

ORGANISATION TODT AND FORCED LABOUR IN NORWAY 1940-45

GROSSRAUM

CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| PREFACE..... | 3 |
| GROSSRAUM | |
| – ORGANISATION TODT AND FORCED LABOUR IN NORWAY 1940-45.... | 5 |
| THE ATLANTIC WALL..... | 8 |
| TECHNOLOGY AS PROPAGANDA..... | 13 |
| DEPORTATION | 23 |
| OT IN NORWAY | 27 |

Project leader
Ketil Gjøelme Andersen

Project group
Ingebjørg Eidhammer
Alejandra Mendez Ramirez
Geir Christiansen
Henning Sandsdalen
Marlijn Noback
Viktoria Hesselberg
Geirr Olav Gram
Frode Myhr
Sverre Høst
Tobias Messenbrink
Sebastian Hungerer
Lars Klemmensen
Hallgeir Skogstad
Carle Lange
Elisabeth Kristoffersen
Hanne Skagmo
Endre Fodstad
Henrik Treimo
Thomas Fjærtoft
Caspar Barth
Gro Synnøve Ellefsen
Kathrine Daniloff

Concept
Ketil Gjøelme Andersen
Alejandra Mendez Ramirez

Design
Alejandra Mendez Ramirez
(main designer)
Carle Lange
Serge von Arx
Siri Langdalen
Hazel Barstow
Marie de Testa
Jan Hustak
Maret Tamme
Victoria Hesselberg

Film and photo editing
Ingebjørg Eidhammer (leder)
Thomas Fjærtoft
Tobias Messenbrink
Sverre Høst

Photo
Håkon Bergseth
Ingrid Aas

Conservation of artefacts
Hanne Skagmo
Endre Fodstad

Texts
Ketil Gjøelme Andersen

Research and advice
Hans Otto Frøland
Gunnar D. Hatlehol
Torgeir Sæveraas
Michael Stokke
Hege Roll-Hansen
Mats Ingulstad
Ingebjørg Eidhammer
Ketil Gjøelme Andersen

Building of exhibition
Geir Christiansen
(head constructor)
Sverre Høst
Frode Myhr
Tobias Messenbrink
Sebastian Hungerer
Lars Klemmensen
Hallgeir Skogstad
Carle Lange
Igor Di Tota
Julius Winger
Morten Andre Hjerpeseth

Translation
Lene Luck
Caspar Barth
Elisabeth Kristoffersen
Phil Loring
Sarah Zorica Mitic
Safina de Klerk
Ilda Resulovic

Partners
Michael Stokke
Eirik Audunson Skaar
Emil Gustafsson
Narviksenteret
Nordlandsmuseet
Falstadsenteret
Romsdalsmuseet
HL-senteret
Norsk Vegmuseum
Norsk Jernbanemuseum
NTNU
Riksarkivet
Riksantikvaren

Financial sponsors
EVZ
NTNU
Fritt Ord
Statens Vegvesen
Norges Forskningsråd
Kulturrådet

Special thanks to
Torstein Hansen
Rigmor Dava
Peder Borgen
Eling Borgen
Tarjei Leer-Salvesen
Bjørn Engvik
Kåre Olsen
Ingrid Thomassen
Walter Goertz
Gisela Goertz
Relsen Larsen
David Hauer
Trond Melen
Steinar Hansen
Akershus Byggetekniske
Forretning
Tunge Ting
Grønn Emballasje

PREFACE

Unorganized for almost 70 years, the so-called Todt archives were opened for research in 2011. The archives consist of 440 shelf meters of historical records, retained at the Norwegian National Archives in Oslo. This was the starting point from which The Norwegian Museum of Science and Technology, in co-operation with historians at The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, initiated a larger research project about Organisation Todt and forced labour in Norway during World War 2. The Research Council of Norway financed the project.

The exhibition *Grossraum* was developed within the frames of the research project and opened in Oslo, February 2017. One of the museum's goals has been to widen the scope from the original research project. People from several different disciplines, areas and traditions were included in the preparation for the exhibition: The museum has co-operated with archaeologists, architects, museologists, and artists, in addition to historians of different disciplines. The installation "Forgotten spades" by the artist Eirik Audunson Skaar, is included as an independent piece in the exhibition. The design is the result of close co-operation with scenographers from The Norwegian

Theatre Academy at Østfold University College. Alejandra Mendez Ramirez has been the main designer. An important ambition has been to develop new methods of combining research, dissemination and collection management.

From day one, dissemination and outreach activities has been a priority. For example, the museum has organized debates and workshops, and contributed to a documentary about forced labour. In addition, eighteen months before the exhibition was opened, a small part of it was made accessible to the public with the ambition of bringing scientists, affected parties and visitors into the exhibition before it was finished. In this way the museum hopes to engage the public in a committing dialogue about the exhibition and its topic.

I wish to thank The Norwegian University of Technology and Science, The Fritt Ord foundation, The National Roadworks, and The Foundation Rememberance, Responsibility and Future who have supported the exhibition financially.

Ketil Gjelme Andersen
Project leader



*Constructing the Arctic railway:
Soviet prisoners of war in Nordland county.*

GROSSRAUM

ORGANISATION TODT AND FORCED LABOUR IN NORWAY 1940-45

Foreign prisoners of war and forced labour built the country. When the war was over and the occupying Nazis left, they had built roads, bridges, airports, railroads, docks, power stations, buildings for industry and fortifications by using forced labour. Much of this infrastructure is still in use.

The exhibition *Grossraum* shows how Norway became part of an economic system completely dependent on forced labour. As many as 20 million people, primarily from the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, were exploited in the Nazi forced labour economy. In relation to population size, Norway is probably the occupied country that had the largest contingency of forced labourers. More than 130 000 people were forcibly sent to work at German construction sites in Norway. Approximately 17 000 of these died. After the deportation of the Norwegian Jews, the fates of these prisoners of war and forced labourers create the most apparent connection between Norway and the Nazi extermination policy.

Historically, forced labour has had little or no part in the Norwegian understanding about the war. We know little about the prisoners of war, and even less about the civil forced labourers who were on Norwegian soil. We do not even know much about the largest entrepreneur on the German side, Organisation Todt (OT). The exhibition and the research project which it is part of, is an attempt to remedy this.

OT was a semi-military construction organisation, which situated itself within a proud German engineering tradition. To begin with, OT recruited volunteer workers, but as the war progressed, the organisation became increasingly dependent on forced labour, both prisoners of war and civil forced labourers. While the prisoners of war received brutal treatment, the civil forced labourers had better conditions. They received salary and, at least to start with, had some social rights.

OT promoted collaboration and the exhibition demonstrates how German and Norwegian construction companies profited in this system. OT provided prisoners of war to German companies, and in some rare cases to Norwegian companies as well. Formally, the Wehrmacht was responsible for the prisoners, but in practice part of this responsibility was given to OT and their private partners. As such, private construction companies and ordinary civilians, had a direct influence on the prisoner's living conditions.



*Prisoners of war at a OT
construction site in northern Norway*

FORCED LABOUR

Forced labour is not a Nazi invention. Involuntary labour in various forms has played an important role throughout European history. In the 19th century, European states used forced labour liberally to build roads and railroads in their colonies overseas. During The First World War, prisoners of war were used as forced labourers on both sides of the front.

However, due to the racist ideology embedded in Nazism, the use of forced labour during World War 2 reached an unprecedented scale and brutality. Towards the end of the war, foreign prisoners of war and forced labourers constituted almost a quarter of the workforce in the Third Reich.

Taking the number of inhabitants into account, Norway is probably the occupied country that received the largest contingency of forced labourers. During the war, more than 130 000 people were forcibly sent here to work at German construction sites. Despite the fact that most of those who died on Norwegian soil were not Norwegians but foreign prisoners of war and forced labourers, their stories have only to a very small degree become a part of the Norwegian World War 2 narrative.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1969-146-01 / photographer: Röhn

Fritz Todt (1891-1942)

Organisation Todt

During World War 2, Organisation Todt (OT) was responsible for large construction projects in Germany and in the territories occupied by Germany. OT built roads, railroads, power stations and several different fortifications. Established in 1938, the organisation was named after its first leader, the engineer Fritz Todt. OT planned and organised the constructions, but let private contractors construct the installations. At its peak, OT controlled a workforce counting 1,5 million people. Some enrolled voluntarily, but the vast majority were forcibly recruited.

In the spring of 1942, OT established an office in Norway named Einsatzgruppe Wiking. This office was responsible for building the fortifications that constituted the Norwegian part of the Atlantic Wall, and for constructing a 1 200 kilometer long extension of the Northern railroad to Kirkenes through Nordland.

OT was a semi state-owned organisation answering to Hitler only, and became a tool for the expansion plans of the Third Reich. With Germany at the core, the plan was to establish a large space in Europe under German control: “*das Grossraum*”. OT’s massive constructions in reinforced concrete can be seen as visual expressions of this politics of space. When allied intelligence summed up the results of OT’s work in the spring of 1945, their conclusion was that the organisation was responsible for “the most impressive construction program since the Roman times”.

