

The White and Red Terror in the Eastern Part of Viru County in 1917–1919

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From 1917 to 1919, terror against political enemies was used by the Bolsheviks, the German occupation authorities, the Commune of the Working People of Estonia that acted as a puppet government for Soviet Russia, and also by the young Republic of Estonia, as they tried to protect their rule. Compared to the rest of Estonia, the eastern parts of Viru County, especially Narva and Jaanilinn, are notable for a relatively higher number of victims. Estonians constituted the majority of the victims of the terror from both sides, but less is known about the fact that many Finnish members of the Red Guards were among those who fell when the Estonian Army and the Finnish volunteers liberated the city of Narva in January 1919.

Introduction and Aims

As a counterweight to the establishment of the Baltic Duchy with the support of the German Empire in April 1918, Arthur Balfour, the foreign minister of Great Britain, the opposing side, declared the Estonian Diet (*Maapäev*) *de facto* the only legitimate representative of the Estonian people in May 1918.¹ The first international recognition of Estonia (in the spring of 1917, the Governorate of Estonia and the Estonian areas of the Governorate of Livonia merged into one Governorate of Estonia) at the government level took place on 8 December 1918 when Soviet Russia recognized Estonia as the Commune of the Working People

¹ See Estonian Diet Protocol No 61, Appendix No 6, Response of the British Government on 8 May 1918 – *Maanõukogu protokollid 1917–1919, 1. koosolekust 1. juulil 1917 78. koosolekuni 6. veebruaril 1919* (Estonian Diet Protocols 1917–1919, from the 1st meeting on 1 July 1917 to the 78th meeting on 6 February 1919) (Tallinn: s.n., 1935), 295.

of Estonia (*ETK* = *Eesti Tööraha Kommuun*). It is interesting that the first territorial conflict of the *ETK* broke out about ten days later in the town of Walk (Valga and Valka today) with the newly proclaimed Soviet Socialist Republic of Latvia due to the fact that the Latvian riflemen battalions invaded the territory of Estonia which the *ETK* considered to be its own.

The concept of terror as part of the politics of violence also includes state violence against its citizens. As it is unclear within which borders Soviet Russia recognized the *ETK*, we can reduce the area we are going to analyse to a smaller region than a state. The district of Alutaguse in the county of Rakvere included four parishes (Vaivara, Lügänuše, Jõhvi and Iisaku). Under tsarist Russia, Narva was part of Saint Petersburg Governorate (but at the same time, Narva was subject to Baltic provincial law like the Baltic governorates). In July 1917, a referendum on joining the Governorate of Estonia was carried out in the territories of Narva and Ivangorod (Jaaniünn). In Narva a majority was in favour but in Ivangorod against; as the population of Narva was larger than Ivangorod, then the referendum resulted in the decision to join. The Chairman of the City Council of Narva, Ansis Daumanis (1885–1920; perished in the Soviet-Polish war) then sent a letter to the Council of People's Commissars of Russia whose chairman Vladimir Uljanov recognised it with a document, signed by him on 16 November. Narva and Ivangorod became parts of the Governorate of Estonia. The twin cities of Narva-Jaaniünn saw the bloodiest terror in Estonia during 1918–1920.²

Apart from the newspaper articles published within a hundred years on the terrorist acts committed in the regions of Alutaguse and Narva, these acts have hardly been mentioned in the publications of historians. E.g. a book by Arved Palgi, published in 1936,³ a study of the White Ter-

² The article covers the events in the parishes of Vaivara, Lügänuše, Jõhvi and Iisaku and in Narva and Ivangorod. Therefore, one of the largest-scale mass murders of Viru County in the forest of Palermo near Rakvere is not covered. However, a resident of Tudulinna (parish of Iisaku) is on the list of the executed in Rakvere. *Author's note*.

³ Arved Palgi, *Enamlaste võimulemine Rakveres ja Rakvere vabastamine* (The Rule of Bolsheviks in Rakvere and the Liberation of Rakvere) (Rakvere muuseumi seltsi kirjastus: Rakvere, 1936).



Victims of the Red Terror in Palermo forest near Rakvere after exhumation on 17 January 1919. RA, EFA.257.A.288.363

ror by Paul Vihalem in 1961⁴ and Taavi Minnik's unfinished manuscript "Terror and Repressions in the Estonian War of Independence in 1918–1920" (2016).⁵ The latter is the only publication which studies both, the White and the Red Terror, it contains a number of references to various authors but its work with archival materials is incomplete. For example, the number of the victims of the Red as well as the White Terror has been pointed out but it is unclear what the sources of information are.

This article was mostly finished by the end of 2019. Later, the White and the Red Terror were studied in the two-volume collection *The History of the Estonian War of Independence*, published in 2020.⁶

⁴ Paul Vihalem, *Valge terror Eestis aastail 1918–1919* (The White Terror in Estonia in 1918–1919), Tartu Riikliku Ülikooli Toimetised (Tartu State University Transactions) 110 (Tartu: Tartu Riiklik Ülikool, 1961).

⁵ Taavi Minnik, "Terror ja repressioonid Eesti Vabadussõjas (1918–1920)" (Terror and Repressions in the Estonian War of Independence (1918–1920)) (manuscript, Tallinn University, 2016).

⁶ *Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu*, I, *Vabadussõja eellugu: Punaväe sissetung ja Eesti vabastamine* (The History of the Estonian War of Independence, vol. 1, Invasion of the Red Army and the

The author of this article has set the following goals:

- 1) describing and comparing the terrorist acts committed in the eastern part of Viru County with those committed in the civil wars of Finland (1918) and Russia (1918–1922);
- 2) finding out as many names of the perished as possible and the causes of their slaughter, leaving open the research on those whose cases lack archival materials;
- 3) identifying who initiated the terror outside military action.

Terrorist Incidents in 1917–1919

Unlike in the counties of Harju and Lääne, no manors were burnt down in the eastern part of Viru County during the 1905 Russia's revolution. Looting on the largest scale took place in the manor of Maidla, followed by some shootings by punishment squads. The victims had never participated in the looting.⁷ After that, by local standards, the people were able to lead fairly peaceful lives until the Bolshevik seizure of power in November 1917 when the Estonia's War and Revolutionary Committee (*SRK=Sõja-Revolutsoonikomitee*) which had been set up for seizing power in the governorate, set its goal to take over the property of landlords. On 10 December, a four-man strong group of Tallinn Red Guard was sent to the manor of Püssi. Count Stackelberg⁸ found out about it and sent a request for help to the 4th Estonian Infantry Regiment in Rakvere whose forma-

Liberation of Estonia), written by Peeter Kaasik, Lauri Vahtre, Urmas Salo a.o, maps compiled by Reigo Rosenthal, compiled and edited by Lauri Vahtre (Tallinn: Varrak, 2020), 201–203, 506–511.

⁷ Helmut Joonuks, *Alutaguse* (Tallinn: Eesti Raamat, 1969), 31.

⁸ Manor of Püssi (in German: Neu-Isenhof) was the majorat estate (i.e. it was inherited as a whole to owner's eldest son) of the branch of Püssi of the large Stackelberg family. By the fideicommissum signed in 1876, the estate comprised the manors of Püssi, Purtse, Hirmuse, Voorepere, Kohtla and Ereda. The manor of Püssi was bought by the Stackelbergs in 1732. Probably it was Count Otto Magnus Ernst Konstantin Stackelberg (1885–1945) who inherited the estate from his childless uncle Gustav Ernst Magnus (1840–1919) (*Genealogisches Handbuch der estländischen Ritterschaft*, I, compiled by O. M. v. Stackelberg (Görlitz: Starke, 1931), 291–292; Kinnistute register, Rahvusarhiiv (Land Register, National Archive), www.ra.ee/apps/kinnistud/, Püssi Lüganuse parish 20.01.2023). *Editor's note*.

tion had begun a couple of days earlier under the leadership of Captain Hendrik Vahtramäe, the grand uncle of the author of this study. In June 1917 he had relocated from the 14th Siberian Rifle Regiment to Estonian national units and been appointed Commander of the 4th Infantry Regiment, formed in December of the same year.⁹ The Regiment included servicemen of various world views but the command never took the side of the War and Revolutionary Committee (at the beginning of 1941 when the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs arrested him, this was one of the few solid charges according to the interrogation protocol¹⁰) and a section of soldiers was sent to help the landlord. In the following shooting three Red Guard soldiers were killed: **Mihkel Aitsam, Jüri Kalmus and Rudolf Imberg**. The only person who managed to make it back to Tallinn was Karl Roots. According to the left-wing media "... shooters, the seven brothers Kursells (the Baron and his family),¹¹ some landlords from the neighbourhood and Estonian soldiers – about 18 to 20 men in total, got in a vehicle which had been waiting for them and left immediately... Some of the murderers have been imprisoned. The counter-revolutionaries who had been caught before, were also brought to Tallinn."¹² The revolutionary tribunal sentenced the murderers to ten years in prison. The decision of the revolutionary tribunal of Tallinn regarding landlords Kursells, Baron Stackelberg and others is quite bizarre, as Stackelberg was not given any punishment. The workers of Dvigatel Machine Plant and Peter's shipyard protested against it.¹³ To our knowledge, it was the only slaughter in the period under review, until the signing of Brest-Litovsk Peace Treaty in March 1918, after which Soviet Russia ceded to the military authorities of imperial Germany all parts of the Governorates of Estonia and Livonia

⁹ Vahtramäe, Heinrich son of Jaak, Rahvusarhiiv (National Archive, henceforth RA), ERA.495.7.6415, 7v.

