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## Soviet Union-controlled POW camp in Macikai 1945–1948

**Establishment of a prisoner of war (POW) camp 184 in Šilutė (Macikai), camp-related statistics and the structure of the camp.** In the last months of WWII and immediately after the surrender of Germany on 8 May 1945, tens of thousands of Germans and their allies were taken prisoner in the territory of Lithuania; the greatest number was taken following the so-called Courland Pocket battle (203,000 soldiers from the Army Group Courland (*Heeresgruppe Kurland*), among which there were 14,000 Latvians, surrendered to the Red Army's 1<sup>st</sup> Baltic Front; other sources provide another figure – 189,000 captives). After the Red Army had taken over Klaipėda Region, POW camp 184 for Germans and captives of other Axis powers was established in the former Nazi POW camp located in Macikai Village by the River Šyša, 3–4 km to the southeast of Šilutė (Heydekrug, Schibben). The camp had good infrastructure: fitted out brick and wooden buildings, security area surrounded with barbed-wire fencing, watchtowers, and the railway and Šilutė-Pagėgiai Road in the vicinity. The POW camp was planned to accommodate 3,000 prisoners.

Šilutė POW camp 184 was formally established on 1 May 1945<sup>1</sup> (according to other sources, on 1 April 1945<sup>2</sup>) in Macikai. One of the archival documents dated 1945 of the USSR NKVD, however, specifies the location of POW camp 184 as being in the town of Kybar-

- 1 The 1944–1949 report on POW camps disbanded by the LSSR MVD, LYA, f. V-141, ap. 2, b. 38 [hereinafter – the 1944–1949 report], l. 9.
- 2 Deed of inspection dated 26 March 1946 of economic activities of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 24, l. 44.

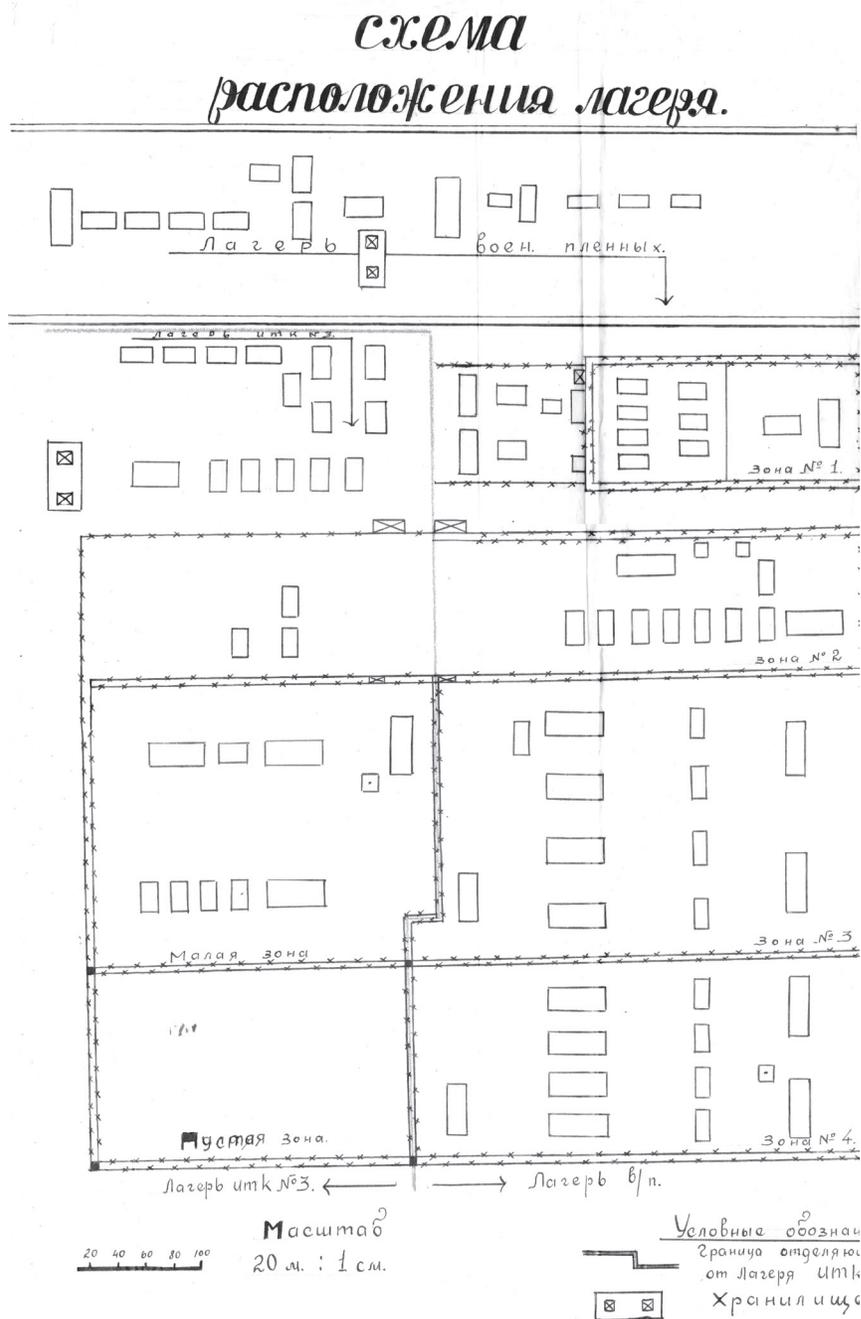


Fig.1. Plan of the 3<sup>rd</sup> corrective labour colony of the Department of Corrective Labour Colonies of the LSSR MVD (left) and POW camp 184 of the LSSR NKVD (right), 1945, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 65, l. 35

tai<sup>3</sup>. Apparently, there was a change of heart and it was decided instead to establish POW camp 184 in the POW camp already built and fitted out by the Nazis in Macikai. Three separate camps subordinate to two different USSR NKVD institutions were established here in 1945: the first was called 'The LSSR NKVD 3<sup>rd</sup> corrective labour colony' and was part of the USSR NKVD Gulag system; the second – 'The LSSR NKVD POW camp 184' was subordinate to the USSR NKVD Main Administration for Affairs of Prisoners of War and Internees (hereinafter – GUPVI); and the third – 'The LSSR NKVD special prisoner of war hospital 2652' was subordinate to the USSR NKVD GUPVI.

The USSR NKVD GUPVI in Moscow was exclusively responsible for managing, regulating, establishing and liquidating camps in Lithuania, selecting sites for camps, determining their type of work, funding the camps and distributing POWs to the camps. The Main Administration often took into account the requests of the Communist Party and government institutions of the Soviet republics to allocate a certain number of prisoners of war for a variety of work involving recovery of the economy.

The Lithuanian SSR (LSSR) NKVD (MVD) Unit for Affairs of Prisoners of War and Internees (hereinafter – OPVI) carried out the directives adopted by central authorities and organised the establishment of the camps, their security, provision of food, medical care, burial of prisoners, etc., and the amount of forced labour. There were 22 officials in the LSSR NKVD (MVD) OPVI in 1946. They had six POW labour camps under their control (2 camps in Kaunas, one each in Klaipėda, Šiauliai, Šilutė and Vilnius), each with their own local administration and divisions. From early 1946, the POW camp in Šilutė was renamed Šilutė health care (health improvement) camp 184 and from 1947 was known as – Unit 6 of Klaipėda POW camp 57. There were also two special POW hospitals in Lithuania: hospital 2652 in Šilutė (Macikai) and hospital 1245 in Kaunas. Several POW camps (divisions of the camps) were established in the former territory of East Prussia. They were under the control of the LSSR NKVD (MVD) OPVI.

Between 1945 and January 1948, state security Lieutenant-Colonel Ivan Troshin was in charge of all POW camps in Lithuania and between 1948 and 1949 the officer in charge was – Major Solovyev. The heads of the LSSR NKVD-MVD apparatus and local administrations of POW camps were almost exclusively officers and sergeants originally from or brought (on secondment) from the USSR. On 1 July 1947, there were 867 employees at the OPVI in Lithuania, of whom only 41 were Lithuanians (4.7%); a total of 17 officials were chiefs and deputy chiefs of camp administrations and of these only one was Lithuanian<sup>4</sup>.

3 The 1945 manual for registration of the USSR POW camps, Secretariat of the USSR NKVD GUPVI, *ibid.*, f. K-8, ap. 2, microfilm 1, b. 2.

4 L. Truska, A. Anušauskas, I. Petravičiūtė, *Sovietinis saugumas Lietuvoje 1940–1953 metais*, Vilnius, 1999, p. 109.

Preparations for the establishment of the USSR NKVD camp in Macikai started before the end of the war between Germany and the USSR. On 22 March 1945, the Council of People's Commissars of the Lithuanian SSR adopted Resolution No 162 'On the transfer of the POW camp and the land in Šilutė County to the USSR NKVD 3<sup>rd</sup> corrective labour colony', which confirmed the decision of the Executive Committee of Šilutė County to transfer 1,569 ha of land and some of the buildings of the former Nazi POW camp to the 3<sup>rd</sup> corrective labour colony<sup>5</sup>. The entire territory of the former camp and the buildings were divided into two parts: the left or western wing went to the 3<sup>rd</sup> corrective labour colony, and the right or eastern wing (almost twice as large) went to the USSR NKVD POW camp 184 established on May 1945 for prisoners of war of the German Army, and also to the autonomous special POW hospital relocated from Vilnius in September 1945. The USSR NKVD GUPVI was exclusively responsible for the coordination and control of the establishment of the POW camp in Šilutė (Macikai) as well as other POW camps in Lithuania (Kaunas, Klaipėda, Šiauliai and Vilnius). Its division in Vilnius – the OPVI of the Lithuanian SSR People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs – only carried out the directives of central authorities, organised security of the camp, forced labour, provision of food, medical care, burial of deceased prisoners, and anti-fascist re-education of prisoners based on Soviet propaganda, etc.

The administration of POW camp 184 in Macikai consisted of the office and operational and interrogation, prisoner records, personnel, discipline and security, apartment, transport, food and fodder, and finance units. Administration of special hospital 2652, where seriously ill POWs from all POW camps of Lithuania were treated was also located here. The hospital operated independently (as a separate division of POW camps), but financing, security and surveillance matters were in the hands of the administration and the chief of POW camp 184 in Macikai.

Major Vasiliy Bakulin was appointed the first chief of POW camp 184 for German prisoners of war on 15 May 1945, and on 3 March 1946 he was replaced by Captain Alexey Zhuravlyev<sup>6</sup>. On 31 December 1946, Lieutenant-Colonel Ilya Tevzaya was appointed the new chief of the camp<sup>7</sup>. On March 1947, Captain Karpov became the chief of Unit 6 (Macikai) of Klaipėda POW camp 57. The deputy chiefs for supplies between 1945 and 1946 were Captain Gurikov, Captain Pisaryev and Captain Zaitsev. On 26 March 1946, the mili-

5 Resolution No 162 'On the transfer of the POW camp and the land in Šilutė County to the LSSR NKVD 3<sup>rd</sup> corrective labour colony' of 22 March 1945 of the Council of People's Commissars of the LSSR, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 123, l. 46.

6 Transfer and acceptance deed of 19 December 1945 of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, b. 121, l. 244–245.

7 Transfer and acceptance deed of 21 January 1947 of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, l. 152.

tary supplies committee of the USSR NKVD District of Lithuania wrote the following about Captain Zaitsev in relation to his job: ‘does not have any special training, does not have any work experience, does not have any knowledge of military supplies, and does not have any administrative skills’<sup>8</sup>. Such comments would have been true for nearly all camp officials. It is difficult to determine the exact number of prisoners of war in Macikai in 1945–1948. Almost every month there was movement of prisoners and their redeployment to other camps. Archival sources specify different numbers. The data on prisoners of war in some documents contradict each other. The numbers of prisoners of POW camp 184 and special hospital 2652 were often put together. The number of prisoners was constantly changing as new groups of people were soon moved to other camps in Lithuania and the USSR or repatriated to their countries of origin. In summer 1945, there were 5,059 prisoners (in the same year 1,233 prisoners were moved from the camp)<sup>9</sup>. On 31 December 1945, there were 4,298 prisoners<sup>10</sup> and their number constantly decreased. In March 1946, there were 2,582 prisoners: 1,979 prisoners in unit one (health improvement) and 603 prisoners in unit two (ancillary farm) of the labour camp. In May 1946 there were 3,834 prisoners in the camp and on 1 July the same year – 3,436 prisoners, of which 578 were officers<sup>11</sup>; on 21 January 1947 there were 1,495 prisoners<sup>12</sup>. Thus, between 1945 and 1946, 5,757 prisoners left the camp, mostly for other camps in Lithuania and the Soviet Union, while critically ill prisoners were repatriated to their home countries. After the POW camp in Macikai became part of Klaipėda POW camp 57, 1,922 prisoners were recorded and another 1,062 – in the special hospital (a total of 2,984 prisoners) on 28 February 1947<sup>13</sup>. Prisoners of different nationalities, predominantly Germans, were held in the POW camp in Macikai (see Table 1).

- 8 Deed of inspection of 26 March 1946 of the economic activities of POW camp 184, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 24, l. 44.
- 9 Certificate dated 2 March 1946 issued by Gromov, chief inspector of the prisoner records unit of POW camp 184 about the number of prisoners in zones I and II of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, ap. 1, b. 121, l. 159.
- 10 1944–1949 report, LYA, f. V-141, ap. 2, b. 38, l. 2.
- 11 Certificate dated 2 March 1946 issued by Gromov, chief inspector of POW camp 184 of the LSSR NKVD, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 121, l. 159; Report dated 29 July 1946 on the surveillance-operational work of the first half of 1946 by J. Bartašiūnas, minister of the LSSR MVD, provided to A. Kobulov, deputy chief of the USSR MVD GUPVI, *ibid.*, ap. 3, b. 12, l. 51.
- 12 Transfer and acceptance deed of 21 January 1947 of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, ap. 1, b. 121, l. 245.
- 13 Deed of inspection dated 28 February 1947 of surveillance-operational activities of Šilutė POW camp 184, *ibid.*, ap. 3, b. 49, l. 34.

Table 1. Ethnic composition of POWs in Šilutė POW camp 184, 1 July 1946.

Nationality	Officers	Non-commissioned officers and privates	Total
Germans	545	2,447	2,992
Romanians	–	150	150
Hungarians	–	127	127
Austrians	6	82	88
Lithuanians	–	49	49
Czechs	18	–	18
Dutch	3	–	3
Danish	2	1	3
Poles	1	–	1
Portuguese	–	1	1
Greeks	1	–	1
Yugoslavs	1	–	1
Total	578	2,858	3,436

Compiled on the basis of a report dated 29 July 1946 on the surveillance-operational work of the first half of 1946 by Juozas Bartašiūnas, minister of LSSR MVD, provided to A. Kobulov, deputy head of the USSR MVD GUPVI, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 12, l. 51

In summer 1945, the POW camp 184 in Macikai was divided into four zones: zone 1 – a production zone 2 – a sanitary zone with dispensary, lazaretto and food unit (kitchen, canteen), zone 3 – the main zone where prisoners lived in barracks, it included the camp bathhouse, disinfection chamber and food storage area, and zone 4 – a reserve zone, the buildings of this zone were in need of repair. The structure of the camp remained very much the same in subsequent years, with only the number of various buildings increasing.

The prisoners worked on rebuilding the towns of Šilutė and Insterburg (from 1946 – Chernyakhovsk, Kaliningrad Oblast, Russia), which had been destroyed during the war, did auxiliary agricultural work, and worked in the supply of food to POWs of the camp and the special hospital (as a matter of fact, camp officials and employees would steal a large amount of food products). In the production zone POWs produced a wide range of consumer goods and various other products.