THE GENEVA CONVENTION OF 1929

The Geneva Convention of 1929 established rules for humane treatment of prisoners of war. Norway and Germany had both signed the treatment before the outbreak of World War 2.

Excerpt from §3: “Prisoners of war are entitled to respect for their persons and honour.”

THE ATLANTIC WALL

AN EDIFICE IN REINFORCED CONCRETE FROM THE PYRENEES TO MURMANSK



Photographers: Jon og Helle Frogner

The longest and the best-preserved part of the Atlantic wall can be found on the Norwegian coast.

Hitler needed to secure the Atlantic coast against possible Allied landings. The building of submarine bunkers, coastal forts and heavy artillery batteries, commenced after the occupation of France, and vastly expanded in 1942. Organisation Todt (OT) was given the task of building what

is now known as the Atlantic Wall. During a period of two years, OT produced over 15 000 concrete constructions on the 14 000 km long coastline from Biscaya in the south to Kirkenes in the north. The projects recruited a workforce of around 300 000 men, most of whom were forced labourers.

Romsdalsmuseet, R.Fot.07789 / photographer: Unknown



Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-1973-036-05 / photographer: Maier



NTM, photographer: Håkon Bergseth



Riksarkivet, RAFA 3309/U47/1/115 / photographer: Unknown



1. Building of fortifications at Aukra in Møre og Romsdal.
2. German soldier guarding battery Todt on the west coast of France.
3. Concrete foundation for a giant canon by battery Nero in Natterøy.
4. Assembling of a canon at battery Vara by Kristiansand.

OT's reinforced concrete defence line could not stand against the Allied invasion in Normandy, France, on "D-day", June 6 1944. The scars from the fights are still visible in the landscape today.

FESTUNG NORWEGEN

The Norwegian part of the Atlantic Wall covers over 10 000 km coastal line and consists of shooting positions, coastal forts and artillery batteries. These constructions are often referred to as *Festung Norwegen* and were OT's largest construction assignment in Norway. A lot of prestige was connected to the seven heavy artillery batteries that housed the largest canons of the time. Battery Vara, close to Kristiansand was the southernmost, while battery Peter by Petsamo was farthest north, in present day Russia. The two batteries Theo and Dietel secured the approach to Narvik, and battery Otto by Ørland controlled the Trondheim fjord. The two batteries Felix and Nero covered the sea around Bergen and the Oslo fjord, respectively.



Tying rebars at Austrått fortress.

NTM / photographer: Håkon Bergseth



NTM / photographer: Ingrid Aas



We have Puschnjak's prisoner card that tells us that he was transferred to OT in April 1943, and that he was 34 years old when he died on Nøtterøy, October 17, 1944. After Kravchenko we have the plaque that was on the original headstone. Engraved with Cyrillic letters it reads: "Alexandr Jegorovitsj Kravchenko, born in 1909, dead the 27th of March, 1945. Suffered and died in fascist imprisonment."

FORGOTTEN GRAVES

A large number of Soviet prisoners of war was used to build the batteries. The death rate was relatively low in the south, but the conditions were disastrous in some of the places in the north. As many as 1 100 prisoners lost their lives building Theo and Dietel.

In a small wood by Vardås on Nøtterøy, close to battery Nero, there are two headstones as shown in the photo. Two Soviet prisoners of war were originally buried here - Alexandr Jegorovitsj Kravchenko and Demjan Puschnjak. They were both from the Ukraine and soldiers in the Red Army. Fellow prisoners erected the monuments at the end of the war.

In the early 1950s, during the cold war, the tombs were opened and the bodies were moved to a central graveyard in Oslo. The threat was no longer Nazi Germany, but the communist Soviet Union. Norwegian authorities feared that communist agents could impersonate the prisoners' family and use the graves as a starting point for espionage.

Prisoners of War Card (Prisoner Card) for Alexandr Jegorovitsj Kravchenko. The card is filled with handwritten information in Cyrillic and Latin script. It includes a photograph of the prisoner, a small metal plaque, and a list of names of fellow prisoners. The card is stamped with 'Stalag 546' and '1943'.

Prisoner Card (Prisoner Card) for Alexandr Jegorovitsj Kravchenko. The card is filled with handwritten information in Cyrillic and Latin script. It includes a photograph of the prisoner, a small metal plaque, and a list of names of fellow prisoners. The card is stamped with 'Stalag 546' and '1943'.

www.obd-memorial.ru, Fangekort, sovjetiske døde fanger



*Organisation Todt workers on parade
with spades as if they were guns.*



TECHNOLOGY AS PROPAGANDA

In the years after Hitler seized power Fritz Todt earned the reputation as Germany's top engineer. Through the nazification of the engineer's organisations, Todt secured a key position within the engineering profession. He advocated raising engineer's reputation and wanted to create an elite corps of engineers who would take over key positions in society. Many engineers backed Todt's plans for creating a separate ministry for technology. As head of the NSDAP's office of technology, Todt was responsible for the propaganda journal "Deutsche Technik".

In 1936, the medieval castle of Plassenburg was turned into a training centre for selected engineers who would be given a "techno-political" education. It included everything from racial doctrines and physical education, to road construction and classical music. Todt claimed that technology under National Socialism had finally found its place in German culture.

At the end of 1930's, with Deutsche Technik as a motto, Todt arranged annual propaganda tours for engineers and party members. In the spring of 1939, the trip went to Norway.

THE MILITARISATION OF LABOUR: WITH SHOVEL AND GUN

When the Nazi-movement came to power, six million Germans were unemployed. While working class political and trade union organisations were eliminated, the regime started public measures against unemployment, including major road projects. From 1935, a six-month compulsory work programme for men was organised through the public employment service, Reichsarbeitsdienst. The organisation was run after a military pattern. Discipline was strict and mass events displayed parading workers with shovels on their shoulders instead of weapons. As such, the employment service prepared the workers for war.

"Technology is to serve the people."

Fritz Todt



NTM / photographer: Ingrid Aas

The key to Fritz Todt's studio in the medieval castle Plassenburg.

Organisation Todt (OT) was also organised after a military model. The construction organisation was established in 1938 after Fritz Todt was commissioned to construct major strongholds in concrete along the border to France. *Westwall*, as the constructions were called, employed tens of thousands of workers, many of whom were forced labourers. Eventually it became common that OT collaborated with the security police to maintain discipline among the workers.

Organisation Todt and Reichsarbeitsdienst were used by the Nazi regime to discipline the working class and to turn the workforce towards military construction projects. Simultaneously, these organisations actively contributed to blur the distinction between war time and peace time economy.

CAR FOR THE PEOPLE?

The plan to build a car that broad strata of the population could afford, a peoples car, or Volkswagen, was launched by Hitler in 1934. While design and construction was entrusted to engineer Ferdinand Porsche, the German labour front's welfare organisation *Kraft durch Freude* (KdF) was responsible for production and sales. The car's official name was therefore *KdF Wagen*. After the launch of a prototype in 1936, two years later the car was ready for mass production. It would cost 1 000 Reichsmark, considerably less than its competitors. The Labour Front was responsible for the construction of a modern factory which was almost finished when the war broke out. A separate system for the sale of the car was also developed. Customers were required to save part of their pay, 25 Reichsmark per month, which went to the repayment of the car.

The car carried the promise of opportunities for material progress and social mobility. In propaganda the vehicle was portrayed as the realization of the Nazi's "people's community". The focus on civilian mass consumption revealed itself as a bluff when it was realized that the project was in conflict with the needs of the armament industry. In 1940, the new factories in Fallersleben were changed in order to produce military equipment. Only 751 civilian people's cars were produced.



NTM / NTM C 12213, photographer: Unknown



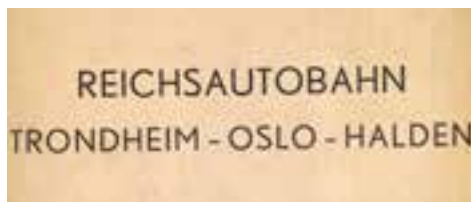
HITLER'S SUPERHIGHWAYS: DIE REICHAUTOBAHN

When Fritz Todt was appointed Director of Roads in 1933 there were already plans to construct motorways in Germany. The Nazi regime expanded the plans and made them their own. The aim was to build 7 000 km motorway over the course of eight years. The roads were financed through government budgets and maintained high standards. In the first years, unemployed labourers, housed in primitive camps, were employed. As workforce became scarce, forced labourers were used. Todt was granted wide powers and was responsible only to Hitler.

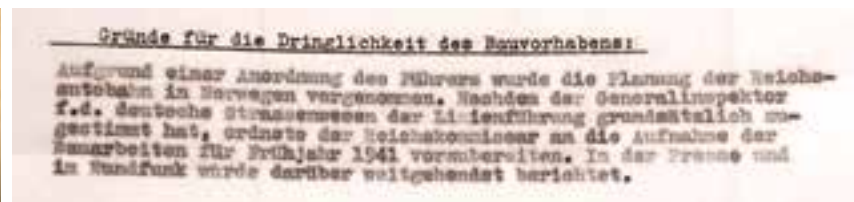
A separate philosophy was developed around road projects. The motorways were not necessarily the shortest possible route. It was important that the roads were a harmonious part of the landscape, so motorists were able to experience the beauty of nature. There was no conflict between technology and nature, claimed Todt.