¹⁰ Vahtermägi, Heinrich Jaak, RA, ERAF.129SM.1.5186-1.

¹¹ Alexander von Kursell (1854–1918) had bought the manor of Erra in 1887. He had eight sons. (*Genealogisches Handbuch der estländischen Ritterschaft*, I, 126–127; Kinnistute register, Rahvusarhiiv, www.ra.ee/apps/kinnistud/, Erra Lüganuse parish, 20.01.2023). *Editor's note*.

¹² "Wasturevolutsioon organiseerib tapmisi" (Counter-Revolution is Organizing Killing), *Eesti Teataja* No 19, 14 December 1917, 3.

¹³ *Nelikümmend aastat Oktoobrirevolutsioonist Eestis* (Forty Years from the October Revolution in Estonia), ed. by Joosep Saat (Tallinn: Eesti NSV Teaduste Akadeemia, 1958), 77.



*Lieutenant Colonel Hendrik
Vahtramäe (1886–1941) in 1919.
RA, ERA.495.7.6415.1.1*

and a small area between Ivangorod and the village of Dubrovka which had been under its rule.

The German troops arrived in Iisaku, one of the largest villages of Alutaguse, on 4 March 1918. The Red leaders of Iisaku had tried to regain power before the arrival of Germans in Tudulinna, a village just 17 km away through the woods and they had reached the verge of the village. The local Defence League fighters had set up a guard and a battle broke out where the Reds of Iisaku lost one man killed and two wounded and they had to retreat. The furious commander of the squad – a railway worker and chairman of the Council of Working People's Deputies **Karl-Eduard Peep** went to seek help in Jõhvi. Halfway there, he ran into his old foe from the municipal council **Hiiob Koppel** whom he shot dead during the following quarrel. He was too late for Jõhvi because the Germans had seized it already. The local people recognized Peep and they handed him over to the representatives of the German army. The same day, he was taken to the manor of Edise and shot dead. On the same day, the farmhands of Tärivere handed over to the Germans the Red Guard

fighter **Rempel** who had been sent there from Tallinn. Just the day before he had wanted to take away the grain crop of the manor and had he set on fire the grain storage which the farmhands managed to put out.¹⁴ The three other Council of Working People's Deputies members did no better. Obviously, the in-coming Germans did not know the local people but there were "active" persons available (allegedly the family of Reinhold Sabolotny, Deputy Commander of the Armoured Train No 1),¹⁵ who notified them of the leading figures of the Red power in the municipality. **Mihkel Käosaar, Tanel Surav and Tanel Tamme** were caught. It took a bit longer before they were killed. They were detained for two nights and then a horror show was set up for the local people. One of the last, Oskar Surva, described the events of the 6 March as follows: "[---] the school stopped, [---] it made an even more horrible scene the following day. 3 men had been caught – Käosaar,¹⁶ Surav and Tamme. They were sentenced to hanging. All schoolchildren who were present and their teacher were made to line up and we all walked to the woods, after the prisoners, with officers at the end of the column. It was supposed to be particularly educating for the children. The moment of hanging made a few children scream. I myself could not get rid of this terrible image for months."¹⁷

The members of Iisaku Council of Working People's Deputies were not the first victims in this region. On 24 February 1918, a five-man strong squad tried to organise an armed takeover of power from the withdrawing Reds. As the Red Guard possessed greater forces, they were arrested and put on the last train leaving for the East. The next morning the train arrived at Jõhvi railway station where the Red sailors insisted on the handing over of the schoolboy **F. Silberstern**, the brother of the landlord of Vaeküla manor **Karl von Schubert** and a schoolteacher **Tiido Jõesaar**. About twenty steps away from the railway, Silberstern, Schubert

¹⁴ Anne Nurgamaa, *Iisaku vald läbi aegade* (Iisaku Parish through Time) (Iisaku: Iisaku Kihelkonna Muuseum, 2016), 94.

¹⁵ The claim comes from the local history researchers. *Author's note*.

¹⁶ According to the personal church register of Iisaku congregation Mihkel Käosaar (1866–1918) was hanged on 14 March for his participation in the murder of Hiiob Koppel. Personal church register XII (Iisaku, Pootsiku, Täriveri), RA, EAA.1225.1.208, 186. *Editor's note*.

¹⁷ Nurgamaa, 94.



*Killed members of the Red Guard near the Tapa railway station.
10 January 1919. RA, EFA.114.0.50431*

and Tiido Jõesaar were shot dead, schoolboys P. Erna and A. Leiberg and Lieutenant Laasi together with P. Pajos were taken to Narva.^{18, 19}

On 27 February, a conflict broke out near Sompa railway station between a German unit and a twenty-man strong Red Guard squad of the workers of Narva and Petrograd. The exchange of fire lasted until the Red Guard ran out of ammunition. **12 combatants** were imprisoned and taken to Rakvere by train. The next day, they were hanged on the trees next to the railway station in front of the townsfolk.²⁰

¹⁸ Palgi, 48–53.

¹⁹ Together with Võsu school headmaster Tiido Jõesaar (1879–1918) from Mäetaguse, on 27 February three more men from the same neighbourhood were shot dead in Jõhvi: the brother of Laviko farm (Palmse parish) owner **Gustav Grönholm** (1880–1918), a student of Käsmu Maritime School **Willem Talpsepp** (1899–1918) from Palmse, and Head of Palmse Rural Municipality **Johannes Kaldenberg** (1869–1918) from Sagadi. On 11 March they were buried in the cemetery of Ilumäe. See “Hukatud Palmse mehed” (Executed Men of Palmse), *Postimees*, 13 April 1929, 1; “Von der roten Garde ermordet in Jewe“, auxiliary congregation of Ilumäe, list of the deceased 1892–1926, RA, EAA.1227.1.128 (unpaginated). *Editor’s note*.

²⁰ “Millest jutustab mälestuskivi Rakvere jaama juures?” (What is the Monument next to Rakvere Station Telling us about?), *Punane Täht* No 2, 23 February 1965, 1.

On 11 November 1918, the World War I ended. Imperial Germany ended up on the side of the defeated, the emperor was overthrown and according to the Armistice of Compiègne, Germany had to withdraw its troops from the governorates of Petrograd and Estonia. Some presence of German troops continued in the governorates of Livonia and Curland. In Narva, power was taken by Council of (German) Soldiers (*Soldatenrat*) on 15 November. A week later, 22 November, the Red Army of the Russian Federal Soviet Socialist Republic (the country's official name since July 1918) made its first attempt to advance from Dubrovka towards Ivangorod but was defeated by the better armed German troops. Soon, the Germans began to withdraw from Estonia. The Red Army 2nd Rifle Regiment of Viljandi and the 3rd Rifle Regiment of Tartu, which had been formed in Jamburg and Petrograd, and the 46th Rifle Regiment (the successor of the 4th Workers Regiment of Narva formed in the autumn of 1917) together with the landing unit of Baltic Fleet sailors – the total of ca 4000 men – began a new offensive six days later, in the early hours of 28 November. They were facing the German 405th Infantry Regiment (1800 men), a battalion of Estonian 4th Infantry Regiment (80 men) and Narva schoolboys, members of the Defence League (100 men). The German troops, the Defence League fighters and the 4th Estonian Regiment combatants started to withdraw from Narva.