There were various discussions and plans concerning the Macikai POW camp in the central USSR NKVD office in Moscow and the LSSR NKVD OPVI in Vilnius in 1945. It was clear that it was not rational to keep a large number of able-bodied prisoners in this

POW camp, because there were no major industrial centres in the area and the town of Šilutė had not been so badly destroyed as to require a large workforce. Between 1945 and 1947, the city of Klaipėda, which was 57 km away and which had been badly damaged, was rebuilt by 5,000–7,000 POWs from Klaipėda POW camp 57, and it would not have been rational to bring prisoners from Macikai camp due to high fuel and time costs. At the end of summer 1945, an idea was developed to use prisoners from Macikai camp for agricultural work and to use the existing infrastructure of the camp for centralised treatment of all POWs in Lithuania.

On 30 August 1945, Colonel Leonid Dyudin, deputy commissar of the Lithuanian SSR NKVD wrote to Colonel General Vasiliy Chernyshov, deputy commissar of the USSR NKVD, concerning the reorganisation of POW camp 184. Being aware that the majority of prisoners of war would be removed from Lithuania in the near future, he stated that one special hospital should be sufficient for all POWs. Dyudin requested that Kaunas special hospital 1245 be disbanded and that Vilnius special hospital 2652 be relocated to POW camp 184 in Šilutė (Macikai). Since POW camp 184 had around 1,000 ha of land, he suggested that 3,000 POWs could be employed in agriculture, but nowhere else. Due to the lack of production industries in Šilutė region, the camp should be divided into three parts and a limit of 7,000 prisoners should be introduced:

- 1) To establish a special hospital (limited to 2,000 POWs). It would serve all POW camps in Lithuania.
- 2) To establish a health promotion unit of the POW camp (limited to 2,000 POWs). POWs from throughout the Lithuanian SSR would be sent for treatment and medical rehabilitation to this unit.
- 3) To establish an agricultural unit of the camp (limited to 3,000 POWs). It would be cultivating crops and vegetables<sup>14</sup>.

The authorities in Moscow took into account nearly all the above recommendations. Kaunas special hospital 1245 was disbanded at the end of 1946. The idea of treating all POWs in Lithuania in Macikai POW camp was rational, but an agricultural unit was not acceptable to the NKVD leadership. During the war a decision was taken in Moscow to use all POWs exclusively in heavy industry (coal and oil production, metal production and processing plants and factories, mining) and in rebuilding the destroyed infrastructure of the USSR and its development (building of bridges, railways and roads). Agri-

<sup>14</sup> Letter dated 30 August 1945 from Leonid Dyudin, deputy commissar of the Lithuanian SSR NKVD to Vasiliy Chernyshov, deputy commissar of the USSR NKVD, concerning the reorganisation of POW camp 184, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 120, l. 1.

cultural work was out of the question and was the prerogative of the population of the USSR. Since healthy men were required for work on the recovery of the USSR's economy, it was decided to treat the sick prisoners. At the end of 1945, due to the very uneven distribution of the number of prisoners, the POW camp in Macikai had to be reorganised. Pursuant to order No. 001349 of 12 November 1945 of the USSR MVD, the POW camp in Macikai was to be reorganised into two units: unit one (limited to 1,000 prisoners) called the health improvement unit and unit two (limited to 300 prisoners) called the agricultural and fishing unit. Unit two was intended for recovering prisoners, whose activity – 'work therapy' – was to supply the camp with food products<sup>15</sup>.

In February 1946, POW camp 184 was formally reorganised and called the health improvement camp (Rus. *ozdorovitelnyj*) and was to fulfil the function of medical care. The health improvement camp was intended for the treatment and physical strengthening of all sick weak captives in Lithuania. Those who had recovered were returned to their former or other labour camps. Until mid-1946, there were 3,000–4,000 prisoners in the camp in Macikai. Later, the number was gradually decreasing and by December 1946 there were 1,266 prisoners in the camp<sup>16</sup>. On 19 December 1946, Colonel A. Chechev, deputy minister of the LSSR MVD, wrote to Chernyshov, deputy minister of the USSR MVD, and pointed out that the funding for maintenance and administrative personnel fell short of the 3,000-inmate limit. The camp was running at a great loss. 'I therefore request to reorganise POW camp 184 by leaving only the health care unit of the camp (limited to 1,000 prisoners)<sup>17</sup>. The request was accepted and on 30 December 1946, Šilutė POW camp 184 was disbanded<sup>18</sup>. On 1 January 1947, the camp in Macikai went from being the base camp to unit 6 of Klaipėda POW camp 57 and from 1948 – unit 3 of Klaipėda POW camp 57<sup>19</sup>.

The administration of POW camp 184 remained in Šilutė; it was finally discharged on 9 September 1948 by Order No 0546 of the USSR MVD. The immovable property of POW

15 Letter dated September 1946 from J. Bartašiūnas, minister of LSSR MVD, to the USSR MVD GUPVI, *ibid.*, b. 123, l. 48.

16 Report dated January 1947 for Q4 1946 by Zhuravlyev, chief of the administration of the POW camp 184, and Chernykh, head of security and discipline of the camp, *ibid.*, b. 41, l. 56.

17 Letter dated 19 December 1946 from A. Chechev, deputy minister of the LSSR MVD to Vasilij Chernyshov, deputy minister of the USSR MVD, concerning the reorganisation of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, b. 123, l. 54.

18 1944–1949 report, l. 42.

19 Letter dated 5 March 1948 from I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, to P. Yefremov, deputy chief of Board I of the USSR MVD GUPVI, LYA, f. K-8, ap. 2, microfilm 1, l. 818.

camp 184 and special hospital 2652 was transferred to the Department of Corrective Labour Colonies of the LSSR MVD<sup>20</sup>.

Although the camp was called a health improvement camp, its inmates performed production functions referred to as 'work therapy'. The camp had a carpentry workshop, sawmill, power plant, and a wood working workshop. In 1946 and subsequent years, the 4-zone structure was maintained, but the zones expanded considerably. Zone 1 was the production zone with ancillary facilities, zone 2 was the sanitary zone with treatment facilities (dispensary and lazaretto) and a food unit (canteen only for lazaretto patients), and zone 3 was the main zone where prisoners of war worked. There was a bathhouse, disinfection chamber and a canteen for all prisoners. Zone 4 contained four brick barracks. Three of these barracks and two other wooden buildings and two auxiliary barracks belonged to special hospital 2652. One barrack close to zone 3 served as a 21-day quarantine area for prisoners. The camp had one sanitary unit (bathhouse), which could be used by 50 people per hour and a disinfection chamber for extermination of fleas, lice and bugs in clothing and bedding. In one month (January 1946) prisoners had four sanitary inspections (washing) after which they were to receive clean underwear. The report by camp officials sent to Vilnius indicated a lice infestation rate of only 1%. The ancillary barracks were used for food, vegetable and fodder storage, a bakery, three winter vegetable storage areas, offices of the operational unit, kitchen and canteen for guards, chemist and dispensary, sewing unit; one barrack for camp prison administration headquarters, five barracks served as accommodation for guards, two barracks for the prison garrison, one barrack for guards-security personnel (watchmen), and one barrack served as a soldiers' club. Eight kilometres from the camp, off the Šilutė–Pagėgiai Road, there was an ancillary farm of the camp with buildings for agricultural equipment, tractors, cattle and poultry. In summer, prisoners harvested hay to farm animals. In February 1947, 235 POWs worked in the ancillary farm and seven other organisations in Šilutė<sup>21</sup>.

The living conditions of prisoners of war were, however, totally different from those described in the reports. According to the memoirs of prisoners of war, in 1945 and at the beginning of 1946, there was neither any clean underwear nor bedding, nor were they changed each week. Prisoners were plagued by lice, fleas, bugs and rats; they were starving, because the camp personnel would steal nearly all or part of the agricultural production from the ancillary farm of the camp (only potatoes, sauerkraut, beetroot and

20 1944–1949 report, LYA, f. V-141, ap. 2, b. 38, l. 42, 44.

21 Deed of inspection dated 28 February 1947 of surveillance-operational activities of POW camp 184, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 49, l. 35.

similar products remained). The situation started to improve only in the second half 1946, when high-up officials of the MVD in Moscow demanded that basic operational procedures be observed in the camps. The MOI officials in Lithuania charged chiefs and deputy chiefs of prisons with this task. As a result, the number of thefts and embezzlement began to decline and some camp officials were punished. Provisions to the camp and forced labour conditions in Macikai were however much better than, for example, those in Kaunas POW camps 296 and 390, but prisoners of war did not stay longer than three months in Macikai, because those who recovered returned to their camps or were repatriated.

**Security and discipline.** Prisoners of war were guarded by the soldiers of the USSR NKVD (MVD) Military Convoy Army 132<sup>nd</sup> Minsk Infantry Regiment or 240<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment Šilutė garrison (company) and locally hired employee-watchmen (riflemen). Due to the shortage of personnel and violations of discipline, it was difficult to maintain labour discipline among the prisoners and they often avoided work especially work on the farm<sup>22</sup>.

In 1945–1946, the technical security system of POW camp 184 was regularly inspected. In December 1946, the camp's protection zones were finally installed: a double barbed-wire fence was erected along the perimeter of the camp. There was particular focus on the protection zone at the entrance gates: guard posts were set up and seven watchtowers were built. A light, audio and telephone alarm was installed (the report of May 1946 states that 'the alarm system was not available because of the lack of electricity'; electricity was produced only at the power plant of the camp)<sup>23</sup>. Telephone lines were brought from the camp headquarters to the guard posts at the gate (Rus. *propusknoj*), the watchtower at the gate, and the ancillary utility buildings of the camp. However, there was a shortage of guards along the entire perimeter of the camp: 26 instead of 50 people according to the number of available positions. There were only 10 staff (May 1946) instead of 16 internal security guard-watchmen. There was a shortage of guards in various POW work places. Furthermore, as stated in some reports, such positions were not even provided for. Firearms were used if prisoners attempted to escape and had to be detained. Strict disciplinary actions followed against violations of military and work discipline.

The camp administration followed a strict internal regime. Officers were held separately from privates and non-commissioned officers. If administrative staff appeared in a bar-rack, the command 'halt' was issued and everyone was required to stand up. The camp

22 Transfer and acceptance deed of 19 December 1945 of POW camp 184, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 121, l. 152.

23 Report of May 1946 of POW camp 184 to I. Troshin, the chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, b. 41, l. 43.

administration elected one person in each barrack to be a leader and any issues were addressed through this person. Disciplinary penalties were applied for refusal to work or for disobeying security guards or escort soldiers. The penal system was similar to that which was applied for violations of the Disciplinary Regulations of the Red Army. Prisoners who committed violations could be reprimanded verbally in front of the parade or by a written order of the chief of the camp. Following a violation, prisoners were also deprived of the right to correspond with relatives or to use the money they had earned at the camp shop for up to two months. For greater disobedience, prisoners were arrested; this arrest could be standard arrest or strict arrest. A brick punishment building was used for arrests in the Macikai camp. The standard arrest lasted 20 days. The prisoner would be sent to work every day and would receive hot food. On the days off he would be allowed to stay outdoors for about an hour. In the case of the strict arrest, the offender would be placed in a separate punishment room for up to 10 days. The prisoner was not sent to work and received hot food every other day. On the days they did not receive hot food, they would be given hot water and bread. Exercise periods of walking were a maximum of 30 minutes a day. Bedding was not provided to prisoners under strict arrest, they simply slept on a wooden bunk bed. In both cases, prisoners were allowed to sleep six hours a day. POWs under arrest were prohibited to correspond, smoke, sing, listen to the radio and play games (chess, checkers, dominoes)<sup>24</sup>.

Prisoners of war could not possess any personal items other than personal hygiene items and they were particularly not allowed any sharp, piercing or cutting items. They only owned the uniform in which they had been captured. It was prohibited to wear or possess civilian clothes (it was easier to escape from the camp and hide wearing civilian clothes). According to the internal rules of the camp the POWs could wear their insignia on uniforms, but many photographs of the period show that epaulettes and other military insignia were torn off. The officers did wear their peaked caps with a cockade and also epaulettes. When the uniforms had worn out, prisoners were issued with a second-hand faded Russian soldier's blouse (Rus. *gymnastyerka*) and a pair of trousers. In winter POWs looked hardly any different to Gulag prisoners, because they wore standard winter padded outdoor wear (Rus. *fufayka*, *telogreika*, *vatnik*) over their uniforms and winter hats. Several years later, when the uniforms had worn out prisoners in some POW camps were issued with the special clothing of Gulag prisoners.

Personal items of POWs and the barracks were searched every month and sometimes more frequently. Many prisoners were of course hiding their awards, decorations, ID

24 Order 'On the rules for holding prisoners in the USSR NKVD POW camps' of 7 August 1941 of the USSR NKVD, LYA, f. K-8, ap. 1, microfilm 3, b. 2.

books, maps, razors, cards, money, etc. The inspectors were most interested in POW documents, awards, Protection Squadron (*Schutzstaffel*, SS) and Storm Troopers (*Sturmabteilung*, SA) body tattoos and sharp metal objects. Minister Bartašiūnas would report the search results to Kobulov of the USSR MVD GUPVI. For instance, in October–December 1946 four searches were conducted in the Macikai camp. No sharp objects were found, but German Reichsmarks were discovered. These were seized and handed over to the cashier of the camp. During a search in December 1946, two Iron Crosses, three medals, four officer/soldiers epaulettes, 28 ID books, one poison (nitroglycerin) ampoule, 1,672 Reichsmarks and other items were discovered. During the search, a sign was found in the wallet of Major Sipman indicating that he had been awarded the First Class Iron Cross order. After the prisoner was undressed, it was identified that the letter A and the blood group were tattooed on his left armpit, which signified his membership of the SS. The same tattoo was identified on the left armpit of Emil Schweizich. The Second Class Iron Cross worn on the chest was found in the uniform worn by Kestner. Poison (Nitroglycerin ampoule) and notes of Fascist content were found in the desk of the former surgeon, medical unit Captain Christian Jakobsen. His interrogation ‘in principle’ (Rus. *po sushchestvu*) ensued. Jakobsen was included, *in absentia*, by the security officials of the camp in the operational file ‘Cockroach’. This operation was aimed at disclosing the pro-fascist activities of POWs in the camp<sup>25</sup>.

The internal structure of the camp consisted of POW work groups and units usually led by officers loyal to Soviets or ‘anti-fascists’ of a lesser military rank who were privates or non-commissioned officers totally obedient and dependent on the camp administration. Members of the same group or unit shared the same barrack, ate at the same table in the canteen, and were collectively responsible for the execution of works, etc. All POWs wore only their own service uniforms (except for the uniforms of German repressive structures).

Operational staff was in charge of the security at the work places. It was desirable that the work places were as close to the camp as possible. The work place had to be fenced with barbed wire. If it was impossible to put up a barbed-wire fence, the prisoners were escorted to work by armed guards. In addition, the employer had to make sure there was a lot of work, so that POWs would not have time to rest. Prisoners were checked by name as they returned from work.