As the Third Reich grew and new countries were acquired, Todt and Hitler planned an extension of the Autobahn network. The goal was to reach the Caucasus in the east and Trondheim in the north. Between 1940 and 1943 Norwegian and German road engineers were engaged in planning Reichsautobahn from Halden to Trondheim after Todt's directions.

3.



Riksarkivet, RAFA 2188



1. It is said that in 1934 Hitler himself drew the first sketch of what was to become the Volkswagen.

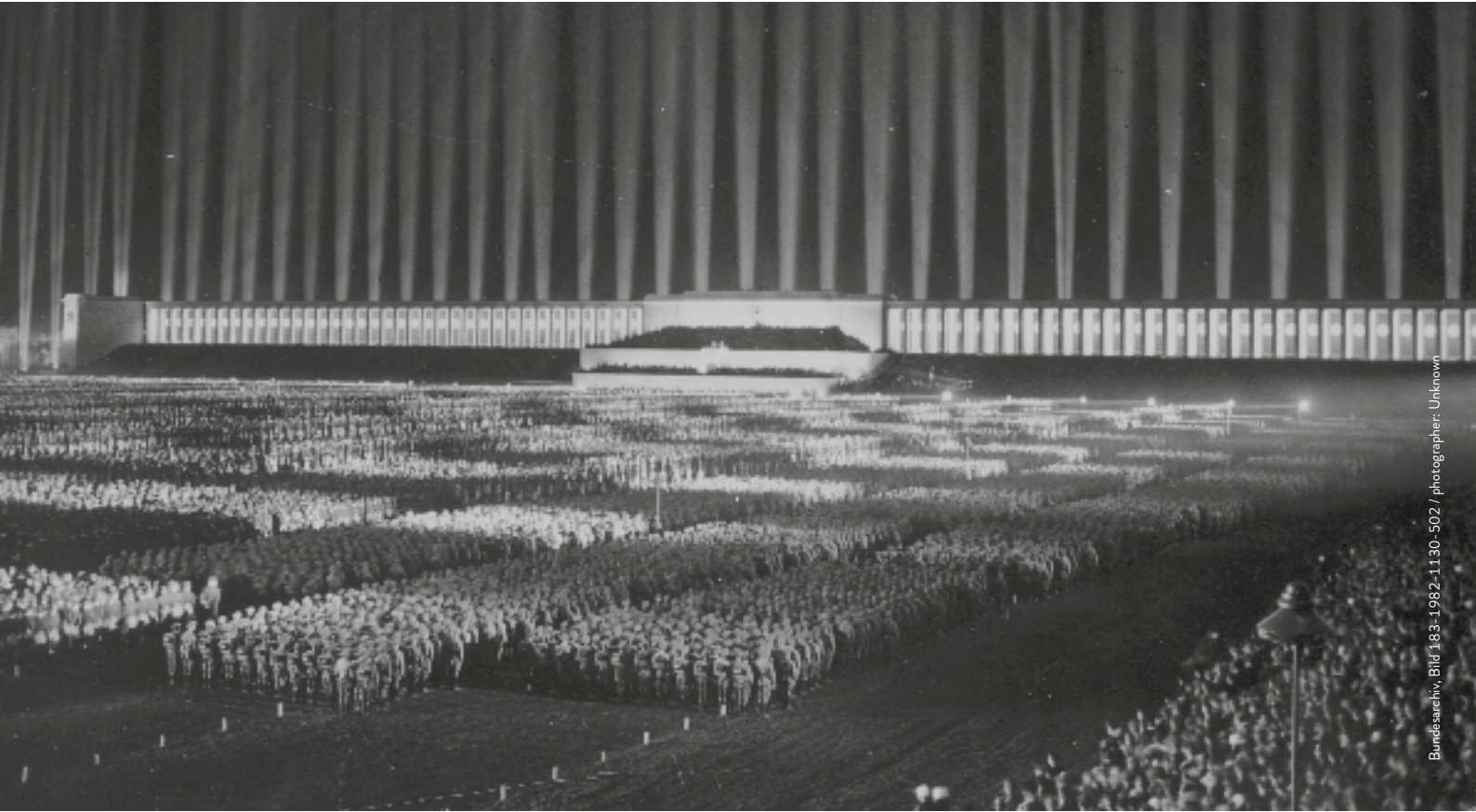
2. The Autobahn often appeared in Nazi propaganda.

3. The document expresses Hitler's wish to build an Autobahn in Norway. The plan was to start the ground work in spring, 1941.

2.



NTM, brochure: Gute Fahrt / photographer: Ingrid Aas

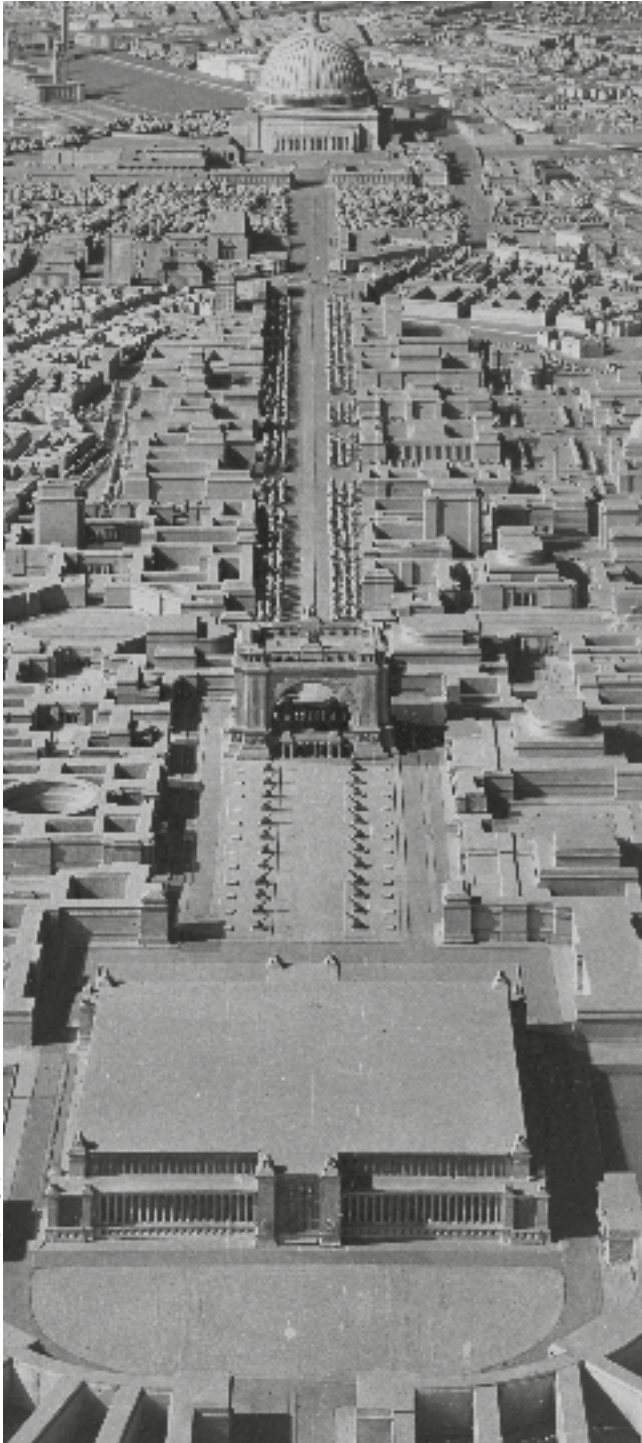


Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-1982-1130-502 / photographer: Unknown

Alberts Speer's cathedral of light.

ARCHITECTURE AS PROPAGANDA

The Third Reich was going to manifest itself with large, monumental constructions. With Albert Speer at the head, the regime's architects went to work planning the reconstruction of cities in Germany and in the occupied regions. Architecture was also used to mobilize the masses politically. In Nuremberg, where the Nazi party held their annual congress, the propaganda potential in architecture was efficiently demonstrated. One of Speer's ideas was to surround the central gathering place with strong floodlights. When the floodlights were lit and shone against the night sky, the people present would get the feeling of standing inside a huge room with columns of light – a “cathedral of light”.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 146III-373 / photographer : Unknown



GERMANIA

Hitler wanted to make Berlin the grandest and most magnificent city in the world – *Welthauptstadt Germania*. Albert Speer, began planning it in 1937. Starting from sketches made by Hitler, Speer built models of the most significant buildings, including the 290 meter tall domed hall Grosse Halle.

Admiring the model of Germania was one of Hitler's favourite pastimes. Although the project was cancelled in 1943 when the fortune of war turned, it still left its mark. Around Germany concentration camp prisoners were forced to break rock under terrible conditions. In areas that were to be demolished to make room for Speer's magnificent buildings, tenements were emptied. Germans who were affected by this were given so-called "Jew housing". That the Jews lost their homes in this fashion was of no concern. The evictions were organized by Albert Speer.

