



HISTORY OF PATAREI

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The Patarei prison complex on the shore of the Bay of Tallinn has developed over decades into a unique monument, a site that many people have considered, and consider even nowadays, as a place of sacrifice for themselves and their comrades in arms, regardless of whether the authorities that sent them to prison did so lawfully or criminally according to our current understandings.

The history of Patarei Prison is the focus of this article, concentrating primarily in the period of 1940–1945, when it was the centre for the most intensive repressions in Estonia as the Soviet and German occupying regimes alternated. The functioning of Patarei as a continuous prison institution under different occupying regimes is studied, along with the charges against the prisoners detained at Patarei, depending on how the authorities that happened to be in power at the time decided to define their enemies. Accentuating different groups of victims is important in shaping and maintaining Patarei as a place of memory.

Architectural Overview of the Complex

The beginning of the Patarei complex can be considered as 1827 when Russia's Tsar Nikolai I approved the design project for fortifying Tallinn's naval port. The naval fortress, the ground plan of which resembles a sextant, consists of an arced three-storey gorge (referring to the rear part of the fortress building) 247 m long situated at the shoreline (turned towards the roads in the Bay of Tallinn), two radial wings 124 m long (a two-storey lunette from the outside and a single-storey lunette from the yard), and a mortar battery situated opposite the tip of the lunette. This structure is one of Estonia's largest classicist ensembles.

The storeys of the gorge consisted of casemates extending crosswise through the building. Its 1.8 m thick external walls had artillery and rifle embrasures with ventilation flues, and windows in the wall facing the yard. Each floor of the three-storey gorge accommodated 24 large vaulted casemates, each with two cannons. The total number of casemates was 90. The somewhat shorter bastions (yet still with three storeys) situated on the seaward side of the gorge were meant for providing flanking fire. The casemates were connected to spacious passageways along the seashore. These passageways were used as living quarters for soldiers in peacetime.

After construction work had begun, it was decided to strengthen landward defences. A mortar battery plan was drawn up for this purpose. A crescent-shaped single storey stone structure was erected on earthworks in front of the tip of the lunette in 1838 and its roof was completed by the following summer. Already from the very beginning, the inner side of the lunette was a kind of atrium yard, where gardening, floriculture and other pleasant activities could be pursued in peacetime, concealed behind trenches, barriers and walls that originally were erected to a height of one and a half storeys.

The Patarei barracks, or simply defence barracks, construction complex was festively consecrated in 1840.

The single-storey limestone building that housed the mortar battery was provided with an open defence platform with a brick parapet as a superstructure in 1854. In the same year, an earthen entrenchment as smooth as glass named "Two-storey Battery" was built beside the western wing of the gorge. In 1855, another earthwork battery was built beside the other wing. The mortar battery defence platform was also partially rebuilt. Its modernisation was completed on 5 June 1855.

Yet after only another three years in 1858, Tallinn was deleted from the list of the Russian Empire's land fortresses (the demilitarisation of Tallinn's naval fortress was nevertheless not completed until 1864) and the defence barracks were reconstructed as ordinary barracks. Most of the embrasures were converted into windows before 1869. It was nevertheless a very mighty barracks meant for large numbers of soldiers – thus for instance, 2,134 soldiers lived in the gorge in 1881. A third storey was built on top of the lunettes in 1892, providing capacity to accommodate an additional 640 soldiers. The Patarei complex was in use as barracks until the collapse of the Russian tsarist state and the creation of the Republic of Estonia.

Patarei is a unique complex in the Baltic region and the Nordic countries, which contains within itself military and cultural history in several aspects:

- It is one of the largest military/defence structures that has been completely preserved;
- It is Estonia's largest classicist building complex;
- It is an example of recent Estonian history (prison) that was in active use even as late as the last decade;
- It is an important landmark in cultural history that many great Estonian men have been connected to at different stages of its history.

Patarei Prison before 1940

The young Republic of Estonia put its agencies in order in 1919, and in the course of this action, prisons as inevitable institutions for the functioning of the state's penal power were placed under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, as is characteristic of a democratic polity. Until then, prisons had been under the jurisdiction of local municipal governments. Patarei Prison was under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice (the Ministry of Justice and Internal Affairs in 1929–1934) until the occupation of Estonia in the summer of 1940. In August of 1940, when the system of government of occupied Estonia was brought in line with that of the Soviet Union, prisons were placed under the jurisdiction of the Prisons Administration of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs. Estonia's network of prisons remained without any major changes since the 1920s. The so-called Patarei in Tallinn became the central prison among 14 prisons.

The history of the Patarei complex as a prison begins in 1920. Tallinn's previous prisons in Toompea Castle and the Fat Margaret artillery tower had been severely damaged in fires during the pivotal events of 1917 and could no longer be used. The barracks of the tsarist era naval fortress in the harbour area, the so-called Patarei, which had lost its original purpose, were given to the Ministry of Justice in 1919. They were put to use as a prison in 1920 after some reconstruction. The conversion into prisons of fortresses that have lost their purpose had been quite commonplace. Recall the well-known Tower of London or the Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg, both of which are museums nowadays.

The new prison was the largest in Estonia with a capacity for nearly 1,000 prisoners. The complex included a hospital and a number of workshops. The prison building was fortified in the course of reconstruction with internal walls, partition walls, iron gates and even double bars on some of the windows. The building, which had been built as part of the fortress, had walls that were two metres thick in some places. After the Trial of the 149 that was held in November of 1924, and the attempt to overthrow the government that followed on 1 December, the number of imprisoned communists increased and separate sections were built for them on the second storey of the main building in 1925 and 1926. The prison's second and third blocks were built as additions in the 1930s, increasing the prison's capacity by about a tenth. Patarei's normal capacity was now counted as approximately 1,200 prisoners. Since there were many short-term imprisonments, and prisoners who had already been sentenced were sent to work camps outside the city, the number of prisoners that passed through Patarei over the course of the year was surely greater.