Before leaving the town, the Germans destroyed some civil structures. By 3 p.m. the units which had been defending Ivangorod, made it to the Estonian side bank of Narva River and all three bridges of Narva River were blown up. By midday, a couple of hours earlier, a battle in the field of Joala had ended.²¹ During the Soviet period beginning with 1944, the estimated number of casualties were 83 combatants of Viljandi Rifle Regiment, today the estimated number of the fallen is larger.²² However, not all the riflemen were killed in action. The wounded whom the Viljandi Regi-

²¹ Today on the southern verge of Narva and partly under Narva Reservoir built in the 1950s. *Editor's note.*

²² Ilja Davydov, "Mõned täiendused Joala väljal 28. novembril 1918 langenud punaväelaste ümbematmise loo juurde" (Some Additional Notes to the Story of the Reburial of the Red

ment soldiers were unable to take along when retreating, were killed with bayonets or according to some sources, even by crushing their heads, and the better clothes and footwear of the victims were robbed – all in contravention of the Hague 4th Convention. Germans had treated the wounded of the opposite side, the Red Guard, in the same way in the battle of Keila near Tallinn on 23 February 1918. After the battle, the wounded were killed with bayonets and the nine taken prisoners were shot dead the next day. To our knowledge, the only prisoner who was taken along by the retreating soldiers, was squad commander Jaan (Ivan) Utter.²³

The next day, 29 November, the Commune of the Working People of Estonia was proclaimed in Narva Alexander Church. However, the next day, the Defence League fighters arrested the former Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Council of Workers' Deputies of Viru County **Aleksander Kippar** and his brother **Adolf Kippar**.²⁴ On 1 December they were both shot dead (according to some sources, during an escape attempt). Two days later, the leaders of the Commune Jaan Anvelt, Johannes Mägi, Hans Pöögelmann and Artur Vallner issued the instruction for combating the “counter-revolutionary element”.²⁵ On 4 December, the fallen Red Guard soldiers were buried in the Pimeaed Park of Narva and the next day, arrests began on both sides of the river.

On 5 December, **Leopold Linder** (1896–1919), an electrician from the Aseri Cement Factory and a former Head of Department of the Executive Committee of the Council of Workers' Deputies of Viru County was arrested at the railway station of Lehtse and taken to a prison camp in Tallinn after he had been turned in by the owner of Aseri manor.²⁶ He

Army Soldiers who Fell in the Field of Joala on 28 November 1918), *Narva muuseumi toimetised* (Narva Museum transactions) 19 (2018), 61.

²³ Viljandi Rifle Regiment Orders, 24 December 1918, RA, ERAF.4907.1.73.

²⁴ Vihalem, 26; Aleksander (1892–1918) and Adolf (1888–1918) Kippar from Voka municipality were shot dead on 1 December and buried in Illuka. Personal church register XVIII (1910–1928) of Jõhvi congregation, RA, EAA.1226.1.318, 68. *Editor's note*.

²⁵ Palgi, 59–61.

²⁶ Mari-Leen Tammela, “Ristilöödud töörahva nimekiri nr 11 Eesti Asutava Kogu valimistel” (List No11 of Candidates of Crucified Workers in the Election of the Estonian Constituent Assembly), *Vabadussoja mitu palet: Soda ja uhiskond aastatel 1918–1920* (*Facets of the War of Independence: War and Society in 1918–1920*), Rahvusarhiivi toimetised (National Archives



*German soldiers together with local people in Narva (1918).
RA, EFA.114.2.227*

was kept in the camp for about three weeks. In the morning of 1 January he was summoned out of his cell. First, prosecutor Jaan Teemant hit him over head with the butt of a pistol, according to his cellmate, whose words were published in the newspaper *Punane Virumaa* 22 years later,²⁷ after that two gunmen dragged him away and killed him with two shots.

On 7 December, the combatants of Gdov Detachment and the Red Army 3rd Finnish Rifle Regiment 2nd Battalion came across the river from the village of Skamja near Vasknarva. A group of combatants of the Defence League of Iisaku, Tudulinna and Illuka had gathered in Vasknarva. Fighting broke out, the forces were unequal and the men of Alutaguse were forced to retreat. Five men from Iisaku fell, **Rudolf Kreenmann** fell prisoner to the enemy and the following day he was killed near the village of Jaamaküla (today Jaama near Vasknarva).²⁸

Transactions) = Acta et commentationes archivi nationalis estoniae 3 (34), ed. by Tõnu Tannberg (Tartu: Rahvusarhiiv 2019), 436.

²⁷ “Langenud seltsimehi mälestades” (Commemorating the Fallen Comrades), *Punane Virumaa*, 4 January 1941, 5.

²⁸ Rudolf Kreenmann (1885–1918) was shot dead on 9 December 1918. XII Personal church register (1899–1927) of Iisaku congregation, RA.EAA.1225.1.208, 51. *Editor’s note.*

One unresolved massacre took place on 6 December in the village of Pootsiku near Iisaku. 20 years later newspaper *Postimees* wrote about it as follows: “In the evening of 6 December, one of these bands of robbers was on the move in the village of Nurme within the parish of Iisaku. For some reason, the Reds seemed to be particularly keen on the farm of Olka in the village of Nurme, probably expecting to acquire a larger amount of wealth. We still lack the details of this nocturnal tragedy because no accomplices were ever caught. After the Reds had left, the neighbours went to Olka farm where they witnessed a horrendous scene. The outer doors had been smashed from outside, everything in the house had been messed up, the whole family had been slaughtered, including farm owner Eduard Olka 37 years of age, his mother Triinu Olka, his wife Anna Elisabet and their two children Meinhard Woldemar and Hermann, the latter only 7 years old.”^{29, 30}

This written record is a bit confusing or rather semi-propagandistic and it is not absolutely clear that the culprits were the Red Army soldiers. First, according to the war announcements of 14 December 1918 by the 6th Army of the Red Army, the units arrived at the village of Katase (ca 10 km from Pootsiku toward Narva River) only the following day, 13 December and instead of Jõhvi as mentioned in the newspaper, the Red riflemen and the sailors were located much further to the East, somewhere between Vaivara and Oru. Secondly, on 2 December, four civilians judged guilty of looting, were shot dead in Narva by the Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution of the Commune of the Working People of Estonia (see below: *ETK* list No 1–4). It is possible that this made the robbers to flee Narva for the West.

A week later, on 16 December the fighters of the Red riflemen regiments of Tallinn and Tartu entered Rakvere. Among the prisoners taken was a resident of Tudulinna – nurse **Rudolf Roost**, the date of whose

²⁹ “Punase terrori päewad Wirumaa” (Days of the Red Terror in Viru County), *Postimees* No 10, 11 January 1939, 5.

³⁰ According to the XII personal church register (1899–1927) of Iisaku congregation the murder took place on 12 December. Anna Elisabeth Olka was 34 years old, son Meinhard Woldemar was 10 years old and son Hermann was 7 years old. The youngest, two-year old Gerda survived. RA.EAA.1225.1.208, 121–122. *Editor’s note.*



Members of the Executive Committee of the Council of Workers' Deputies of Viru County in 1918. From the left: Leopold Linder, Aleksander Kippar, Aleksander Grauberg. RA, ERAF.2.1.1443.1

execution is unknown,³¹ neither is it known whether he was a civilian or a military nurse and how he ended up being a prisoner.

A day later, the combatants of Viljandi Riflemen Regiment who had been guarding the prison of Joa, were sent to Narva front, whereas in Narva the executions had already started under the leadership of the Commune.³² The shootings took place on 16 different days, out of them ten in December and six in January. The first to face the shooting on 2 December were four persons judged guilty of looting and one “White officer” **Johannes Jun**; two days later **Mart Tamm** was found guilty of spying and killed; five days later, two riflemen of Viljandi Rifle Regiment **Oskar Lund** and **Teodor Elberg** were killed for deserting.

³¹ Rudolf Roost (1896–1919) was killed in January according to the personal church register XIIIa (1900–1926) of Iisaku congregation. RA, EAA.1225.1.210, 182. *Editor's note.*

³² Lists of prisoners of Narva Department of the Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution, RA, ERAF.28.1.628.

In the same decree, 13 Red Army soldiers were found guilty escaping and expelled from the regiment. So, upon catching they could be court-martialed.³³ The same day, another Red Army soldier **Albert Mäe**, was executed, his unit is unknown. On 19 December, six Estonian Army soldiers were executed (see below the list No 13–18). The rest of the victims of the Red Army, identified by the commission investigating the crimes of Bolsheviks, were civilians. On the last day of executions on 13 January 1919, the only person shot was **Olga Snitkina** – for stealing the personal belongings from fallen Red Army soldiers in the battle of 28 November 1918.