Photo: MA-students from the Norwegian Theater Academy, Østfold University College, 2015



A part of the granite elements that were meant to cover the facade of Hitler's gigantic Victory Monument in Berlin were carved on Store Råholmen close to Kråkerøy by Fredrikstad. 250 readied elements can still be viewed on the islet. They are now protected under cultural heritage laws.

NTW / photographer: Håkon Bergseth



This "Hitlerstone" from Store Råholmen was planned to be part of the Victory Monument in Berlin. The stone has been in a private garden in the Fredrikstad region since the 1960s.

THE VICTORY MONUMENT – REWRITING HISTORY BY ARCHITECTURE

As part of his Germania project Hitler planned a gigantic Victory Monument. It would be 117 metres tall, 170 metres wide and 120 metres deep. Names of the fallen German soldiers of the First World War would be engraved in the monument. With a victorious outcome of the Second World War, Hitler wanted to correct the humiliating defeat of 1918.

Already in 1925 Hitler had, as leader of an insignificant party on the far right, drawn a draft of the monument. Based on this drawing Albert Speer made a model of the monument for Hitler's 50th birthday in 1939.



Hitler's sketch for the Victory Monument in Berlin

When Fritz Todt was killed in a plane accident in February 1942, Hitler appointed Albert Speer (1905-1981) leader of OT. Speer was also appointed minister of arms, influencing the entire German war economy. It was under Speer's leadership OT truly became dependent on the workforce of prisoners of war and civil forced labour.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-114204 / photographer : Unknown

NORWEGIAN GRANITE TO GERMANIA

In the summer of 1940 Albert Speer began investigating whether Norwegian granite was suited for the monumental edifices he was planning for Berlin and Nuremberg. Different samples were presented to Hitler who was very excited about the colours in the Norwegian rock. In the years that followed Speer ordered enormous amounts of rocks in Norway. The entire quarry industry, from Aust Agder to Østfold was involved in the deliveries. In 1941, Norwegian stonemasons visited Speer in Berlin for training. Only a tiny fraction of the granite eventually ended up in Berlin due to limited transport options.

“There are plans to commemorate the present position of Germany by several magnificent buildings of such proportions that the necessary amount of stone cannot possibly be provided sufficiently in Germany. (...) The program includes deliveries for 10 to 15 years. Dr. Klein maintained that enough workers would be provided, and that the Germans considered sending prisoners of war to work in the quarry industry for the planned deliveries to Germany.”

Minutes from a meeting between representatives for Norwegian quarry industry and Heinz Klein from the Technical department of the Reich's Commissary, July 9 1940.

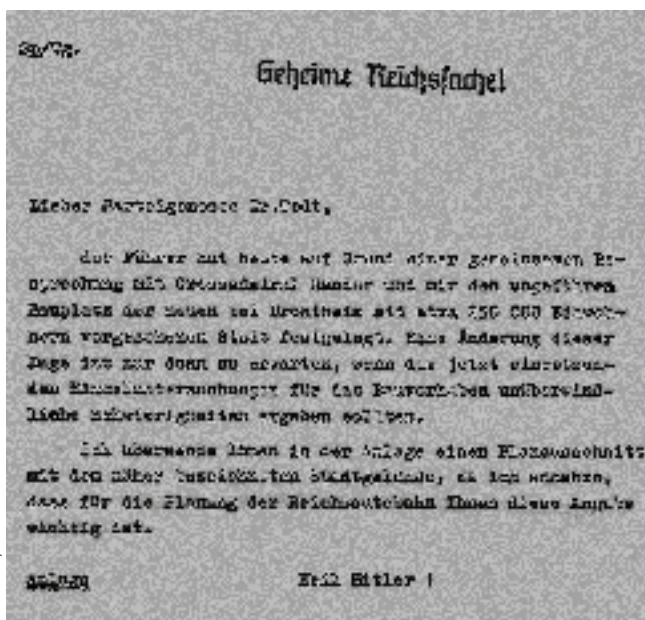


The Trondheim model. After a short stay in Berlin, the model was first brought to Oslo, and later to Trondheim where it was displayed in Stiftsgården. The photo is from Terboven's visit to Trondheim in the summer of 1942.

TRONDHEIM IN BERLIN

In the summer of 1940, the German Reich's Commissary ordered a model of the Trondheim fjord from *Norsk Modellerings Kompani* in Oslo. The actual client was armaments minister Fritz Todt, which acted on behalf of Hitler. The model, covering 48 square meters, was brought to Berlin and displayed in the Hall of Models in the Reich's Chancellery. Todt, Speer and Hitler used it for planning a number of major

construction projects. Initially a submarine bunker was to be built in Trondheim, later on a naval yard and a dry dock some distance away from the city. Adjacent to these installations Hitler envisioned the establishment of a new city with 250 000 inhabitants – *Neu Drontheim*. In June 1941, he decided that the new city would be built by Øysand, southwest of Trondheim.



Riksarkivet, RAFA 2188

On June 21, 1941, after having studied the Trondheim model intensively, Hitler decided that Neu Drontheim should be located at Øysand by Gulosen. Albert Speer, who was present when the decision was made, briefed Fritz Todt on the matter the same day. The following day Hitler ordered Operation Barbarossa to begin – the attack on the Soviet Union. Letter from Albert Speer to Fritz Todt, June 21st, 1941.



Private collection, photographer: Unknown

Fritz Todt visited Trondheim in September 1941 to control the ground conditions of the areas chosen for the German construction plans. The photo is probably from Gulosen, where Neu Drontheim was supposed to be established.



Riksarkivet, RAFA 2188

On his visit to Norway in September 1941, Fritz Todt ordered an examination of the ground conditions by Gulosen.



Riksarkivet, RAFA 2188

This segment of a map over Trøndelag was used as a base for the Trondheim model.



Soviet prisoners of war amounted to the largest group of forced labour under Organisation Todt in Norway.

DEPORTATION

NTM / photographer: Håkon Bergseth



"We did not know where we were going"

OPERATION BARBAROSSA: ANNIHILATION-WAR IN THE EAST

When the Nazis invaded the Soviet Union in June 1941, they started what has been called the “most destructive and barbaric war in the history of man”. The attack was part of Hitler’s annihilation-war against the Eastern European Slavic population. Using a deliberate starvation tactic large areas would be emptied of people and incorporated in the Nazi *Grossraum*. Hitler believed his victory would be quick, and

ordered that captured Soviet soldiers were to be starved to death. The prisoners were corralled and abandoned, without adequate food or shelter. At least 1.7 million prisoners of war died in the first seven months. As the fighting dragged on, the Nazis realized they needed to exploit this huge source of “free” labour in order to drive their wartime economy.



Nazi Germany recruited forced labour from all over Europe. The civil forced labourers and the prisoners were all taken away from their countries against their will. The transport through Europe was exhausting, and could last for months. No one knew where they were heading or what kind of fate awaited them there.

STETTIN

The seaport city Stettin, present day Szczecin in Poland, was the shipping hub between Germany and Norway during the war. The majority of OT's supplies to Norway were shipped from Stettin. Here, OT had their own transit camp where prisoners of war and forced labourers received their equipment before heading north. The voyage to and from Norway was dangerous. When the prisoner ships *MS Palatia* and *MS Rigel* were torpedoed in 1942 and 1944 respectively, over 3 000 Soviet prisoners of war drowned on their way to and from work in Norway.

The same ship used to bring prisoners of war and forced labourers, was used to deport Norwegian Jews in November 1942. For the Jews, the voyage went from Oslo to Stettin with *DS Donau*, and from there by train to Auschwitz. As German building projects in Norway desperately needed workforce, Norwegian workforce was murdered in the gas chambers. The logistical system Stettin was a part of, shows the tension between the Nazi regime's economic and racist goals.

NTM / photographer: Håkon Bergseth



“I remember that it was in February, 1943, it was a Sunday and market day. Every man at the market was arrested and taken to a hangar. Everyone, except Serbs and Gypsies were allowed to go. Older men were executed, the rest were transported in closed train carriages to Germany. (...) We were sent to Oslo at the end of April 1943.”