The situation regarding domestic policy significantly affected changes in the number of prisoners. This brought waves of criminals convicted of acts committed against the state into the prison. They admittedly considered themselves to be political prisoners. Numerous persons with communist sympathies and other persons who had cooperated with the Soviet Union were sent to the prison during the first years of the republic, especially in connection with the attempt to overthrow the government that took place with the support

of the Soviet Union on 1 December 1924. Ten years later in the mid-1930s, people were under attack who had participated in the right-wing radical movement spearheaded by veterans of Estonia's War of Independence and in their attempt to overthrow the government.

From the very beginning, the authorities proceeded from the principle that the prisoners have to earn their upkeep themselves in order to save public money. Patarei, which went into operation in 1920, had its own sewing workshop, print shop and bindery, etc.

During the years preceding World War II, the political landscape in Europe became ever more threatening both internationally and domestically. Alongside the totalitarian Soviet Union and Germany, an authoritarian form of government or even a dictatorial regime had been established in most Eastern European countries, including the Baltic States. After the coup d'état carried out by Konstantin Päts in 1934 and the subsequent repressions aimed at the members of the veterans of the War of Independence movement in 1934–1936, relative stability ensued. Estonia dozed off into the apparent complacency of the so-called Era of Silence, hoping at the end of the 1930s to be spared from the upheaval that threatened Europe. The power wielded by Konstantin Päts was fortified by the new constitution that went into effect in 1938. Päts was elected to the post of President of the Republic, which had just been created. As an indication of domestic peace and on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the independence of the Republic of Estonia, the President who had just recently taken office announced a political amnesty on 6 May 1938, releasing 104 communists from Patarei Prison, most of whom had spent the greater part of the period of existence of the Republic of Estonia between the walls of that prison. Along with the communists, amnesty was also granted to 79 members of the War of Independence veterans' movement, whose alleged preparations to overthrow the government in 1935 were in turn provoked by Päts's seizure of power in 1934. By the summer of 1940, 36 persons who had been convicted of espionage for the Soviet Union, and seven persons who had been imprisoned for political crimes, still remained in Patarei Prison alongside criminal offenders.

The First Year of Soviet Occupation: 1940–1941

The authoritarian regime led by Konstantin Päts was far removed from our contemporary understanding of democratic government, but the policies of the Era of Silence did not generate constant fear in ordinary people, or even in political opponents, of ending up in prison or being subjected to even harsher punishment. The arrest and conviction of members of the War of Independence veterans' movement who were popular among the people had been part of a campaign following the seizure of power, and they were released as the regime stabilised. The communists were a different story: their activity had been prohibited for more or less the entire existence of the Republic of Estonia (starting from December of 1918). The suppressed communist attempt to overthrow the government in December of 1924 was an additional reason for their prohibition. Communists did not

become a political force with any sort of broad support among the people. Thus it was considered natural to send communists behind bars when they occasionally emerged. The preamble to the Amnesty Act stated: "On the occasion of this important moment [the new constitution going into effect], former errors directed against the system of government are to be considered forgotten, and those citizens who have until now for one reason or another gone astray in relation to the state are also to be given the opportunity to take part in the work building up the state and life in society."

On the one hand, the occupation of Estonia by the Soviet Union in June of 1940 did not change much for Patarei Prison. Criminal offenders, who accounted for the majority of the prisoners, remained behind bars serving their sentences as before. On the other hand, the crowd clamouring to overthrow the government that made its way to the Central Prison on 21 June, accompanied by Red Army armoured vehicles, demanded the release of political prisoners. The prison warden refused to release anybody without orders from his superiors. Only after negotiations led on behalf of the rebels by the former political prisoner Aleksander Resev, who had been sent to prison for 15 years in 1924 and released by amnesty in 1938, the so-called political prisoners were released with the consent of the Minister of Justice. The rebels rejoiced in triumph as their 30 kindred spirits were released from Patarei, with another 13 released from other penal institutions in Estonia. Thirty-six persons sentenced to prison for spying for the Soviet Union (including, for instance, Captain Nikolai Trankmann, who had betrayed the plan of Narva's border fortifications to the Soviet Union) accounted for the majority of this group. Twenty-three of the spies who had been in prison were Estonian citizens, while 11 were citizens of the Soviet Union and two were stateless persons. In addition to the spies, the last three communists who had done time for participating in the attempted coup of 1 December 1924 (Aleksander Mui, Kristjan Seaver and Alfred Sein) were released. Their initial life sentences to forced labour had later been commuted to sentences of 15–20 years, which would have ended in 1941.

The actions of the rebels out to overthrow the government and of their instructors from Moscow were not limited to only releasing their supporters from Patarei and other prisons. In the course of seizing power, the imprisonment of state officials who had hitherto been in office, or simply of political opponents, began immediately. This admittedly was not necessarily in the plans of the wielders of power sent from Moscow to Estonia, but they were unable to funnel the activity of the local rebels enraptured by overthrowing the government into the appropriate channel. Arrests and the takeover of Tallinn's police precincts began under the direction of the local communists Hendrik Allik, Edgar Petree, August Mäemat and Alfred Sein with the tacit support of the commanders and political instructors of the Red Army units deployed in Tallinn. First of all, the officials who had been present at the Political Police prefecture, headed by Political Police Commissar Julius Edesalu, were disarmed and locked up in the Central Prison. There the initiative was initially in the hands of local communists as well: Mäemat, who had been sentenced to 15 years of forced labour for participating in the rebellion of December 1924, was appointed commissar of the Central Prison, and Sein, who had just been released from between those same walls, was named warden of the prison block housing single cells.