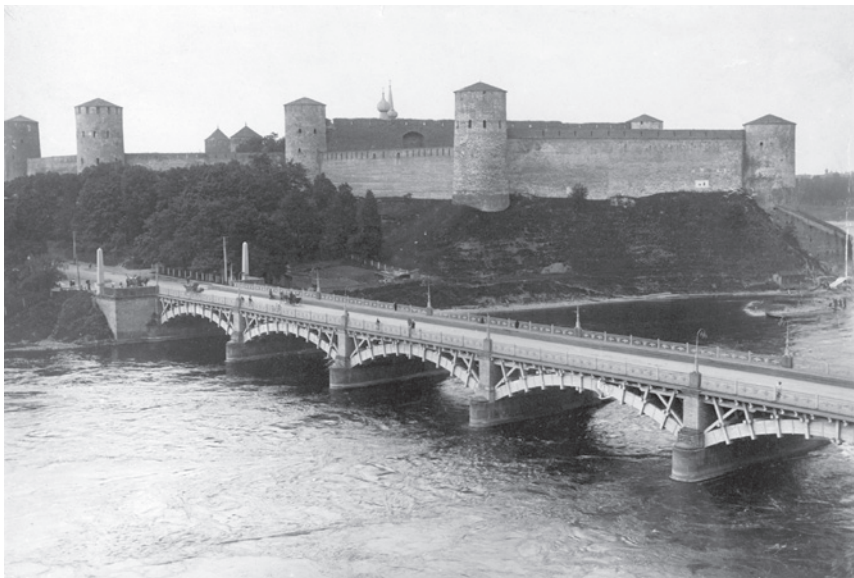
Executions were organised by the chief of the prison Madis Jõgi and his deputy Vladimir Kataev, the decision was signed by Oskar Ellek, head of Narva Department of the Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution (the Cheka). In addition to the prison on the western bank, the detainees were also kept in the fortress of Ivangorod on the opposite bank of Narva River where the conditions were a bit better.

Below is the list, put together by the Estonian Provisional Government commission for investigating the crimes committed by Bolsheviks³⁴ of the residents of Narva and Ivangorod, executed by the Commune, whose corpses were identified.

1. Ivan Olnov, 2. Pavel Svedov, 3. Karel Landing, 4. Leopold Pruul, 5. Aado Välja, 6. Oskar Lund (Viljandi Regiment riflemen), 7. Albert Mäe (Red Army soldier), 8. Theodor Eiberg (Viljandi Regiment riflemen), 9. Konstantin Savi, 10. Kristjan Lallo, 11. Grigori Simonenko, 12. Pavel Belykh, 13. Johannes Telling (officer of the Estonian Army), 14. Aleksander Ahlmann, 15. Joosep Siimann, 16. Karl Bauer, 17. Gustav Kull, and 18. Julius Treimann (all six were soldiers of the Estonian Army), 19. Peeter Kusnets, 20. Nikolai Yeemelyanov, 21. Jaan Ilves, 22. Moisch Herschkowitsch, 23. Albert Kern, 24. Villem Lukken, 25. Eduard Peterson, 26. Ants Epro, 27. Mart Tamm, 28. Voldemar Korsnik, 29. Daniel

³³ Orders of Viljandi Rifle Regiment, 10 December 1918, RA, ERAF.4907.1.73.

³⁴ Materials on the people executed for political reasons and requisitioning of property during the era of the Commune of the Working People of Estonia, presented by local governments, RA, ERA.495.10.110.



A view to Ivangorod (Jaanilinn) from Narva in 1913. Photo by Johannes Pääsuke. Estonian National Museum, ERM Fk 214:6

Valgepea, 30. Johannes Mitri, 31. Adolf Schmiedehelm, 32. Karl Puusepp, 33. Eduard Pent.

The name of Karl Miller has been left out because he allegedly managed to escape while being taken to be executed; at the same time, the name of Albert Mäe is not on the list of the executed for deserting the riflemen regiment. In addition, there were people who were reported missing or whose corpses were found elsewhere from the original burial site. These people were not included on the list of hostages either:

34. August Trall, 35. Theodor Gorsanov, 36. Vjačeslav Rimski-Korsakov (16-year-old combatant of the Defence League), 37. Leena Reinfeldt, 38. Johanna Reinfeldt, 39. Anton Steinberg, 40. Dmitri Čistoserdov (a priest), 41. Volkov (a priest), Johannes Miller, Kristine Prunes.

When comparing the lists of the executed compiled by the Commune and the Estonian Provisional Government commission, it is important to pay attention to the realisation of the latter that all the corpses had not been

identified. Some discrepancies: the names of Johannes Miller (42) and Kristine Prunes (43) are not on the Commune's list. There are 15 more names who have been marked as executed on the Commune's list including the dates of execution:

1. Johannes Jun (White Guard officer), 2. Nikolai Vilipson, 3. Johan Nurk, 4. August Trall, 5. Ernst Rosit, 6. Alats, 7. Robert Prink, 8. Lauri Pesonen, 9. Martin Karutamm, 10. Hugo Pahmann, 11. August Toom, 12. Julia Tamberg, 13. Johannes Reinfeld, 14. Aleksander Volkov (all seven were registered as White Guard soldiers), 15. Liisa Podaletski.

Although Alexander Volkov (No 14) has been marked as a White Guard soldier on the Commune's list, he was probably the above-mentioned priest (no 41).

According to the Finnish database of war deaths,³⁵ Lauri Pesonen (No 8 on the list) probably died from the wounds he got in Narva on 18 January 1919 and was not executed on 12 January. The Finnish newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat* published a memorial article on him on 5 February 1919: “[---] still the Reds managed to wound two young soldiers so that the second who was physically weaker, was incapable of taking his companion with him and went for help in a company further away. Meanwhile, the Red bandits had seized the wounded man, dragged him along to Narva where he was found dead a couple of days later. A victim of this kind of death turned out to be a lyceum [high school] student Lauri Immanuel Pesonen.”

Let us add some unofficial data from the memoirs of Mrs Veera Davidenkova (Davydenkova), a teacher of the Municipal Gymnasium (High School) of Narva. She wrote about 26 January 1919 that a total of 35 corpses had been taken out of the nightman's hole (corpses of the executed had been thrown to the hole where the latrines of Narva were emptied), thus, the difference in data is very small.³⁶

³⁵ Sotasurmasampo 1914–1922. Portaali Suomeen liittyviin sotatapahtumiin vuosina 1914–1922 (WarVictimSampo 1914–1922. A semantic portal about war events related to Finland from 1914 to 1922), <https://sotasurmat.narc.fi/fi>, 30 May 2023.

³⁶ The newspaper articles covering the activities of the city government. An overview of the economic and political situation of Narva from 26 October to 15 May 1919, RA, ERA.2536.1.144.

Finnish volunteers of Ekström's battalion in January 1919. From the left: NCO Eero Miettinen, Private Lauri Pesonen and Sergeant Onni Korhonen. RA, EFA.114.2.145



The last and the bloodiest terrorist act in the eastern part of Viru county began on 18 January 1919. Mrs. Davidenkova wrote:

“[---] The first White units, 50 (Martin Ekström's) Finnish combatants and 10 Estonian Army fighters entered the city about 5 p.m., we can hear Hooray! And a bit later, the shots can be heard on the square in front of the Town Hall. We later find out that a group of Red Army soldiers were besieged and they were all shot dead on the spot. [---].”

According to a Finnish historian Vesa Leino, 27 Finnish Red Guard soldiers were shot in front of the Town Hall.³⁷

³⁷ Vesa Leino, “Oikeudenhoito suomalaisessa vapaaehtoisjoukossa Viron vapaussotassa 1919” (Master's thesis, Department of History of the University of Jyväskylä, 2001), 53.

Mrs. Davidenkova wrote:

“19 January, at 10 in the morning. There is horror on the streets. There are corpses all over, single and in groups. Along the edges of the houses there are long rows of corpses, these are slaughtered Red Army soldiers. Blood has painted the snow red, it is impossible to find a spot of clean white snow where to step. An attempted breakthrough of the Red Army took place at Herman Castle, the corpses of the horses of two squadrons are lying on the street, with corpses of soldiers between them. There were streams of blood on both sides of the street, the Revel (i.e Tallinn) road was covered in corpses. The White Finns and Estonians have shot everyone with the red star on their hat... We found out that the Whites would not be further advancing or tracking the Reds. The whole day single shots could be heard in town, the Reds who were found in basements, courtyards and buildings, were shot.”