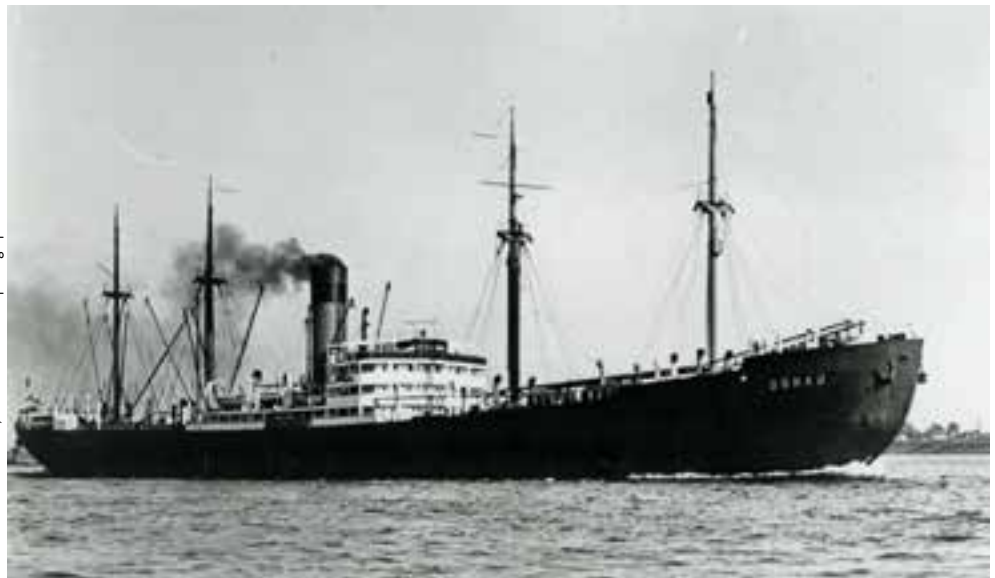
*Krsto Zoric
(1923-2017)
from Montenegro
was a forced labourer
in Norway.*

Bundesarchiv, Bild 121-0646 / photographer: Unknown



Stettin, a shipping hub between Germany and Norway.

Norsk Maritimt Museum, NSM.21.06-818/ photographer: Unknown



DS Donau, used to transport prisoners of war and Norwegian Jews.



OT workers marching into Oslo, spring 1942.

OT IN NORWAY

“THE WAR’S ZONE OF FATE IS NORWAY”

Toward the end of 1941, it was clear that Germany’s “surprise attack” in the East had failed and that the war would drag out. In October 1941, Hitler had already ordered the building of a railroad through Finland to secure the German line of supplies to the front by Murmansk. Todt was sceptical, and the plans were shelved. Later, Josef Terboven, the Reich’s Commissioner to Norway, suggested that the connection north could be secured over Norwegian territory. In addition to finishing the R50 road to Kirkenes, which is now E6, they could build a 1 200 km long railroad running parallel to the road, the so-called polar railroad. The road- and rail projects would eliminate the need for transport by ship along the Norwegian coast, which was vulnerable to torpedo attacks.

In Berlin, the fear for an allied landing on the coast of Norway grew. In January 1942 Hitler said that Norway had become the zone of fate for the war, and demanded forced development of the coastal defence. Numerous coastal forts and a number of heavy military batteries – later referred to as Festung Norwegen – were planned to incorporate the great Atlantic Wall that was under construction from Biscaya to Kirkenes.

As the plans took form, there was a tug of war about who would be in charge of the construction work. Fritz Todt’s negative attitude to the polar railroad was probably why OT held a low profile in Norway to start with. After Todt’s death in February 1942, OT and the new leader Speer decided to establish a sub-division in Norway.

EINSATZGRUPPE WIKING

In April 1942 OT established a sub-division in Norway under the name of Einsatzgruppe Wiking. The sub-division was simultaneously under Reich’s Commissioner Terboven in Oslo, and OT leader and minister of arms Albert Speer in Berlin. At its peak, OT controlled a workforce of around 90 000 men in Norway, over half of which were Soviet prisoners of war. During the war Einsatzgruppe Wiking became the largest entrepreneur in Norway, influencing heavily the distribution of work material and other economic factors.

Einsatzgruppe Wiking’s main office was in Oslo, and administrated a number of construction offices around the country, which, in turn, supervised the local building sites. At the main office there was staff dedicated to construction of roads, of railroads, fortifications etc. The bulk of the staff was engineers and architects with high academic education. Einsatzgruppe Wiking was also responsible for Denmark.

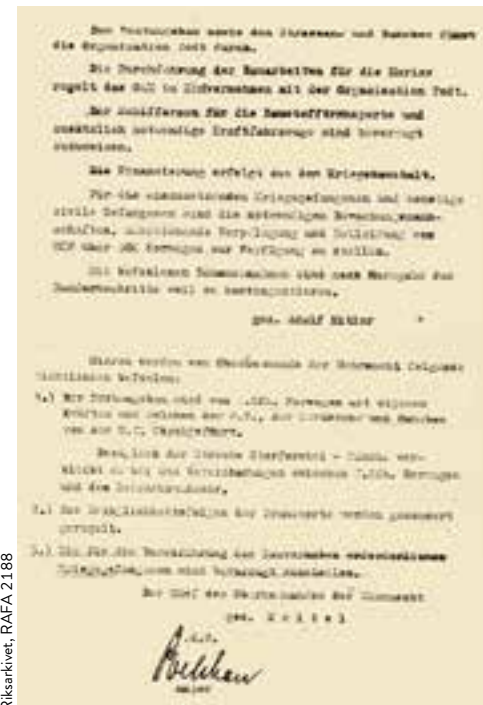
Einsatzgruppe Wiking continued to develop the contact that was already established between Todt, Speer and Terboven. In cooperation with Terboven, Todt had been planning the construction of the Reichsautobahn between Halden and Trondheim since the autumn of 1940. Speer was the head architect for Neu Drontheim, the new city that was planned to be built southwest of Trondheim. Todt was also involved in this work. OT’s first official project in Norway was the construction of the submarine bunker Dora in Trondheim. The work started in spring 1941, and was led from Berlin until Einsatzgruppe Wiking was established.



NTM / photographer: Ingrid Aas

Teleprinter used by OT in Norway.

Hitler's Viking order, originally from May 13th, 1942.



Riksarkivet, RAFA 2188

HITLER'S "VIKING ORDER"

Hitler decided the construction program for Einsatzgruppe Wiking in a so-called Führer order from May 1942. In addition to large road and rail projects, OT was expected to build coastal forts and batteries, submarine bunkers, and factories for light metal production, including power plants. Hitler described these projects as "vital for the outcome of the war", and they needed to be concluded as quickly as possible. The Führer order was given to the Minister of Arms, Albert Speer, and strengthened OT's position in regards to other German entrepreneurs who were involved in construction in Norway, firstly Wehrmacht.

Warfare is hard work. Occupation requires elaborate preparations. Everything needs to be relocated; not just weapons and ammunition, but food, nails and concrete mixers. People too need to be moved from one place to the other. Soldiers, obviously, but also workforce. Occupation almost always entails new construction projects. You need airstrips for airplanes and bunkers or barracks for lodging the soldiers. A lot of this is hard physical work, but a lot is also office work.

War requires the accounts to be done, that someone is in charge of the logistics and how the stocks of things develop. Lists, statistics, index cards needs to be filled in. How much ammunition is in store, how much barbed wire? And fuel?

No hasty decisions, no hasty actions, just follow the set routines. For instance, when you are going to send some rolls of roofing paper from Moss in Østfold, to a road construction site in Nordland; many letters need to be written before shipping is secured and the roofing paper is on its way north. There is not much time. Autumn is getting closer. And until the roof is watertight, the SS-soldiers oppose to guard the Serbian prisoners who are building the road.



Private collection / photographer: Unknown

Willi Henne: the unknown organiser of the war economy

Willi Henne was an engineer and one of Fritz Todt's closest employees. He was only 35 years old when he stepped up as leader of Einsatzgruppe Wiking. Henne was also in charge of the technical department of the Reich's Commissary, and represented Albert Speer in his capacity as "general authority over the construction sector" of Norway. All these functions made Henne a very influential man. He took part in deciding which building projects were to be prioritized, and the distribution of finances. Henne was a member of NSDAP and SS.



Photo: NTB, Scanpix

Grünertøkk skole was seized by OT in 1942 and used as transit camp for civil forced labour before they were sent to building sites around the country. Up to 900 people could be placed here. The school building was run by personnel from OT and SS. If you were a Norwegian forced labourer or a foreign forced labourer who came to Norway by boat from Germany, Grünertøkk skole would often be the first meeting with Einsatzgruppe Wiking.



NTM / photographer: Håkon Bergseth

Index cards with different categories of OT-workers.

THE WORKFORCE

OT's workforce in Norway consisted of two main categories: prisoners and civil forced labour.

The majority of the civil workers were what we today would call forced labour; they were forcefully recruited and had little influence over their own working conditions. Even though some may have started their OT career more or less voluntarily, the voluntariness rapidly disappeared, since OT rarely allowed anyone to quit. Once their contract expired, OT would extend the contract without consulting the person in question. The civil forced labourers were given salary and had some social rights. However, the treatment varied depending on the worker's nationality and ethnicity.

The prisoners were the backbone of OT's workforce. The vast majority were Soviet prisoners of war, but OT also exploited the working ability of civil prisoners, both political prisoners, and prisoners convicted of crime. Toward the end of the war over 50 000 prisoners worked for Einsatzgruppe Wiking.



Levanger Fotomuseum, LEM.006.01.027.24 / photographer: Per Renbjør

The submarine bunker Dora in Trondheim was OT's first project in Norway.



Norsk Jernbanemuseum, JMF01.1770 / photographer: Unknown

The extension of the railroad through Nordland was going to be OT's largest project in Norway.

THE PRISONERS ARRIVE

The grand building projects that were under way in 1942 required a massive workforce. There were no available hands in Norway; it was clear from the beginning that the projects relied on foreign prisoners of war and forced labour.