The organisers of the overthrow of the government initially tried to create the impression before the public that their actions were lawful in every respect. Regardless of the fact that communists had taken over the Political Police and the Central Prison, Johannes Kõks, who had served as director of the Central Prison since 1934, formally remained in office. The turning point came on 14–15 July, when pseudo-elections of the Riigivolikogu (lower house of the Estonian Parliament) were held. Then the Minister of Justice Friedrich Niggol of the marionette government headed by Johannes Vares formally accepted the voluntary resignation of Director Kõks. Two days later already on 17 July, Kõks was arrested and brought as a person under arrest to be held in custody between familiar walls.

On 17 July, it could be read in the newspaper that the old communist Artur Jaanson took office as the new director of the Central Prison.

The release of prisoners in the course of the overthrow of the government did not remain the only undertaking of its kind. Under the management of the new director of the Central Prison and after Estonia was declared a Soviet socialist republic in July of 1940, the convictions of persons held in all penal institutions started being reviewed. According to a directive issued by the Minister of Justice, boards had to be formed consisting of a representative from the Prosecutor's Office, a prison representative, a representative of the Estonian Communist Party appointed by the Party's Central Committee, and a representative of the Central Association of Estonian Trade Unions. The chairman of the board and the deciding member in the event of a tie in voting was the representative of the Communist Party. The boards could submit proposals to the Minister of Justice for cancelling or commuting sentences by way of pardons and for relieving prisoners of the consequences of their sentences.

The board at the Central Prison chaired by the Communist Party representative Kristjan Seaver began work on 24 July. It perused documents and listened to oral explanations provided by persons in custody. Eight sessions were held, in the course of which the subsequent fate of over 400 prisoners was discussed. Sentences were admittedly not amended in all cases but generally speaking, they were shortened. Ninety-two prisoners were released and their convictions were expunged. The lists unfortunately do not indicate what the released persons had been imprisoned for. It can be presumed that political reasons or philanthropy was not behind the release of previous prisoners in great numbers. This can be viewed more as the creation of large numbers of beholden persons who could thereafter be recruited to work for the new regime. Another reason was allegedly the lack of space that prevailed in the prison because a wave of arrests was unleashed with the beginning of the Soviet occupation.

There are gaps in the surviving data concerning persons imprisoned in 1940–1941. The Estonian Registry Bureau of Repressed Persons has by now identified and disclosed the names of over 9,850 persons arrested at that time for political reasons, most of whom were also locked up behind the walls of Patarei for a longer or shorter period of time. Prisoners convicted for criminal offences remained in prison in addition to persons held in custody for political reasons. Some of the personal files of persons held in custody at the Central

Prison in 1940–1941 have survived. There are only 73 files pertaining to victims of political repression. The lion's share of the surviving 1,277 files concern persons convicted of criminal offences, over 300 of whom had already been in prison before the overthrow of the government.

The masquerade put on by the occupying authorities, pretending that Estonia continued to exist as an independent country, ended at the outset of August 1940 with the annexation of Estonia as one of 16 union republics incorporated into the Soviet Union. With the declaration of Estonia as a union republic of the Soviet Union, state agencies started being reorganised according to the structure of the Soviet Union's state apparatus. Local penal institutions, which had hitherto been under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, henceforth had to be under the jurisdiction of the Soviet Union's agency for internal affairs.

The transition to the structure of Soviet governmental agencies formally began when the Constitution of the Estonian SSR went into effect on 25 August. The Estonian SSR People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs (hereinafter NKVD) was thereby formed as the governmental agency in the field of internal affairs. It began operating on 31 August 1940 when the former Minister of Internal Affairs Maksim Unt handed the conduct of affairs over to the new Estonian SSR People's Commissar for Internal Affairs Boris Kumm.

The USSR People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, generally known by its abbreviation in Russian NKVD, had since 1934 gradually built up an enormous mechanism that controlled everything from firefighting and a large proportion of infrastructure to prisons, the NKVD's own military units (the so-called internal forces), censorship, counterintelligence and foreign intelligence. Even though there were NKVD ministries (people's commissariats for internal affairs) in the union republics as well, the NKVD was an agency with a vertical chain of command. All of its important, and also many less important, orders came straight from its central agency in Moscow. Among other things, the NKVD controlled the entire repressive cycle: it dealt with surveillance, making arrests and (preliminary) investigation, in parallel with judicial bodies, it could in cases under investigation on the basis of very many sections of the Criminal Code also hand down convictions through military tribunals of NKVD troops or by NKVD Special Counsel, and finally it was also responsible for convicts serving their sentences in some Gulag (Main Administration of Camps) prison camp.

Along with Estonia's other penal institutions, Tallinn's Central Prison was placed under the jurisdiction of the Estonian SSR NKVD Prisons Department and Department of Correctional Labour Camps. The Central Prison, known among the people as "Patarei", was now given the official name Estonian SSR NKVD Prison no. 1. Smaller places of detention were additionally set up as necessary – the state security organ, the border guards, the army, the militia (Soviet police force), and other agencies had their own preliminary investigation cells (KPZ, *камера предварительного заключения* in Russian), lock-ups, etc. The Internal Prison in the cellar of the Estonian SSR NKVD main building on Pagari Street in Tallinn became the most notorious of them, where living conditions were especially inhumane and where interrogations and also some sentences for execution by shooting were carried out.