A total of 70 POWs in the Macikai camp (in May 1946 – a total of 64 POWs, 28 of them camp drivers), almost all of German nationality, could perform their duties without su-

25 Report dated 5 February 1947 by J. Bartašiūnas, minister of LSSR MVD, to A. Kobulov, deputy head of the USSR MVD GUPVI, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 44, l. 52–55.

pervision both in the camp and outside of it: 20 POWs were employed in the transport section, mostly as drivers, 10 worked in the food and fodder supply, 13 worked in the supply of various items, 27 worked in accommodation maintenance and took care of the furniture and equipment in the barracks (beds, tables, stoves, windows, doors, etc.), heating (fuel), and also maintained the apartments and dormitories of the administrative staff, guard offices, etc. POWs who maintained accommodation often went on business to Šilutė and Klaipėda<sup>26</sup>.

**Daily POW life and work conditions.** Most of the POWs admitted to the newly renamed health promotion camp in Šilutė were those suffering with the so-called Group III symptoms of wasting. The living and ‘treatment’ conditions of the patients, especially during the cold season, were very bad. In 1945–1946, the camp administration was indifferent to the problems of prisoners. People suffered from wasting, regular malnutrition, incurable chronic diseases, vitamin deficiency, severe injuries or the consequences of severe injuries, cold barracks, poor bunk beds, and the lack of straw mattresses and bedding. Although, according to official data of the LSSR MVD, POWs were provided with the required amount of food as per their condition (two-course lunch – hot soup and hot main course), the testimonies of prisoner of war Arno Schulze and prisoner of the 3<sup>rd</sup> corrective labour colony (Gulag) Bronius Antanaitis, indicate the opposite: the food provided was terrible, especially in 1945–1946. Inmates of both wings of the camp would be given only watery soup for lunch. Antanaitis wrote: ‘We were hungry during the day when we worked, we went to bed hungry and we would wake up in the morning hungry’<sup>27</sup>. When prisoners were working near the camp the situation was somewhat improved by local residents, who, according to the possibilities of the period, gave food to prisoners. POWs ill with dystrophy ate at the lazaretto kitchen separately from others.

POWs lived in large brick barracks with walls that were only half a brick thick, there was no ceiling and the roofs were not insulated. It was impossible to keep the barracks warm with the amount of fuel they received. There were on average 50–60 people in each room. The clothing of POWs was in a terrible condition. The chief of the camp Captain Karpov stated that ‘uniforms were frayed and often in need of repair’<sup>28</sup>. Winter clothing was not available except for standard winter padded outdoor wear and winter hats. There

26 Report dated January 1947 for Q4 1946 by Zhuravlyev, chief of the administration of the LSSR MVD POW camp 184, and Chernykh, head of security and discipline of the camp, *ibid.*, ap. 1, b. 41, l. 56.

27 A. Antanaitis, *Žodžiai iš pragaro*, Vilnius, 1991, p. 70.

28 Meeting of 29–30 October 1947 of the employees of the LSSR MVD POW camps, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 66, l. 31.

were no winter trousers or footwear. Living conditions only improved in 1947 when officials in Moscow began to be concerned about the situation. POWs repatriated to Germany and other countries in 1945–1947 told about the tragic situation of POWs in the Soviet Union. It was then that the concern about the amount of food, clothing and living conditions arose.

From the end of 1945, POWs in Lithuania received mandatory benefits according to their military rank. The rank and file soldiers and non-commissioned officers were paid 7 roubles (RUB), mid-rank officers – RUB 10, higher-ranking officers (starting from the rank of the major) – RUB 15 and senior officers (generals, field marshals) – RUB 30 per month. In addition, POWs earned money for performing certain duties in the camp. A POW who worked as a doctor in the camp earned RUB 40 per month and RUB 20 working as a nurse<sup>29</sup>. On 29 September 1945, the USSR NKVD GUPVI directive regarding the employment of prisoners of war pointed out that the prisoners who performed the prescribed amount of work or exceeded this amount by 100%, were to be promoted financially (by receiving a bonus) and by being provided with better living conditions. In 1945, the average salary of POWs was RUB 13.19 and in 1946 – RUB 15.3<sup>30</sup>. Based on accounting documents of Klaipėda POW camp 57, in April 1947 prisoners earned on average RUB 19.16, in May – RUB 14.19 and in August – RUB 22. Wages in the camp's ancillary farm were only a third of this amount – only about RUB 5.5<sup>31</sup>. The highest wages were paid for manufacturing consumer goods for the population at large.

According to their physical capacity, POWs of the Macikai camp performed artisan and small jobs: produced locks, safes, knives, electric cookers, furniture, and other items, worked on the camp's farm fished, etc. A total of 679 ha of arable land (in 1946–1947 the plan for sowing was fulfilled by 104.5%) and 543 ha of pastures were allocated to the camp. The farm had 76 horses, 109 cattle, 25 pigs and 71 hens<sup>32</sup>. In 1945, joint fishing groups from Šilutė and Klaipėda POW camps caught 45 tonnes of fish in the Curonian Lagoon, in 1946 – 135 tonnes, in 1947 – 104 tonnes and in 1948 – 59 tonnes, in total 393 tonnes of fish<sup>33</sup>.

29 Circular dated 25 August of the USSR NKVD regarding provision of food to POWs, *Военнопленные в СССР 1939–1956. Документы и материалы*, Москва, 2000, с. 344.

30 1944–1949 report, l. 21.

31 Letter dated March 1948 from A. Chibryakov, chief of the administration of Klaipėda POW camp 57 to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 121, l. 272, 285.

32 A. Arbušauskaitė, Šilutės miesto ir apylinkių represinių struktūrų charakteristika (trumpa neskelbta istorinė Macikų lagerio apžvalga), Klaipėda, 2012, LYA, f. V-141, ap. 2, b. 38, l. 28.

33 Ibid.

A sewing unit and a barber's shop were set up for the needs of the prisoners of the Macikai camp. Services were provided by prisoners who were qualified to do such work. A German prisoner was employed at the barber's in the town of Šilutė and he also provided paid services to the camp staff. The sewing unit mended the uniforms of German and Russian prisoners. The POW camp officials and staff also used the tailor in exchange for which prisoners received additional food products or tobacco. However, some Soviet military personnel despised the Germans and demonstrated their own exclusiveness and superiority. For instance, on 9 February 1946 a Private Akunyshin came to the sewing unit and demanded that his shirt be ironed and the collar be attached, although he was supposed to do this himself. This was yet another form of prisoner humiliation. The tailor, however, alleging that he needed the camp chief's permission for such jobs refused to do as requested. Akunyshin attacked the prisoner, then went outside and attempted to throw a stone through the window with the aim of injuring the prisoner, but missed. Later Akunyshin screamed expletives at the senior investigator V. Strekachyev and was punished with seven days in a punishment cell, but managed to escape<sup>34</sup>. At the end of 1945, a gang of robbers appeared in Šilutė district, where they proceeded to ambush and rob travellers. The security personnel of the camp identified that the main gang members were guards from the POW camp in Macikai – Master Sergeant Bagdasaryan, Private Akunyshin and Lithuanian civilian Stupuras<sup>35</sup>. The further fate of Akunyshin is unknown.

The camp barber's employed a group of barbers (the number is not known, but they had to provide services to 3,000 prisoners each month, so it must have been quite a large group). Prisoners had to pay for the services. Both the barbers in the camp and in the town of Šilutė had to hand over the money to the cashier, but there was no strict financial control. The accountant would collect the money, but would not issue any receipts to prisoners. In November 1946, the financial department of Klaipėda POW camp 57 inspected the financial accounting of the barber's services at Macikai camp and determined that RUB 3,835 were missing. They identified the figure, because not receiving any documents for the money collected, the German prisoners kept their own records. Russian inspectors trusted the honesty of the Germans and were well aware that the money had been misappropriated, i.e. stolen. This was a scandal. After investigating the situation, the head of the

34 Report dated March 1946 on the surveillance-operational work in February 1946 by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 24, l. 156–157.

35 Ibid, l. 157.

financial department of Klaipėda POW camp 57 Grinshpun wrote a letter to Lieutenant-Colonel Troshin in Vilnius<sup>36</sup>.

**Table 2. Financial report for the period between October 1945 and October 1946 of the barber's shop at POW camp 184**

Date	Delivered to the cashier (RUB)	Delivered to the cashier according to the prisoners' records (RUB)	Shortage (RUB)
October 1945	150	425	275
November	541	550	9
December	50	400	350
January 1946	535	750	215
February	753	946	193
March	566	996	430
April	804	1,188	384
May	969	1,444	475
June	560	1,002	442
July	370	726	356
August	660	1,040	380
September	292	515	223
October	302	405	103
Total	6,552	10,387	3,835

Based on: Letter dated November 1946 from Grinshpun the head of the financial department of Klaipėda POW camp 57 to I. Troshin, the chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 24, l. 255–256.

Conditions for POWs in Macikai camp improved considerably in 1947–1948. Prisoners received both more food and food that was of a better quality, they could buy food pro-

<sup>36</sup> Letter dated November 1946 from Grinshpun, head of the financial department of Klaipėda POW camp 57 to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, l. 255–256.

ducts in the camp shop and illegally – from local producers; medical services improved. As a result, the number of fugitives decreased. Prisoners were waiting for repatriation. At that time, the biggest disaster for a prisoner was an unexpected transfer to Russia. As many prisoners were suffering from chronic diseases and exhaustion and could not do hard physical work, only 534 prisoners were transferred to the depths of the USSR between 1945 and 1946<sup>37</sup>.

**Medical care.** The physical and mental condition of POWs of the German Army in 1945 was very bad and even tragic. Most of the soldiers, whose units were defeated in the fronts and ‘pocket’ battles (the siege of Pomerania, Courland, Berlin, etc.) by the Soviet Army, were physically exhausted and demoralised, especially those who were taken prisoner by the units of the 1<sup>st</sup> Belorussian Front. Due to exhaustion, many soldiers were diagnosed by Soviet medical staff as ill with dystrophy – many had to face a slow agonising death. According to the official LSSR MVD data, 1,244 POWs died in Lithuania in 1945 and 1,559 POWs died in 1946<sup>38</sup>. The winter of 1945 was a particularly difficult period. In 1945–1946, repatriation of prisoners began. However, the Soviet leadership did not intend to return all ill POWs.

Officially, all prisoners in the camps were divided into four categories. The relatively healthy and able-bodied persons belonged to category one; prisoners who were partially able to work belonged to category two. Prisoners of these two categories were sent to forced labour, although according to Soviet prison supervisors only 27% of these people were actually capable of working. In 1949, the USSR and LSSR MVD officials admitted that 50% of all prisoners in 1945 were unable to work<sup>39</sup>. Elderly prisoners or prisoners who suffered from chronic diseases or those who were excused from work temporarily due to an illness and were treated at the camp lazarettos or were recovering in convalescent rooms of the camps or stationary special hospitals belonged to category three. The majority of prisoners of category three were ill with chronic diseases. They produced consumer products and maintained the barracks and the camp site. In 1945, 34% of the prisoners of category three could not do any work at all. Persons with dystrophy, disabled prisoners who were unable to walk and could only be transported belonged to category four.

All prisoners who came to Macikai health promotion camp, had to pass a complex sanitary inspection and disinfection. Subsequently, for 21 days they lived in a quarantine

37 1944–1949 report, l. 2.

38 1944–1949 report, l. 2.

39 1944–1949 report, l. 6.

area in the camp of their designation (zone) isolated from other prisoners. During inspection, their physical condition was determined and preventive measures were taken against infectious diseases. There was a daily sanitary inspection of the work places and accommodation ('the zone') of POWs and those who were ill were sent to the dispensary. Patients who were unable to walk were kept at the lazaretto. They had beds, were provided with white bedding and hospital clothing (long white shirt). POWs who were seriously ill were admitted to special hospital 2652; on average 35–45 patients were sent to the special hospital per month.

Compared to other camps, the area of the POW camp in Macikai was tidy; some of the buildings were built of bricks, although the thin walls of the buildings did not provide good protection against cold. The dispensary had a doctor, a surgeon and a dentist and treated 1,500–2,000 POW each month. Skin conditions were among the most frequent causes of visits to the doctor, while conditions which required surgery were the second highest reason for attending. In January 1946, 539 prisoners were laid off from work. There were 550 beds (although maximum was 500) in the camp lazaretto; it had showers and toilets and a canteen. POW medics handled patient records (case histories) under the supervision of Russian doctors. Although residential premises were overcrowded, due to the efforts of German prisoner-medics, the spread of epidemic diseases was prevented. Centrally supplied water was bacteriologically tested and suitable for use<sup>40</sup>.

Between 1945 and 1 November 1947, 5,185 prisoners were held at the POW health improvement camp 184 in Macikai: 1,307 – from Vilnius POW camp 195, 955 – from Kaunas POW camp 296, 693 – from Klaipėda POW camp 57, 296 – from Šiauliai POW camp 294, 1,891 – from the special hospital 2652, and 45 – from unidentified locations. Out of all POWs who were admitted for treatment or health improvement, 4,781 or 92.2% were weak or ill with dystrophy, 60 prisoners suffered from tuberculosis, 523 had digestive tract diseases, 1,671 – skin diseases (51 – had scabies), 246 – heart diseases, 21 had frostbites, 11 had neurological diseases, 1,836 had various types of surgery, and 2,288 had other illnesses<sup>41</sup>.

In the first years after the war, due to the huge number of prisoners and ambitious work in progress in industry, the USSR GUPVI gained some political importance. The USSR GUPVI, its division managers in the republics and also POW camp chiefs who managed

40 Report dated February 1947 on the operations of January 1946 of LSSR MVD POW camp 184, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 123, l. 36–37.

41 Meeting of 29–30 October 1947 of the employees of the LSSR MVD POW camps, *ibid.*, b. 66, l. 31.

large human and material resources were able to fulfil any economic order from the Kremlin. This led to the USSR GUPVI structure becoming the most corrupt structure in the Soviet Union. The reasons behind this were that the labour of POWs was almost free and that there was the lack of control over relations between POW camps and local economic entities (the relations therefore were based not only on mutual cooperation, but also on personal benefits and taking advantage and abusing of prisoners). POW camps became a source of profit for Soviet officials.

Given this circumstance, the biggest disagreements between the health improvement camp in Macikai and Klaipėda POW camp 57 concerned the use of convalescent prisoners and patients for various works. In 1947, the administration in Macikai was of the opinion that patients were to do relatively light work and that the appropriate work therapy was to be used. The administration of Klaipėda POW camp 57, on the other hand, insisted that all prisoners were to be used for all, even the hardest work as had been done in the past (1945–1946).

In 1947–1948 the mass repatriation of prisoners of war started. The Soviets saw prisoners as a source of Soviet propaganda. It was necessary that the POWs returning predominantly to Germany and Austria would have at least a more favourable opinion of the USSR, the ‘most peaceful’ country in the world, and they therefore tried to educate them in the anti-fascist spirit and to make sure they were healthy and not ridden with diseases. To this end, in October 1947 Colonel General Sergey Kruglov, minister of the USSR MVD, wrote confidential letter No. 5245 ‘On the preservation of the physical condition of prisoners of war in 1947–1948’ addressed to the administrations of Ministries of the interior in the republics and regions<sup>42</sup>.