Extensive preparations were required before the work could commence. The prisoners would be placed in camps, material for barracks was needed, barbed wire for fencing, flood lights for watch towers, kitchen utensils, mattresses and all sorts of tools. For Norwegian industry and commerce, assisting the Germans in these preparations was good money.

To start with, the technical department of the Reich's Commissary was responsible for the preparations, but in

March 1942, Hitler decided to hand the assignment to OT. Six thousand German skilled workers and 10-15 000 Soviet prisoners of war were immediately at their disposal. Transferring the prisoners to Norway was a lot more time-consuming than first anticipated, and they were not the dominating category of the OT workforce until 1943.

Formally, OT had limited responsibility for the prisoners. While the prisoners of war were under the jurisdiction of Wehrmacht, which took care of accommodation, board and guarding, SS was responsible for political prisoners. Amongst the prisoners OT was in charge of, only Yugoslavs, mostly Serbs, were under SS. The treatment of these people was exceptionally brutal and ruthless.

"Due to the climatic conditions, the prisoners had serious infections (...). They slept soaking wet in snow and rain out in the open without any possibility to get warm. (...) The camp is a mockery of the concept of prison camp."

SS-doctor Dr. Bauer, after a visit to the OT-camp at Øvre-Jernvann, August 1942

From the OT-archives:
Norwegian forced labourers and Soviet prisoners of war

Personalkarte I: Gefangene Sowjet
 Kriegsgefangenen-Nummer: II B
 Name: Scherenitschikov
 Geburtsdatum: 1924
 Geburtsort: ...
 Religion: ...
 Beruf: ...
 Foto: [Portrait of a man in uniform]

Arbeitskarte
 Name: Zakaria
 Geburtsdatum: 11.1.21
 Arbeitsort: ...
 Arbeitgeber: ...

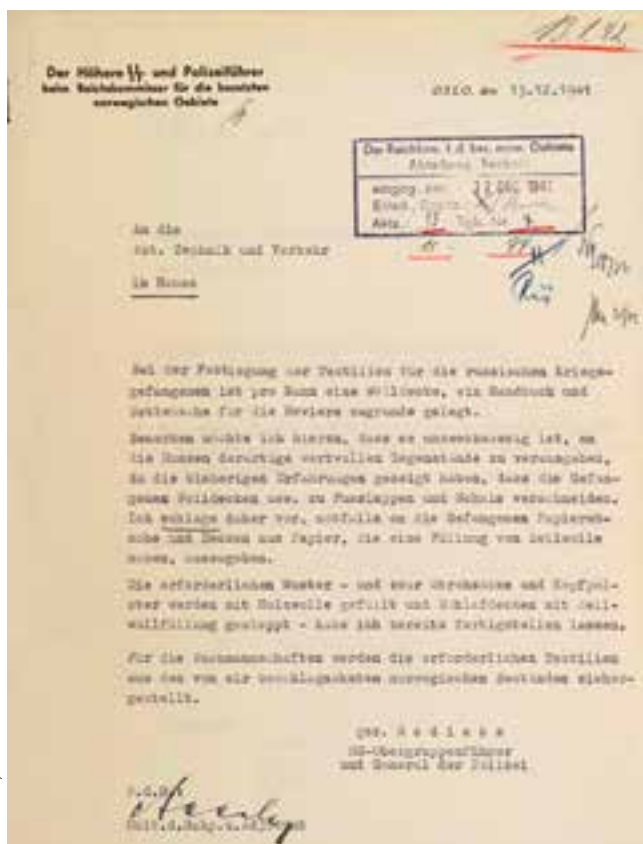
Personalkarte
 Name: ...
 Geburtsdatum: ...

Personalkarte
 Name: ...
 Geburtsdatum: ...

Personalkarte
 Name: ...
 Geburtsdatum: ...
 Foto: [Portrait of a man]

Personalkarte
 Name: ...
 Geburtsdatum: ...
 Foto: [Portrait of a man]

The Geneva Convention of 1929, excerpt from § 10:
"Prisoners of war shall be lodged in buildings or huts which afford all possible safeguards as regards hygiene and salubrity."



Letter, dated 15th of December 1941, to the Reich's Commissary in Oslo, dealing with the upcoming employment of Soviet prisoners of war. In the letter Wilhelm Rediess, head of the higher SS and Police in Norway, gives his advice on how prisoners are to be equipped:

"In the determination of the textiles for the Russian prisoners of war in their living quarters, per man one woollen blanket, one towel and bed linen is the common rule.

I would like to point out in this regard, that it is inexpedient to give such valuable objects to the Russians, as the experiences thus far have shown that the prisoners cut the woollen blankets etc. into foot wraps and scarves. I therefore propose that, if necessary, the prisoners should be provided with bed linen and duvets made of paper, filled with viscose fibre."



Soviet prisoners of war in the region of Nordland. The photo is taken after the liberation in May 1945.



Photo: Erling Borgen

Zarco Vidovic from Serbia survived the Beisfjord massacre.



Photo: L. Mladjenovic / Narviksenteret

The prison camp in Beisfjord on fire, July 17 1942.

NORDLAND COUNTY

OT had their most extensive projects in Nordland. On Engeløya, OT built the coastal battery, Dietel, which was going to control the approach to Narvik. Further inland OT was responsible for upgrading the road R50, present day E6, and the extension of the railroad north. Initially, Hitler wanted a continuous “polar railroad” to Kirkenes, but accepted after a while Narvik as terminal station. The railroad construction was based on tremendous efforts from Soviet prisoners of war. Of the around 26 000 prisoners who worked there, 2161 died.

THE BEISFJORD MASSACRE

During the summer of 1942, around 900 Serbian prisoners came to the SS-camp in Beisfjord outside of Narvik. The plan was to put the prisoners to work on OT’s road site. Illness and exhaustion made many of the prisoners incapable to work. In the afternoon on the 17th of July, SS commenced the execution of ill prisoners. They were placed in groups and shot down with machine guns. Prisoners who had hidden indoors, were killed when their barracks were set on fire. 287 people were murdered in the massacre.

The prisoners who were able to work, were sent to the OT-camp at Øvre Jernvann to build a road. The camp was in terrible condition, and the brutal treatment killed many of the prisoners.



Photo: William Hakvaag – Lofoten Krigsmuseum

Russian prisoners in Nordland bury a fellow prisoner.

German OT-workers in Alta repairing their work clothes.



Riksarkivet, RAFA3.309/JUG68/2/33, photographer: Unknown



ALTA

Alta became an important harbor for supplies going on to OT's construction projects in Finnmark. OT built a dock and established a transit camp for prisoners of war here. There was also a camp for German convicts here, amongst them prisoners from the infamous Emsland-camps in Germany. Many German prisoners died due to the brutal treatment they received.

Riksarkivet, RAFA3.309/JUG68/2/18, photographer: Unknown



OT personnel arrive in Alta.



Riksarkivet, RAFA 3309JU49/1/2, photographer: Unknown

Food distribution in freezing winter weather.

"For us who are construction workers, finalising the railroad to Narvik is a technical honour of the highest rang. Nobody can accuse us for not having used the expected energy and rejoiced over this great technical work."

Albert Speer in a letter to Willi Henne, November 1944

GROSSRAUMTECHNIK – HITLER'S POLAR RAILROAD

Towards the end of 1941 Hitler had the idea of a "polar railroad" northbound through Norway from Mo i Rana to Kirkenes. Measured by the number of prisoners of war employed, the polar railroad was OT's largest project on Norwegian soil. The railroad would secure German lines of supplies to the Murmansk front, and transport iron ore and nickel south to Germany. Even though the reasons used to advocate for the railroad were short term, there was no doubt that the construction of it would take a very long time. Actually, the project only made sense in a long-term perspective; it was part of Hitler's highflying ideas of the German *Grossraum*. If the polar railroad was connected to the existing Murmansk railroad, there would be a continuous railroad connection between Oslo and St. Petersburg.

The polar railroad can be understood as an expression of the Third Reich's politics of space. Hitler made OT into a tool for this policy. Efficient organising and use of modern technology made it possible to tackle shortage of time and resources, he believed.



Riksarkivet, RAFA3309/U67b/6/H1, photographer: Pieper

Construction work by Fauske.



NTM, photographer: H. Bergeeth

Railroad track for the polar railroad, produced by Krupp in 1942.



Riksarkivet, RAFA3309/U67b/6/D3 / photographer: Pieper

Fillings for the polar railroad on Saltfjellet.

NORDMANN!

Du kommer til O.T., den største byggeorganisasjonen. O.T. hjelper med å beskytte ditt land, din heim, din familie og deg selv og bygger nye trafikkeveger for Norge.