Prison staff were replaced by persons loyal to the new regime, whom specialists brought from the Soviet Union – state security officers – set about leading. Formally speaking, the institution's highest-ranking position was admittedly filled by a trustworthy person from Estonia in most cases, but an experienced NKVD officer was appointed his deputy, who essentially ran the institution. Minister of Internal Affairs Maksim Unt appointed Viktor Feigin as the new director of the Central Prison as of 16 August. The former acting director Jaanson initially remained as a deputy director and was later reduced to the post of the prison's head of firefighting. Feigin was trustworthy in the eyes of the occupying regime. He had admittedly grown up in Estonia but was one of those Estonians who, as a recruit of Comintern agents, fought in Spain for two years as a volunteer in the International Brigade. There in Spain he also joined the Communist Party. During the first weeks of the Soviet occupation, he had already succeeded in serving as the commandant of Toompea Castle, the centre of power located in Tallinn, and as the deputy of Karl Hansson, also a veteran of the Spanish Civil War and the head of the *Rahva Omakaitse* (People's Self-Defence Force), formed already in June of 1940 as the local extension of the NKVD. Feigin remained in the post of director of the Central Prison until only December of 1940, when he was dismissed. The alleged reason for this, or at least its inducement, was reportedly the escape of prisoners. Let us point out that Minister of Internal Affairs Unt, who appointed Feigin as director, was himself arrested on 22 May 1941 and was sent to Patarei as a prisoner. On 9 June he was already sent onward to Moscow, where he was sentenced to death and executed on 30 July 1941. At the same time, Feigin's path through life also ended: he was sent as a saboteur to Finland in 1941 after the start of the war between the Soviet Union and Finland, where he was caught and executed less than two weeks before Unt.

In place of Feigin, Lieutenant Vassili Jurjev became temporary acting director until State Security Sergeant Aleksei Selitrennikov, who had arrived from the Soviet Union, took over the post of director in January of 1941. Selitrennikov served in the NKVD *apparat* in Estonia after the war as well.

The central *apparat* of the Estonian department of the NKVD, and the investigation unit of the state security department that dealt with persons held in custody for political reasons, were located in Tallinn. The Internal Prison in the cellars of their residence on Pagari Street could not nearly accommodate all persons in custody. Thus the nearby Patarei Prison became the penal institution that all arrested public officials, high-ranking military officers, police officers and businessmen of the Republic of Estonia passed through before their execution or being sent to the Gulag, along with all others who had fallen victim to repressions due to their activities in the Republic of Estonia or because of their political convictions.

Persons in custody were interrogated at Pagari Street and at Patarei. Persons sentenced to death by the military tribunal of the NKVD troops were in most cases taken in groups of three or more prisoners from Patarei to the Internal Prison on Pagari Street according to the orders of the Estonian SSR People's Commissar for the NKVD or his deputy. There they were received by the warden and commandant of the Internal Prison with a detachment of

guards. The prisoners were shot in the courtyard or cellar of the Internal Prison. Arnold Brenner, also a veteran of the Spanish international brigades and the commandant of the People's Commissariat for State Security (NKGB, the state security branch of the NKVD, which was separated from the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs in February and March of 1941 to form a separate People's Commissariat) Internal Prison, and the head of the 3rd Department Sergei Kingissepp, the son of Viktor Kingissepp, the former leader of Estonian communists, were both in command of the execution firing squad. Sergei Kingissepp had come to Estonia from the Soviet Union. The fate of many of the prisoners has successfully been ascertained, although for the most part, the graves of the victims are not known. Yet we do not always know even that much. The best known example of this is Jaan Tõnisson, one of the most outstanding Estonian politicians who was arrested in December of 1940. His documented traces end on 4 July 1941 at Patarei Prison. His name is crossed off the list of prisoners to be sent by train echelon to the Soviet Union. A notation on an NKVD card file card allows us to claim that Tõnisson was almost certainly executed in Tallinn in early June of 1941 together with many other well-known Estonian statesmen and military officers.

For the people who remained in freedom, the Patarei and Pagari prisons became places from where the disappearance of their kinfolk into the unknown began in the period of the Soviet regime. For this reason, there is very little information on life within the prisons during the first year of Soviet occupation.

After war broke out between the Soviet Union and Germany, the number of arrested persons started growing quickly in June and July of 1941, and the prisons were filled to capacity. The transportation of convicted persons to the Soviet Union that had already begun little by little in the spring became a mass evacuation of prisoners, and in some places also the indiscriminate execution of persons in custody as the front line approached. By the start of the war, there were 1,651 persons in custody in Patarei, two thirds of which (1,078) were under preliminary investigation. Half of these people (621), in turn, were persons placed in custody by the state security organs, meaning that they were imprisoned primarily for political reasons. The mass deportation carried out on 14 June also happened to be part of the reporting period (10–20 June 1941), but the men, women and children imprisoned in the course of the deportation were not brought to Patarei. Instead they were sent straight to Russia by rail in train echelons. The number of persons in custody admittedly increased by 48 during the reporting period, but it is not known on account of whom this increase occurred.

Thirty-one lists have survived in Estonia with a total of 2,831 names of persons in custody who were to be evacuated from Patarei to Russia. A total of 214 names on these lists have been crossed off, and it is known that at least 27 of these people were shot in Estonia. Yet according to the Estonian Registry Bureau of Repressed Persons, at least 35 of these people were nevertheless evacuated to Russia with other prisoners. The fate of the remaining 152 persons is not known, like for instance the above-mentioned Jaan Tõnisson. The fact that 116 people are on several lists simultaneously adds further confusion.