After the receipt of the letter in Lithuania, a meeting of the employees of the LSSR MVD POW camps was convened on 29–30 October 1947. The meeting was attended by the administration of the LSSR MVD, chiefs and deputy chiefs of camp administrations and units, the LSSR MVD OPVI officials, and employees of political units in the camps (58 participants). According to Major Kolokshanskiy, deputy chief of the Macikai camp, 70–75% all prisoners were sent to do hard work (on the instruction of the administration of Klaipėda POW camp 57). Captain Karpov, the chief of the Macikai camp, stated at the meeting that such use of POWs was contrary to the functions of the health improvement camp and the aims of medical treatment. He pointed out that as part of their work therapy, POWs prepared hay for the camp farm and chopped wood, assisted with agricultural work and worked at the sawmill, fished, and produced consumer goods (barrels and

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, l. 30–33.

safes and mended shoes and uniforms). He praised the honesty and sense of responsibility of the Soviet medical staff. Since there was a shortage of medical staff, the camp resorted to the help of prisoner-medics. Karpov complained that the camp was poorly supplied with medicines and that there was no chemist where urgent prescription medicinal products could be produced. This meant frequent visits to a chemist in Klaipėda. He also drew attention to the fact that the patient analysis showed that accommodation conditions were unsatisfactory in all POW camps across Lithuania, consequently POWs often suffered from skin conditions (scabies, etc.), including those which required surgical treatment. In ten months of 1947, 4,483 'recovered' patients left Unit 6 (Macikai) of Klaipėda POW camp 57. Although Karpov claimed that the sanitary conditions of the camp were good, his deputy, Major Kolokshanskiy, raised certain problem areas, such as for example the lack of soap for a month at the camp. Karpov put forward the following suggestions at the meeting: 1) to set up a chemist, 2) to provide the camp with medical staff, 3) to maintain the camp as a health improvement camp and therefore abandon all unnecessary production functions; there should only be work therapy. To use prisoners of category three in Lithuanian labour camps only for light work. The sanitary service of POW camp 57 and, even better, the LSSR MVD OPVI should approve sanitary health improvement plans for the Macikai camp (i.e. Unit 6 of Klaipėda POW camp 57) in order to prevent industrial enterprises from interfering in the operations of the camp and offering functions not characteristic to such a camp<sup>43</sup>.

**Surveillance work.** The POW camp in Macikai had an Operational Unit (separate premises). Its employees were responsible for the surveillance of all POWs and auxiliary personnel of the camp. They recruited agents from among people in the prison and passed strictly classified information to the administrative employees of the USSR and LSSR NKVD (MVD): Major General Bartašiūnas, minister of LSSR NKVD(MVD), Colonel Piotr Kapralov, deputy minister, Lieutenant-Colonel Troshin, the chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, Major Korolenka, deputy chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, and Major R. Gerasimchuk, head of the Operational Unit of the LSSR MVD. Subsequently, Bartašiūnas or Troshin passed the secret information to Lieutenant General Kobulov, deputy head of the USSR MVD GUPVI in Moscow. Heads of the Operational Unit of the camp Captain Otreshko and Major Kuzma Vorontsov also had the right to correspond with Kobulov directly. The Operational Unit was in charge of all prisoners of war in POW camp 184 and special hospital 2652, camp officials and hired staff. There were six positions in the Operational Unit of POW camp 184 approved by Antanas Mickevičius, deputy minister for personnel of the

43 Ibid.

LSSR MVD, on 1 July 1946: the head of the unit Vorontsov, chief operative Lieutenant Ilya Korsunov, operative Ivan Shumkov, and chief investigator Senior Sergeant Vladimir Strekachyev – all members of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) (AUCP[B] CC). There was an allowance for two further positions – one operative and one investigator, but these were not taken<sup>44</sup>.

The most important surveillance-operation involved prisoners of war. With the help of the agents inside, the aim was to achieve the following: 1) to identify the prisoners of war who were to be put on trial for crimes committed in the territory of the USSR; 2) to identify the prisoners of war (Soviet citizens) who were ‘traitors of the homeland’; 3) to identify official and unofficial employees of German intelligence and counter-intelligence; 4) to identify prisoners of war who were in contact with the Lithuanian partisans and underground organisations; 5) to prevent sabotage and espionage, anti-Soviet activities, desertions, etc. of the prisoners of war. Interestingly, in 1946 one of the most important tasks in the area of surveillance was to identify the relationship of prisoners of war with what is specifically identified as the Lithuanian Freedom Army<sup>45</sup>.

On 1 September 1945, there were 3,383 prisoners in the Macikai camp of whom 3,219 were Germans. At that time 15 agents had been recruited<sup>46</sup>. In April 1946, Captain Otreshko reported to Colonel Kapralov about the recent surveillance work carried out in the lazaretto of POW camp 184, special hospital 2652 and ancillary farm, where ‘penetration of hostile elements was possible’. All surveillance operations were reviewed and recruitment of new prisoners who had been delivered to the special hospital was planned. Anti-fascist-minded persons were appointed leaders of POW labour companies and battalions. These were often recruited agents who were an ‘example’ to other inmates<sup>47</sup>.

Each month, the LSSR MVD and OPVI reported to Moscow about the POWs who committed or allegedly committed war crimes and were identified by operatives. In November 1946, Minister General Bartašiūnas reported to Lieutenant General Kobulov that Lieu-

44 Composition of positions of the Operational Unit of the administration of POW camp 184 dated 1 July 1946, LYA, f. V-142, ap. 1, b. 6, l. 163.

45 Report dated October 1946 on the surveillance-operational and interrogation work of POW camp 184 to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 24, l. 208.

46 Report dated 1 September 1945 on the surveillance network of POW camp 184 by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work, *ibid.*, b. 4, l. 125.

47 Notification dated April 1946 regarding surveillance work from S. Otreshko, head of the Operational Unit of POW camp 184 to Piotr Kapralov, deputy minister of the LSSR MVD, *ibid.*, b. 24, l. 76.

tenant Colonel Leopold Asmus of the German Army, a member of the National Socialist German Workers' Party (*Nazionalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei*, NSDAP) since 1933, was identified and his surveillance started at POW camp 184. Asmus was arrested on 5 May 1945 near Potsdam. According to camp agents 'Holtsman' and 'Mary', Asmus was a superintendent of the transition camp for Russian POWs in the city of Stalino (now Donetsk Donbass Oblast, Ukraine) in 1943–1944. Later he held a similar position in Dubossary (Romania, now Moldova). Bartašiūnas wrote: 'Asmus is now imprisoned and being actively interrogated'<sup>48</sup>.

On 17 May 1946, Captain Otreshko, who apparently had just been appointed to a new position, passed a nominal list of 33 agents with their aliases to Major Vorontsov,<sup>49</sup>. However, there were also some problems. For instance, on 17 May 1946 Major Gerasimchyuk, asked Major Vorontsov where the following prisoners had disappeared to: Eduard Gelmer (agent 'Fritz'), Christian Keiner (agent 'Drei'), Heinz Lenning (agent 'Ordinaret'), and Otto Mai (agent 'Lazutchik'). Their files had been sent from POW camp 184 to Vilnius POW camp 195, but such persons were not found<sup>50</sup>.

Due to the frequent relocation of prisoners from one camp to another, the work of agents suffered. Having regard to the instructions regarding the surveillance work issued by Minister Bartašiūnas, the Operational Unit of POW camp 184 recruited 28 agents in the first half of 1946: 20 Germans, 4 of whom were officers, 3 Austrian privates, 1 citizen of the Czechoslovakia, 2 Poles and 2 Lithuanians<sup>51</sup>. The agents had to identify members of NSDAP and war criminals, expose prisoners engaged in anti-Soviet activities, espionage and sabotage in the workplaces or in the preparation of acts of sabotage and escapes, prisoners who maintained contacts with the local underground organisations, etc. For example, in August–October 1945 the agent 'D'Artagnan', Austrian non-commissioned officer Franz Zichen, revealed two squads of the Lithuanian armed underground partisan movement in Tauragė and Klaipėda counties. In 1946, he helped to catch fugitive

48 Special notification dated November 1946 by J. Bartašiūnas, minister of LSSR MVD, to A. Kobulov, deputy chief of the USSR MVD GUPVI, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 12, l. 269.

49 Transfer deed dated 17 May 1946 of the surveillance work at POW camp 184, *ibid.*, b. 23, l. 3–4.

50 Enquiry dated 17 May 1946 of R. Gerasimchyuk, head of the Operational Unit of the LSSR MVD to K. Vorontsov, deputy head for operational work of POW camp 184 regarding the missing agents, *ibid.*, b. 23, l. 146.

51 Report dated 8 July 1946 by K. Vorontsov, head of the Operational Unit of LSSR MVD POW camp 184 to A. Kobulov, deputy chief of the USSR MVD GUPVI, LYA, f. V-69, b. 12 (hereinafter – K. Vorontsov's report), l. 51 a. p.

POW Henrik Fritz who had escaped from Klaipėda POW camp and was hiding in the environs of Šilutė). Cichen as a ‘qualified agent’ was recommended for work abroad. The agents who left the camp continued their activities; their strictly classified files were sent to their new location<sup>52</sup>.

Agent ‘Schroeder’ (Max Kogler, b. 1913, from Munich) earned the special respect of the Operational Unit. In March 1946, he obtained information that watch-master (*wachmeister*) Vinter, a prisoner of the Macikai camp, had persecuted Jews of the Warsaw Ghetto, participated in their pogroms and blown up their underground hiding places. Operatives started the file called ‘Palach’ (Rus. executioner) for him<sup>53</sup>. In August, together with another agent in Šilutė county, ‘Schroeder’ revealed the locations of Lithuanian partisan units (this intelligence operation was coordinated with the heads of MGB and MVD divisions in Šilutė county). ‘Schroeder’ was valued as a very good, enterprising and intelligent agent. He unveiled war criminal Feldwebel Artur Fidler. The agent was repeatedly awarded for his good work and recommended for work abroad<sup>54</sup>.

In 1945, the Operational Unit recruited Gerard Begelein, alias ‘German’, in Macikai. In 1946, LSSR MGB instructed its division in Šilutė County to use agent ‘German’ in the liquidation of a group of German soldiers who had not surrendered (about 30 people) operating in Šilutė, Pagėgiai and Tauragė counties. ‘German’ was infiltrated into the group and later betrayed the group. He also took part in betraying the operations of Lithuanian partisans to Soviet security<sup>55</sup>.

Although agents actually reported on their former comrades or personal enemies, they acted from ideological persuasion. All agents expected their faster release and return home in exchange for their services. They collected information that was of interest to the Operational Unit through their acquaintances. In the first half of 1946, the Operational Unit of the camp received 327 reports from agents, on the basis of which two members of NSDAP, 27 officers, 5 members of the SS and SA, 2 city superintendents, 21 persons who served in the field police and Feldgendarmarie, and 1 saboteur (all German nationals) were identified. The agents also helped to identify and arrest five war

52 List dated 1 November 1946 of the agents leaving POW camp 184, *ibid.*, b. 23, l. 247.

53 Report of November 1946 by S. Otreshko, head of the Operational Unit of POW camp 184 to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, b. 24, l. 79–83.

54 Report dated 3 April 1946 of the Operational Unit of POW camp 184 to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, b. 12, l. 114.

55 S. Mėlinauskas, *Macikai: Sugrįžimas atminties takais*, p. 98–100.

criminals who had committed violent crimes in the USSR (two Germans, two Estonians and a Latvian). Most of this information was passed to Moscow – the USSR NKVD-MVD structures<sup>56</sup>.

With the help of agents, between summer 1945 and 1 November 1946 the Operational Unit started surveillance of 82 prisoners (criminal case-files were opened on them) and 45 people were arrested. On 1 November 1946, 54 prisoners from the Macikai camp were on the operatives' files as either being suspected or accused of various crimes<sup>57</sup>. In 1946, Major Max Lidke (b. 1899) was unmasked; he worked as the superintendent of the city of Kislovodsk in 1942. Under his order 46 residents were arrested and over 400 people were deported to Germany for forced labour. An intensive search of the so-called Soviet 'citizens' (Lithuanians, Latvians, Estonians, Ukrainians, Russians and Germans) who had served in the German military-police structures was launched. Only nine Lithuanians and four Germans were identified<sup>58</sup>.

Probably the most significant and important Nazi criminal to be unmasked, from the point of view of Lithuania, was Oberwachtmeister Karl Heimann of the 16<sup>th</sup> SS Police Regiment arrested on 8 May 1945 in Curland. In summer 1944 he participated in the burning of the village of Pirčiupiai together with its inhabitants. Senior investigator Strekachyev of the Operational Unit of the Macikai camp opened the file on him called 'Arsonist' on 17 November 1946. Agent 'Helke' who also served in the 16<sup>th</sup> SS Police Regiment reported to Strekachyev details and circumstances of the tragedy of Pirčiupiai Village. It turned out that Heimann had already been arrested and jailed in a POW camp, but managed to escape. Although dressed in civilian clothes, he was then detained by police and sent to a Gulag labour colony. After his identify had been established, he was again jailed in a POW camp this time in Macikai<sup>59</sup>.

In September 1946, operatives exposed SS-Sturmbannführer Aloys Heil, who served in the Ministry for the Occupied Eastern Territories and was the aide-de-camp of Alfred Rosenberg in eastern Russia. Agents also identified Major Gabriel Shutoff, who was the

56 Vorontsov's report, l. 51 a. p.–52; Report of May 1946 by K. Vorontsov, head of the Operational Unit of LSSR MVD POW camp 184 to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 23, l. 144.

57 Ibid., l. 245.

58 Vorontsov's report, l. 34, 37.

59 Letter dated 1 December 1946 from K. Vorontsov, head of the Operational Unit of POW camp 184, to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, regarding the case of prisoner of war K. Heimann, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 23, l. 255–258.

superintendent of the city of Nezhin (located near Kiev) among the prisoners<sup>60</sup>. These persons were accused of war crimes.

It was not only prisoners who were recruited for surveillance work, military and civil personnel from the local administration were also recruited. It was important to know whether the staff cooperated with the prisoners or maintained personal relationships, whether full-time employees were politically and morally credible. At the end of 1945, the following agents were at the Macikai camp: 'Catfish', 'Grigoryev' and 'Savelyev' (they were responsible for the employees of the farm units), 'Viktorova' and 'Ivanova' (they were responsible for the employees of for sanitary unit), 'Kurok' (later transferred to Klaipėda POW camp 57), and 'Boris' (who was demobilised from NKVD due to his age). For instance, on 4 December 1945 agent 'Viktorova' reported that accountant Nikolay Maryin from the food and fodder unit often had a drink with Lebedev, the stock keeper of the unit, and both stole food from the food storage area. Later it was identified that Maryin stole potatoes, flour, soap, etc.<sup>61</sup>.

Employees were not allowed to maintain personal relationships with prisoners, and if this happened the employee was fired from his job, could receive an administrative penalty or even be prosecuted. In April 1946, Captain Otreshko, the deputy chef for operational work of POW camp 184, sent an extraordinary notification to Major Korolenka concerning inappropriate behaviour (intimate relations) of Vera Moksheva, the head of the officers' canteen, with German prisoner Fritz Atzler, who worked in the canteen as an assistant chef (testimony of agents 'Ivanova' and 'd'Artagnan'). Surveillance of these people started. It turned out that their relationship had started at the beginning of 1946. At night Atzler would meet Moksheva in her apartment in Šilutė where they had intimate relations (meetings lasted from January to March.). In early April, their relationship was 'unmasked'<sup>62</sup>. Otreshko noted that, according to the information provided by agents, local girls preferred German prisoners of war to Russians and he could support this with more information. However, he could not arrest Moksheva, because she had a child of 8 or 10 years of age. Atzler however was arrested and sent to a punishment cell. Otreska

60 Letter dated October 1946 from K. Vorontsov, head of the Operational Unit of POW camp 184, to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, regarding the case of prisoner of war A. Heil, *ibid.*, b. 24, l. 208–228.

