

Common grave for and a memorial to Red Army soldiers on Tõnismägi, Tallinn

Historical statement

Customer: Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Contractor: Estonian Foundation for the Investigation of Crimes Against
Humanity

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Introduction

Currently published information concerning the common grave for soldiers of the Red Army and the so-called “Liberators’ Monument” at 13 Kaarli Avenue, Tõnismägi, Tallinn is controversial, being based on either official approaches to history published during the Soviet period or on oral heritage preserved among people.

The Tallinn Inspectorate of Cultural Monuments made an inquiry on this subject to the Estonian State Archives in 1994. In the reply of the State Archives it was stated that no documents reflecting the funeral of Red Army soldiers on Tõnismägi in the autumn of 1944 had been found.

In 2004, Külli Holsting (Tallinn Cultural Heritage Department) and Urmas Oolup (Municipal Archives) compiled a memo on the same subject, using the documents kept in the National Archives and the Tallinn Municipal Archives. Neither did they manage to find any documented proof of the time and circumstances of the funeral of the Red Army soldiers. Based on a coffin found in the course of the excavation work on Tõnismägi in 1995, the writers of the memo believed that the existence of the burial place on Tõnismägi is an incontestable fact.

In the course of the preparation of this statement, the availability of potential authentic archival sources in Estonian archives was re-examined and information published in books and in the press was analysed. The archives of the organisations and agencies, which were likely involved in these events or whose involvement had previously been referred to, were scrutinised. The main attention was focused on the following archives: the agendas, minutes and short-hand reports of the meetings of the EC(b)P Central Committee Bureau, the schedules of work, correspondence and accounting records of the Military Department, (Branch of the Estonian State Archives (the former Party Archives) - ERAF Archives depot 1), the agendas, minutes, decisions, regulations and orders of the meetings of the Council of People’s Commissars of the Estonian SSR, the correspondence of the Military Department of the ESSR CPC (Estonian State Archives - ERA Archives depot R-1), the agendas, minutes and reports of the meetings of the EC(b)P Tallinn City Committee Bureau, the statements and correspondence of the Military Department and the Organisation and Instruction Department of the City Committee (ERAF Archives depot 5), minutes the meetings of the Executive Committee of the Council of Working People’s Deputies of the city of Tallinn, reports and correspondence of the Tallinn Department of Architecture (Tallinn Municipal Archives - TLA Archives depot R-1), documentation of the Tallinn Maintenance Trust (TLA Archives depot R-180), reports of the political departments of the 8th Estonian Rifle Corps and the 7th Estonian Rifle Division and the historical journals of the units thereof (ERAF Archives depot 63, 78), transcripts of the reports of the 8th Army and the 2nd Shock Army of the Red Army (ERAF Archives depot 32). In addition, the Archives of the Defence Resources Agency (Archives depot 9) and the Archives of the Tallinn Board of City Planning (depository unit 6509) were used; the annexed photos originate from the Estonian Film Archives and the Estonian History Museum. Important information was also found in the press of 1944–1945.

The statement was prepared out with a view to finding answers to the following questions:

- Did the graves of the Red Army soldiers appear on Tõnismägi and when did they appear? Who gave the order for the burial and who conducted the burial?
- How many dead bodies were altogether buried there and who were the Red Army soldiers buried on Tõnismägi?
- Which were the circumstances of the erection of the “Liberators’ monument” and on whose initiative was it carried out and who directed it?
- What was the monument to symbolise?

1. Graves on Tõnismägi

A confirmation of the fact that graves dating back to World War II exist on Tõnismägi, in a green area next to St Charles Church where also the “Liberators’ Monument” is standing, was obtained in 1995 when in the course of the reconstruction of the square in front of the monument, trenches were dug for new trees to be planted on the church side of the square. In the course of the work, two fragments of a thin board were excavated from the ground by the shovel of a backhoe. On the order of the Tallinn City Centre Government, AS Agu conducted archaeological surveys, which confirmed that this had been a contemporary non-Christian burial. The place of the burial is not noted in the report, however it is mentioned that “contemporary burials” can be found on the central north to south axis of the monument, which was suggested to be taken into account during the excavation works that followed.¹ (See Annex 1.)

Reference books from the Soviet period are usually limited to providing general information, stating that the “Liberators’ Monument” was erected to the Red Army soldiers who were killed during the liberation of Tallinn. The short encyclopaedia “Tallinn”, published in 1979, is somewhat more informative; its entry on “Liberators’ Square” includes the following sentences: “/.../ *“Liberators’ Square” is a small triangular green area enclosed by a limestone wall in the Northern part of Tõnismägi. On 25 September 1944, those killed during the liberation of Tallinn were buried there /.../*”. The names of 13 deceased are also listed.²

Regulation of the Council of People’s Commissars of the Estonian Soviet Socialist Republic (hereinafter referred to as the ESSR CPC) of 6 October 1944, based on Regulation of the State Defence Committee of the USSR No 1517 of 1 April 1944, required the Executive Committees of the Councils of Working People’s Deputies (hereinafter referred to as the CWPD EC) of counties, cities and rural municipalities to form commandos for tidying and decorating brother graves and cemeteries of the Red Army. The executive committees had to register and bury

¹ Külli Holsting, Urmas Oolup. Hauad Tõnismäel [Graves on Tõnismägi]. Memo. 12.04.2004; Archaeological supervision of the excavation works of the so-called “Liberators’ Monument” on Tõnismägi. Compiled by AS “Agu”. 1995.

² Tallinn: Lühientsüklopeedia [Short Encyclopaedia]. Board of editors L. Valt, L. Raudits, A. Mihkelsoo. Tallinn, 1979, p. 308.

unburied fighters of the Red Army and to submit relevant lists to the ESSR CPC. Personal responsibility was assigned to the Chairman of the CWPD EC.³

In connection with the celebration of the 27th anniversary of the Red Army the Secretary of the Estonian Communist (Bolshevik) Party Central Committee Sazonov sent a circular letter to the City and County Committees of the EC(b)P in February 1945, ordering to submit exact information regarding the number and the location of the graves of those killed during the war by 15 March 1945. A plan for reburials had to be provided where the location of the graves was inappropriate.⁴ On 3 March 1945, to the inquiry to the Tallinn City Committee, Secretary General of the Council of War of the 8th Army Captain Kotov sent a list concerning brother graves and individual graves. As regards Tallinn, 20 graves with 52 buried in the Alexander Nevsky cemetery (a part of the Siselinna cemetery) and one grave with one buried in the Tallinn Jewish cemetery were noted.⁵ The same data is also confirmed by the report of 15 March of the Head of the Military Department of the EC(b)P Tallinn City Committee Leppik, which also adds other burial sites: “/.../ *In addition, there is one grave near St John’s Church, one grave in Komandandi Street, two graves near St Charles Church and one grave on Virumägi (the former “Musumägi”). The last bodies buried outside cemeteries must be reburied in the Tallinn military cemetery. /.../*”⁶ (See Annex 2.)

“Near St Charles Church” does not clearly specify whether it is the “Liberators’ Square”, but this is a like possibility. Leppik did not write how many bodies or who had been buried there or where exactly they had been buried.

The 2nd volume of the collection “Estonian people in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941–1945” reads: “/.../ *Workers of Tallinn expressed their sincere gratitude to their liberators and paid special tribute to the heroes of battle who gave their lives during the liberation of the capital of Estonia. On 25 September 1944, deputy division commander colonel K.P. Kolesnikov, lieutenant colonel M. P. Kulikov, commander of the 657th Rifle Regiment and others fallen were buried with great homage on Tõnismägi, Tallinn. /.../*”⁷

The truthfulness of the last section may already be questioned, since the rank of the alleged deputy division commander colonel Kolesnikov was for some reason lowered to major on the memorial tablet, and the regiment commander Kulikov,

³ Regulation of the ESSR Council of People’s Deputies on removing dead bodies from former battlefields, the procedure for taking over brother graves and cemeteries and the maintenance thereof in connection with the advance of units. — Estonian SSR Gazette, 6 October 1944, No. 2, art. 19.

⁴ Circular letter of the Secretary of the EC(b)P CC Sazonov to City and County Committees. 14.02.1945. Branch of the Estonian State Archives (hereinafter referred to as ERAF) Archives depot 5, ref. 5, depository unit 96. L. 2.