If the authorities were unable to evacuate prisoners, their subsequent fate had to be decided on the spot according to orders. It was decided in many Estonian prisons to execute the prisoners: 193 people were murdered in Tartu Prison on 8 July on the orders of the local head of the NKVD. On the same day, 11 prisoners were executed in Viljandi. Prisoners were also executed in Kuressaare, Valga, Võru, the NKVD jail in Petseri, Jõhvi and Lihula, and possibly elsewhere as well. As a contrary example, 45 prisoners were released on 10 July on the orders of H. Juhvelt, the warden of Paide Prison. Most of the persons in custody in Patarei were evacuated by rail in train echelons to Siberian prison camps in the Soviet Union, but the last 150 prisoners were taken away from Tallinn by ship as late as 26 August, when the overland connection to the Soviet rear area had already been cut off. Less than 5% of the prisoners taken to Russia saw Estonia again.

Patarei during the German Occupation: 1941–1944

As the occupation of Estonia was being carried out in June of 1940, the Central Prison had continued to operate uninterruptedly. Some of the criminal prisoners continued to serve their sentences. The prison's management and officials were replaced step by step. The German occupying regime replaced the Soviet occupying regime through warfare and for a brief period of time, the prison most likely ceased to operate. By 28 August when German forces captured Tallinn, there apparently were no prisoners in Patarei anymore. A small number of persons in custody might nevertheless have been left behind in the prison hospital. There are no reports of released prisoners and no traces have been found of last minute executions like in Tartu or Kuressaare. The new occupying regime also needed a prison to consolidate its power, and the Patarei complex was immediately put to work. The reception of persons held in custody already began on 31 August at the latest, but possibly even earlier.

Already during the first weeks, agencies of the Estonian Self-Administration began to function, operating under the control of the German occupying authorities. Most of the nationwide agencies that had started operating were formally placed under the jurisdiction of the Self-Administration and its directorates. The German occupying authorities did not restore the operation of local judicial institutions right away. All local penal institutions, together with police authorities, were placed under the jurisdiction of the agency that dealt with internal affairs, namely the Directorate of Internal Affairs. This kind of arrangement somewhat resembled the situation in the Soviet era, when prisons were placed under the jurisdiction of the NKVD.

The Prison Houses Administration began operating in September of 1941 as part of the Estonian Self-Administration Directorate of Internal Affairs headed by Oskar Angelus.

Regardless of the fact that it was part of the Estonian Self-Administration directorates, the Prison Houses Administration depended in its work first and foremost on the German Security Police and Department IV of the SD (Gestapo). Thus Patarei Prison was also connected primarily to the German Security Police and the SD.

The number of people arrested on political charges was so large during the first months of the German occupation that in addition to the existing prisons, temporary concentration camps were set up on orders from *Wehrmacht* rear area units in order to detain them all. There were 16 penal institutions with a total of 9,750 persons in custody in Estonia in October of 1941. By that time, 2,600 persons were already in custody at Patarei, though its normal capacity was 1,200. The number of prisoners in Patarei had grown exponentially in the first weeks of the occupation. According to data submitted to the Political Police, 583 persons held in custody were already registered on 2 September, five days after Tallinn was captured. Their number continued to increase rapidly, exceeding 1,000 by the 5th day of the month, and surpassing the threshold of 1,200 calculated as the prison's capacity by the 9th day of the month. The threshold of 2,000 was already surpassed by the 19th day of the month, and the largest occupancy rate of that period – 2,668 detainees – was reached by 9 October 1941. Since the reports in question were submitted to the Political Police, then it must be assumed that these numbers do not include prisoners charged with criminal offences, though their number certainly had to be far smaller. Thereafter the number of detainees decreased but fluctuated over quite a broad range: between 1,300 and 2,500. It started increasing again in 1944 in connection with the imminent evacuation, rising to about 4,200 detainees in August, when prisoners brought over from other prisons and camps were assembled in Patarei prior to being loaded onto ships. Patarei Prison remained the central penal institution in the German Security Police and SD system throughout the entire German occupation.

In the summer of 1942, Martin Sandberger, head of the Security Police and the SD in Estonia, renamed three Estonian penal institutions labour and correctional camps (in German *Arbeitserziehungslager* – AEL). The former central prison house that was part of Patarei was also among those renamed institutions. It was renamed Tallinn Labour and Correctional Camp (Estonian abbreviation TKL) no. 1. The regulations of Germany's prison camps were admittedly adopted, but this changed little as far as the prisoners were concerned. The main change was only the name.

After it had been put back into operation as a prison, Patarei's staff consisted mostly of prison officials from the era of the independent Republic of Estonia, at least initially. These officials had been removed from their posts during the first year of Soviet occupation. An order that compelled police and prison officials from the era of the independent Republic of Estonia to return to their former positions is said to have been issued in the autumn of 1941, and corresponding appeals in writing were sent home to them. Staff that was added in the following years also consisted primarily of Estonians.

Kaarel Tarendi was the first acting prison warden until the outset of 1942. He later served as deputy warden in charge of production. Thereafter, Karl-August Vergi was acting prison warden for a short time. He had served as deputy director of Tallinn's Central Prison in the latter half of the 1930s. From June of 1942 until August of 1943, the commandant of Tallinn's TKL was August Ilves. Thereafter, this post went to Captain Aleksander Laak, who had previously served in the same position as commandant of the Jägala TKL, which had

since been shut down. Laak was the warden of Tallinn's TKL located in Patarei until the camp ceased operating.