61 Report dated January 1946 for Q4 1945 by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, l. 117–118.

62 Extraordinary notification dated 15 April 1946 by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, to Korolenka, deputy chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, regarding inappropriate behaviour of an employee, *ibid.*, b. 23, l. 138.

did not know what was to be done with respect to Moksheva and asked for advice from Vilnius. Judging by similar cases in other POW camps, such employees were dismissed immediately and removed from the system of internal affairs. On 12 April, Moksheva was expelled from the Komsomol organisation and removed from the MVD system. Atzler was transferred to Vilnius POW camp 195<sup>63</sup>.

Moscow was particularly interested in the POWs who were famous scientists and had published scientific works or inventions or worked at scientific institutions, but operatives and gents failed to identify any at the camp in Macikai.

During WWII, tens of thousands of people, served and fought in the German Army. After the war they were formally declared by Moscow officials to be citizens of the USSR. These were mainly citizens of what were independent states in the pre-war period – the Baltic countries, Poland (Western Ukraine and Western Belarus), Romania (Moldova) population, and the Germans of Ukraine and Russia. Between the end of 1945 and February 1946, several such ‘USSR citizens’ appeared on the radar of the Operational Unit of the Macikai camp. They served in the German paramilitary organisations (SS, SA, police) and were suspected of war crimes and crimes against humanity. ‘In the absence of an interpreter [of the German language – V. T.], we focused on the filtration of the USSR citizens in POW camp 184, preparation of their documents, and dispatch of Estonian and Latvian POWs to other camps’, Otreshko wrote<sup>64</sup>.

On 10 February 1946, 305 USSR citizens were identified in the Macikai camp. Of these, 44 people were suspected of having committed war crimes. Homes of 122 prisoners were inspected to this end<sup>65</sup>. The USSR citizens included the following: Estonian Gefreiter Rudolf Liepvaldis (served in the SS, guarded the Jewish ghetto and fought against Soviet partisans), Estonian non-commissioned officer Aino Vilbre (served in the police, looted residents and burned down villages in Karamyshev district), Estonian Gefreiter Adolf Vissor (served in the German Army, looted residents, burned down villages and forced the population to work in Germany), Latvian Gefreiter Aloys Baiba (served in the police, looted and arrested residents, burned down villages) German Johann Schulz from Odesa (served in the Feldgendarmerie, looted and arrested residents), Estonian SS Oberscharführer Kalju Lutsar (served in the German Army and police, looted residents, shot

63 Report dated May 1946 on the surveillance-operational work of April 1946 by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, b. 24, l. 119.

64 Report dated March 1946 on the surveillance-operational work of February 1946 by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, l. 158.

65 Report dated February 1946 by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184 concerning the filtration of USSR citizens, *ibid.*, l. 43.

officers of the Red Army), and Estonian Gefreiter Juhan Maidlo (served in the SS, fought against Soviet partisans, looted and murdered residents) <sup>66</sup>.

In early 1947, when Macikai POW camp passed to the control of Klaipėda POW camp, the unmasking of war criminals continued. Lieutenant Ilya Korsunov, the chief operative, was in charge of this work. The Operational Unit opened 61 case-files on German officers who had served in paramilitary organisations and committed war crimes. The following prisoners were recognised as the main war criminals at the camp: Colonel Willie Bachshtein, Colonel Rizibek (chief of Berlin police communications), Major Walters (chief of the Russian POW camp in Ukraine), and First Lieutenant Ern Shefer (chief of the Nazi police unit responsible for the security of German government buildings and the apartments of Joseph Goebbels, Wilhelm Frick, Walther Funk and others).

However, the LSSR MVD leadership was not satisfied with the activities of the Operational Unit. On 28 February 1947, a special committee consisting of the representatives of various MVD bodies of Šilutė County identified that the Operational Unit worked very poorly with agents, that criminals failed to be unmasked and their cases were essentially frozen. For example, on the basis of eyewitness' accounts, on 11 January 1946 employees of the Operational Unit of Kaunas POW camp, initiated a case against Major P. Burkfelz. He was accused of involvement in the mass killings of civilians in Dniprodzerzhynsk. In August 1946, Burkfelz was transferred to the Macikai camp, but agents showed no interest in him. The same happened in the case of Major Alshevski (superintendent of Cracow and other cities), Major Wilhelm Burdhof (SD secretary), Major Max von Schtruzen and Heimann (who participated in the killing and burning of residents of villages), and others<sup>67</sup>.

**War criminals and convicts.** If the Soviet special bodies identified criminal activities of POWs during the war, they were interrogated, arrested and convicted. Between May 1945 and 1 November 1946, 16 POWs were arrested at the Macikai camp (among them there were Estonians and Latvians), charged under Article 15-1(A) and (B) of the Penal Code of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR), and sentenced to death by hanging or firing squad or to 10–20 years in prison, usually penal servitude. In April 1946, two Estonians from POW camp 184 in Macikai were convicted: Aksel Veski (b. 1921), a private of the Latvian police, was convicted under Article 58-1(A) and sen-

66 Letter dated 28 February 1946 from P. Kapralov, deputy commissar of the LSSR NKVD, to A. Kobulov, deputy head of the USSR MVD GUPVI, *ibid.*, b. 12, l. 121 a. p.–122.

67 Deed dated 28 February 1947 of the inspection of the surveillance-operational work at POW camp 184 and special hospital 2652, *ibid.*, b. 49, l. 34–39.

tenced to death by firing squad without seizure of his property, because no property was identified (he fought against Soviet partisans), and Ado Miagi (b. 1924), a private of the SS police unit, was sentenced under the same article to 20 years penal servitude and restriction of civil rights for 5 years (he was involved in the Holocaust). In April 1946, two cases were completed which involved Latvian non-commissioned officer Valdemar Robert Michelson, the chief of the SD police squad (he fought against Soviet partisans), and non-commissioned officer Aino Vilbre, also the chief of the SD police squad. Both were convicted under Article 58-1(A). Michelson was sentenced to 20 years penal servitude. In April, investigation of the cases involving Juhan Maidlo and Michail Berg charged under Article 58-1(A) began. Together with others, the following POWs were also sentenced under Article 58-1(A) of the Penal Code of the RSFSR (case-file 'Protege', Rus. *Stavlennik*): Latvian Gefreiter and Rifleman Aloys Baiba of the SS squad and German Adolf Francke originally from Ukraine, both sentenced to 15 years penal servitude. Private Adolf Vissor of the SS police squad, Estonian SS Oberscharführer Kalju Lutsar, chief of the SS police squad, and Wehrmacht privates Johann Schulze, Arthur Olheicer, Wilhelm Vaker, Henrik Schwartz, Peter Schpenst – all sentenced to 10 years penal servitude. On 15 May 1946, the MVD military tribunal sentenced Private Michael Berg, Eduard Mint, and German Arthur Fidler, who was deputy chief of Panevėžys POW camp for Russian prisoners, to death by firing squad. Major Max Lidke, who was the superintendent of the city of Kislovodsk, was recognised by the military tribunal in 1948 as a category I war criminal and sentenced to 25 years in a prison camp (convicted under a decree of the USSR Supreme Council dated 19 April 1943)<sup>68</sup>. By 1 January 1947, 23 war criminals had been identified in the Macikai camp, including Willie Bachman and Aloys Heil, accused of serious crimes<sup>69</sup>.

**Escapes.** Many of the POWs at first naively expected that the USSR would soon let them go home. This was the practice in the Allied countries – only war criminals or persons suspected of offences remained in the camps. Moscow, however, behaved differently. Prisoners whose health had improved were returned to their former POW camps and from there many were sent to the depths of Russia. Only very ill or incapacitated patients were repatriated. Due to difficult living conditions in captivity, longing for home and relative proximity of the German border, some prisoners tried to escape from the camps. Agents operating among POWs regularly notified the authorities about planned escape

68 List of 16 POWs arrested and convicted between May 1945 and 1 November 1946 at POW camp 184, *ibid.*, b. 23, l. 251.

69 Letter dated 4 January 1947 from K. Vorontsov, head of the Operational Unit of POW camp 184, to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, b. 24, l. 341–348.

attempts. For instance, on 9 February 1946, agent 'Schroeder' notified the Operational Unit that there were rumours in the camp that there was nothing more to wait for and an escape should be planned for the spring, because all hopes of returning to the homeland were lost<sup>70</sup>. Using favourable circumstances, when POWs working on a farm or in the production unit were guarded only by a few hired guards rather than experienced NKVD escort guards (there was always a shortage of them), prisoners of war would suddenly disappear. Escapes were often carefully prepared in advance. The most important thing was to have food, civilian clothes, documents and maps. Fugitives were provided with all this by local residents and the Lithuanian national underground (partisans).

In September 1945, 5 people escaped from the Macikai camp (their names are almost illegible in the documents). On 10 December 1945, Wilhelm Gerviz escaped from the camp. As a result, Lieutenant Kolobkov, the camp duty officer was jailed for 10 days and his salary was halved<sup>71</sup>. The number of escapes particularly increased in the first half of 1946. On 19 January 1946, non-commissioned officer Hans Legrand and Staff Gefreiter Bruno Kornelzen escaped. For a while they were hiding in Traksėdžiai Village of Šilutė County with local residents Meita Vitei and Trautė Tolač and tried to get to a Lithuanian partisan unit. Operatives of the camp located them and arrested them after one month. They also found a radio transmitter at one of the resident's homes, which together with the documents of the fugitives was transferred to Šilutė NKGB<sup>72</sup>.

One of the aims of the Operational Unit of the Macikai camp was to prevent captives from escaping. There were great expectations of the camp agents in this regards. On 9 February 1946, agent 'Schroeder' notified that after speaking with Obergefreiter Hein Bidnger, he discovered how fugitive Kornelzen succeeded in escaping. After his escape, Kornelzen lived in Šilutė for eight days where he received Lithuanian documents and then went to Pagėgiai, his original place of residence. Bidnger thought that there was an underground organisation in Šilutė which provided Lithuanian documents to refugees. Based on this and other information, Šilutė NKGB partly revealed 'a Lithuanian and German nationalist organisation' and prosecuted some of its members<sup>73</sup>. In April 1946,

70 Report dated March 1946 on the surveillance-operational work of February 1946 by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, l. 158.

71 Report dated January 1946 for Q4 1945 by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, l. 117–118.

72 Letter dated 19 February 1946 from S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, l. 35.

73 Report dated March 1946 on the surveillance-operational work of February 1946 by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, l. 158.

agents helped to expose six prisoners who were getting ready for an escape. They were punished with disciplinary penalties<sup>74</sup>. On the night of 29–30 April 1946, three prisoners escaped: Herbert Eger, Veiss Schmeizel and Eberg Steiner. It seems that two managed to hide, but Steiner was shot during detention on 1 May 1946<sup>75</sup>. In July 1946, there were 12 Soviet agents among the POWs. They warned about five escapes that were being planned<sup>76</sup>.

By May 1946, 26 prisoners had escaped from POW camp 184 and special hospital 2652 and by 1 July – another 6. As explained by the chief of the camp, the officer on duty was guilty for the escape of 7 and the military unit guards – for the escape of 12 people. During hay making, there was a lack of security and 5 people escaped; another 2 escaped from the sawmill called Soviet Partisan. Of all the defectors, 7 were detained, the rest were not found. It later transpired that the prisoners took advantage of the guards' drinking habits. One prisoner who tried to escape was shot at and was wounded. He was captured and placed in the camp hospital<sup>77</sup>.

Between 1945 and 1946, a total of 48 prisoners escaped (9 were caught) from the POW camp in Macikai and 3 patients escaped from the special hospital in 1946 (they were never caught)<sup>78</sup>. In most cases the detained fugitives were not returned to their former camp, but were held in the punishment companies or battalions (Rus. *shtrafbat*) stationed nearby and later transferred to Russia or Kazakhstan, mostly to the high security camp in Zhezkazgan, escape from which was impossible. Some fugitives were in exceptional cases temporarily put into the punishment cell in the Macikai camp and from there sent to penal units. To reduce the number of escapes, security of the camp zones and prisoner workplaces was regularly strengthened.

Archival records do not reveal the whole truth about these escapades. In order to escape from the camp in winter time, not only were warm clothes and food required, but it was also necessary to have a high degree of physical stamina. In October–December 1946, three POWs escaped from the camp. On 7 December 1946, Private Bruno Baer was let

74 Report dated 1 May 1946 on the surveillance-operational work by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, l. 87, 96.

75 Extraordinary notification dated May 1946 by A. Zhuravlyev, chief of the administration of POW camp 184, and S. Otreshko, head of the Operational Unit of POW camp 184, to LSSR MVD, regarding escapes of prisoners, *ibid.*, b. 25, l. 17.

76 Vorontsov's report, l. 56.

77 Report dated May 1946 of the chief of POW camp 184 to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, ap. 1, b. 41, l. 43.

78 1944–1949 report, l. 41.

out from the camp with a group without any escort to do some forestry work. Using this opportunity he immediately fled. On 26 December, Obergefreiter Heinrich Milze escaped from Macikai special hospital. Together with another prisoner he was sent to Rusnė to bring some hay for hospital needs. They were escorted by fire protection chief Markelov. On the way back the cart in which they were going broke down. Markelov sent Milze alone to the village to get an ax. Milze seized the opportunity and fled<sup>79</sup>. These prisoners escaped during the winter, which means that they were getting ready for the escape in advance, as they needed, at least initially, food, warm clothes and somewhere to spend the night. The report by Captain Zhuravlyev states that ‘two of them [refugees] were liquidated and one was not caught’<sup>80</sup>.

At the time Šilutė County was one of the most important corridors for war refugees. This meant that the surrounding areas were carefully monitored by the NKVD MVD personnel and policemen and documents of any strangers they came across were checked. On 17 July 1946, policemen detained Alfredas Pliaukas who escaped from POW camp 266 in Mītava (Latvia). The fugitive initially explained that he had been released to go home, but that on the way he had lost his documents, however he soon admitted that he had escaped. Pliaukas was delivered to the Macikai camp and later sent to a labour camp. At the same time, Johan Stark, who was repatriated from Latvia to Germany back in 1939 and then fought in the war, but was arrested in February 1945. He was imprisoned in a POW camp in Donbass (Ukraine). Together with other Latvians (he considered himself Latvian) he was released from the camp and legally came to Latvia from where he wanted to get to Germany, but was caught. Initially he pretended to be dumb, but soon spoke. The fugitive was very weak, because he had hardly eaten anything for 10–12 days and was sent to hospital. After his recovery he was sent to the labour camp (the so-called ‘labour battalion’)<sup>81</sup>.

In October-December 1946, operatives of the Macikai camp and other NKVD employees detained seven fugitives from other camps: Oberfeldwebel Karl Heimann from Kaunas POW camp 296, Obergefreiter Henrik Huenadel from Mītava POW camp 266, Privates Karl Antholzner and Stefan Mecke from Tallinn POW camp, prisoners Jozef Hospach and

79 Special notification dated January 1947 from K. Vorontsov, head of the Operational Unit of POW camp 184, to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 24, l. 373.

80 Report dated January 1947 for Q4 1946 by Zhuravlyev, chief of the administration of the LSSR MVD POW camp 184, and Chernykh, head of the security and discipline of the camp, *ibid.*, ap. 1, b. 41, l. 56.

81 Letter dated June 1946 from S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, ap. 3, b. 24, l. 101.

Walter Atmonge from Riva POW camp 480/3 (Estonia), and Oberfeldwebel Georg Zauer from Tallinn POW camp 492/8<sup>82</sup>. In 1947–1948, when mass repatriation of prisoners started, the number of refugees declined significantly.