⁵ Сведения о месторасположении братских и индивидуальных могил военнослужащих погибших в боях за освобождение Советской Эстонии от немецких захватчиков. ERAF Archives depot 5, ref. 5, depository unit 96. L. 3–5.

⁶ Head of the Military Department of the EC(b)P Tallinn City Committee Leppik’s report to the Head of the Military Department of the EC(b)P Central Committee P. Stamm. Archives depot 5, ref. 5, depository unit 96. L. 6.

⁷ Eesti rahvas Nõukogude Liidu Suures Isamaasõjas 1941–1945 [Estonian people in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941–1945]. Vol. 2, Eesti rahvas võitluses Nõukogudemaa täieliku vabastamise ja sõja võiduka lõpuleviimise eest aastail 1944–1945 [Estonian people in the struggle for the complete liberation of the Land of Soviets and for the victorious completion of the war, 1944–1945]. Editor-in-chief L. Lentsman. Tallinn, 1977, p. 343.

allegedly “buried with great homage”, was actually forgotten for 30 years and his name did not come up until in the 1970s.⁸

As regards the date of the burial on Tõnismägi, readers were tried to be disoriented and the actual date was tried to be concealed during the Soviet period. The official Soviet historical literature only speaks about the burial of „the fallen liberators” in September 1944. The two graves mentioned above in Annex 2 may indeed date back to September 1944, the period right after the occupation of Tallinn. The burial (or reburial) of 12 allegedly fallen Red Army soldiers actually took place in April 1945. At least three short reportages reflected the event in the press.

On 14 April 1945, it was written in the newspaper *Rahva Hääl*: “/.../ *The funeral procession is moving slowly along the streets of Tallinn. Garlands, flags in mourning veils, twelve red coffins on the cars, accompanied by the mourning habitants of Tallinn. The fighters of the Red Army who fell during the liberation of Tallinn, the capital Estonia on 22 September 1944 are buried in a common grave. The coffins are being placed near an open grave on a triangular square near St Charles Church. /.../*”⁹

The newspaper *Noorte Hääl* of 17 April 1945 read: “/.../ *On Monday, the 14th date of this month, the burial of twelve heroic fighters of the Red Army who had fallen on the day of the liberation of Tallinn, fighting against the Hitler conquerors, takes place. /.../*”¹⁰

In the *Советская Эстония* of 15 April 1945 Captain L. Auerbach wrote: “/.../ *Yesterday, the working people of the capital of Estonia sent the officers and soldiers of the Red Army who had fallen while liberating the brotherly Estonian people and Tallinn to their last journey. There are 12 of them. Let us remember the names of the heroes: Guards Major V. I. Kuznetsov, Captain A. M. Brantsev, Captain Serpov, Lieutenant V. E. Volkov, Second Lieutenant I. M. Lukanov, Guard Sergeant V. I. Davydov, Guards Senior H. Pikalo,¹¹ Guards Senior Yelena Varshavskaya, Red Army soldier D. A. Belov and three more unknown soldiers. They had been buried at different locations but yesterday their remains were transferred to the brother grave in the wide avenue on Tõnismägi. /.../*”¹² (See Annex 3.)

The reportages fail to ascertain who organised the burial; neither do they reveal who gave the order to establish a common grave in the centre of Tallinn. It is even surprising that the organisation of such propagandist event is not covered in the documents of the organs of the communist party and public authorities of that time.

⁸ И. Кроон. Имена на граните. — Советская Эстония. 9 Май 1974, No. 107; Enn Veskimägi. Kes on need tundmatud sõdurid [Who are these unknown soldiers]? — Õhtuleht. 13 January 1975, No. 10.

⁹ Inga Kaaret. Igavene au langenud kangelastele [Eternal honour to fallen heroes]. — *Rahva Hääl*. 15 April 1945, No. 88.

¹⁰ Viimane austusavaldus kangelastele [Last tribute to heroes]. — *Noorte Hääl*. 17 April 1945, No. 46.

¹¹ The name was initially misspelled. The correct spelling would be S. Napikalo.

¹² “/.../ *Вчера трудящихся эстонской столицы отдавали последний долг офицерам и бойцам Красной Армии павшим за освобождение братского эстонского народа, за освобождение Таллина. Их двенадцать. Запомним имена героев: /.../ Они были похоронены в разных местах, а вчера их останки были перенести в братскую могилу в обширном сквере на Тынисмяги. /.../*” Л. Ауэрбах. Вечная слава героям. Перенесение праха советских воинов павших в боях за Таллин. — Советская Эстония. 15 April 1945.

It is clear that this issue could not be dealt without addressing the EC(B)P CC Bureau, but the issue of the burial was not discussed during the sessions of the Bureau in the first half of 1945.¹³ The Military Department of the EC(b)P CC dealt with the coordination of such issues and relevant correspondence; however, the organisation of the burial is mentioned neither in the correspondence of the department, nor in the annual reports of the department for 1945 and 1946.¹⁴

Neither is the burial on Tõnismägi reflected in the agendas, decisions, regulations, and orders of the ESSR CPC or in the materials of the Military Department.¹⁵

The Tallinn City Committee Bureau of the EC(b)P had to be aware of the funeral but such issue was not included in the agendas of the City Committee in the first half of 1945.¹⁶ If a department was required to deal with it, it must have been namely the Military Department of the City Committee; however, its schedule of work for March 1945 has not been preserved (or it never existed) among its schedules of work. The schedule of work for April/May does not mention the organisation of a funeral on Tõnismägi. As regards the monthly reports of the department, namely the report of April 1945 is missing and the annual report of the department (from September 1945 until 1 January 1946) does not cover the funeral.¹⁷

However, indirect implications can be found among the documents of the EC(b)P Tallinn City Committee. The following can be read from the information of the Organisation and Instruction Department of the City Committee of the period from 10–20 April 1945: “/.../ *Together with other departments, the reburial of the soldiers and officers of the Red Army who had fallen during the liberation of Tallinn was carried out and an organised meeting with 20,000 participants was held on the occasion. /.../*”.¹⁸ False information was communicated even within the ECP City Committee. A commemoration meeting with 20,000 participants could even not be taken seriously in the context of that period. A notice in the newspaper *Советская Эстония* mentioned only 10,000 participants, but even this is an obvious exaggeration. The preserved documents of the EC(b)P City Committee do not reveal what the cooperation of the Department of Organisation and Instruction with other departments was about.

¹³ See reports of the EC(b)P CC Bureau No. 75–88 (28.09–28.12.1944) and No. 89–104 (03.01–11.04.1945). ERAF Archives depot 1, ref. 4, depository unit 114, 120, 156, 163, 168, 172, 177.

¹⁴ See e.g. Отчет о работе военного отдела ЦК/б/ Эстонии за 1945 и 1946 гг. ERAF Archives depot 1, ref. 5, depository unit 106.

¹⁵ See minutes of the decisions of the meetings ESSR CPC Bureau No. 1–48 with annexes. 05.01.1945–30.12.1945. Estonian State Archives (hereinafter referred to as ERA), Archives depot R-1, ref. 3, depository unit 49; minutes of the decisions of the meetings ESSR CPC Bureau No. 1–27 with annexes. 02.01.1945–11.12.1945. ERA Archives depot R-1, ref. 3, depository unit 47. Table of contents of the orders of the ESSR CPC No. 1k – 1257k. 1945. ERA Archives depot R-1, ref. 3, depository unit 37. Correspondence of the Military Department of the ESSR CPC, see ERA, Archives depot R-1, ref. 13, depository unit 1, 2.

¹⁶ See e.g. the agendas of the EC(b)P Tallinn City Committee from 6 March to 29 April 1945. ERAF Archives depot 5, ref. 5, depository unit 4. L. 1–5.

¹⁷ See the schedules of work and reports of the Military Department of the EC(b)P Tallinn City Committee. ERAF Archives depot 5, ref. 5, depository unit 98.

¹⁸ Information to the Department of Organisation and Instruction of the EC(b)P CC from the Department of Organisation and Instruction of the EC(b)P Tallinn City Committee from 10–20 April 1945. ERAF Archives depot 5, ref. 5, depository unit 31. L. 115.