Primarily Estonian residents whom German police authorities and judicial institutions had charged on political and racial (primarily local Jews) grounds, but also with other offences (acts damaging to the war economy, speculation, etc.), were detained in Patarei, along with local criminal offenders. As an exception, a few dozen German and Czech Jews were temporarily brought to Patarei in 1943. They were the only ones of the more than 2,000 people who had been brought to the Jägala TKL in the autumn of 1942 who had been left alive – the rest had been murdered at Kalevi-Liiva. Beyond that, roughly 300 Jews were brought from France to Tallinn's prison in May of 1944 on orders from the German authorities. They were part of Convoy no. 73, the main destination of which was Lithuania. About 40 of them made it out of Estonia alive and were taken to the concentration camp in Stutthof in the late summer of 1944.

Besides the prison workshops, Patarei's detainees also worked at sites situated in the city (for instance at the harbour or cleaning up war damages in the city) as well as in field camps and fatigue parties outside of the city. Working beyond the prison walls provided people who had to survive on meagre wartime prison fare with the occasional chance to procure a little bit of additional food from complaisant people, even though dearth of foodstuffs prevailed beyond the prison walls as well.

Mass executions were not carried out at Patarei. The prison admittedly had an execution chamber, where criminal prisoners sentenced to death by hanging were executed. Some of the prison's guards served as the hangman in return for extra pay. The public hanging of four detainees in Patarei on 17 July 1944, which the newspaper *Eesti Sõna* also reported at that time, has for various reasons been highlighted as an example before the public time and again for decades. Public notification of the execution of criminal offenders and persons who had violated wartime laws was common at that time. (The public was not, however, informed of the carrying out of death sentences of political opponents or the mass execution of Jews. This was a state secret, *geheime Reichssache*). In the case of the above-mentioned incident, the men involved had admittedly been imprisoned for communist activity according to the newspaper article, but they were charged with deliberately spreading the spotted typhus infection. Due to the outrage generated in the camp, volunteers found from among the detainees themselves are said to have carried out the execution. The actual circumstances of this sensational execution will evidently remain unclear. Regardless of what the real story was concerning the alleged spreading of typhus-bearing ticks through the keyholes of cell doors, it can be expected that the aims of this "show execution" were broader. The military situation at the front was becoming ever more difficult and relations between Estonians and those occupying their country, which had hitherto been quite tolerant, were becoming strained. The notification of the execution of persons who had not followed the rules was meant as a signal to a considerably broader audience than the people doing time in Patarei Prison.

The writer Jaan Kross, who was imprisoned in the spring of 1941 for participating in the nationalist resistance movement and was also held in Patarei Prison until September, has written, first of all in the collection of short stories *Silmade avamise päev* (The Day Eyes were Opened, 1988) and then also in his memoirs, that he was in the same cell with men whose death sentences had already been announced in wall newspapers as having been carried out when he had still been in freedom.

Political prisoners and “racial enemies” were not executed in the prison and with the participation of prison officials. The Security Police conveyed to the prison warden lists of detainees from those categories who had been sentenced to death. These prisoners were handed over to the police for execution on the basis of those lists. Prisoners were sent to execution mostly at night when less people were out on the streets, and when the possibility was smallest that those to be executed would come into contact with prison officials who were not involved in the execution. The organisation of the executions of political prisoners and “racial enemies” was under the jurisdiction of the Estonian department of the Security Police and the SD. For the most part, members of the department’s guard detachment carried out the death sentences. This detachment was done away with on 23 September 1943. It is not known who belonged to the execution detachments thereafter.

According to Gerhard Isup, the prison official who looked after handing prisoners sentenced to death over for execution, the execution of Estonian citizens and residents of Estonia who had been sentenced to death was under the jurisdiction of the Estonian department of the Security Police and the SD. Jews brought from European countries and placed for a certain time in Patarei in smaller groups in 1943 and 1944, however, were handed over to the German detachment under the command of *SS-Unterscharführer* Witte. Thus it can be presumed that the German group of the Security Police and the SD dealt with Jews brought from outside of Estonia.

Statistics concerning prisoners taken from Patarei for execution have not survived, but considering the general statistics concerning repressions in the period of German occupation, it can be argued that mass executions of persons detained in Patarei were carried out in the last four months of 1941 and in early 1942. Relative calm prevailed at Patarei for nearly the entire subsequent two years, and the complex was used as a forced labour camp, where persons under preliminary investigation were detained in addition to convicted persons. People convicted in Estonia during the war were generally not sent to German forced labour camps located elsewhere, even though the regulations prescribed this in the case of certain prisoners. For instance, Karl Säre, the 1st Secretary of the Central Committee of the Estonian Communist Party who had been imprisoned, was sent from Patarei to Germany in 1942. Säre had been active in previous years in China as a Soviet intelligence agent and now German intelligence agencies hoped to gain information from him concerning the Soviet spy Richard Sorge, who had been exposed in the Far East. After the exhaustion of this interest, Säre was sent to the Sachsenhausen concentration camp and

from there onward to the Neungamme concentration camp, where he died on 14 March 1945.

As the front approached, preparations were launched in 1944 for evacuating prisoners from Estonia. They started being assembled from other prisons and camps in Tallinn at Patarei, which thus acquired the additional role of a transit camp. The first wave of prisoners was already sent by way of Patarei by rail to camps located in Polish or German territory from February to May of 1944. Russians and prisoners whose sentences were for longer than five years were sent away first of all in the spring. The evacuation was halted as the front line stabilised, and continued as the military situation worsened from July to September, from then on by sea. By the outset of August 1944, most detainees from other TKL's in Estonia had been brought to Tallinn, about 4,200 people in total. Since Germany's shaky front lines needed fresh troops, prisoners fit for military service born in 1900–1926 serving shorter sentences were given the chance to volunteer for the army in accordance with orders issued in August.