**Anti-fascist re-education of prisoners of war – ‘Soviet denazification’.** After WWII, legal and repressive denazification took place in the territory of Germany occupied by Allied forces. The aim was to liquidate the ideological manifestations of Nazism (fascism), to punish Nazi ideologues and war criminals using legal means, to liquidate all Nazi (fascist) public bodies and public organisations and instead to establish new Western-style democratic institutions, and to create preconditions for the Germans themselves to choose a model for a new state and a democratic society based on human values.

Denazification was called ‘anti-fascist activity’ in the Soviet Union and the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany, i.e. it included anti-fascist propaganda, agitation, and means by which it was sought not only to destroy the Nazi (fascist) ideology or to punish the Nazi war criminals, but also to re-educate people living in the Soviet-occupied zone of Germany and POWs in the USSR in the spirit of communism and Leninism. Throughout this anti-fascist re-education, forced ideological, political and repressive measures were used; these were organised by the Communist Party of the USSR (AUCP[B]), the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) founded in 1946, and the USSR NKVD-MVD and NKGB-MGB GUPVI and its divisions of internal affairs in republics and regions. The German Officers’ Union and the newspaper *Free Germany* published in Moscow contributed substantially to the anti-fascist re-education of prisoners of war.

In the Macikai camp, anti-fascist ideology was disseminated by operatives of the Operational Unit and the Anti-Fascist Unit, officers (Chekists, KGB members), political commissars (Rus. *politruk*), and members of local Communist and Komsomol organisations. The Soviet way of life, the cult of Stalin, the Communist press, and the ‘peaceful’ Soviet foreign policy were promoted to captives. The Soviet anti-fascist propaganda and its measures were very primitive, but quite a few prisoners agreed to listen to it, apparently in the hope of early release home or better living conditions in the camp, in addition it made a difference to the usually boring and mundane days in the camp.

In 1945, the Operational Unit organised an anti-fascist group of prisoners at the camp led by the senior instructor for anti-fascist work First Lieutenant Koshkin. The group was called the Anti-Fascist Committee, abbreviated Antifa. In October–December 1945, they managed to involve eight prisoners in the group, among them some pre-war German

82 Special notification dated January 1947 from K. Vorontsov, head of the Operational Unit of POW camp 184, to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, 1. 374.

Social Democrats and Communists. The same number (8) of anti-fascists was recorded in July 1946. The group also organised anti-fascist activists – 43 people, of which 41 were German and 2 Romanians: 17 of them were Social Democrats, 6 – Communists, 1 – a member of the Centre Party and 19 – non-party members<sup>83</sup>. The activities of the Anti-Fascist Committee were not popular among POWs. Anti-fascists lectured to the prisoners on the history of the USSR and the AUCP[B], the Constitution of the USSR and fascism. Listening to lectures was associated with honest work and improvement of productivity. The archival documents of POW anti-fascist activities clearly show that the camp administration artificially staged participation of prisoners in lectures or various clubs or their ‘interest’ in ideologically communist publications, etc. Everything was based on psychological force, so that when a prisoner was asked whether he wanted to contribute to the anti-fascist activities, the only choice was ‘yes’. Of course, there were those who sincerely believed in the USSR and Stalin’s ‘peaceful foreign policy’ and the ‘democratic future of Germany’ promoted by Moscow. They actively participated in the anti-fascist activities of the camp, but these people were in the minority. In their reports to General Bartašiūnas and Lieutenant-Colonel Troshin the leadership of the camp sent such information on anti-fascist activity which should have kept the USSR NKVD (MVD) leaders in Moscow satisfied. Based on the articles of the Soviet newspaper *Izvestia*, Koshkin regularly (1-2 times a week) read political information to prisoners<sup>84</sup>. It is very unlikely that seriously ill prisoners or those who returned to the camp after a hard day’s work would have been interested in the Communist propaganda (Sunday was the only day off). After the political information had been read, there had to be a mandatory discussion thereof. Prisoners were so fed up with all these briefings that they asked the administration for other non-political and propagandistic topics. Sometimes the prisoners’ requests were satisfied and they could listen to lectures of educated German POWs on such non-political topics as, for example, on the formation of the Earth, the Sun, the Moon, and the light.

Particular attention was paid in the anti-fascist propaganda to the disclosure and punishment of German war criminals. During the briefings prisoners were informed about the sentences handed down to the most important war criminals by the International Military Tribunal in Nuremberg. Therefore one of the most important tasks of the anti-

83 Special notification dated 29 July 1946 on the surveillance-operational work of POW camp 184 in 1946 from J. Bartašiūnas, minister of LSSR MVD, to A. Kobulov, deputy chief of the USSR MVD GUPVI, *ibid.*, b. 12, l. 57.

84 Report dated January 1946 for Q4 1945 on the antifascist work by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, b. 24, l. 115–116.

fascist group was to unmask war criminals at the Macikai camp. Captain Otreshko used to receive information from agents about pro-Nazi or pro-fascist minded Germans.

The Operational Unit was very interested in the political attitudes of prisoners. The camp agents reported about them on a regular basis. Many POWs condemned fascism, but did not support communism. There were a number of prisoners in the camp affected by the Nazi ideology, especially former officers. For example, on 24 May 1946 agent 'Hund' reported that Karl Heinenberg at the special hospital was engaged in anti-Soviet agitation, praised the fascist rule, declared that he would not work in Soviet captivity, and urged others to follow in his footsteps. The Operational Union opened a case-file called 'Pest' on him. As he was transferred from the special hospital to POW camp 184 after his treatment, agent 'Fiat' was instructed to continue his surveillance and to record new facts of his anti-Soviet activities<sup>85</sup>.

Some prisoners assessed the similarity between the ideologies of Nazism-fascism and communism fairly objectively. In September 1946, First Lieutenant Alfred Protorius, a POW with the doctor's qualification who worked in special hospital 2652, was explaining that there was a large gulf between the Russian communist propaganda and the real life of Soviet man. The life of a Soviet man was not at all like it was painted by Soviet newspapers and propaganda. While the USSR spoke about peace, it was busy arming itself. Protorijus stated that he was dissatisfied with how Soviet Russians were brought up and followed other nations as models<sup>86</sup>.

Anti-fascists were not popular in the camp, they were openly considered the tools of Moscow communist propaganda, security agents and even traitors. They also enjoyed privileges. Some of the anti-fascists did not go to work at all, others were appointed heads of work groups or leaders of barracks; they wore uniforms and footwear that was in better condition than that of the rest and received better food. However, they were well aware of the futility of their activities, feared the revenge of their comrades and feared for their lives, therefore they reported any anti-fascist moods to the Operational Unit right away. On 8 April 1946, anti-fascist agent 'Siegfried' reported the following: 'From February 1946 I spent some time with Romanian prisoners and learned that there were fascists among them. Johan Drotler (Romanian German) threatened 'Siegfried' saying that "from this day on watch what happens to you"', while Franz Kemf told him that prisoners had decided to kill him.

85 Special notification dated 3 June 1946 from K. Vorontsov, head of the Operational Unit of POW camp 184, to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI regarding the case of prisoner of war K. Heinenberg, *ibid.*, b. 23, l. 156.

86 Report dated October 1946 of the Operational Division of POW camp 184 to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, b. 24, l. 208–210.

On 15 May 1946, anti-fascist prisoner Adolf Baer made an official request to the camp administration regarding non-commissioned officer Joachim Kaldbach who was against anti-fascists. On 15 March, Baer came into the 2<sup>nd</sup> barrack to his friends, when he faced Joachim and other prisoners: Haze, Jozef Deriche and Evald Koch. Kaldbach stated that the Russians put impossible demands to them and it would be better if they released them home. Baer replied on behalf of the anti-fascist committee that this was empty talk and that they were only agitating and irritating prisoners to which Kaldbach answered with expletives. When Baer tried to explain it to Kaldbach for a second time, he grabbed Baer by the throat and started to strangle him. Other prisoners separated them. Kaldbach was prosecuted for this incident<sup>87</sup>.

There were some leisure activities available in the camp, which were associated with anti-fascist activities. The camp had a library with 1,300 fiction and historical books in German selected by censors. The camp anti-fascist editorial board issued the German wall newspaper *Antifa*, which was censored and which wrote about achievers at work, innovators, etc. There was also a prisoners' club with capacity for about 350 people. Concerts by prisoners and music and choral clubs were held here. Russian and Western classical music was performed. Acrobats appeared on stage and there was a wide range of popular music performances. On the dates of Soviet festivals, meetings were held with official speeches in which anti-fascists condemned fascism. In February 1946 prisoners were allowed to play chess; 127 players played 2,286 games in the chess tournament. Six concerts and another two in the ancillary farm 8–10 km away from the camp were staged<sup>88</sup>.

**Embezzlement of assets and corruption.** As in the system of the cooperation between POW camps and enterprises across the Soviet Union, in Lithuania too corruption, almost uncontrolled lawlessness of camp administrators, and embezzlement of assets thrived. Chiefs of POW camps, like some slaveholders, in agreement with the managers of enterprises could autocratically decide how to use the work force and how much to pay it. Often there were no contracts between the camp and enterprises, the books were difficult to understand and complicated, inspection commissions often failed to find evidence of the work done or delivery notes, etc.

The personnel of the Macikai camp consisted of accidental and poorly trained people collected from the front filtration and transit camps, NKVD officers (officers and sol-

87 87 Special notification dated 29 July 1946 by J. Bartašiūnas, minister of LSSR MVD, to A. Kobulov, deputy chief of the USSR MVD GUPVI, regarding the surveillance-operational work at POW camp 184 in 1946, *ibid.*, b. 12, l. 56.

88 Report dated March 1946 for the antifascist work in February 1946 by S. Otreshko, deputy chief for operational work of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, b. 24, l. 161.

diers, mainly Russian-speaking) seconded from Russia, and hired civilians. Some of these people were real thieves, skilled experts in the embezzlement of state assets. They were looking for the opportunity to steal and sell something. In most cases the money received from such sales was used by camp officials and employees on alcohol, entertainment and partying. All their morality was based on the desire to exact revenge on the Germans, so thefts and embezzlement were 'morally justified'. The camp authorities not only stole food and other items allocated for prisoners, but also took no notice if this was done by the staff. Thieves often remained unpunished, but rather were assigned to other duties.

On 26 March 1946, the USSR NKVD supply committee for the military district of Lithuania carried out an audit of the camp ancillary farm and stock. As a result, they wrote that the camp employees understood their responsibilities and job functions poorly, were ignorant of orders, directives, rules and regulations in their field of work, and many did not hold the required education. Employees were unreliable. For example, due to abuse of office and thefts the head of the Food and Fodder Unit M. Zolotukhin escaped (deserted) from work on 28 September 1945. A search for him was launched. The new chief F. Shvetsov had no special training, had very little education, had questionable morals, etc. It was the same situation with other employees. During the inspection it transpired that food storage and other stock rooms were not guarded at night, they were just locked and sealed. Up until January 1946, there were no stock accounting books. This meant that employees could steal and plunder valuables allocated to POWs without any obstacles. The USSR NKVD set food norms for prisoners which seemed quite reasonable. Even some of the current Russian historians claim that the prisoners were well fed. However, by contrast, in their memoirs, prisoners of war state that they were constantly hungry. The books for the issue of products examined by the auditors showed that more products than required were actually issued to prisoners. But this was how embezzlements were written off. For example, according to the books, in May 1945 the following products were issued in larger quantities than required: white bread – 272 kg, cereal – 36 kg, fat – 6.2 kg, salt – 52 kg, soap – 23 kg, and cigarettes – 313 units (the total sum of RUB 2,100); in June 1945: sugar – 29 kg, salt – 79 kg, flour – 170 kg, breadcrumbs – 78 kg, cigarettes – 6,070 units, tobacco (shag) – 28 kg (the total sum of RUB 2,900); in July 1945: soap – as many as 516 kg, fat – 60 kg, butter – 28 kg, tobacco – 66 kg, bread – 40 kg, and cigarettes – 1,050 units. This continued each month. All products were priced at state prices, but in the markets they were around 10 times more expensive. One can only imagine the amount of money raised by the camp threesome – chief Major V. Bakulin, his deputy for supply affairs Captain Pisarev and the head of product unit First Lieutenant Zolotukhin – for the food and other products that they were able to sell or exchange or

use as bribes, etc. Of course, the camp bookkeepers, who approved these financial machinations, doctored the books accordingly.

Each month some of the food products were written off. For example, in June and July 1945, 32 tonnes of fresh potatoes (worth RUB 25,000 at the time) were written off, but to be more precise, they were in fact stolen. The deeds for writing them off did not specify the cause as to why the potatoes were unsuitable. The deeds were signed by a committee of camp officials, including Major Bakulin. The auditors found that the potatoes had been stolen and instructed that an investigation be conducted and the culprits punished. The auditors also found that prisoners were fed poorly, there was no canteen for prisoners (only the canteen for camp staff complied with sanitary requirements), no menu was drawn up, and there was no variety in the food and other requirements were not observed. The following was missing from other stock rooms: 516 winter hats, 3,040 towels, 2,700 footwraps, 3,500 pillows, 2,500 bed sheets, etc. The audit committee concluded that the state suffered losses amounting to RUB 572,700 in 1945 in the Macikai camp with the knowledge of its administration (Bakulin and his deputy Pisarev)<sup>89</sup>. Bakulin was dismissed from office on 3 March 1946, but was not punished.

In March 1946, the authorities of the Macikai camp and the new chief, Captain Alexey Zhuravlyev, ordered the Operational Unit to identify persons who were stealing and embezzling camp assets. With the help of the agents in the camp, the cases of abuse of office and other crimes were soon identified. In February 1946, there were 4 agents in the camp: 'Viktorova' and 'Ivanova' reported to the head of the Operational Unit Otreshko about the work at sanitary and other units, 'Grigoryev' reported about embezzlement cases of material goods, and 'Wind' (Rus. *Veter*) reported about the ancillary farm. There were a few more agents, but they were not reliable and were not used: for example, instead of conducting surveillance, agent 'Catfish' stole goods himself. On several occasions agent 'Ivanova' reported to the Operational Unit that chief deputy for supply Pisarev stole from the stock room and was assisted by the head of the stock room Senior Sergeant Nikolay Tyukhin. The loss was RUB 6,500. After inspection, Pisarev was dismissed from office and criminal proceedings started against him<sup>90</sup>.

Not all those who had committed crimes, however, were punished. In July 1946, deputy chief Vorontsov wrote a letter to the chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI Troshin stating that

89 Deed dated 26 March 1946 regarding economic activities of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, b. 24, l. 44–57.

90 Report dated 29 July 1946 on the surveillance-operational work in 1946 by J. Bartašiūnas, minister of LSSR MVD, provided to A. Kobulov, deputy chief of the USSR MVD GUPVI, *ibid.*, b. 12, l. 56 a. p.

camp chief Zhuravlyev did not punish his subordinates for stealing, but only gave them sanctions – offenders were usually appointed to other positions or were required to pay for the losses. However, Vorontsov failed to report about greater losses or cases of embezzlement – this could have compromised him and his operational activities. He indicated only minor offences. For instance, Boris Vyunov, director of the ancillary farm, used prisoner labour for sowing crops on his own farm using the seeds he stole from the camp farm: 600 kg oats, 120 kg peas, 150 kg vetch, and 225 kg of wheat. On 30 May 1946, Vorontsov reported this fact to Zhuravlyev. Vyunov was only ordered to pay for the work done by prisoners and to cover the losses of the seed theft. The head of bakery Chechelnicki stole a sack of rice and together with the driver from Šilutė military unit Denisov sold it for RUB 1,500. Chechelnicki was fired, but was appointed as head of the stock room. Earlier that year, on 23 April 60 X 100 kg sacks of sugar were delivered from Vilnius. After an inspection, it transpired that 28 kg of sugar was missing – it was stolen through an opened seam in the sack. The delivery was accepted by Lieutenant Fyodor Shvetsov. No investigation was conducted though, because Shvetsov was sent on a course to Moscow<sup>91</sup>. In August 1946, when POWs were being transported by rail, 31 sacks of flour, 74 blankets, etc. were stolen on the way. Chechelnicki, now the head of the stock room, was suspected of committing the offence. He was only dismissed from office, but not arrested, although the prosecutor's order for arrest was received on 10 February 1947<sup>92</sup>.