A letter from Head of the Military Department of the EC(b)P Tallinn City Committee, Leppik, to the Military Department originates from 8 January 1945: “/.../ According to the information of the CWPD EC, the commandant of the city starts to organise the reburial of all officers and soldiers fallen during the liberation of Tallinn in the Military cemetery. For the time being, the Maintenance Trust of the Tallinn City CWPD EC is dealing with the maintenance of the graves. /.../”¹⁹

A supposition may be made that in April 1945 the Soviet military authorities were indeed dealing with the burial/reburial. However, documents of the Commandant’s Office of the Tallinn garrison are not in Estonian archives and are hence unavailable. Therefore, it is not possible to find out who made the decision to conduct the burial, gave instructions and where the bodies that were buried came from. A list of those buried in the common grave on Tõnismägi, originating from the former Tallinn City Centre Archives, later called the Lenin District Military Commissariat Archives, kept in the archives of the Tallinn Department of the Defence Resources Agency, also refers to the involvement of the military authorities in the burial. Some information, which was not at the disposal of civil authorities, has been disclosed there.²⁰ (See below.)

Odds are known about the activities of the Tallinn CWPD EC and its subordinate units (e.g. the Department of Architecture and the Maintenance Trust of Tallinn) regarding the establishment of the green area and the erection of the monument after the funeral,²¹ but it is clear that the executive power of the city of Tallinn could not autonomously decide upon the funeral and neither was it reflected in the minutes of the meetings of the Tallinn CWPD EC.²²

The Maintenance Trust, also comprising a special Department of Funerals, used to deal with issues relating to the maintenance of graves and green areas in the city of Tallinn. It is difficult to describe the role of the Trust in organising funerals since the documents of the Trust dating back to that time have not been preserved.²³

2. Who are the so-called liberators of Tallinn buried on Tõnismägi?

A list of those buried on Tõnismägi, submitted by the Military Commissariat of the former Tallinn Central District, later Lenin District, to the ESSR State Military Commissariat, is kept in the archives of the Defence Resources Agency at 3 Maneeži St, Tallinn. The list bears no date and it obviously originates from the 1970s or 1980s. The names of thirteen fallen servicemen under the heading “Братская могила на ТЫНИСМЯГИ” are specified on the list. The list has been signed by Lieutenant Colonel O. Artamonov, Military Commissar of the Tallinn Lenin District. It is unknown on

¹⁹ Report No. 04 of the Head of the Military Department of the EC(b)P Tallinn City Committee to the Military Department of the EC(b)P CC. 08.01.1945. ERAF Archives depot 1, ref. 49, depository unit 11. L. 1.

²⁰ Defence Resources Agency’s Archives (Tallinn, Maneeži 3) Archives depot 9, ref. 6, depository unit 22.

²¹ See e.g. Tallinn Municipal Archives (hereinafter referred to as TLA) Archives depot R-1, ref. 1-II, depository unit 8.

²² See e.g. TLA Archives depot R-1, ref. 1-II, depository unit 26.

²³ See TLA Archives R-180.

which sources the compilation of the list was based.²⁴ (See Annex 4.) The names of the Red Army soldiers in different sources total 14.²⁵

Composite list of the possible Red Army soldiers buried on Tõnismägi²⁶

No	Surname	First name	Father's name	Rank	Unit	Year of birth	Date of death
1	Belov	Dmitri	Andrei	Private	23 rd Artillery Penetration Division	1910	21.09.44
2	Bryantsev	Aleksei	Matvei	Captain	1222nd Mobile Artillery Regiment	-	22.09.44
3	Var-shavskaya	Yelena	Mikhail	Senior	40th Guard-Mortar Regiment	1925	22.09.44
4	Volkov	Vassili	Yegor	Lieutenant	657th Rifles Regiment	-	22.09.44
5	Grigorov	Aleksandr	Ivan	Sergeant	2392 nd эр (2392 nd evacuation hospital (?))	-	07.03.45
6	Davydov	Vassili	Ivan	Sergeant	30 th Guard Mechanised Regiment	1915	22.09.44
7	Kolesnikov	Konstantin	Pavel	Colonel	125th Rifles Division	1897	21.09.44
8	Kotelnikov	-	-	Lieutenant Colonel	-	-	22.09.44
9	Kuznetsov	Vassili	Ivan	Major	1222nd Mobile Artillery Regiment	1908	22.09.44
10	Kulikov	Mikhail	Piotr	Lieutenant Colonel	657th Rifles Regiment	1909	22.09.44
11	Lukanov	I	M	Lieutenant	-	-	22.09.44
12	Serkov	Ivan	Stepan	Captain	79th Light Artillery Brigade	1922	21.09.44
13	Hapikalo	Stepan	Illarion	First Lieutenant	26th Tank Regiment	1920	27.09.44
14	Syssoyev	Ivan		Captain	657th Rifles Regiment		22.09.44

According to the data found, 9 of the fallen on the list (marked in **Bold** in the Table) were members of the units which were more or less connected with the Tallinn occupation operation, but there is no evidence that any of them were killed at the time of the conquest of Tallinn.

There is little information concerning the circumstances of the death of these service people. The first ones to arrive in Tallinn were the advance party of the 125th Division of the 117th Rifles Corps of the Leningrad front (comprising the units of the 1222nd Mobile Artillery Regiment, the 82nd Tank Regiment and the 466th and 657th Rifles Regiments), the advance party of the 72nd Rifles Division (the units of the 14th Rifles Regiment, the 27th Tank Regiment, the 1811th Mobile Artillery Regiment) and the 152nd Tank Brigade in the composition of the 3rd Baltic front (which was supported by the 26th tank Regiment) and the advance party of the 8th Estonian Rifles

²⁴ Defence Resources Agency's Archives, Archives depot 9, ref. 6, depository unit 22.

²⁵ See also И. Кроон.

²⁶ Defence Resources Agency's Archives, Archives depot 9, ref. 6, depository unit 22; И. Кроон.

Corps. Given that the advance parties were in turn supported from the rear by the mortar (the so-called *Katyushas*) regiments of the 30th and 40th Guards by means of (jet) mortars, they may also be indirectly considered conquerors of Tallinn.²⁷

In 1972, in order to ascertain the circumstances of the deaths, the ESSR State Military Commissariat addressed the Central Directorate of Human Resources of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR with a request to send them information regarding Lieutenant Colonel Kotelnikov, Major Kolesnikov,²⁸ Major Kuznetsov, Captain Serkov and Lieutenant Lukanov. On 6 June 1972 the ESSR State Military Commissariat received an answer as follows:

.../ Colonel Kolesnikov, Konstantin Pavlovich, Deputy Commander of the 125th Rifles Division, was killed on 21 September 1944 and is buried in Tallinn. .../ Captain Serkov, Ivan Stepanovich, Reconnaissance Commander of the 79th Light Artillery Brigade was killed on 21 September 1944. .../There is no data concerning Lukanov I. M. and Kotelnikov. .../.²⁹ (See Annex 5.)

The fall of Colonel Kolesnikov has also been described in the aforementioned collection “Estonian people in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941–1945”: *.../ The group of General K. Gerok had organised a strong defence in the region of Kaberla–Kodasoo, 45 kilometres to the East of Tallinn. A fierce battle followed, in which also the mobile second advance party of the 117th Rifle Regiment, which was moving on the same route, directed by deputy commanding officer of the 125th Rifles Division K.P. Kolesnikov, intervened after a while. The 82nd Tank Regiment under the direction of Lieutenant Colonel F. G. Gritsev and the 1222nd Mobile Artillery Regiment under the direction of Major V. I. Kuznetsov, as well as the subdivisions of the 466th and 657th Rifles Regiment joined the battle within the composition of this party. They could not break through the enemy’s defence. A round defence was organised for the night. Since the commanding officer of the second advance party K. Kolesnikov was killed in the battle, both units were subordinated to Major General I. Yastrebov. .../”³⁰ As one can see, Kuznetsov has also been mentioned, but according to the Central Directorate of Human Resources of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR his date of death is 22 September 1944: *“.../ Guard Major Kuznetsov Vassili Ivanovich, commanding officer of the 1222nd Mobile Artillery Regiment, was killed on 22 September 1944 and is buried in Tallinn. .../”*³¹ It is possible that he was also killed or deadly injured in the region of Kahala. At the same time Kuznetsov’s name is mentioned in the decree of the Higher Commander-in-Chief “Expression of gratitude to the liberators of Tallinn” of 22 September.³² Consequently, there are two possibilities: gratitude was expressed to a deceased whose fall was not announced until after issue of the decree, or he was killed after issue of the decree.*

²⁷ Боевое донесение № 266/оп. ШТАРМ-8. 22.9.44 года. 21.00 (Report of Lieutenant General Starikov, Commander of the 8th Army, to the War Council of the Leningrad front) ERAF, Archives depot 32, ref. 9, depository unit 2; Estonian people in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union. Vol. 2, p. 340; <http://rkka.ru/ihandbook.htm> [viewed on 8 June 2006].

