gifts, celebrated Christmas and Easter together, and it sometimes happened that some of them had romantic and intimate relationships with prisoners). The Nazi authorities strictly regulated the relations between the German civilians and prisoners, and punished them for any violations. Women who had intimate relationships with prisoners of war were treated particularly harshly. The Nazis encouraged people to report on each other and fuelled the atmosphere of mistrust and hostility. Denunciations were considered examples of citizenship and loyalty to the German nation and the Nazi government.

Most of the historical and statistical material and information about the POW camp in Macikai in the Soviet period and the special hospital is in the Lithuanian Special Archives (LYA), the set of documents of the State Security Committee of the Lithuanian SSR (KGB), documents of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Lithuanian SSR (MVD) and documents of the Lithuanian Communist Party (LCP). The surviving documents are not always complete, sometimes very fragmentary, and often contradict each other, particularly statistical data. The main archival material was found in the collections V-69, V-73, V-141 and V-142 of MVD documents. They provide information about the structure of the camp, documents about the number and ethnic composition of prisoners, surveillance work in the camp, personal and political moods of prisoners, their correspondence with relatives (mainly in Germany), escapes of prisoners, spying, identification of perpetrators

of war crimes, treatment and deaths of prisoners, and difficult living and forced labour conditions. However, quite a large number of cases were deliberately destroyed immediately after the liquidation of POW camps in the USSR in early 1949. The documents were considered of no value and were scrapped. This is evident from various deeds issued by MVD committees of the LSSR or letters of MVD officials regarding the search for prisoners of war in the LSSR MVD Central Archives.

Another very important source is microfilmed documents of the USSR NKVD (MVD) Main Administration for Affairs of Prisoners of War and Internees and its various departments (including POW camps in Lithuania) brought to the Lithuanian Special Archives from the Russian State Military Archive in 2001–2002. The Lithuanian collection LYA K-8, schedule 2, microfilms 1–3 of this Russian Archive contains lists of NKVD labour camps and of the deceased POWs, descriptions and schemes of POW cemeteries, cemetery maintenance and other documents. Of course, these documents too have many grey areas, because accounting of prisoners, particularly the deceased prisoners, in the first post-war years (1945–1946) was very poorly organised, places where prisoners lived and worked were described incorrectly or there were no descriptions, etc. Even the USSR and the LSSR MVD personnel could not explain to the officials in Moscow in the late 1940s (1949–1950) certain circumstances of the life and death of POWs in Macikai.

The picture of life of the POWs is complemented by the LCP document set of the Lithuanian Special Archives, collection 1771 schedule 190, which reveals the ambitions of the Central Committee of the LCP and the Council of Ministers of the LSSR to cure all prisoners at Šilutė POW health care camp in order to make maximum use of them in the restoration of Lithuanian cities, roads, bridges and other infrastructure and construction of industrial facilities. These wishes were not always considered by the USSR NKVD Main Administration for Affairs of Prisoners of War and Internees in Moscow, because the Soviet leadership wanted to use healthy POWs for the restoration of the destroyed western part of Russia, extraction of energy resources (coal, oil, wood), and construction of hydro power plants, so thousands of prisoners were transferred from Lithuania to the east.

Collections R-R-358-360 and 832-833 of the Lithuanian Central State Archive contain documents on economic activities of the POW camp in Macikai, POW cemetery, etc.

Historical and statistical material and information about the Gulag unit in Macikai are available in the MVD set of documents of the Lithuanian Special Archive, collections V-14 and V-145/11. This was the working material of the LSSR NKVD (MVD) administration of Klaipėda region, of the Department of Corrective Labour Colonies and of the 3rd unit of the labour camp – orders, plans, reports and statements of the managing personnel. It reveals the structure of the camp, discloses some information about the number of

prisoners and their daily life (food, medical treatment and work), and provides lists of prisoners who died in 1948–1955. It is impossible, however, to reconstruct a detailed history of the labour camp, because many documents have not survived. Documents of the period between 1945 and 1950 are only fragmentary. The majority of the documents cover the period between 1951 and 1954 in the labour camp.

The LCP set of documents of the Lithuanian Special Archive, collection 1043, contains documents of the Lithuanian primary Communist Party organisation at unit 3 of the labour camp (of the Department of Corrective Labour Colonies of the LSSR NKVD (MVD)) in Šilutė District. Although very few minutes of the meetings of this LCP division remain, they contain information about the situation of the camp and its everyday life.

Archival information about the Gulag units in Lithuania can be found in the KGB set of documents of the Lithuanian Special Archives, collection K-8, schedule 1, which contains microfilmed documents of the USSR NKVD (MVD) Main Administration of Places of Detention held in the State Archive of the Russian Federation. These documents contain information about the operations of the Department of Corrective Labour Colonies of the LSSR, deployment schemes of its subdivisions and certificates-references.

The historical picture of the prisoner of war and Gulag labour camps in Macikai is complemented by archaeological site surveys conducted in 2014 by a group of archaeologists (Egidijus Abromavičius [author of the project], Edvinas Ubis, Daumantas Kiulkys and Miglė Urbonaitė) and also the finds and archaeological material (plans, drawings, photographs, etc.). Archaeologists provided details of the boundaries of POW cemeteries. An area of 435 sq. m was investigated, trenches of various sizes were excavated, and various items of people's economic activities and household items (buttons of the uniforms of Belgian and Lithuanian Army troops, glass bottles for a variety of uses, cups, flasks, and small Lithuanian and Russian coins), foundations of a building, and graves were detected.

During the preparation of the book, there was a huge problem with the authentic spelling of German first names and surnames in Soviet era documents. Prisoners' names are provided in the archives only in Russian transcription, furthermore in different documents names are transcribed differently. The names were usually written as they were pronounced or only certain aspects of the German spelling (double consonants 'l', 't', 'n', etc.) were taken into account. Since we do not know the exact spelling of German names used in the documents, they are provided in the book as they appear in archival documents.