These are just a few examples. Thefts continued during the lifetime of the camp in Macikai. Greed and an opportunity to profit from food products and household items allocated by the state to POWs were stronger than conscience and the fear of punishment of some camp officials.

### **Special POW hospital 2652 in Macikai**

Between September 1944 and August 1945, seriously ill POWs in Lithuania were treated at special POW hospital 2652 in Vilnius – Vilnius Clinics (later there was a maternity ward in this hospital on Kovo 8-osios Street [today Tyzenhauzų Street] and today – a nursing home). The exact number of people who were treated or passed away in this

91 Letter dated July 1947 from K. Vorontsov 'Regarding work against embezzlements and thefts in the first half of 1946 at POW cam 184' to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, b. 1, l. 164–165.

92 Deed dated 28 February 1947 regarding the inspection of the surveillance-operational work of POW camp 184, *ibid.*, b. 49, l. 35.

hospital in Vilnius is unknown. The patients who died in hospital were buried in the cemetery of POW camp 195 (the cemetery of unit 5 of the camp) located near Olandų Street and the Jewish cemetery. It is definitely known that seven German POWs who died in special hospital in Vilnius are buried in this cemetery<sup>93</sup>.

In late summer 1945, special POW hospital 2652 in Vilnius was relocated to POW camp 184 in Šilutė (Macikai). Officially, special hospital 2652 subordinate to the USSR NKVD GUPVI was established in September 1945<sup>94</sup>. A total of 652 seriously ill and physically exhausted prisoners of war were delivered to this hospital from other camps in Lithuania. These were predominantly Class I and II disability patients, men who were not able to work<sup>95</sup>. After they recovered, they were returned to labour camps. Patients were provided better food than at POW camps, but they were only allowed to stay in hospital for a maximum three months.

The number of patients in the special hospital in Macikai varied: in 1945 there were 1,098 seriously ill prisoners<sup>96</sup>, on 1 July 1946 – 831<sup>97</sup>, on 1 March 1947 – 1,292<sup>98</sup>, and on 28 February 1947 – 1,062 patients<sup>99</sup>. The head of the special hospital in 1945 was Major Rozvanov and in 1945–1948 – Lieutenant-Colonel T. Dyomin.

The hospital in Macikai was located on the site of POW camp 184, in the middle of the camp barracks (the archival drawings do not specify the boundaries of the hospital area, only the barracks used by the hospital are marked). The area of the hospital was fenced with barbed wire and there were four watchtowers in the corners from which the guards could see the entire area. The hospital was like a prison in as far as discipline was concerned.

Patients lived and were treated under difficult conditions. Due to their poor physical strength hardly anyone dared to escape – between 1946 and 1948 only three people managed to escape. In the list of refugees dated 4 January 1947 and sent to Vilnius (LSSR MVD), Dyomin explained that because of the small number of guards, the security of prisoners was poorly ensured. The hospital was guarded by Šilutė NKVD (MVD) gar-

93 List of prisoners of war buried in the cemetery of POW camp 195, LYA, f. K-8, ap. 2, micro-film 1, b. 200.

94 Vorontsov's report, l. 51 a. p.

95 Certificate dated March 1947 regarding the parade at Šilutė special hospital 2652 issued by I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 125, l. 114–115.

96 1944–1949 report, *ibid.*, ap. 3, b. 38, l. 2.

97 Vorontsov's report, l. 51 a. p.

98 Certificate dated March 1947 regarding the parade at Šilutė special hospital 2652 issued by I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 125, l. 114–115.

99 Deed dated 28 February 1947 of the inspection of the surveillance-operational work at POW camp 184 and special hospital 2652, *ibid.*, ap. 3, b. 49, l. 36.

prison, internal administration officials and hired security personnel (watchmen), but there was a shortage of them, particularly when ensuring the security of recovered patients who were sent to work in the fields or elsewhere. For instance, in late 1946, one prisoner of the special hospital escaped, having been sent to work by the ancillary farm in the environs of Rusnė. During the entire period of existence of the hospital, no guns were used against hospital prisoners. Personal items of prisoners and premises of the hospital were regularly inspected. During one inspection in late 1946, guards found 12 knives made by the inmates<sup>100</sup>.

The hospital was ‘serviced’ by the Operational Unit and its agents. For example, in November 1946 four agents spied on the patients<sup>101</sup>, in February 1947 – their number increased to eight. Senior Sergeant Vladimir Strekachyev, chief operative of the Operational Unit for the special hospital, complained to the visiting commission in February 1947 that there was a shortage of agents: there were only two agents among the hospital personnel and there were no agents among the personnel of the food and household item stock rooms, or the transport and POW canteen. Since most of the personnel lived in the German-occupied territory during the war, they were not entirely trusted<sup>102</sup>.

POWs of various nationalities were treated in the hospital (see Table 3).

**Table 3. The number of POWs treated at special hospital 2652 in Macikai on 1 July 1946 by nationality**

Nationality	Officers	Privates	Total
Germans	54	737	791
Austrians	1	30	31
Lithuanians	–	1	1
Romanians	–	2	2

100 Notification dated 4 January 1947 from T. Dyomin, head of the Medical Service of special hospital 2652 to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, ap. 1, b. 41, l. 134.

101 Letter dated December 1946 from K. Vorontsov, head of the Operational Unit of POW camp 184, to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, ap. 3, b. 24, l. 315.

102 Deed dated 28 February 1947 of the inspection of the surveillance-operational work at POW camp 184 and special hospital 2652, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 49, l. 36.

Nationality	Officers	Privates	Total
Hungarians	–	1	1
Czechs	1	2	3
Yugoslavs	–	1	1
Belgiums	–	1	1
Total	56	775	831

Compiled on the basis of a report dated 8 July 1946 by Vorontsov, the head of the Operational Unit of LSSR MVD POW camp 184, to Kobulov, deputy head of the USSR MVD GUPVI, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 12, l. 51 a. p.

**Medical care and mortality.** Macikai special hospital consisted of three complexes of single-storey brick barracks, as stated in one of the documents, and was not adapted (Rus. *neprisposoblennye*) to living and treatment. The four barracks in the northern part of the hospital contained washing and toilet facilities and workshops; the barracks in the southern part of the hospital contained a kitchen and a shop. There were 350 beds in the therapeutic unit, 200 – in the surgical unit, 100 – in the unit of communicable diseases, and 50 beds for patients with other conditions. Between 1945 and 1 March 1947, a total 3,574 prisoners of war were treated at the hospital, of which 2,934 were convalescing or when their health improved they were transferred back to their former camps and some – to ‘health improvement’ camp 184 in Macikai. In this period, three prisoners escaped, four were imprisoned and 642 were repatriated<sup>103</sup>. The hospital had an X-ray and physical therapy rooms, a laboratory, and a chemist. Premises for therapy occupied 4,374 square meters, 6 square meters per patient<sup>104</sup>. German POWs who worked as medics lived in a room of 10 or sometimes 14 people. Only the head doctor had a separate small room.

In 1945–1946, conditions for hospital patients were very poor: the barrack walls were only half a brick thick and were not insulated, there was no ceiling (only the roof) and there were only single glazed windows. Patients were freezing, because it was impossible to achieve the 18–20°C degree temperature required in the regulations. In winter

103 Certificate dated March 1947 regarding the parade at Šilutė special hospital 2652 issued by I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, ap. 1, b. 125, l. 114–115.

104 Inventory document of 1946 of special hospital 2652, *ibid.*, b. 122, l. 189.

the temperature was usually 8°C. There was a shortage of bedding, because the military sanitary administration issued the bedding in summer, when the number of patients was considerably smaller. Prisoner of war Arno Schulze, who was a medic at special hospital 2652 in Macikai wrote: ‘In winter we had no fuel to burn in the stoves, patients were covered with thin blankets and lay on straw filled mattresses, and the food was just watery soup with nothing else in it. We barely managed to remove the rags from people trembling from the cold in order to be able to listen to the lungs. [...] I remember well how during the coldest days of winter we had no heating in the premises, because there was no firewood, and both the patients and we suffered. Head doctors had to suffer the cold too’<sup>105</sup>. There were sufficient amounts of medicinal products, but their supply, which was organised by the administrations of POW camps 184 and 57, was not satisfactory.

Medical personnel of special hospitals in Vilnius and Kaunas consisted of German prisoners of war, but when the hospital was relocated from Vilnius to Šilutė (Macikai), German medics worked alongside Russian doctors and nurses. The head of the hospital, Dyomin, was a medic, along with such physicians as Pindurina, Slatkova, Olesnickaya and others. Dyomin did not engage in the treatment of patients and managed only administrative and ‘political’ matters, i.e. he oversaw the work and reliability of German doctors. There was a shortage of full-time doctors and other medical staff: there were 3 doctors instead of the required 8 and 2 surgeons instead of 3, and there was no neuropathologist or physiotherapist; there were 34 nurses instead of 79 and 16 orderlies instead of 62<sup>106</sup>.

There were disagreements between German medics and Russian camp administration and medical staff and even a few cases of confrontation. Dyomin was against the full German POW staff in the hospital. On 30 October 1947, at a meeting of the personnel of POW camps of the LSSR MVD he told of a tragic incident. Abdominal surgery had been performed on one prisoner. As his health deteriorated, he was brought in a van along the bumpy road to the hospital in Macikai on the third day after surgery. On the way, the stitches of the wound came undone and the patient died<sup>107</sup>. The circumstances of the tragedy remained unclear, but knowing the poor work conditions of POW medics in lazarettos, there could have been more cases like this. German doctors tried to save

105 A. Schulze, *Führung und Bewahrung*. Impressions of the German prisoner of war from the Macikai camp, manuscript, Šilutė, 2009 Reminiscences published on the Internet website *Silokarciama* was prepared by director of the museum Roza Šikšnienė [available from [www.silokarciama.lt](http://www.silokarciama.lt), accessed 2014-09-06].

106 Inventory document of 1946 of special hospital 2652, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 122, l. 189.

107 Meeting of 29–30 October 1947 of the employees of the LSSR MVD POW camps, *ibid.*, b. 66, l. 33.

the lives of their countrymen as best as they could, but they did not always succeed. To mention just a few medics who worked at the camp, there was Leumer, an orthopaedist from Berlin, Gervin, a surgeon from Westphalia, E. Dostal, a surgeon from Vienna, Hilebrand, Lothar Müller, Fritz Cronus from Dresden, and others.

There were some cases in the hospital, where in order to avoid forced labour, prisoners self-harmed themselves (Rus. *chlenovreditelstvo*) or simulated diseases. This also happened in almost all the other prison camps. For example, Private Karl Heinenberg who was admitted to the special hospital on 25 November 1945 did not want to heal quickly and go to work, so he prevented the wound from healing. Agent 'Fiat' reported about such behaviour. This was confirmed by orderly Bretshneider. Heinenberg was prosecuted, but his further fate is unknown<sup>108</sup>.

The patient mortality at the Macikai special hospital was high. The 1949 report of the LSSR MVD states that 198 people died here in 1945, 119 – in 1946, 129 – in 1947 and 19 – in 1948, a total of 465 people<sup>109</sup>. Former Lithuanian air force pilot Leonas Alekna who was imprisoned in the USSR NKVD 3<sup>rd</sup> corrective labour colony said: 'The mortality among us, political prisoners, in this camp was relatively low, but that among prisoners of war was quite high. Almost every morning we saw how a dozen of them were taken away for burial in the common cemetery located outside the camp'<sup>110</sup>.

**Liquidation of the special hospital in Macikai.** In early 1947, following the reorganisation of the prisoner of war camps in Lithuania, special hospital 2652 in Macikai remained an independent unit in the POW camp system in Lithuania, although its financing and economic activities depended on the decisions of the administration of Klaipėda POW camp 57. As a result of the repatriation which started in 1947–1948, POW camps, their units and special hospital were restructured and reorganised. Due to the reduced number of patients it was decided to liquidate the special hospital in Macikai.

Pursuant to an order dated 15 November 1947 of the minister of health of the LSSR, on 14 April 1948 Bakulin, deputy chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, ordered Major S. Sergeyev, the chief of POW camp 195 in Vilnius, to accept special hospital 2652 in Šilutė (Macikai)

108 Special notification dated 29 July 1946 on the surveillance-operational work of POW camp 184 in 1946 from J. Bartašiūnas, minister of LSSR MVD, to A. Kobulov, deputy chief of the USSR MVD GUPVI, *ibid.*, ap. 3, b. 12, l. 55.

109 1944–1949 report, l. 2.

110 L. Alekna, *Atsiminimai, Šilutės muziejus, Macikų lagerio kaliniai A–M*, b. 1; S. Mėlinauskas, *Macikai: Sugrižimas atminties takais*, p. 92.

with all its patients to the central lazaretto<sup>111</sup>. So the special hospital in Macikai formally and structurally passed to POW camp 195 in Vilnius and, together with the health improvement camp (former POW camp 184), became Unit 5 of POW camp 195 in Vilnius. On 16 April 1948, the hospital was officially and structurally disbanded and the remaining 358 patients had to be moved to the central lazaretto of POW camp 195<sup>112</sup>, but this was not done immediately, because it was very difficult to transport seriously ill bed-ridden patients.

In 1948, a decision was taken in Moscow to reduce the number of POWs in Lithuania: to repatriate prisoners who were ill and unable to work, to redistribute others according to the demand of workers in Lithuania, and to send some to Moscow. Since the number of ill prisoners was declining, on 10 June 1948 General Bartašiūnas asked Colonel General Ivan Serov, the deputy minister of the USSR MVD, to allow special hospital 2652 in Macikai to be relocated to Kaunas ‘in order to bring it closer to the main personnel and sources of supply’. Only this time the number of patients should be limited to 300 and a convalescent unit for 150 patients was to be established in addition to the hospital. The hospital was to serve all the prisoners of war in Lithuania, as their number continued to decrease. Bartašiūnas noted that there were very seriously ill prisoners who were unable to work and also patients who could not be repatriated due to ‘operational circumstances’. Since pursuant to the order of 20 May 1948 of the USSR MVD, the LSSR MVD OPVI was liquidated, Bartašiūnas asked to transfer this hospital to the care of the LSSR MVD<sup>113</sup>.

The hospital was never relocated to Kaunas. In July 1948, Dyomin asked Bartašiūnas and Bronislavas Penkauskas (Penkovski) to close the hospital because ‘it made no sense to keep a hospital for 2,000–3,000 prisoners of war’ and suggested that the remaining patients be transferred to POW camp 195 in Vilnius, while the hospital-camp be disbanded<sup>114</sup>. On 15 July 1948, pursuant to order No 00836 of the USSR MVD, the separate Unit

111 Letter dated 14 April 1948 from V. Bakulin, deputy chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, to S. Sergeev, chief of POW camp 195 in Vilnius, regarding acceptance of special hospital 2652 in Šilutė, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 122, l. 111.