²⁸ In fact Kolesnikov was a colonel; at the beginning his rank was specified as major on the monument.

²⁹ И. Кроон.

³⁰ Estonian people in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941–1945. Vol. 2, p. 340.

³¹ И. Кроон.

³² See Eesti rahvas Nõukogude Liidu Suures Isamaasõjas 1941–1945: dokumente ja materjale [Estonian people in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941–1945: documents and materials]. Editor-in-chief I. Paul. Tallinn, 1975, pp. 457–458.

The same also stands for the partorg (*organiser in the Communist party*) of the 1222nd Mobile Artillery Regiment Captain Aleksei Bryantsev and the platoon commander of the mortar platoon of the 657th Rifles Regiment Lieutenant Vassili Volkov. They were also members of the 125th Rifles Division and since later there were no major conflicts, they could also be considered to have been killed in the region of Kahala, but more detailed information regarding this is not available.

Lieutenant Colonel Mikhail Kulikov, the Commander of the 657th Rifles Regiment, and Ivan Syssoyev, the partorg of the same regiment, are usually deemed to have fallen in the Kahala battle. Their names were not known for decades and probably the reference on the first memorial plate to the “two unknown” was a reference to them. At the same time, Syssoyev’s name is not mentioned on the list of the Military Commissariat either. An unclear story about Kulikov who was buried “with great homage” in order to be later totally forgotten was already mentioned above. According to the confirmation obtained from the Archives of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR: “/.../ *The commander of the 657th Rifles Regiment, Lieutenant Colonel Kulikov, Mikhail Petrovich, killed [the rest fell, Kulikov was killed – yõum] 22.9.1944. Buried: in Tallinn. /.../ Syssoyev Ivan Mikhailovich, born in 1909, Captain, partorg of the 657th Rifles Regiment of the 125th Rifles Division, fell on 22 September 1944. /.../*” These names were written on the memorial plate on the basis of a document signed by Major general Tuhkru, the Military Commissar of the ESSR: “/.../ *On the basis of archival documents and the memories of the retired Colonel I. I. Paul³³ and the memories of A. K. Kalvo, the former militia chief in Tallinn in 1945, Lieutenant Colonel Kulikov, M. P. and captain Syssoyev, I. M. were reburied in the Tõnismägi brother grave, and therefore I consider it possible to perpetuate their names by writing them in the place of two unknown soldiers on the monument. /.../*”³⁴

The 40th Guards Mortar Regiment supported by means of mortar fire the first echelon of the Estonian Rifles Corps during the offence, which started on 17 September 1944 from the Emajõgi River. The regiment was at the disposal of the artillery of the corps later as well. Since in the decree of the Higher Commander-in-Chief “Expression of gratitude to the liberators of Tallinn” of 22 September the name of the Commander of the artillery of the corps, Karl Aru, is mentioned and since the rest of the artillery units of the Corps were far behind, one may say that the 40th Mortar Regiment supported by means of mortar fire the advance of the advance party of the Estonian Rifles Corps founded on 21 September. The senior of the medical service of the Mortar Regiment Yelena Varshavskaya’s name is also mentioned among the fallen of the 22nd September. The circumstances of her death remain vague. In 1985, the newspaper *Õhtuleht* published a story about Varshavskaya and the events were described as follows: “/.../ *On 22 September Tallinn was liberated. On the same day Lena Varshavskaya fell. Guardsmen buried their dear fellow fighter with all military honours. /.../*” There is no detailed description of her fall, however, a story about her last letter to her father is appended. The letter is said to have been

³³ This did not stop Ilmar Paul, who was also one of the editors-in-chief of the collection “Estonian people in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union” Vol. 2 (1977), from authorising the story about Kulikov’s burial on Tõnismägi on 25 September 1944, which he partly contradicts in his memories. See above.

³⁴ И. Кроон.

written on 16 September and to have been covered in bloodstains. Somebody had allegedly taken the letter from the pocket of the deceased and posted it.³⁵

Stepan Hapikalio (initially on the list under the name of H. Pikalo) belonged to the 26th Heavy Tanks Regiment, which was in the composition of the 152nd Tank Brigade and the advance party of which joined the advance party of the Estonian Rifles Corps near the Peningi Manor on the morning of 22 September in order to enter Tallinn together at 11.30 a.m.³⁶ Information concerning Hapikalio's death originates from the Central Directorate of Human Resources of the Ministry of Defence of the USSR: “/.../died after illness on 27 September 1944. Buried in Tallinn on Turuplatsi Puiestee (Market Square Avenue). /.../” (сквер базарной площади, г. Таллинн)³⁷

The story concerning Sergeant Vassili Davydov who allegedly fell on 22 September is also unclear. According to the list of the Military Commissariat his unit was the 30th Guard Mechanised Regiment (30 зб. мех. п). It is not possible to ascertain the presence of such a unit in Estonia in 1944. There has obviously been a mistake in the list and Davydov actually fought in the 30th Guard Mortar Regiment (commanding officer of which was Lieutenant Colonel D. Hrushch), which supported the advance party of the 117th Rifles Corps, directed by I. Yastrebov.

The Ministry of Defence of the USSR provided the following information concerning Dmitri Belov: /.../ Lance-corporal Belov D. A., scout of the 23rd Artillery Division. /.../ Fell on 21 September 1944, buried in Tallinn. /.../”.³⁸ Belov is referred to as a private in the list of the Military Commissariat. In 1944, the 23rd Penetration Artillery Division operated indeed in Estonia but it did not directly participate in the “liberation of Tallinn”. The decree of the Higher Commander-in-Chief of 22 September 1944 does not mention the division.

7 March of 1945 has been noted as the date of death of Sergeant Aleksander Grigorov. He has nothing to do with the “liberation of Tallinn”. His name was not on the memorial plate either. However, his name is on the list of the Military Commissariat. A mysterious 2392 ээ, which probably means an evacuation hospital, has been specified as his place of service. (In the Red Army and in the Soviet Army, men who had been hospitalised were included in the personnel of the hospital). There is no more detailed information regarding A. Grigorov. There is also a list of the Red Army's evacuation hospitals, which operated in the territory of Estonia during 1944–1945 among the information collected by Jüri Pärn, but he has not registered a hospital under such number. However, Jüri Pärn's list might not be absolutely complete; hospitals were often displaced.³⁹

On the basis of the data of archives the number of people who were buried on Tõnismägi in total remains unclear, and a whole range of questions remain

³⁵ Tema nimi oli Lenina [Her name was Lenina]. — Õhtuleht. 7 January 1985, No. 4.

³⁶ Battle report of the head of the 2nd Penetration Army. 22.09.1944. ERAF Archives depot 32, ref. 9, depository unit 2; 8. Operative report No.266/оп of Lieutenant General Starikov, Commander of the Army to the War Council of the Leningrad front. 22.09.1944. ERAF Archives depot 32, ref. 9, depository unit 2; extract from the record of the action of the 354th Rifles Regiment of the 7th Estonian Rifles Division. 05.10.1944. — Published in the book “Eesti rahvas Nõukogude Liidu Suures Isamaasõjas 1941–1945: dokumente ja materjale” [“Estonian people in the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet Union 1941–1945: documents and materials”]. p. 453–454.