An extract from Juuso Ylonen’s master’s thesis on the attitude of the Finnish media to the activity of the Finnish volunteers in Estonia. *Helsingin Sanomat* of 24 January 1919 describes the events on the above dates, referring to the Estonian newspaper *Waba Maa* as follows:

“[---] the enemy leadership had been expecting an attack along Tallinn road and had therefore focused all its attention there. Out of the blue, Finns appeared on Narva Town Hall Square at 5.20 p.m. The Finns’ hail of bullets mowed down the fugitives. A large number of prisoners was taken, including the leadership of a whole division and all officers of the regiment command.”³⁸ (the last is an exaggeration. Author’s note.)

Mrs Davidenkova 10 days later:

“Every day we can hear shots in *Pimeaed* park, on these “red graves” the Red Army soldiers, mostly Red Finns were shot; the people who were sentenced to death were told to take off their boots and to turn around with their backs to gun barrels...”

³⁸ Juuso Ylonen, ““Wiron wapauden puolesta bolshevistien hirmuwaltaa vastaan,” Suomen lehdistön suhtautuminen suomalaisvapaaehtoisten toimintaan Viron vapaussodassa 1918–1919” (Master’s thesis, the University of Joensuu, 2009), 34 (ref. 101).

Captain Martin Ekström (1887–1954), Commander of the Detachment of Finnish Volunteers, in Swedish uniform. Tallinn, 1919. RA, EFA.272.0.37839



Mrs Davidenkova's description of the execution of a large number of Red Finns is confirmed by Arthur Nieminen, a Finnish volunteer in the Ekström unit in Narva back then.³⁹ In 1938 he sent his war memoirs to the Committee on the History of the War of Independence. He wrote: “[---] On 20 January we arrived in Narva. The rooms of the Town Hall

³⁹ Arthur Mathias Nieminen (1893–1942), Cross of Liberty II/3. Served in the tsarist Army in 1915–1918. He was a non-commissioned officer in Ekström's Battalion, later Sub-Lieutenant. After the departure of the Finnish volunteers, he joined the Estonian Army, took Estonian citizenship and settled in Estonia after the war. After the Soviet Union occupied Estonia, he was arrested in the summer of 1941 and taken to GULAG. He died in the hospital of Irkutsk (*Eesti Vabaduse Risti kavalerid* (Cavaliers of the Estonian Cross of Liberty), written by Jaak Pihlak, Mati Strauss and Ain Krillo, compiled by Jaak Pihlak (Viljandi: Vabadussõja Ajaloo Selts, Viljandi Muuseum, 2016), 500.) *Editor's note.*

were full of Red prisoners, the majority of whom were Finns. I went talking to them with Lieutenant A(nton) Eskola. Later they were all shot dead.”⁴⁰ His description of what could be seen on streets is also similar to Mrs Davidenkova’s. Nieminen writes: “Everywhere, more in the suburbs, corpses were to be seen. There were civilians and soldiers. I have seen a fair amount of fighting and bloodshed but I had never seen so much blood before as I saw on the streets of Narva back then. A dark red stream was meandering in the gutters and as frozen and snow-free, it shone in a dull glow.”⁴¹

According to Vesa Leino, 700 Red Army soldiers were taken prisoners in Narva.⁴² No sources have been found to identify those 700 or even more, according to some estimates. Leino writes that some prisoners were ordered to roll the cannons in the battles against the Red Army, and if they refused, they were executed.⁴³ According to Mrs Davidenkova, groups of 30–40 prisoners were taken to Pimeaed Park every day.

The Estonian Radio archive possesses the memoirs of Viljandi Rifle Regiment company commander Karl Kanger, recorded in 1982: they retreated from Narva, taking the same route they had crossed the river the year before, in the night of 27 November i.e. via Piimanina, 4 km South of the railway station. He did not comment on the losses, he only pointed out that he sank through ice and his companions pulled him out of water.⁴⁴

Some extracts from the Finnish newspapers on the Finnish volunteers and the Red Guard soldiers, quoted by Juuso Ylonen. The left-wing Suomen Sosiaalidemokraati wrote on 20 January 1919: “[---] The units which went to Estonia may contain White terrorists”. According to the Hufvudstadsbladet (in Swedish) on 23.1.1919 “[---] Over 200 Finnish

⁴⁰ Nieminen, Arthur Mathias, RA, ERA.2124.3.841, 7.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 8–9.

⁴² Leino, 53.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ Estonian Public Broadcasting (ERR) archive, KIRJUTAMATA MEMUAARE (UNWRITTEN MEMOIRS). Karl Kanger. 09.01.1983 Estonian Radio / ASCDR-10257, <https://arhiiv.err.ee/guid/19626>.

Red Guard soldiers, resisted much harder than Russians. Among them were some infamous murderers from the district of Malm in Helsinki. The first thing to do when they got to Narva Town Hall, was to tear down the “red rag” from the roof.”

Another recollection of the events of 19 or 20 January by a future Red Army Major and war commissar Hjalmar Front:

In Ivangorod, the battalion was ordered to get out of the train and received a command from the front section Russian commander to go across the river and to go on defending positions in the suburbs of Narva in order to defend the city against the enemy attacks from the West.

Later it turned out that the Russian units had withdrawn from Narva the day before and the city had been seized by the units of the Estonian Defence League. Allegedly, there were also Major Ekström's Finnish volunteers in Narva. No doubt, the Russian headquarters in Ivangorod were aware of the situation. The commander of the Finnish battalion was told that Narva was still held by the Red Army and the battalion was getting on its positions in the rear of its own units which could, however, retreat any moment.

The only route to defensive positions went through the city of Narva.

A narrow road led from the bridge of Narva to the city square. The distance was less than half a kilometre. The battalion made a stop on the square for a meal and a brief rest, the food was ready in the field kitchen and company commanders were about to distribute it. Allocated time was one and a half hours.

They had barely stopped when the hail of bullets began from the buildings around the square. The enemy had organized an ambush.

Machine guns sowed death; the battalion standing in dense groups in the open square had no chance to hide. At first it was unclear where the enemy was shooting from.

A couple of minutes later, a bloody hand-to-hand combat began. The ambushed enemy came to the square. Seeing the enemy, the sparse group of survivors went to defence. The witnesses later said that the Finns were killed with bayonets, knives, street paving stones and axes. Neither side was able to shoot properly.

About twenty men of the battalion survived. They managed to pretend to be dead and later to escape. Part of the rear of the battalion survived because they had not made it to the square yet.^{45, 46}

The action on the eastern bank of Narva River ended on 20 January but new victims kept being added. The previous passage described how every day, till 28 January, groups of about twenty prisoners were taken to Pimeaed Park to be executed. There is no documentary evidence available about the events on these dates.

Here we can make a smooth transition to the last large-scale settling of scores in the remotest eastern corner of Viru county. The underground leadership of the Estonia's Communist Party published a leaflet in April 1919 before the elections of the Estonian Constituent Assembly, whose other side was titled as List No 11 of the Crucified Working People.⁴⁷ It includes the names of the two executed members of the Executive Committee of the Council of Workers' Deputies of Viru County (Kippar, Linder), Puumann (worker of Narva, savagely slaughtered by the Finnish butchers) and Klara Lind (worker of Narva, slaughtered in Rakvere by Estonian Whites) and a longer list of the "crucified" workers of Narva from the end of January to the publishing of leaflets. They are the following:

- 1) Karl Kuiva, 2) August Visnapuu, 3) Jakob Vahesaar, 4) Johannes Kuitinen, 5) Roman Ruubert, 6) Alide Ruubert, 7) Anna Timofeeva, 8) Maria Tost, 9) August Holm, 10) Mihkel, Orv, 11) Konstantin Kaerov, 12) Johannes Aart, 13) Aleksander Aart, 14) August Aart, 15) Oskar Kurvits, 16) Joosep Lippo, 17) Karl Lindeman, 18) ...Rogort, 19) ...Riisar, 20) ...Alt, 21) ...Järv, 22) Larionov (factory clerk), 22) Nikolai Nikitin

⁴⁵ Hjalmar Front, *Kremlin kiertolaisia. Muistelmia monivaiheisen elämän varrelta* (Helsinki: Alea-kirja 1970), 59–60.