1. Fra det tidspunkt De befinner Dem på O.T.s samleplass vil det bli sørget for Dem. De får fra denne dag forpleining og røkevarer tildelt av Wehrmachts beholdninger. De må da avlevere deres rasjoneringskort.
2. Jo mer disiplin De viser, desto lettere og bedre foregår alle reiseforberedelser. De kan slutte Dem sammen med kamerater og komme til samme arbeidssted.
3. Det er mulig at det går flere dager med å sette opp en transport. Fra den dag De innfiner Dem står De i O.T.s tjeneste, får lønn og blir forpleiet. Det er derfor nødvendig at De bor på O.T.-Leitstelle inntil avreisen finner sted.
4. Under transporten er en av Deres landsmenn transportleder. Han har å sørge for orden og disiplin. Hans anvisninger har De da å følge.
5. Det er sørget for losji på Deres arbeidssted. En av Deres landsmenn blir innsett som leirfører. Han er ansvarlig for forholdene i leiren. Til ham kan De henvende Dem hvis De har noen ønsker. Han vil da sørge for at berettigede ønsker blir oppfylt.
6. Når De har slitt ut Deres egne arbeidsklær på byggestedet, kan De i nødsfall få kjøpt arbeidsko (trebunnet med overlær), arbeidsbukse og undertøy på arbeidsplassen.
7. Videre kan De i leiren få kjøpt enkelte bruksgjenstander til det daglige behov. Det blir også sørget for aviser, tidsskrifter, bøker, kino og spill.
8. Deres lønn får De etter den norske rikstariffen. Så snart som mulig skal De arbeide på akkord. Da kan De forbedre Deres fortjeneste ved arbeidsvilje og flid. Foruten Deres tariffmessige lønn får De vederlag for heimfravær. Særlig gode arbeidstelsler belønnes med premier i form av ekstratildelinger av alkohol og røkevarer. Jo mer De yter, desto bedre får De det.
9. Hvis De har familie å forsørge, får denne et lønnsforskudd for 2-3 uker av O.T.
10. I sykdomstilfelle blir der sørget for lægehjelp.

Nordmann, vær lojal og oppfyll din arbeidspåkt. Derved unngår du politiets inngripen med musket og/eller fengselstraff.

Oslo, mai 1944.

Organisation Todt
Einsatzgruppe WIKING

Faksimile, Tysk okkupasjon av Søndre Akker, 1940 - 1945, Terje R. Diesen, 1990

Recruitment poster for Organisation Todt in Norway. Few Norwegians followed the call.



Private collection, photographer: Unknown

Danish OT-workers in Norway. The Danish OT-employees generally had so good conditions in Norway, that they should probably not be labelled forced labour. For example, Danes who did not want to prolong their contract were actually allowed to quit. Even so, the Danes, too, complained about the working conditions.

CIVIL FORCED LABOUR FROM 21 NATIONS

Civil workers from 21 nations were mobilized to work for OT in Norway. The vast majority of these were what we now would call forced labour, as they were recruited through various types of force. Most of the civil forced labourers received a salary and were admitted a few social benefits, such as vacation and leave. Many of the civil forced labourers in Norway worked for German companies that were engaged by Einsatzgruppe Wiking.

How the civil forced labourers were treated, depended on which national and ethnical group they belonged to. Civil forced labourers from the Soviet Union received the worst treatment.

Norwegians were also conscripted to Einsatzgruppe Wiking. The conscriptions were a German initiative, but organized and executed by Norwegian officials. During the war, more than 30 000 Norwegians were forcibly conscribed to Einsatzgruppe Wiking.

"The workers from the East are in a special position (...) They can and must be treated much harder than the culturally superior people of (...) Western Europe."

Max Erich Feuchtinger, 1944, responsible for workforce in OT.

"The food ration of prisoners of war shall be equivalent in quantity and quality to that of the depot troops."

The Geneva Convention of 1929, excerpt from § 11.

Riksarkivet, RAFA 2188

| Verpflegungsätze Norwegen-Reich | | Menge pro Mann + G. | Lebensmittel | | | | Brotwaren | | | Sonstige | |
|--|---|------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|---|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|---|
| | | | Weizen per Mann + G. | Roggen | Getreide ersatz per Mann + G. | Eiweiß ersatz per Mann + G. | per Mann | | | per Mann | |
| | | | | | | | kg | kg | kg | l | l |
| Militärische Verpflegung (Norwegen) | Deutsche OT, Angehörige an sonst. Luftw. Staffeln | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 100 50 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | |
| | Ausländische Arbeiter (mit Ausnahme) | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 100 50 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | |
| | Norweger, Polen, Schweden u. a. | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 100 50 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | |
| | Fremdgeborene (aus deutsche Ostgebieten) | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 100 50 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | |
| | Verwundete Ausländer (Serben, Ungarn, Polen, Finnen, Franzosen) | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 100 50 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | 1000 500 | |
| Norwegische Zivilverpflegung | | normal | 1000 | 1000 | 100 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | |
| Deutsche (Heimat) Zivilverpflegung | | normal | 1000 | 1000 | 100 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | 1000 | |

Table showing food rations for different categories of OT-workers.

THE SCARCE FOOD

German OT-employees had easiest access to food. Initially workers from countries that were Germany's allied were going to have the same rations; however, they usually got far less. Workers from occupied countries, for instance Norway, had to accept even smaller rations. Generally workers from Eastern Europe ate less and worse food than those from the West. You did not necessarily get what you were promised. The rations were adapted to local conditions. Bread was often supplemented with cabbage and potatoes, and meat replaced with fish.

The prisoners suffered the most due to the scarcity of food. The leader of Einsatzgruppe Wiking, Willie Henne, initiated several actions to improve the conditions. Nevertheless, the situation was disastrous for the prisoners coming from Serbia, Germany and the Soviet Union.

"According to the Danish workers, the walls were full of bed bugs. Several Danes showed the bites they had on their bodies. Even the OT-people told me that the conditions in Oslo were disastrous, but there was nothing they could do about it"

"On the way back, the Danes were put in a full gym at Grünerløkka school. According to the Danish workers (...) there was a barrel with a lid in a corner of the gym; this was where the men went to the toilet during the night."

"Foreign workers, mostly from Bulgaria and Romania, in Einsatzgruppe Wiking have not received any salary for over a year."

"The soup contained sea weed."

"Where I come from, even the pigs get better food than we do here."

Unhappy workers

The German censorship in Norway detected numbers of letters from unhappy OT employees of all nationalities. The themes were usually bad food, long working hours and unpaid salary or permissions of leave that were not admitted.



Riksarkivet, RAFA 33.09/49.141, photographer: Unknown

The Speer school in Sandefjord

THE SPEER SCHOOL IN SANDEFJORD

Sandefjord was an important base for *Transportflotte Speer*, OT's sea based supply service in Norway. *Transportflotte Speer* was established before the war in order to transport building material to the monumental buildings in Berlin, including Norwegian granite. Later, the fleet was integrated into OT and became particularly important in Norway since building activity here depended on transport by sea. In Norway *Transportflotte Speer* disposed a large number of

small and medium sized ships, and a crew of around 1 600 people, most of whom were Dutch seamen conscripted by force. At one point there were 1 300 Dutchmen working for *Transporte Speer*.

Transporte Speer were constantly looking for labour and founded their own school – *Speerschule* – in Sandefjord in order to secure the recruitment of personnel.

"The Norwegian will to cooperate (...) made it possible for the occupation power to keep the economy going till the end of the war."

Hans Klaussen Korff, Reich's Commissary financial management.

COLLABORATION

OT relied on cooperation with private German and Norwegian construction companies to execute their projects.

The construction companies did the actual construction, while OT organized the work, provided building material, machines and extra workforce. Usually the German companies were the main entrepreneurs, and the Norwegian companies were their subcontractors. There is not much evidence to show that the Norwegian companies hesitated to partake in OT's projects. The contracts were voluntarily agreed upon, on a strictly commercial basis. Due to the large road and railroad projects, NSB (The Norwegian State Railways) and Statens vegvesen (Norwegian Public Roads Administration) co-operated very closely with Einsatzgruppe Wiking.

For security reasons only German companies, in particular German construction companies, had access to the forced labourers. As private Norwegian construction companies rarely worked with prisoners, the state owned institutions NSB and Vegvesenet came closer to the prisoners. This was especially true for Vegvesenet, which in some periods had "employer's responsibility" for several hundreds of prisoners of war.

The occupying forces' demands and orders created difficult dilemmas for OT's Norwegian partners. However, it is fair to question whether the Norwegian willingness to cooperate went a little too far.

"GERMAN WORK"

At the beginning of the war, good money could be made from working at German sites. More than 200 000 Norwegians were involved in so-called "German work", most of them working for Wehrmacht. Later, the economy became more and more regulated. Several measures were taken in order to reduce any wage increase, and at the same time, the possibility of changing work place was severely reduced.

Architect Leif Egeberg – the mediator

The Architect Leif Egeberg functioned as mediator between OT, the Reich's Commissary and Norwegian business and industry. Egeberg arranged for contracts to Norwegian companies that were willing to construct roads that were strategically and military important. To secure these contracts, Egeberg cooperated closely with Statens vegvesen. Vegvesenet accepted to supervise the quality of the work done by the construction companies, and to lend out some of their engineers as consultants. This mix of roles makes it difficult to assess where responsibility really lied. Leif Egeberg was convicted for treason after the war.