³⁷ И. Кроон.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Jüri Pärn's collected information in the Estonian War Museum – General Laidoner's Museum.

unanswered. Initially 9 names were known and 3 were unknown. In 1946, the schoolgirls Ageeda Paavel and Aili Jürgenson blasted the initial wooden monument. (See below). There were 11 names and no unknowns on the reconstructed monument. Lieutenant Colonel Kotelnikov and Major Kalesnikov had been added to the initial names.⁴⁰ (See photo 1.) There were already 11 names and two unknowns on the memorial plates on the monument unveiled on Tõnismägi in 1947. (See photo 2.) At the same time Leppik's letter also refers to two graves that had earlier been near St Charles Church. Were they these "unknowns"? In this case, if 12 bodies were buried on Tõnismägi in April 1945, there is still one missing or in excess (provided that two bodies were earlier buried in the two graves near St Charles Church). Later the names of the "unknown" Kulikov and Syssojev were identified. In addition, another name (Grigorov) who was allegedly buried on Tõnismägi but whose name never existed on the memorial plate exists on the preserved list of the ESSR State Military Commissariat. Given that his date of death was 7 March 1945 and that therefore he could not participate in the "liberation of Tallinn", his name was simply left out from the memorial plate. This would explain the number of the names, but since there are no documents, it still remains a speculation.

According to the preserved information, it appears that even those who conducted the burial were not sure who they were burying. Lieutenant Colonel Kotelnikov's name poses questions. Has such person ever existed? The Central Directorate of Human Resources could not ascertain whether Kotelnikov, ranked senior officer existed and was buried in Estonia. The same goes for Lukanov.

Since there is no sound information regarding the number and the identity of the buried, it is impossible to declare who of the listed has actually been buried on Tõnismägi. It may be asked whether persons who were killed during the conquest of Tallinn and have also been discretionally included in the list and their names added afterwards. The fact that 2/3 of those who are said to have been buried on Tõnismägi are officers and three of them had the rank of lieutenant colonel is also noteworthy. In the battlefield, lower ranked servicemen constitute the majority of the killed. Did they bring bodies along from Kahala, dozens of kilometres away from Tallinn, in order to bury them later at a randomly chosen location and then rebury them after half a year? Information on how the Red Army regulations prescribed the handling of the fallen would help to evaluate this in a more detailed manner, but unfortunately, the undersigned did not have this information at his disposal.

It is possible that those aforementioned soldiers of the Red Army who had been buried in single graves in the centre of Tallinn were reburied on Tõnismägi. However, they were located in the area of Harjumägi, Viru(värava)mägi, Tõnismägi and Liberty Square where neither major nor minor conflicts took place. Under which circumstances were those men killed? Were they buried at the place of death or were they brought there from somewhere else? Or were they brought from the places where occasional exchanges of fire are known to have taken place, i.e. in Vaskjala near Tallinn, Ülemiste, Pääsküla and Nõmme?⁴¹

⁴⁰ Kolesnikov had in fact the rank of colonel. The wrong rank was recorded until the end of the 1970s.

⁴¹ See Mart Laar. *Isamaa ilu hoieldes* [Preserving the beauty of fatherland]. Stockholm, 1997. Chapter "Soldiers of the Republic", pp.185–197.

Oral heritage

In connection with the death of some of the buried whose names are not mentioned on the monument or whose names were identified later, circumstances have been suspected to exist which could not be brought to light, were not compatible with the official Soviet approach to history, and have led to the generation of many legends. At the same time there is no information to rebut those rumours and this may also be adequate information, which was not documented at the time of the events.

According to one statement, on 25 September three members of the Red Army were buried who had tried to steal vodka from the Liviko distillery and who were shot as marauders on the order of Vassili Võrk, the commandant of Tallinn. Among them were also the “unknown” Syssojev and Kulikov.⁴² Hence, it is not surprising that facts about them were suppressed for decades. However, this legend seems not to be founded on fact, since why did a regiment commander have to go himself to steal vodka and why were the bodies of the marauders carried to the centre of town? The materials of the Political Department of the Estonian Rifles Corps, which partly reflect the events of ransacking, do not confirm this event.⁴³ At the same time there are reminiscences of a heavy binge of alcohol of the Red Army soldiers on the „liberation day”. According to one legend, two drunken servicemen of the Red Army were run over by a tank in the centre of town. If this is true, they also were buried somewhere.

During a discussion in the Heritage Protection Council in 1994, inspector of cultural monuments Jaanis Tali also placed the day of the first funeral on 25 September 1944. The writer of this document does still not know on which data Tali’s opinion was based on. According to the head of the former Tallinn Inspectorate of Cultural Monuments Iira Einamaa, their administration also received information that the close relatives of a serviceman buried on Tõnismägi had exhumed the body and taken it to his native place; according to another source it was taken to Kaliningrad.⁴⁴

Aili Jõgi who participated in blowing up the monument in 1946 recalls that Jaan Künemäe, who later was a famous motorcycle sportsman and who used to work in the garage of the Rifles Corps, which was situated under the so-called “Generals’ House” had told her: *“/.../ At that time, soldiers of the Red Army burglarised flats in Tallinn and got away with it. Three such marauders happened to accidentally break and enter into the flat of “one of their owns” or an officer and naturally, the politruk (political instructor) shot them as a sign of gratitude for such kindness. /.../”*. The bodies were wrapped in a trench coat and were holed near St Charles Church.⁴⁵

A legend is also connected with Varshavskaya’s death. According to the Soviet official version Varshavskaya fell near the memorial of Russalka in Tallinn.

⁴² Pekka Erelt. Otsitakse surnud vabastajaid [Dead liberators wanted]. — Eesti Ekspress. 22 September 2005.

⁴³ See ERAF depot 63 and depot 78.

⁴⁴ See Toomas Kummel. Kesse lamab trollipeatuse all [Who is lying under the trolley stop]? — newspaper KesKus. June 2006; Priit Hõbemägi. Viimne reliikvia ehk kuidas vabaneda pronksõdurist [The last relic or how to get rid of the bronze soldier]. — Eesti Päevaleht. 16 June 2006.

⁴⁵ See Allar Viivik. Koolitüdrukud õhkisid Tõnismäe „vabastajate” monumendi [Schoolgirls demolished the “liberators” monument on Tõnismägi]. — SL Õhtuleht. 11. September 2004.; Juku-Kalle Raid. Verinoor plika ja punane ausammas [A very young girl and a red monument]. – Tegelikuse KesKus. 2003. No. 7.

There was no battle there. According to a legend, Varshavskaya was raped and killed but there is no evidence to support it.⁴⁶

3. About the monument

After the burial of the Red Army soldiers on Tõnismägi the square was named Liberators' Square on 12 June 1945 on the order of the Tallinn CWPD EC of 18 May 1945": /.../ *The following decision, adopted on 18 May 1945, to be put on the record: In order to fulfil the wish of the workers, technical staff and employees of the Machine Construction Plant No 1 of the city of Tallinn, the memory of the heroic fighters and commanding officers who fell has heroes in the combat against German occupants over the liberation of Tallinn is to be perpetuated and the square between Tõnismägi and the streets of Toompuiestee and Kaarli puiestee, the burial site of the heroes is to be named "Liberators' Square" /.../*"⁴⁷

The Maintenance Trust of the Tallinn CWPD EC and the Leninist Communist Youth League of Estonia (ELKNÜ) were required to tidy the square.⁴⁸ The maintenance work had to be completed by the 5th anniversary of the ESSR (in July 1945) and on that day a monument had to be unveiled in the square (see photo 3). Supervisions over the work had to be exercised by the Military Department of the EC(b)P Tallinn City Council.⁴⁹ For example, the pupils of Tallinn who were members of the Communist Youth League worked 535 man-hours in the Liberators' Square from 6 June to 6 July.⁵⁰

On 12 June 1945 the project plan of the "Liberators' Square" was approved by a decision of the CWPD EC. There is a separate archival document concerning "Liberators' Square" in the archives of the Tallinn City Planning Department (the former Department of Sustainable Development and Planning). One may read from the explanatory memorandum attached to the design that the square would be enclosed by the existing limestone wall; there were 16 benches overlooking the monument alongside the square. The site of the grave was marked on the design as a "tomb" with roses and decorative bushes on it. The monument was placed on the design straight behind the grave and not at the Tõnismägi-side point of the triangular green area where it was actually erected.⁵¹ (See Annex 6, CD-1)

⁴⁶ Pekka Erelt. Otsitakse surnud vabastajaid [Dead liberators wanted].

⁴⁷ Minutes of the meeting of the Tallinn CWPD EC No. 23. 12.06.1945. TLA Archives depot R-1, ref. 1-II, depository unit 26. L. 350p–351.