From February to September of 1944, at least 2,200 people in total, a large proportion of which were Russians (both Russians from Estonia as well as Russians evacuated from the Soviet Union to Estonian territory), but also at least 72 Latvians, were sent from Patarei first to Stutthoff and to a lesser extent from there onward to other concentration camps. The circumstances by which 300 to 400 Latvian prisoners ended up in Patarei are not known. Most of them had apparently arrived at Patarei from Salaspils TKL on 7 July 1944. They were transferred to the camp at Murru for a while, and were later sent back to Tallinn. The fate of those Latvians who were not among the 72 who were evacuated is not known.

After the end of the war, the greater portion of former concentration camp prisoners was repatriated to the Soviet Union.

There was, however, an altogether different type of detainee at Patarei and among those sent to Stutthoff. The German authorities did not pursue and punish only Soviet-minded persons, but also figures in the Estonian nationalist resistance movement. The writer Jaan Kross, for instance, has written about them in his memoirs of the time he spent at Patarei. Kross succeeded in being released from Patarei at the end of the war, but his comrade in arms Enn Sarv and another five men were not so lucky and were sent onward to Stutthoff. The restoration of Soviet occupation did not leave either Kross or Sarv in freedom. Both were arrested in 1946 and sent to what was by then already a Soviet forced labour camp.

Not much is known about the last days of German occupation era Patarei. On 11 September, a week before its evacuation, another 1,633 detainees were still present in Patarei according to an official report. The execution of some of the detainees at the last moment cannot be ruled out but there is no evidence of this. Prisoners were not evacuated *en masse* in the course of the evacuation of Tallinn by sea until 22 September 1944, but according to former prisoners, prison guards released some of them before German forces left Tallinn.

Jaan Kross has recalled this as follows:

“But then we stood in the corridor of the Patarei single division and awaited our fate. It turned out that there were even a little bit more men there, five or six, but the rest were most likely strangers. That same probably slightly drunk man with a narrow face and wearing a cap stepped in front of us and ordered us to follow him. But he did so in any case in a sotto voice. He took us through a couple of grated communicating gates, whereas the guards at the gates or communicating doors opened them at his signal without hesitation. I remember that I noted to Armin, who walked beside me: “Aha – we walked past there in any case –” and I had in mind the chamber where it was rumoured that death sentences were customarily carried out. Thereafter we reached some almost unlighted rooms adjoining some sort of so-called production management courtyard. Thus I stumbled on the feet of some people who were sitting down. Somebody muttered that they had just arrived here from Jõhvi. Then we saw a bit of exceedingly beautiful starry autumn sky and exited the last gate, and suddenly we were on the other side of the prison walls. And naturally we looked around in utter suspense: where are the lorries? (The rumour had spread in the meantime that we were being taken to Paldiski and from there to Germany.) So where are the lorries then? And the inevitable outdoor gendarmes with their little shields hanging from their necks? And the dogs? – The first and the second and the third were nowhere in sight! Instead, our escort emerged from the darkness. It is as if he had ordered us with a gesture to gather around him. In any case, before we were able to scatter he said: “Well, boys, now – everybody goes wherever he wants! This crap is over for now!” And we ran for it.”

Most of the prisoners who had been in Patarei in the final days of the German occupation were probably sent at the last moment from Tallinn towards Paldiski on foot so that they could then be transported onward from there by sea. According to Albert Koppel, who was in that convoy, there were 700–800 men who arrived escorted by guards at the camp at Klooga by the evening of 20 or 21 September. The mass murder of Jews had already been carried out and the Germans had left the camp. The Germans who had escorted the prisoners from Patarei also disappeared, so that the next morning, the company of prisoners scattered towards the four winds.

The Red Army captured Tallinn on 22 September.

The NKVD Started Up Patarei Prison Again

There was a momentary interruption in the operation of Patarei Prison in September of 1944. Along with the return of the Red Army and the NKVD, the prisons that had survived the destruction of war were quickly put to use again. Some state security officers who had organised the work of the prisons in 1940–1941 had also returned. The rolling of battles over the land was followed by a quick wave of repression that was supposed to purge the country of “anti-Soviet elements” and contribute to the sovietisation of the captured territories. This was all rather similar to what had happened in the late summer and autumn of 1941 after the Germans had captured Estonia.

The prisons that had survived the war were quickly filled with persons held in custody. By the outset of 1945, the number of arrested persons in Estonian prisons had already grown to 4,218, including 2,378 in Patarei (the prison had a capacity of 1,200 detainees at that time). By 10 March 1945, there were 3,620 arrested persons in Patarei alone, which was one of the largest numbers of prisoners in the history of Patarei. There was a total of 6,730 prisoners in all prisons at that time. The majority of detainees at that time consisted of persons under preliminary investigation who awaited their verdicts. Regardless of overcrowding three times in excess of its normal capacity, a few prisoners were “forgotten” there for several months. Due to lack of space, convicted offenders soon started being transported to forced labour camps in interior regions of the Soviet Union. The greater portion of convicted offenders in the post-war period consisted of people imprisoned for political reasons. The number of new arrests started declining in 1946, as was the case throughout the Soviet Union. By the time of Stalin’s death in March of 1953, there were eight prisons in Estonia with a total capacity of 3,280, of which 1,646 spaces were occupied. The Patarei complex remained the central prison under the administration of the Estonian SSR Ministry of Internal Affairs after World War II as well, and it was used primarily as a preliminary investigation prison. Persons held in custody were taken by so-called black ravens to the Internal Prison of the Ministry of State Security on Pagari Street for interrogations, which were often accompanied by violence. The black raven was a van on the side of which the word ‘Leib’ (bread) was painted to mislead the public. The Internal Prison at Pagari Street was an even more notorious place than Patarei due to the violence employed there and its intolerable living conditions. Over the years, Patarei had a number of different official designations, the last of them being “Preliminary Investigation Isolating Facility no. 1”. Patarei was still used as a prison in the restored Republic of Estonia as well under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice until December of 2002.