⁴⁶ Hjalmar Front (1900–1970) was a man of colourful life. Later he was a Red Army officer, in 1938 he gave himself a prisoner to the Japanese in Manchuria. After the WWII where he had been fighting on the Japanese side, he made it to Sweden via the USA. He died in Sweden in 1970. The facts presented by him should be approached with some reservations. *Author's note*.

⁴⁷ Ristilöödud töörahva nimekiri nr. 11 (List No 11 of the Crucified Workers), Eesti Ajaloomuuseum (Estonian History Museum) AM D 292:1/17.

(hospital committee member), 23) ... Michlai (factory committee member), 24) August Utsel (employee of a pharmacy).

As for the fate of the two last dozen people, we can add that the first name of Alt (No 20) was Dmitri. At the beginning of the 1960s, Maria Alt, the widow of the executed, showed the site where her husband had been shot. She and her brother had secretly gone to the cemetery of Siivertsi and dug up a grave. One of the corpses had green woollen socks on which helped her to identify it as the body of her killed husband. Dmitri Alt, Karl Kuiv and Oskar Kurvits were all executed on 15 February for having been members of the committee for arranging funerals of the Red Army soldiers.⁴⁸

Analyses and Hypotheses

The scarcity of archival sources, the events that keep moving further back in history and the deaths of witnesses only makes it possible for making superficial analyses and formulating hypotheses. The Hague Convention IV of 1899/1907 on the Law and Customs of War on Land stipulated that it was forbidden to kill or wound the enemy who had laid down his arms or to declare that no quarter would be given.⁴⁹ The commands of imperial German Army did not adhere to it either in the Battle of Keila on 23 February 1918 or in the field of Joala on 28 November when they killed the wounded who had been left on the battlefield. The Germans took the Tallinn Red Guard soldiers and Viljandi riflemen who were wearing brightly coloured outfits for an armed gang (*francs-tireurs*). The ca 1200-man strong unit of Martin Ekström (subject of the Kingdom of Sweden) who had entered Narva in January 1919, got paid by the Estonian Provisional

⁴⁸ Davõdov, 80; the claim is confirmed by an entry in the personal church register K III volume (1897–1939) of Alexander congregation of Narva, according to which Oskar Kurvits (1886–1919) was shot dead according to his wife on 15 February 1919 for being in the Red Guard. RA, EAA.1221.1.327, 219. *Editor's note*.

⁴⁹ Vt Convention with Respect to the Laws and Customs of War on Land (Hague IV), 1899/1907, article 23, The Avalon Project. Documents in Law, History and Diplomacy, https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/hague04.asp#art23.

Government but proceeded from the Finnish law while waging war in Estonia. The Finnish Supreme Commander, General Mannerheim had stipulated in February 1918 that the surrendered could be killed or taken prisoners based on the commander's consideration arising from the situation.⁵⁰

The 4th Infantry Regiment of the Estonian national units of the Russian Army in Rakvere did not fall under the subordination of the Executive Committee of the Council of Workers' Deputies of Viru County, although there had been attempts to make it bolshevist at the end of 1917 and the beginning of 1918. The Estonian Provisional Government did its best not to use the names of the Commune of the Working People of Estonia and the Latvian Socialist Soviet Republic, the subjects recognized by Soviet Russia. While investigating the crimes committed in the county of Viru and other counties, the vague concepts like Bolsheviks or Russians were used. In the file of Leopold Linder⁵¹ he was called a Russian spy without any evidence. The Commune used vague concepts while investigating guilt – the enemy was called either bourgeoisie or the White Guard and Ekström's subordinates were called butchers or knifemen (a term used by the Reds about the Whites in the Finnish Civil War).

The only original documented information available about the victims of terror covered in this study, concerns the victims of the slaughter in Püssi manor, Leopold Linder and the White (a very small amount) and the Red Terror in Narva. Apart from the decisions of Narva Department of the Commune's Committee for Combating Counter-Revolution (their legitimacy is a different matter), there are no written documents on the procedures of investigation on any other victims, although none of those killings were carried out in a battle situation; the Finnish Red Guard soldiers were also shot dead after they had surrendered. Executions were covered in the newspapers but after the publication of the last issue of *Eesti Kütiväe Teataja* (Estonian Riflemen Gazette) in mid-January 1919, no newspapers were published in the Estonian language in Narva until the end of October. However, another source – the church registers,

⁵⁰ Leino, 52.

⁵¹ Leopold Linder, RA, ERA.56.2.1538.

has become available in this century. Lutheran ministers and orthodox priests recorded the deaths of the members of their congregations on the lists of the deceased and the buried and the personal books, also noting in a more or less detailed way the circumstances of deaths. Back then, the absolute majority of the people were members of a congregation, regardless of their world view. Still, these documents have no data about the people who were not local or the servicemen who fell victims to terror in large numbers.

Estonia saw the White and the Red Terror in 1918–1919. The permanent exhibition of the War of Independence in the Estonian War Museum, opened in 2019, quotes 680 as the number of civilian casualties in 1918–1919. The numbers of the victims of the White and Red Terror have not been separately pointed out, it is only mentioned that the majority of them were killed by the Reds. We might conclude that for that figure, almost every second execution had to be carried out in the eastern part of Viru county. Briefly after the War Museum exhibition was opened, *The History of the War of Independence* was published where we can read that nearly 700 people fell victim to the Red Terror and 500–600 people to the White Terror.⁵² Probably, these figures do not include the Finnish Red Guard soldiers who were shot dead on 19–29 January 1919 (who were not civilians), about twenty to thirty a day. Unlike Viktor Kingissepp's *List of the Crucified* which we should be sceptical about, the written records by Vera Davidenkova can be considered an objective source. The number of the victims who were brought out of the nightman's hole in her records is nearly the same as the number presented by the Committee of the Provisional Government. At this point we should recall the fate of the little known Red Finns in Estonia in the battles of 1918–1919 where about 1100 Red Finns fought. They were not only fighting against the Estonian Army and the Russian White Guard soldiers but also against the Finnish volunteers (see above).

The approximate losses of the Red Guard in the battles of 1918 in Finland according to the *Finnish Encyclopedia*⁵³ were 3600 fallen and 8400

⁵² *Eesti Vabadussõja ajalugu I*, 508.

⁵³ *WSOY iso tietosanakirja*, peatoim. Kalevi Koukkunen, 4. kd. (Porvoo: WSOY, 1995), 173.

as victims of other violent deaths. In the battles, 70,000 men participated on the side of the Whites and a few more on the side of the Reds. If the round number of them was 72,000, then every sixth fighter got killed. The share of the fallen and the killed was even larger in Estonia. The Commander of Vaasa Regiment Martin Ekström had not been known for his adherence to the rules of waging war in the battles of Viipuri (Vyborg) in April and May 1918 and therefore, it is likely that he behaved in the same manner in Narva.

Davidenkova was not interested in who had organized the shootings in Pimeaed Park at the end of January. Major General Aleksander Tõnisson, commander of the 1st Estonian Division, removed Sub-Captain Karl Paulus⁵⁴ from the position of the Commandant of Narva for the reasons which are still not known and he was demoted. The author has a suspicion that the demotion, which was possibly justified by extrajudicial executions in Narva, was unfair. It strikes the eye in the files that the first investigation material to be found was dated as 30 January, hence on 20–29 January no investigations were effected and the twenty to thirty Red Army soldiers who were taken for execution every day, were shot dead without any record. During the battles of Viipuri in spring 1918, there was an unwritten rule in a *Jääkäri*-battalion that if the ID of a Red Guard soldier was found in his pocket, then he was executed without any delay or explanation.⁵⁵ (At the end of 1918, Head of State Pehr Evind Svinhufvud granted amnesty to all the White soldiers who had participated in executions.) There is every reason to believe that back then, in January 1919, Narva was not governed by an Estonian commandant but the lead-

⁵⁴ Karl Aleksander Paulus (1896–1960), Sub-Captain (after liquidation of Sub-Captains rank Captain), the Cross of Liberty II/3. On 19 January 1919 participated together with the Finnish volunteers in the liberation of Narva. On 21 January was appointed Commander of Narva, on 28 January was arrested by the order of General Tõnisson and on 26 February was demoted to a private by the order of the day from the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces. On 4 March he was set free and assigned to the Commander of the Naval Forces. On 22 October 1919 his rank was restored. In 1920 he resigned. Paulus, Karl, son of Konstantin, service file, RA, ERA.495.7.3997, 13–14.