⁴⁸ Отчет о работе военного отдела Таллинского ГК КП/б/Э за июнь месяц 1945 года. ERAF Archives depot 5, ref. 5, depository unit 98. L. 31; Протокол № 42 заседания бюро Таллинского ГК КП/б/Эстония от мая 1945. г. ERAF Archives depot 1, ref. 3, depository unit 35. L. 158.

⁴⁹ Протокол № 50 заседания бюро Таллинского ГК КП/б/Эстония от июня 1945 г. ERAF Archives depot 1, ref. 3, depository unit 35. L. 261–262.

⁵⁰ Report of the Maintenance Trust of Tallinn CWPD EC No. 3936 to the head of the Municipal Department EK(b)P Tallinn City Committee Parindi. 07.05.1945. ERAF archives depot 5, ref. 5, depository unit 65. L. 24.

⁵¹ K. Holsting, U. Oolup; Minutes of the meeting of Tallinn CWPD EC No. 23. 12.06.1945. TLA archives depot R-1, ref. 1-II, depository unit 26. L. 350p–351; Design of the "Liberators' Square". Explanatory memorandum of the acting manager of the Design Office E. Kaar, to the design of "Liberators' Square" in Tallinn. 28.05.1945. Archives of the Tallinn City Planning Department, depository unit 6509.

The Tallinn Department of Architecture elaborated competition conditions for the erection of a monument in “Liberators’ Square”⁵², which were approved and on 12 June the Tallinn CWPD EC decided to declare a competition of conceptual designs for the monument planned to be erected in “Liberators’ Square”: “/.../

1. *The conceptual design must express and perpetuate the memory of the courageous sons of our fatherland who have fallen in battle against the enemy while liberating Tallinn.*
2. *The location of the monument to be erected shall be “Liberators’ Square” in Tallinn.*
3. *The monument must be in harmony with the square, the size of the monument must harmonise with the size of the square. The height of the monument must not exceed 5 metres.*
4. *Design the monument from local materials, such as Tallinn limestone, Saaremaa dolomite, Vasalemma marble and granite./.../*⁵³

Seven projects were submitted to the competition of conceptual designs. By the decision of the jury, the first prize was not awarded. Two prizes for the second place and two prizes for the third place were awarded.⁵⁴

On 6 August 1945 it was decided in the EC(b)P CC that the project would be based on the design “Dolomite” by Arnold Alas, but several changes were suggested to be made. For example it was suggested that the memorial plates and the name plates for the fallen should be placed on the front side of the monument and that on the front side, a pentagon-shaped Great Patriotic War decoration should be displayed rather than the planned figures of a garland and a flame. The motif of the flame and garland was suggested to be used, if appropriate, on the rear side of the monument. It was suggested that a group of figures depicting a mother and a child should be used.⁵⁵ On 9 October 1945 a contract was concluded with the architect A. Alas and the sculptor Enn Roos with a view to building the “Liberators’ Monument”. The Tallinn CWPD EC commission reviewed the designs submitted by the sculptor and the architect on 12 November and submitted two conceptual designs for approval to the EC(b)P CC.⁵⁶ /.../ *According to one of the designs the group depicts a mother and a child, whereby the mother symbolises mourning people and the child symbolises future; according to the other design, the group depicts a Red Army soldier and a child and here the Red Army soldier symbolises a victor who is building a new future with the growing youth, while respecting the memory of his fallen comrades. /.../ The monument shall be erected on the triangular square opposite St Charles Church where a temporary wooden monument is situated at the moment. There are the graves*

⁵² Activities report of the Tallinn Department of Architecture for the period from 11 June to 20 June 1945. ERAF Archives depot 5, ref. 5, depository unit 62. L. 4.

⁵³ Minutes of the meeting of Tallinn CWPD EC No. 23. 12.06.1945. TLA Archives depot R-1, ref. 1-II, depository unit 26. L. 351–359.

⁵⁴ Activities report of the Department of Architecture of the City of Tallinn of the period of 20 August to 10 August 1945. ERAF Archives depot 5, ref. 5, depository unit 62. L. 7.

⁵⁵ Letter of the head of the Department of Architecture of Tallinn CWPD EC, V. Toppel to Tallinn CWPD EC 09.10.1945. TLA Archives depot R-1, ref. 8, depository unit 5. L. 40–40p.

⁵⁶ Report of Tallinn CWPD EC No. 45. 13.11.1945. TLA Archives depot R-1, ref. 8, depository unit 16. L. 40.

of the fallen heroes in front of the monument, which shall be maintained all year round. /.../”⁵⁷

By May 1946 the design was eventually approved and the 29th anniversary of the October Revolution (i.e. 7 November 1946) was set as the deadline for the unveiling of the monument. By the end of September 1946, the sculptor Roos had completed a full-size clay model of the bronze soldier. On 10 October, the model was reviewed by the ESSR Council of Architecture and the Commission of the Cultural Sector of the Artists’, which came to a conclusion that the statue was appropriate but that some changes had to be made. Since it seemed that the monument would not be completed within the term, replacement of the bronze soldier by a plaster soldier was considered but the idea was categorically rejected by the commission, referring to weather conditions.⁵⁸ Since it was clear that the work would not be completed within the term, it was decided that the monument would be unveiled on 1 May 1947.⁵⁹ This deadline also passed and the unveiling of the monument was planned for the 3rd anniversary of the “liberation” of Tallinn. The work was accepted by the commission on 21 September 1947⁶⁰ and the unveiling took place on 22 September 1947.⁶¹ (See photos 4, 5 and 6.)

Later the surroundings of the monument were changed to a certain extent and for example in 1964 the “perpetual flame” was added.⁶² (See photos 7 and 8.) In the second half of the 1970s, the memorial plates on the monument referring to the two alleged “unknowns” who had been identified as Kulikov and Syssojev, were also corrected. On the basis of the data received from the Ministry of Defence of the USSR, missing initials were added and Colonel Kolesnikov’s rank was corrected.

After Estonia regained independence and the Russian troops had been withdrawn, a decision was made that the surroundings of Tõnismägi should be redesigned. The design permit envisaged preserving the monument and the trees and bushes. The concrete pedestal and the hollow for the gas flame were to be removed.⁶³ (See Annex 7.) The former memorial plates and the inscription stating “May the fallen heroes who have fallen for the liberation of our country and for independence be honoured forever” were also removed. Estonian and Russian plates with the inscription “For those who were killed in World War II” were added.⁶⁴

There have been several ideas for the redesign of the square. In 1995 a design competition was declared. The Tallinn City Central District Government ordered a

⁵⁷ Tallinna vabastajate monument [Monument to liberators of Tallinn]. — Sirp ja Vasar. 20 October 1945, No. 42; Activities report of the Tallinn Department of Architecture for the period from 11 October to 20 October 1945. ERAF Archives depot 5, ref. 5, depository unit 62. L. 13.

⁵⁸ Letter from deputy chairman of Tallinn CWPD EC, A. Hendrikson to the 1st secretary of the ECP CC Nikolai Karotamm. 06.10.1946. TLA Archives depot R-1, ref. 8, depository unit 16. L. 39–40.

⁵⁹ Decision of Tallinn CWPD EC No. 372-o. 22.10.1946. TLA Archives depot R-1, ref. 8, depository unit 16. L. 38.

⁶⁰ Deed on the reception of the works of the monument to the liberators of Tallinn. Archives of Tallinn City Planning Department, depository unit 6509.

⁶¹ Tallinn tähistas oma vabastamise 3. aastapäeva [Tallinn celebrated the third anniversary of its liberation]. — Rahva Hääl. 23 September 1947, No. 223.

⁶² See photo in collection Vabastamislahingud [Battles of liberation]. Compilers David Kiljako and V. Kapp. Tallinn, 1966, p. 288.

⁶³ Planning permit for Kaarli pst 13. Archives of the Tallinn City Planning Department, depository unit 6509.

⁶⁴ Karl Laane. Tallinna kalmistud [Cemeteries in Tallinn]. Tallinn, 2002, p.123.

preliminary design from the architectural bureau of J. Okas & M. Lõoke. The explanatory memorandum of the preliminary design reads that from the urban developmental point of view it would be appropriate to build six-storey houses in the area. According to the terms and conditions of the competition the green area was to be preserved and a monument erected to all who those had fallen in Estonia during World War II. Excessive openness from the side of St Charles Church was seen as a major shortcoming. Consequently, trees and bushes were to be planted in front of the square. The project envisaged generating a connective balance, an ensemble. Its components were:

1. The existing monument.
2. A black granite pedestal, 50 cm from the ground, which had to symbolise a territory uniting all those fallen — death brings everybody together.
3. A seven-meter steel cross, which had to symbolise the counterbalance of the Christian world against the soldier who carried communist ideology.
4. A 4.5 m high black granite colonnade, which had to symbolise an imaginary line separating the adversaries.
5. An oak, which was to symbolise the continuity of national identity.⁶⁵ (See Annex 8, CD.)