In Summary

Nearly one hundred years have passed since the time when Patarei was put to use as a prison complex. Over that time, the system of government beyond the prison walls has changed four times, with the additional attempts to overthrow the government in 1924 and 1935. Only the restoration of the independence of the Republic of Estonia in 1991 was not accompanied by political and/or military violence. In all the other incidences, Patarei in particular was the central place where tens, hundreds and even thousands of members of the contingent that found itself on the losing side were locked up. The current dismal and decaying condition of the complex is the inverse manifestation of respect for these memories and our culture of commemoration.

During the years of occupation in 1940–1991, Patarei became a symbol of foreign rule and the sufferings of thousands of innocent people. The fates of Jüri Jaakson, Jaak Reichmann and Maksim Unt are a few of many vivid examples of the irony of fate on the one hand, and the circuitous history of Patarei Prison on the other. Jaakson was Minister of Justice at the

time when Patarei became a prison, and his life in freedom ended with the deportation in June of 1941. Since he was taken into custody during the deportation, his journey admittedly led straight to Russia without a stopover at Patarei, and ended somewhere in a Soviet prison, where he was sentenced to death and executed. Reichmann was a judge and the Chief Justice of the Court of Appeal for two decades. He had sent a number of people behind the walls of Patarei in the course of standing for justice and imposing penalties, and he ended the days of his life as a prisoner of the NKVD between the walls of that same Patarei Prison. These two men ended up in Patarei under the force of a foreign power. Maksim Unt, however, fell victim to his own side. He had participated actively in turning Patarei into an NKVD prison, but this did not atone for his alleged sins before that same regime.

A number of members of the veterans of the War of Independence movement, who had been released in 1938 under the terms of the amnesty, found themselves in Patarei Prison again in the first half of the 1940s, this time as prisoners of the NKVD or NKGB. For instance, Colonel Eduard-Alfred Kubbo (1887–1941), a two-time recipient of the *Vabadusrist* (Cross of Liberty, Grade I/ 2nd Class and Grade II / 3rd Class), was imprisoned on 6 November 1940, and was shot in Tallinn on 10 June of the following year. Captain Paul Laamann (1892–1945), who had also been released by means of that same amnesty and was similarly a recipient of the *Vabadusrist* (VR I/3), went to Germany in 1941 as part of the *Nachumsiedlung* (the second wave of resettlement of German nationals from the Baltic States to Germany which took place after the Soviet annexation of the Baltic States). He served as company commander in the Ostland Police Battalion formed in Germany of men who had resettled there during the *Nachumsiedlung*. Thereafter he returned to Estonia and served as Chief of Staff of the strike force formed by Rear Admiral Johan Pitka in the late summer of 1944. Laamann was arrested on 22 October 1944 and was shot in Tallinn on 25 January 1946. As the irony of fate would have it, one of his interrogators was the Estonian SSR People's Commissar for State Security Boris Kumm, an Estonian communist who was released together with Laamann in the amnesty of 1938.

Patarei Prison first acquired symbolic meaning in the eyes of Estonian communists, most of whom had been locked up in its cells for longer or shorter intervals for actions directed against the state in the Republic of Estonia. In June of 1940, after the occupation of Estonia, local communists who were still imprisoned there were released, and in the later depiction of events glorified as a "people's revolution", Patarei became a symbol of the evilness of the Republic of Estonia. It was depicted as such in the memoirs of old communists that were published throughout the entire Soviet period. The life of communist political prisoners is also depicted in the play *Mõõk väravas* (Sword at the Gate) by Mart Raud, which was published at the outset of 1941 as the first original "Estonian SSR play". The play was also brought to the stage right away with high hopes, but due to its ignorance and ineptitude, it did not even earn the endorsement of former political prisoners, the prototypes of the main characters, to say nothing of the broader theatre audience.

An NKVD prison operated at Patarei in 1940–1941. Thousands of victims of the communist regime passed through it prior to their execution or before being sent to the Soviet Union. After Estonia fell under German occupation in September of 1941, the German Security Police and the SD used this facility as its centre of detention over the course of three years. Thousands of people, the political and racial enemies of the National Socialist regime, were locked up between its walls to await their fate or serve their sentences. Alongside local residents, Jews from France, Czechoslovakia and Germany, and Russians and people of other nationalities from occupied territory of the Soviet Union were included among them. There were fortunate detainees whose imprisonment did not last long. There were also those who were sent onward to other penal institutions, but for many it proved to be their last stopover before execution. In September of 1944, Estonia once again fell under Soviet rule and NKVD operatives immediately returned to direct the prison that they were already familiar with. This latest in the series of changes of power again locked thousands in cells who were charged with acting against the Soviet regime and/or with assisting the German authorities.

Patarei has remained a memorial site that is currently neglected. Yet is shared in common by different parties that have also been at enmity with one another, and have alternately been both inside and outside the prison's locked doors, as if in historical role plays.