⁵⁵ Lars Westerlund, “Me odotimme teitä vapauttajina ja te toitte kuolemaa. Viipurin valloituksen yhteydessä teloitettut venäläiset” – *Venäläissurmat Suomessa 1914–22*, Osa 2.2. *Sotatapah-tumat 1918–22*, edited by Lars Westerlund, Valtioneuvoston kanslian julkaisusarja 3/2004, 136.

ers of the Finnish volunteers whose activity was very similar to what had happened in Viipuri.

Jesse Hirvelä writes in his study that at the end of January 1919, the 164th Finnish Rifle Regiment was sent to the front of the Russian Civil War, composed of 712 combatants who had mostly returned from the Estonian front.⁵⁶ The 3rd Finnish Communist Rifle Regiment which started its combat near the village of Vasknarva, comprised 870 soldiers and officers, out of whom (at least) one battalion was fighting on the Estonian territory. Hereby we can calculate the approximate losses of the Red Finns: if we subtract a bit less than 700 men of the 164th Rifle Regiment from 1100, then we get ca 450 as the number of the lost combatants of the Red Finns, out of whom half fell on the front and half were shot dead within the last ten days of January in the Pimeaed Park of Narva, the bloodiest period with the most casualties from December 1918 to the end of January 1919.

Why were these casualties never mentioned after World War II? Probably because the Finnish Democratic Republic, a puppet government established by Stalin at Terijoki during the Winter War in 1939–1940 which was supposed to come to power after the conquest of Finland, did not make it to a triumphant entry into Helsinki but stopped in the suburbs of Viipuri on 13 March 1940. Between the two world wars, Estonia favoured the narrative that during the Estonian War of Independence the kindred nation of Finns came to help on the southern coast of the Gulf of Finland. The fact that another part of Finns came to support their proletarian mates in order to fight for the Commune of the Working People of Estonia instead of the Finnish Socialist Workers Republic, was hardly ever mentioned in Estonia between the two wars nor afterwards.

When comparing the executions carried out in the eastern part of Viru County and in the civil wars of Finland and Russia, then one of the greater distinctions is the lack of concentration camps in Northeastern Estonia. Marko Mihkelson does write in his bachelor's thesis about

⁵⁶ Jesse Hirvelä, "Kahden sisällissodan vallankumoukselliset: Suomalaisen Kommunistisen Puolueen sotilasjärjestö Neuvosto-Venäjällä 1918–1920" (Master's thesis, the University of Helsinki, 2017), 49.

a concentration camp of the Commune but actually there were ordinary prisons in Narva and in Ivangorod but there was no prison whatsoever in Tartu. The Commune had a Commission for Combating Counter-Revolution⁵⁷ and the Estonian Provisional Government had field courts martial,⁵⁸ decisions were made in haste and the accused had no right of appeal.

At the end of 1918, the largest number of detainees was in the Far East of Russia and Eastern Siberia in the camps set up by the Japanese and the White guardsmen of Alexander Kolčak.⁵⁹ Back then, the bolshevik GULAG had far fewer prisoners. In Finland, the shootings of the Red guardsmen finished at the end of 1918. A large part of the prisoners with more lenient sentences mostly died from hunger or disease.

There are some recorded episodes from 1918–1919 in immediate surroundings of Estonia in the Finnish Karelia (where most of Estonian victims of the Finnish Civil War come from) and in the governorates of St Petersburg and Pskov. The Viipuri Massacre at the end of April 1918 is known for its largest number of casualties, over 300 people (it was the revenge for the slaughter of 30 supporters of White Finns in the prison of Viipuri a few days before the city fell to the Whites), mostly the Slavs (Russians, Ukrainians, Poles) but also three (or possibly five) Estonians.⁶⁰ On 23 November, the Red Army shot in Jamburg 23 Red Army soldiers

⁵⁷ See Palgi, 25: The Manifest of the Commune of the Working People of Estonia p. 1: “The Provisional Government of Estonia, all its agents and supporters, all landlords and pastors whose criminal hands are dripping with the blood of the Estonian workers, are outside the law, i.e. outlaws.” P. 2: “Anyone who insists on carrying out the orders of “the Provisional Government of Estonia” or its agents, must be shot on the spot.”

⁵⁸ The decree of the Provisional Government on the establishment of the field courts martial, 5 December 1918, *Riigi Teataja* (State Gazette) 1918, 6, 1–2. The decree was retroactive from the declaration of the martial law, i.e. from 29 November 1918. All persons who worked against the Republic of Estonia or for the benefit of the anti-state forces or communicated with them or collaborated with them in any other way; all persons who attempted to hinder military action (e.g. communication, advancing); all killers, burners and plunderers; all persons spreading rumours harmful to the Republic of Estonia, all deserters, rebels and defaulters were to be court-martialed.

⁵⁹ Pavel Golub (Павел Голуб), *Belyj terror v Rossii (1918–1920 gg. [Белый террор в России (1918–1920 гг.)]* (*White Terror in Russia (1918–1920)*) (Moscow: Patriot (Патриот), 2006).

⁶⁰ Westerlund, 123, 125.

who had retreated in panic after failed offensives on Narva and Ivan-gorod. In May 1919, Finnish volunteers killed in Krasnaya Gorka a dozen bolshevist leadership members of Kronstadt (there were no Estonians among them) and in September the same year, the armoured train combatants of the Estonian Army killed in Irboska on their own initiative 25 trade union figures who had been taken there from Tallinn for sending over the front to Russia.

The only similarity with the Finnish Civil War is the Battle of Tam-pere which took place in the second half of March and the first half of April in 1918. The number of the fallen (ca 1000 soldiers) was more or less the same on both sides but after the battle, hundreds of Red Guard soldiers were extrajudicially executed. The same happened after the Battle of Narva where the Red Army losses on the battlefield were even smaller than the massacre in Pimeaed Park which started on 19 January.

Hypotheses

First, from the murdered on The List of the Crucified Working People there is information only about three persons; in addition to D. Alt and K. Kuiv there is the biography of Klaara Lind.⁶¹ When the Germans entered Narva in March 1918, she was imprisoned. Allegedly, the Germans wanted to shoot her right away but then they agreed to keeping her behind bars. When the Commune was in power, she supposedly used to report her fellow citizens to the commission. However, how would the leadership of a German regiment who was in Narva for the first time ever, know whom to arrest as early as in March? We could set up a hypothesis on the executions at Iisaku on 6 March as well: was it the acting out of mutual enmity by killing a fellow citizen, unpleasant in the eyes of the newly changed authorities or was it just pure and simple currying favour? When, how and where (most probably in Rakvere) Klaara Lind was killed, remains unknown.

⁶¹ "Pilk enamlaste elust ja tegevusest Narwas" (A Glimpse of Life and Activity of Bolsheviks in Narwa), *Waba Maa*, 12 February 1919, 2.

Second: The Estonian Army was incapable of securing normal civil life in Narva from 18 January to the end of January 1919 in a state of war. Martin Ekström had been Commander of the Vaasa Regiment in Viipuri in April and May the year before but did not get actively involved in trying to stop ethnic cleansing.⁶² The population of Viipuri in 1918 was made up of the Finnish majority and the three groups of minorities of equal sizes – Swedish, German and Russian. Among the executed there was only one Baltic German, a victim of a random bullet, all the others were mostly Russian. It is likely that before the Whites captured the city, there were Swedes and Germans among the 30 victims of the Red Terror. From 19 January, the Finnish volunteers committed a large number of violent acts in Narva. For the robbery of merchant Kalašnikov, one member of the 5-man strong group was sentenced to death but General Martin Wetzler, the general leader of the Finnish volunteer units in Estonia, replaced it by a more lenient punishment. Finnish volunteers paid hardly any attention to the orders of the leadership of the Estonian Army. The White Terror which had been committed on the northern coast of the Gulf of Finland in 1918, was now continued outside the borders of the Republic of Finland. The only Estonia-related data which the Finnish database of war deaths includes, are the data of the casualties of *Pohjan Pojat* and Ekström's unit. As for the fallen Red soldiers, only two possible names come up – Viktor Rahikainen (died in Narva on 19 January 1919) and Wilhelm Ruotsalainen. There were more armed conflicts in Narva that day and they may have also fallen in exchange of fire. As for the Red Finns and other Red guardsmen who fell prisoners or were killed in Narva, only the number of the ones who were shot dead in front of the Town Hall is known. Their names are not known and we can only guess who, how many, when, why, where and how were killed in the ten last days of January and probably also in February.