The widespread romantic legend according to which the famous wrestler Kristjan Palusalu was the model for the bronze soldier has not been substantiated. The Soviet power considered Palusalu a deserter (i.e. a traitor of his homeland) who had already been sentenced to death for fleeing a working battalion, but had escaped again from the penalty company. It is unlikely that Roos took a risk and used a “people’s enemy” who had just escaped from a prison camp as a model for such a politically sensitive monument. If the bronze soldier really resembles Palusalu to some extent, it did not affect Roos’s future career. In 1948 he was awarded a reward of Soviet Estonia for the “Liberators’ monument” and even afterwards he was entrusted with ideologically important jobs such as the monument to Viktor Kingissepp on Harjumägi, which was completed in 1951.

Palusalu is not the only candidate for the model. According to one legend, Enn Roos had said at the beginning of the 1960s that he had made the statue on Tõnismägi after the free wrestling champion Helmut Puur — which the latter rebuts, since he had posed for Roos in a pilot’s uniform. According to other speculations, Haljand Hallismaa, heavy athlete, long-time teacher and school headmaster, Helmut Pormeister, former hammer thrower who used to work at the Kirov collective farm, and others could have been the models.⁶⁶ E. Roos has said the following: “/.../I used fighters of the Rifles Regiment as my models to a little extent, and later while modelling the head, I used a young worker who lived nearby as a model. /.../”⁶⁷ Albert Adamson who worked as a woodworker in Luther’s plant in 1947 and could

⁶⁵ Planning of the surroundings of the monument on Tõnismägi. Preliminary design. 1995. Tallinn City Planning Department, depository unit 6509.

⁶⁶ Anneli Ammas. Kes on see mees, kes seisab Tõnismäel? [Who is the man who is standing on Tõnismägi?] — Eesti Päevaleht. 16 September 2004.

⁶⁷ Enn Roosi tööst [On the work of Enn Roos]. — Sirp ja Vasar. 25 July 1948, No 30.

catch the sculptor's eye as a strong broad-shouldered man, whom Roos could have asked to pose for him, is a likely candidate.

4. What the “Liberators’ monument” symbolises

In general outlines, Red Army monuments can be divided into three:

1. Monuments symbolising the victory in the Great Patriotic War
2. Monuments erected in honour of the “liberation” of a certain town or region
3. Monuments erected on common graves of fallen soldiers of the Red Army.

Common graves were usually also situated near monuments of the two first categories but they were mainly graves of “unknown soldiers”.

The first known document concerning the potential future monument dates back to 27 October 1944, when the EC(b)P CC and the ESSR CPC declared a competition for a monument to be erected in order to commemorate the Patriotic War. A decision was made that the location of the monument to be erected would be the area of Võiduväljak (Victory Square) and Harjumägi. “/.../ *From the ideological point of view, the monument must express the patriotic rise of the Estonian people and their fight against fascist conquerors. The monument must express friendship between the nations of the Soviet Union, perpetuate the memory of the courageous sons of their fatherland who have lost their lives in fight against the enemy. /.../*”⁶⁸ 15 February 1945 was fixed as the deadline for submission of designs.⁶⁹ The common regulation of the EC(b)P CC and the ESSR CPC of 13 February 1945 extended the deadline until 15 April 1945.⁷⁰ The cultural newspaper of that time the *Sirp ja Vasar* construed the idea as follows: “/.../ *The monument of the Patriotic War must demonstrate to the whole world the patriotic rise of our people, their great spiritual riches and the fight against fascist conquerors. Our people's rectitude, character and high level of development must be revealed. Let the monument to the Patriotic War be a song of praise for a person and soldier who embodies higher human values in his fight. /.../*”⁷¹

23 designs and 8 models were received within term.⁷² None of them was considered to be worth the first place. The jury decided to give out two prizes for the

⁶⁸ See also Repoort No. 78 of the EC(b)P CC Bureau of 20 October 1944. ERAF, archives depot 1, ref. 4, depository unit 20. L. 1–8.

⁶⁹ Regulation No. 221 of the ESSR and EC(b)P CC “Isamaasõja tähistamiseks püstitatava monumendi kavandite tingimuste kinnitamise kohta” [On the approval of the terms and conditions for the designs for the monument to be erected in order to commemorate the Patriotic War] 27.10.1944. — Eesti NSV Teataja. 5 November 1944, No. 8, art. 86.

⁷⁰ Regulation No. 119 of the ESSR and EC(b)P CC “Isamaasõja tähistamiseks püstitatava monumendi kavandite tingimuste täiendamise kohta” [On the supplementation of the terms and conditions for the designs for the monument to be erected in order to commemorate the Patriotic War] 13.02.1944. — Estonian SSR Gazette. 28 February 1945, No. 8, art. 99.

⁷¹ Isamaasõja monument Tallinna [A monument to the Patriotic War to be erected in Tallinn]. — *Sirp ja Vasar*. 24. March 1945, No. 12.

⁷² Lõppes Isamaasõja monumendi ideekavandite võistlus [Competition for the conceptual designs of the monument of the Patriotic War has ended]. — *Sirp ja Vasar*. 21 April 1945, No. 16.

3rd place (8000 roubles) and a prize for places 4–6.⁷³ Hence no monument was erected on Victory Square or Harjumägi and a monument to V. Kingissepp was erected on Harjumägi in 1951 instead (author E. Roos); in 1957 a memorial stone dedicated to the events of the revolution of 1940 was placed on Victory Square (author J. Raudsepp).

There had to be at least one liberators' monument in each capital of the republics of the Soviet Union and naturally, also a common grave had to belong to the monument. Hence, a monument dedicated to the "liberation" of the city was built in Tallinn on Tõnismägi on a green area near St Charles Church by a decision of the Tallinn CWPD EC. The Red Army soldiers who had died for unknown reasons were exhumed from their graves in Tallinn or near Tallinn or, as Leppik, the head of the Military Department Tallinn City Committee expressed it — "those who were buried outside cemeteries and must be reburied in the military cemetery in Tallinn."

The monument, which had been erected on Tõnismägi, remained for a long period of time the most representative monument of Tallinn, connecting both the "liberation" of Tallinn and the commemoration of the soldiers who had fallen in the course of it. A monument for an "unknown soldier" was not erected in the military cemetery of the Siselinna cemetery until 1974 (author I. Kannelmäe). The first phase of the Maarjamäe memorial ensemble to "those who have fought for the Soviet power", suitable in terms of its size for a capital of a Soviet republic, was completed only in 1975 and the 2nd phase was never fully built.⁷⁴

How Tõnismägi became a site for the celebration of the "great victory" and a commemoration site of the fallen soldiers for decades was not planned in advance; it rather happened by chance. Even as late as in March 1945 the square next to St Charles Church was considered to be an inappropriate place for a grave and also the bodies who had probably been initially buried there in two graves in 1944 were planned to be reburied in the military cemetery. It is not known on whose order the common grave was established in the centre of Tallinn, but the location was chosen on propagandist considerations rather than due to a lack of space in the military cemetery.

The "Liberators' monument" on Tõnismägi should be primarily seen as a post-war compulsory component of urban planning. It had to be situated in a public place and a spacious square had to be near it, so that compulsory "rituals" could be carried out there as mass events on the anniversaries of the Soviet power and the Red Army. Dead bodies were a matter of secondary importance, and probably even at the end of the Soviet period nobody knew exactly where the grave was located, since repeated maintenance works had altered the relief beyond recognition and the burial site was not separately specified in later designs.

Hence, the monument symbolised rather abstract heroes. Comparison between this monument and the monument which was erected in 1941 on Maarjamäe to the sailors of the mine cruisers Avtroil and Spartak who were shot near the isle of Naissaar in 1919 is inevitable. They were reburied on Maarjamäe in 1941. Since

⁷³ Suure Isamaasõja mälestusmonumendi ideekavandite võistluse lõpptulemused [Final results of the competition of the conceptual designs of the memorial to the Great Patriotic War]. — Sirp ja Vasar. 19 May 1945, No. 17.