112 Letter dated 22 April 1948 of S. Sergeev, chief of POW camp 195 in Vilnius, to I. Troshin, chief of the LSSR MVD OPVI, *ibid.*, l. 112; 1944–1949 report, l. 2.

113 Letter dated 10 June 1948 from J. Bartašiūnas, minister of the LSSR MVD, to Ivan Serov, deputy minister of the USSR MVD, regarding a permission to relocate special hospital 2652 in Macikai to Kaunas, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 124, l. 57–58.

114 Letter dated 31 July 1948 from T. Dyomin, head of the hospital, to J. Bartašiūnas and minister of health of the LSSR Bronislavas Penkauskas (Penkovski) regarding closing of the hospital, LYA, f. K-8, ap. 1, b. 124, l. 51.

6 of Klaipėda POW camp 57 and special hospital 2652 were liquidated. All real property (camp barracks, utility and other buildings, and protection zone installations) and material valuables (transport, food supplies, furniture, etc.) were transferred to the LSSR NKVD 3<sup>rd</sup> corrective labour colony<sup>115</sup>.

**Repatriation of prisoners of war of Macikai camp.** Prisoners of war who were in better physical condition, able to work, or were specialists were usually sent to POW camps in the depth of the USSR, while prisoners who were seriously ill and unable to work for the revival of the USSR economy were repatriated (i.e. returned to their country of origin). Among the latter there were many men who became disabled and critically ill due to injuries incurred in the battles, hard work in POW camps and malnutrition. The other category of repatriated prisoners were people in respect of whom the Kremlin had made agreements with the Moscow-friendly governments of the relevant countries or whose repatriation was in Moscow's interest. In summer 1945, fulfilling the Kremlin's political will, NKVD leaders responsible for prisoners of war in the Soviet Union decided to release some POWs home. Preparatory work was to be carried out: echelons were to be built and equipped with bunk beds and tables, dry food parcels were to be handed out and hot water was to be made available. Before their release, POWs were dressed in new or at least not worn out uniforms and were provided with footwear.

After Moscow's agreement with the pro-Soviet Polish Lublin government in July 1945, repatriation of Poles who had been mobilised to the German Army started. On 12 July 1945, Kabulov, the deputy head of the USSR NKVD GUPVI, sent a list of 228 people to Bartašiūnas and ordered him to verify all prisoners of war and all interned Poles, including deceased ones, as a matter of urgency in all the camps of Lithuania and to specify why the prisoners had been arrested and charged. The order was to be carried out by 22 July<sup>116</sup>. In July 1945, five prisoners of war and six mobilised persons were selected at the POW camp 184<sup>117</sup>. Seriously ill prisoners of war of other nationalities were also released. In 1945, a total of 251 such people were released (150 Germans, 64 Czechs, 26 Poles, 6 French, 2 Austrians, 2 Belgians and one Yugoslav)<sup>118</sup>.

115 1944–1949 r, l. 43–45.

116 Letter dated 12 July 1945 from A. Kobulov, deputy chief of the USSR MVD GUPVI, to J. Bartašiūnas, commissar of the LSSR NKVD regarding the return of 228 Polish POWs to the Polish government, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 1, l. 90.

117 Notification dated July 1945 from L. Dyudin, deputy commissar of the LSSR NKVD to A. Kobulov regarding the 11 Poles selected for repatriation, *ibid.*, l. 99.

118 POWs released to their country of origin in 1945 from POW camp 184, *ibid.*, l. 305.

In 1945 between August and November preparation for the evacuation of 654 POWs from special hospital 2652 to their homeland started: 539 Germans, 57 Poles, 34 Austrians, 19 Czechs, 4 Hungarians and one Frenchman (46 of these were disabled, 74 – were in poor health [could not walk], 531 were patients requiring long-term treatment, and 3 prisoners of category three prisoner group)<sup>119</sup>. In 1946–1948, no more prisoners of the special hospital were repatriated. Only prisoners of stationary POW camps were repatriated. Convalescent patients were sent back to their camps or for ‘rehabilitation’ at Šilutė POW camp 184, and only were they entitled to repatriation.

The existing documents show that in 1945–1946, 3,767 persons were repatriated from POW camp 184 in Macikai (895 in 1945 and 2,872 in 1946), of which by nationality: 3,182 Germans, 149 Czechs, 115 Austrians, 113 Poles, 34 Yugoslavs, 27 Dutch, 16 Danish, 8 Swiss and others. In 1945, 658 prisoners, 540 of which were German, were repatriated from special hospital 2652<sup>120</sup>. Thus, a total 4,425 POWs were repatriated from POW camp 184 and special hospital 2652 in Macikai.

**Cemetery.** The cemetery for POW camp 184 in Macikai was allocated in a parcel of land near the River Šyša, about 250 metres northwest of the camp site. In 1946, the cemetery was fenced with barbed wire and divided into three quarters of 25 graves each. A wooden post was placed at the head of each grave with the corresponding registration number of the deceased and the number of the quarter. In January 1946, a committee was formed consisting of the representatives of the LSSR NKVD and the POW camp and on 11 January the committee concluded that the camp cemetery was well maintained, except for the absence of an alphabetical list of the deceased and the fact that in some graves (3<sup>rd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup>) several people were buried. By 11 January 1946, a total of 18 people were buried<sup>121</sup>. In 1946, 11 prisoners died in the camp, so in 1945–1946 a total 29 prisoners of POW camp 184 in Macikai were buried in the cemetery<sup>122</sup>. Compared to other POW camps in Lithuania, the number of people who died in POW camp 184 in Macikai (also called the health improvement camp) was the smallest (and this figure must not be confused with the number who died in special hospital 2652 in Macikai!).

119 Letter dated 29 November 1945 from Rozvanov, head of special POW hospital 2652 to LSSR NKVD regarding the repatriation of diseased POWs, *ibid.*, l. 148.

120 1944–1949 report, l. 2, 38.

121 Deed dated 11 January 1946 regarding the inspection of the cemetery of POW camp 184 and the procedure for burying the deceased, LYA, f. K-8, ap. 2, microfilm 1, b. 207.

122 1944–1949 report, l. 2.

The deceased of special hospital 2652 were buried in a separate cemetery opened in May 1945. The cemetery was 100 metres by 150 metres and was located 600 metres from the boundary of POW camp 184. Since the cemeteries of both institutions were separate, the registration books of the deceased were also separate.

Up until 1946, the attitude of the administration of the POW camp in Macikai to the deceased prisoners was openly scornful. Often, the deceased were buried in graves two or more at a time, stripped naked and their memory was not immortalised by elementary personal data records on the posts, information about the deceased prisoner was not always recorded in the books, the cemetery was not fenced, etc. In late 1945, information reached officials in Vilnius regarding the desecration of the dead prisoners. To this end in January 1946, on Bartašiūnas' order special committees were formed at the special hospital in Macikai and also other POW camps in Lithuania with the aim of identifying 'violations of legal requirements' of the USSR NKVD and elimination of deficiencies. The committee at the Macikai special hospital consisted of First Lieutenant Bondarenka, head of the LSSR NKVD OPVI, Captain Belousov, deputy head of the hospital, and Senior Sergeant Forsov, accounting inspector. The Commission demanded that by 15 January 1946 graves be tidied and burial be conducted according to the prescribed requirements: a plywood post was to be placed at the head of each grave with the number of the grave and the quarter of the cemetery written with indelible paint; deceased prisoners of war were to be buried one person to a grave, in underwear, and officers – in outerwear; a new plan of the cemetery was to be prepared and a copy sent to the LSSR NKVD<sup>123</sup>. These instructions were carried out for a while, but in 1948, after the liquidation of special hospital, the graves were neglected altogether.

In total, 465 people died in special hospital 2652 between 1945 and 1948. In 1945, 18 people died in POW camp 184 and another 11 in 1946, totalling 29 inmates<sup>124</sup>. If we add up the figures, officially 494 people are buried in both POW cemeteries in Macikai. Since there were numerous instances in 1945 of more than one body being buried in a single grave and the names of the deceased were not always recorded in cemetery books, it can be said that more than 500 prisoners could be buried in Macikai. After the special hospital was closed in 1948, deceased prisoners of Unit 3 of the labour camp of the Department of Corrective Labour Colonies of the LSSR MVD continued to be buried in this cemetery.

123 Deed dated 10 January 1946 completed by the officials of special hospital 2652 and the LSSR NKVD regarding violations of the burial procedures at special hospital 2652, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 3, b. 24, l. 261.

124 1944–1949 report, l. 2.

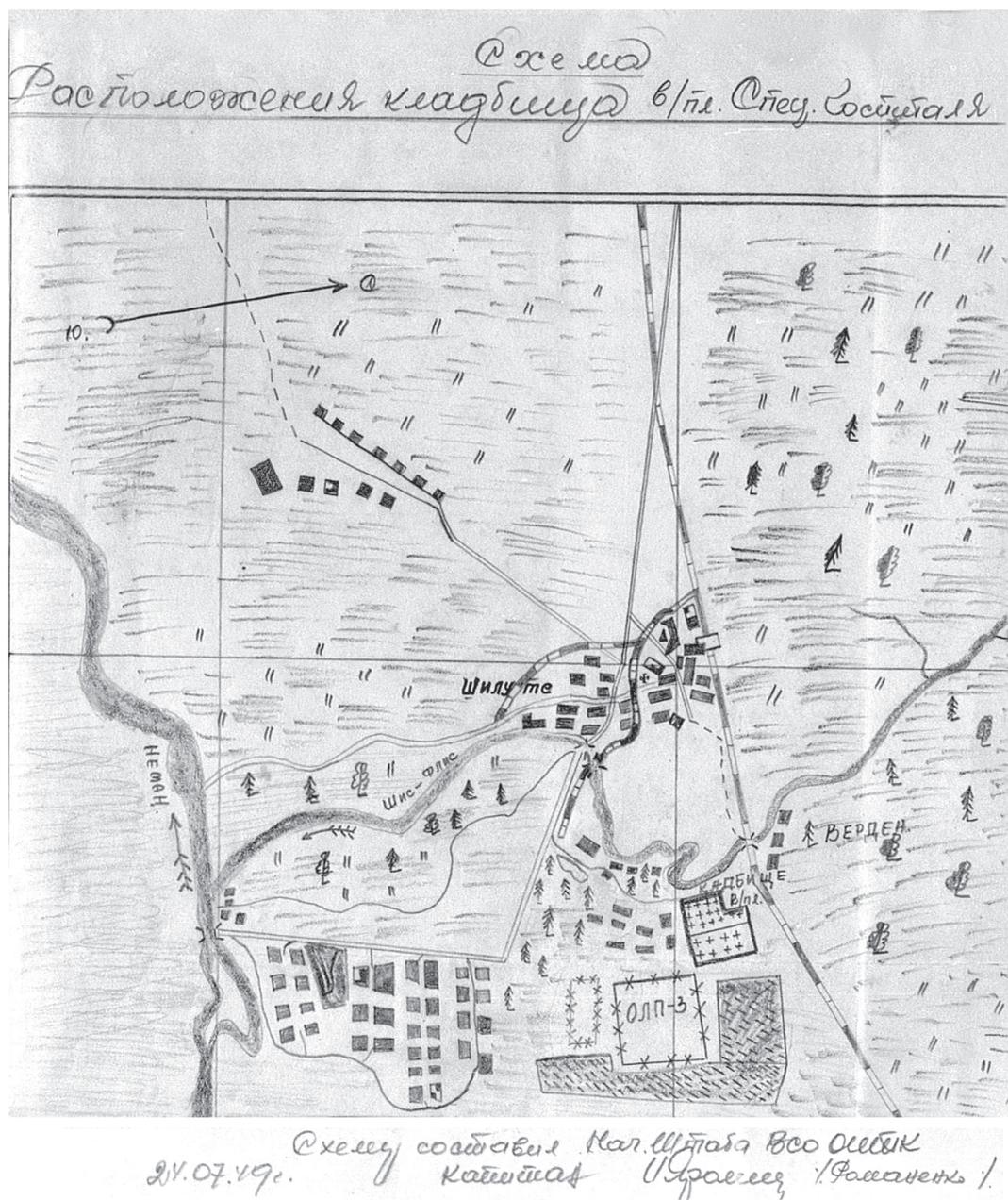


Fig. 2. Plan showing the cemetery (marked with plus signs) of POW camp in Macikai, 1949, LYA, f. K-8, ap. 2, microfilm 1, b. 207

In 1949, the USSR signed the Convention on the Treatment of Prisoners of War and undertook to protect the cemeteries of prisoners of war and to take care of them and also, if possible, to allow the representatives of foreign countries to visit them. The Soviet Union had to make an effort to be seen as a party which performs its international obligations in good faith in the eyes of the world. In view of the Kremlin's political course, in 1950 the USSR MVD leadership began a review of its previous work. Subsequently, Lithuania regularly received enquiries from the USSR MVD regarding the burial sites of prisoners of war and their maintenance, requests to verify the lists of deceased POWs and their names and surnames.

The existing situation seemed to be rather poor. Lithuanian officials who frequently had replaced previous officials of repressive structures pretended to know nothing about the problems of POW imprisonment, burial sites or issues regarding archival documents of the deceased. In 1950 it was identified that the cemeteries of former POW camp 184 and special hospital 2652 were located near each other, but archival documents about the exact location of burial sites of these two institutions were not available. It was argued that according to the cemetery plan, a total of 432 deceased prisoners of war were buried in Macikai<sup>125</sup>.

In 1955, when the POW camp was closed, attempts were made to destroy the cemeteries. A land 'reclamation' project was prepared. Although this project was never implemented and the cemetery was not levelled, animals were grazing on the site, tractors were crossing it and there was a road there.

After the USSR made a commitment to the government of the German Federal Republic to maintain the burial sites of German POWs, in 1958 an inspection campaign of POW cemeteries was initiated by Moscow. The leadership of the LSSR MVD ordered its local officers to inspect the condition of cemeteries. On 25 November 1958, a special committee for the inspection of the cemetery of the special POW hospital in Macikai was formed, and it identified that there were 251 graves in Pagryniai Village, 10 metres from the River Šyša near Pagryniai Home for the Disabled and the cemetery of the former Unit 3 of the labour camp of the Department of Corrective Labour Colonies of the LSSR MVD. The graves had posts on which the number of the cemetery quarter and the grave was inscribed and also the dates of birth and death of the deceased. The graves had posts on which the number of the cemetery quarter and the grave was inscribed and also the dates of birth and death of the deceased. Half of these posts were deteriorated.

125 Letter dated 15 September 1950 from P. Yefremov, acting minister of LSSR MVD, to Belousov, head of the Special Information Bureau of the USSR MVD regarding the cemetery of special hospital 2652, LYA, f. V-69, ap. 1, b. 115, l. 80.

The cemetery was not fenced, maintained or protected. A deed of the inspection of the cemetery was completed on which one of the LSSR MVD officials pencilled in a note in Russian ‘leave it’ (Rus. *ostavit*)<sup>126</sup>. This meant that the cemetery should not be destroyed. Today, the cemetery is fenced with a metal mesh fence painted with white paint. On the southern side of the site there are two metal gates: single and double. There are many metal ornamental and wooden crosses, granite and concrete tombstones on the site. There are also many grave mounds covered in grass, and concrete and wooden borders of various shapes surrounding the mounds. Most tombstones have various inscriptions.

126 Deed dated 25 November 1958 regarding the inspection of the cemetery of special POW hospital 2652, LYA, f. K-8, ap. 2, microfilm 1, b. 207.