In response to the last question of the set aims: As a result of the transfer of power in Petrograd in November 1917, Jaan (Ivan) Poska, the governorate commissioner, handed over the administration in Toompea

⁶² Seppo Rustanius, Jouni Eerola, "Viipurin etninen puhdistus," *Helsingin Sanomat*, 14 January 1996.

Castle on 11 November to Viktor Kingissepp, the representative of the Estonian War-Revolutionary Committee. Till 10 December 1917, the district of Rakvere saw a tense but peaceful political life until Count von Stackelberg together with his relatives and a group of the 4th Estonian Regiment soldiers arranged the killing of the Red Guard soldiers who had been delegated from Tallinn to take over the manor on the authority of the War-Revolutionary Committee. According to the interview with the only survivor Karl Roots in 1957 it turns out⁶³ that there was no exchange of fire; the first two could not even grab their guns, the third rushed toward the other outer door but he was hit by the bullets from outside. Roots thought that he survived only because the shooters rushed to the sledges which were ready for immediate departure, reckoning that all raiders had been killed. Ironically, two years later, the Count had to give up his property due to the land reform, this time for the benefit of the Republic of Estonia.

Summary

In a contemporary approach to history, an understanding prevails that in 1918–1919, the people entered the fight against the proletarian world revolution, exported from the East which in Estonia was represented by a handful of fanatics and conspirators.

In 1913, the number of Estonians living in the Saint Petersburg Governorate was 93,000, in the Pskov Governorate 32,000 and around Novgorod 3300, out of whom the majority had been born in Estonia and Livonia.⁶⁴ At the beginning of 1917, the Estonian community in Petrograd was the second largest in the world, exceeding the one in Tartu.

⁶³ Estonian Public Broadcasting Archive, 40 aastat tagasi Püssi mõisas (40 years ago in the manor of Püssi). 10.12.1957 Estonian Radio / RMARH-103748, <https://arhiiv.err.ee/guid/103748>.

⁶⁴ Vadim Musaev (Вадим Мусаев), *Éstonskaja diaspora na Severo-Zapade Rossii vo vtoroj polovine XIX – pervoj polovine XX v. [Эстонская диаспора на Северо-Западе России во второй половине XIX – первой половине XX в. (Estonian Diaspora in North-Western Russia in 2nd Half of 19th Century and 1st Half of 20th Century)]* (St. Petersburg: Nestor (Нестор), 2009), 19.

By 1918, the migration balance of Estonians from the sight of Russia's border areas was positive, because of which the number of Estonians in the neighbouring governorates had been growing. The majority of them had left for Russia in the hope of possessing land which was complicated and expensive to do at home.

As for the participation of Estonians in the Russian Civil War, there are some data about officers. Mati Kröönström writes that "according to a rough estimate, the number of Estonian officers participating in the Russian Civil War, could amount to 800 men, out of whom up to 250 were in the Red Army and at least 500 officers in the White Army."⁶⁵ There is less information about the non-commissioned officers in the Russian White Guard. As for the Red Army, we know that the Estonian Rifle Division which had been renamed the Estonian Rifle Brigade in February 1920, prior to Tartu Peace Treaty, comprised over 5100 men on 17 September 1919,⁶⁶ who were not all Estonians. It was technically not possible to draft the same number of Estonians to the White Guard forces from the other regions of Russia (Siberia, Crimea etc) because there the number of Estonians was significantly smaller than in the governorates of Petrograd and Pskov.

According to the orders of Viljandi Rifle Regiment, in December 1918 (the Commune announced general mobilization on 7 January 1919) over 500 men were drafted to the Regiment. This number surpasses the total number of the volunteers who joined the Estonian Army in the whole of Viru County. The Defence League of Narva under the leadership of Captain Heinrich Laretei had 120 members at the end of November 1918. In the first elections of the Constituent Assembly in April 1919, the leftists (social democrats, labour party and socialists-revolutionaries) who in the Russian context were called the minority (Mensheviks) won 65% of votes or the majority. By mid-February 1919 (the time of rebellion in Saaremaa) people's mentality was not as developed as we usually think today.

⁶⁵ Mati Kröönström, "Eesti ohvitserid Vene kodusõjas" (Estonian Officers in Russia's Civil War), *Akadeemia* 5 (2005): 918.

⁶⁶ Hanno Ojalo, *Punakütid: Eesti punakaartlast ja punaste küttide sõjatee 1917–1920* (Red Riflemen: The War Path of the Estonian Red Guardsmen and the Red Riflemen in 1917–1920) (Tallinn: Argo 2014), 119.

During the War of Independence, in Pechory County, the soldiers of the Estonian Army and of the Red Army Estonian Rifle Division used to go for chats in the trenches during the breaks in battles.⁶⁷

The most significant difference is that one party saw their future in an independent state, and the other party in a renewed Russian Federation. In December 1918, the mobilization into the Estonian Army failed. At the same time, a notable number of people voluntarily joined the riflemen in Narva. The author lacks comparable data about the other regions of Estonia, but I dare draw the conclusion that the mentality of the residents of eastern Virumaa was notably different from the other regions of Estonia. The Red Guard Squad of Iisaku parish comprised ca 20 men, the Red Guard of Aseri was even larger, and there was also a Red Guard Squad in Kunda which is outside the district studied in the current article (thanks to this squad, the Bolsheviks managed to seize power in Rakvere at the end of 1917).⁶⁸ In Narva, Ansis Daumanis managed to form a fully-fledged workers' regiment, and other units of the Commune comprised residents of Narva. Out of the identified men of Viljandi Rifle Regiment who fell in the battle of Joala, a third were the residents of Narva.

The second half of 1940 saw the return of the Red repressions and they continued in the form of terror during and after the World War II. The formal executor of judgments was the only political party allowed, the Communist Party of Estonia (ECP) and there were Estonians among the executors. It is hard to assess whether they did it in their blind conviction or simply for retaliation (incl. for the White Terror in 1918–1919). The communists who peaked in the parliamentary elections of 1923, (15% of votes), had 1400 members when they got legalized after the Soviet occupation at the end of July 1940.⁶⁹ 16 years later, by ECP 9th Congress in January 1956, the number of members had grown to 23,000 (incl. 45% Estonians). In addition to communists, there was the Young Communist League (Komsomol) with the age limit of 27 years

⁶⁷ KIRJUTAMATA MEMUAARE. Karl Kanger.

⁶⁸ Palgi, 25.

⁶⁹ Hiljar Tammela and Olev Liivik, "Eestimaa Kommunistliku Partei liikmeskond 1940–1941: allikad ja mehaanika" (The Membership of the Communist Party of Estonia 1940–1941: sources and mechanics), *Tuna* 1 (2020): 65.

for its members. The number of members of the Komsomol was about three times larger (over 60,000).⁷⁰ Obviously, in 1956, both communists and komsomols included a large share of Estonians who had arrived in Estonia after the Soviet Union occupied Estonia and they had never been citizens of the Republic of Estonia. However, we can presume that the total number of Estonian citizens who were members of the Communist Party or the Komsomol,⁷¹ surpassed the number of the deportees of 1941 and 1949. After the speech of Nikita Khruščev, the General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (which was confidential but became widely known) in February 1956, they abstained; since then up to the Hungarian revolution in October the same year, the author has not found one single protocol of a plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Estonia or a meeting of the local organization which would have assessed the repressions, following the example of Moscow.

Finns have done a huge amount of work and identified the victims of the White and the Red Terror as much as it has been possible. The author of this article found ethnic Estonians among them who had ended up in Finland. In Estonia, there is still a lot of work to do.

Comparing the White and Red Terrors in the eastern part of Viru County, it is clear that unlike in the other regions of Estonia in 1917–1919, the number of the victims of the White Terror exceeded the number of the victims of the Red Terror.

⁷⁰ The nationality of members is known because the society-related statistics conducted in the USSR included the data of social background, nationality, gender, education et al. *Author's note.*

⁷¹ The number of members of the ECP and Komsomol does not reflect the mentality of the society as a whole, because back then the candidate members for the Communist Party and the Komsomol, particularly intellectuals, had to go through a thorough background check after submitting an application, therefore, each candidate would not become a member. *Author's note.*

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