⁷⁴ See K. Laane, pp. 120–124.

their graves were not found, the funeral was only for the record. The propagandist part was important.

Context of the era

After the conquest of Estonia in 1944, the destruction of the monuments of the Republic of Estonia, which had survived or had been restored during the German occupation, began. On 15 April 1945 a monument by Amandus Adamson, erected to 87 persons who had fallen in the War of Independence, was blown up in Pärnu. On 23 May 1945, the liquidation of monuments of the War of Independence was discussed at a meeting of the EC(b)P CC Bureau. Nikolai Karotamm was in favour of the elimination and he was supported by Johannes Vares, who had been awarded the Cross of Liberty and in whose opinion the Estonian Rifles Corps should have dealt with that issue. Adamson-Eric who participated in the meeting was against the demolition and suggested that more valuable monuments should be preserved and, if possible, only the inscriptions removed. He was supported by Eduard Päll, in whose opinion the demolition in Pärnu in such a manner had been a major mistake. The Bureau did not make a decision. However, the monuments were still liquidated and on 2 August Karotamm sent a circular letter to city and county committees, ordering that monuments of the War of Independence be destroyed during August. On 1 September he extended the term until 10 September. The term was not met and the destruction lasted for several years. A monument in Torma, depicting the Estonian epical hero Kalevipoeg had a peculiar destiny: the statue was first facing the east, then, after the occupation of Estonia in 1944 the statue's face was turned towards the west, during the German occupation again towards the east and in 1944 again towards the west. It was demolished in this position in 1948.⁷⁵

A comprehensive file concerning the monuments of the War of Independence, which had been compiled by the Military Department of the EC(b)P CC in April 1945, has been preserved in the Estonian State Archives. Monuments are listed by counties in this file and it specifies the amount of explosive and an evaluation concerning the transportation that were needed. For example an extract regarding Võrumaa: *“/.../ In order to carry out demolition works, 15 Party activists and 275 persons from the Destruction Battalion must be mobilised. 15 workers are needed for the execution of each demolition and 10 people are needed for protection. /.../ In order to carry out demolition works, 225 kg of TNT, 150 metres of rope/fuse and 100 primers are needed, since there is no demolition material on the spot. 11 lorries, which are available but which lack petrol, are needed for carrying the ruins away. /.../”* A list of 13 monuments follows.⁷⁶

“Liberators’ Square” on Tõnismägi was not left out from the “war of monuments”. On the night of 8 May 1946, schoolgirls Ageeda Paavel and Aili Jürgenson blew up the initial wooden monument. Ageeda Paavel describes the events as follows: *“/.../ Our beloved monuments started to disappear one after another. They had to be paid back somehow and the so-called Liberators’ Monument on Tõnismägi was picked. It was situated in the square of the current “bronze man” on the side*

⁷⁵ Kaljo-Olev Veskimägi. *Kuidas valitseti Eesti NSV-d* [How the Estonian SSR was ruled]. Tallinn, 2006, pp. 144–147.

⁷⁶ Report by the Chairman of the EC(b)P Võrumaa Committee, Tamm, No. 101/s to the EC(b)P CC 1st secretary Nikolai Karotamm. 06.04.1945. ERAF Archives depot 1, ref. 3, depository unit 501. L. 37. See the same file about other counties and towns.

facing the church. It was about a meter high wooden pyramid, which was only about 20 centimetres in diameter; it was of a plain blue colour and its top was decorated by a red tin pentagon. /.../ Juhan [Juhan Kuusk] gave us the explosives and instructions. There was nothing really difficult about it. The important thing was that the fuse had to be long enough to give us a safe distance for running away. It was. We put in place the materials for the blast with Aili; we had no supporters. The fact that a militia officer who was on duty was flirting with a girl at a distance and did not notice us made it easier for us. Although this girl did not belong to our group, she was also later arrested. /.../” Naturally, the newspapers of that time did not write anything about it and they managed to quickly restore the monument before the Victory Day, but the majority of the inhabitants of the capital were aware of the demolition. The initiative of the girls was followed and similar monuments were also demolished in Rakvere and Tartu.⁷⁷

Summary

The archival sources and other information available in Estonia do not fully clarify the issues in question. The burial of the first Red Army soldiers on Tõnismägi in September 1944 immediately after the conquest of Tallinn is probable but not documented by the written sources available in Estonia. Some information may be found in the archives of the troops who invaded Tallinn in 1944, but unfortunately these are not within the reach of Estonian researches. On the order and at the direction of the Soviet military powers, 12 bodies of Red Army soldiers were probably reburied on Tõnismägi in April 1945. The bodies (or some of them) had been earlier buried at different locations in the centre of Tallinn. It was as late as in March 1945 that the establishment of the common grave for the Red Army soldiers to be reburied (including those buried on Tõnismägi) was planned to take place in the military cemetery of Tallinn.

Different sources specify the names of 14 soldiers of the Red Army who are allegedly buried in the common grave on Tõnismägi. At least of them served in units which participated in a broader sense in the operation of conquering Tallinn. The fall of any of these Red Army soldiers directly in the armed conflicts in the course of the conquest of Tallinn has not been confirmed.

Establishing a common grave in the city centre on Tõnismägi was based on Soviet ideology of urban planning, according to which there had to be a liberators' monument with a brother grave in each capital of the Soviet republics. The construction of the monument was organised by the Tallinn CWPD EC and the artistic and ideological final decision was made by the EC(b)P CC staff.

According to the initial concept, the “Liberators’ monument” on Tõnismägi had to *„perpetuate the memory of the courageous sons of the fatherland who had fallen in the fight against the enemy while liberating Tallinn”*. However, this was primarily a compulsory architectural component of a post-war city of the Soviet Union, particularly of the capital of a Soviet Republic, where ideological mass events were to be carried out. The grave lost its importance and finally, at the end of the Soviet occupation, nobody even knew the exact location of the grave. Repeated

⁷⁷ Me ei olnud siis enam lapsed [We were not children any more then]. Compiled by Vello Volt. Tallinn 2003. p. 9–10. For more detailed information see the investigation file of Ageeda Paaveli, Aili Jõgi and others. ERAF Archives depot 129, depository unit 30.

maintenance works had altered the relief and the location of the grave was not separately marked on the later plans.

A CD with Annex 6 and the eight enclosed photos is attached to the historical statement.

Peeter Kaasik

June 2006

Annexes:

1. Explanatory memorandum of the archaeological supervision of the earthwork of the so-called Liberators' monument on Tõnismägi, carried out by AS Agu, addressed to the Tallinn City Central District Government, Tallinn, 1995.
2. A letter from Leppik, the head of the Military Department of the EC(b)P Tallinn City Committee, to Tamm, the head of the Military Department of the Central Committee of the EC(b)P. Tallinn, 15.03.1945. ERAF 5-5-96, p. 6.
3. Л. Ауербах. Вечная слава героям. Перенесение праха советских воинов павших в боях за Таллин. — Советская Эстония. 15 April 1945.
4. List of those buried in the common grave on Tõnismägi. Archives of the Defence Resources Agency (3 Maneeži St, Tallinn) archives depot 9. Not dated.
5. И. Кроон. Имена на граните. — Советская Эстония. 9 May 1974, No 107.
6. Design of the "Liberators' Square". Explanatory memorandum of the acting manager of the Design Office E. Kaar, to the design of "Liberators' Square" in Tallinn. 28.05.1945. Archives of the Tallinn City Planning Department, depository unit. 6509. Annexe copied on CD.
7. Planning permit for 13 Kaarli Avenue. Archives of the Tallinn City Planning Department, depository unit 6509.

Photos (copied on CD):



01. May 1946. (Estonian Film Archives 0-560).



02. 22 September 1960 (Estonian Film Archives 0-24732).



03. Published in *SL Õhtuleht* on 11 September 2004 (Estonian Film Archives).



04. September 1947 (Estonian Film Archives 0-938).



05. 1 August 1953 (Estonian History Museum N 7676)



06. 1 August 1953 (Estonian History Museum N 7676).



07. 21 September 1964 (Estonian Film Archives 0-45256)



08. September 1964 (Estonian Film Archives 0-45758)