Photo: Hemnes kommune/ John Johnsen's samling



"There are now 80 Serbs working for the Norwegian Public Roads Administration on the road section 12 km further on from Korgen, despite the cold winter weather."

Progress report, OT, January 1944

STATENS VEGVESEN (NPRA) AND THE PRISONERS OF WAR

Many of the Serbian prisoners who came to road construction sites in Nordland the summer of 1942, moved into camps built by Statens vegvesen. Engineers from Vegvesenet often guarded and controlled the prisoners' work. In a report from February 1944, the CEO of Vegvesenet, Andreas Baalsrud, writes that Vegvesenet by Elsfjord-Korgen had 500 prisoners of war working for them. However, the Germans experienced that it was not fruitful to let the Norwegians work with the prisoners. The prisoners worked harder and faster when they worked for German construction companies.

In order to speed up road projects that the Germans prioritized, Vegvesenet sometimes advised OT on the conscription of Norwegian workers.

| Gefangene u. Häftlinge | | |
|------------------------|-----|---------------|
| soll | ist | nach benötigt |
| | 500 | |

Riktskrivet, RAFA 21188

The state owned road company had 500 prisoners of war at their disposal in February 1944.

NTM, Todt 187 / photographer: Unknown



German guards with Soviet prisoners of war working on rail tracks on Saltfjellet.

THE NORWEGIAN STATE RAILWAYS (NSB) AND THE PRISONERS OF WAR

Before the establishment of Einsatzgruppe Wiking in 1942, Wehrmacht was in charge of the railroad construction in Norway. In the south, the aim was to complete the connection between Oslo and Stavanger, and in the north, to complete the connection between Trondheim and Bodø. In December 1941, without consulting Wehrmacht, Hitler decides to increase the ambitions radically; within two years, there would be a “polar railroad” all the way to Kirkenes. OT would be in charge of the construction. Even though the project was seriously down scaled, and Narvik became the end station in 1943, the Polar railroad employed more than 26 000 prisoners of war. 2161 of these men died.

Initially, the leader of NSB’s construction department, Otto Aubert, opposed to the use of prisoners. However, NSB were imposed to find out how the use of prisoners could be organised. The studies were ready in January 1942, and concluded that



it would be possible to use prisoners as workforce for the north bound railroad construction. There is no evidence, however, that NSB wished to use prisoners. Throughout the war, Aubert insisted that it was best if OT left the construction work to NSB and their Norwegian employees.

Formally, the prisoners who worked on the railroad in Nordland did not work for NSB, but for OT and the German construction companies.

Even though the prisoners working on the rail and road construction in Nordland formally worked for OT and the German construction companies, NSB and Statens vegvesen often ended up with the practical responsibility for them. Employees from NSB or Vegvesenet frequently watched and controlled the prisoners’ work.

Berichtigte Zahlen über den Kriegsgefangeneinsatz
der G.M. Faaske in Juni 1944 (Nacht 10. 6. 44)

| Lager: | Zahl | Firma: | Zahl |
|----------------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
| Faaske: | 407 | G.M. | 172 |
| | | Fanghøst | 93 |
| | | Ras | 220 |
| Strømmen: | 482 | Grun v. Blif. | 903 |
| Hegarden: | 501 | | |
| Torsleug: | 400 | Pol. u. Söllner | 778 |
| Opitvik: | 378 | | |
| Aspfjord: | 337 | K. Kutzer | 595 |
| Kalvik: | 258 | | |
| Lappetorvik: | 431 | Funk | 431 |
| Eroken: | 410 | Kochtief | 936 |
| Kobbelv.: | 130 | | |
| Gjerselvann: | 135 | | |
| Basistunnel: | 255 | | |
| Gesamt: | 4190 | | 4190 |

Heil Hitler!
Der Hauptamtsleiter.
(Hankle).
Reg. - Beirat.

*Sei für mich
in Gott mit
einer Empfehlung
das wird gut sein
mich für 1944*

German construction companies were given prisoners of war for the construction of railroads for Organisation Todt.

IDEOLOGICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE EXECUTED BY CIVILIANS

The co-operation with OT opened the door for close connections between ordinary, civilian Germans and the prisoners. Engineers and department leaders in German construction companies instructed the prisoners, watched over them and were given security tasks. There were incidents of violence against prisoners executed by German civilians. In this way, OT helped the Nazi regime delegate the responsibility for ideologically motivated violence to civilians, making them partly responsible for the regime's crimes.



Rikarkivet, PA0276U1/11/ photographer: Leiv Kreyberg

26 000 Soviet prisoners of war built the railroad for OT in Nordland, and lived under severely difficult conditions. The photo of this Russian prisoner was taken after the liberation in May 1945.

**"I wish to emphasise that abuse
against prisoners of war is
unacceptable and also beneath
the dignity of a German and an
OT worker"**

Excerpt from a letter from Einsatzgruppe Wiking to the
leaders of the German construction company Strabag in
Stavanger, December 1943



Riksarkivet, RAFA 3309, 47/1/118/; photographer: Unknown



Riksarkivet, PAL209/Ue/85/03/7340; photographer: Unknown

The light metal factory on Herøya after the bombing in July 1943.

KRISTIANSAND

OT had a separate “head of construction” in Kristiansand between 1942 and 1944. OT built airports by Kjevik, Mandal and on the island Lista, and fortifications along the coast. The single largest project was the artillery battery Vara, which included a great number of Soviet prisoners of war. In the summer of 1943, the building administration in Kristiansand also had Polish prisoners of war at their disposal.

The company *Betongbygg A/S* had several jobs for OT in the area, and was one of very few Norwegian companies given direct access to work with prisoners of war.

ÅRDAL

The new aluminium plants in Årdal were the main subject in Hermann Göring’s plan to double Norwegian production of light metal by seven. The plan included finalising the power plant at Tyin. The German controlled company *A/S Nordag* were in charge of the building process, while OT contributed with supplies of civil forced labour, mostly so-called “Eastern workers” from the Soviet Union. At one point there were around 2 000 Eastern workers in Årdal. Many civil forced labourers from France ended up there, too.

HERØYA

On Herøya, close to Porsgrunn, Norsk Hydro built aluminium- and magnesium factories in cooperation with their German partners Luftwaffe and IG Farben. The new plants were part of Hermann Göring’s plan to increase the light metal production in Norway. OT assisted with the organisation of the project and disposed forced labour for it. Several hundred Norwegian and foreign forced labourers were involved in the construction of the factories on Herøya and the power plant by Mår. The factories were almost ready to start production in July 1943, when they were struck by allied bombers.

Due to their part in the light metal project, Norsk Hydro were investigated for treason after the war. No charge was raised. The cooperation with the Germans was important for Hydro’s focus on light metal after the war.



*Performance based rations
made the weak even weaker.*

"In the total war, every minute
is valuable and must be devoted
to work."

OTs leadership in Trondheim

Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-J05235 / photograph: Schwahn, Ernst



"Wollt ihr den Totalen Krieg?", Minister of Propaganda Goebbels's speech in Berlin, February 1943.

TOTAL WAR

The German defeat at Stalingrad in February, 1943, became a turning point in the war. From now on Nazi-Germany was fighting defensively. As soon as the defeat was announced in Berlin, Minister of Propaganda Goebbels had the people cry out their support for "the total war". All resources in society were to be at the disposal for the warfare.

The total war intensified the ideological pressure, while at the same time concern for economic efficiency increased. In OT, this was expressed through intensifying ideological indoctrination, parallel with efforts initiated to avoid the most brutal treatment of prisoners of war. It was difficult to access more prisoners, so it became vital to keep the working ability of those already at disposal.

However, to claim that the total war made economical considerations prevail, is not correct. Rather ideology and economy were forced into new alliances. One such alliance was the introduction of a system where the prisoners were given food rations in accordance with their work effort.

"PERFORMANCE BASED RATIONS"

OT and Wehrmacht both worked systematically to find methods to enhance the productivity of the prisoners of war. The most radical action was to base the food rations on the work performance of the prisoners. From OT's point of view, it was essential to get as much work effect from a certain amount of food. Since the amount of food was given; when some got more, others got less.

Leistungsbuch für Kriegsgefangene.
Firma: S t u a g
Tunnelbau, Schicht 1

| Leistung | | Wünsche | Unter- schrift | Bemerkungen |
|------------------|--|---------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Essen- staff. | im Verh. zur deut. Arbeiter- gruppe | | | |
| 7a | 7b | 8. | 9. | 10. |
| 1 | 80 % | Kommando verdient Gehalt. | Schulze Bauführer | 10 Zigaretten ausgegeben. Lehne, Hptm. |
| 2 | 80 % | | | |
| 2 | 70 % | | | |

Bemerkung: Spalte 5 bis einschl. 9 ist
von den Firmen auszufüllen.

Riksarkivet, RAFA 2188

Employees in German construction companies registered the prisoners' work effort in special "effort books". The efforts, ranked and compared to how much a German worker could perform. This would decide how much food the individual prisoner received. This way, the commercial companies strongly influenced the wellbeing of the prisoners.



Riksarkivet, PA0276/U1/10/ photographer: Leiv Kreyberg

Russian prisoner of war from Saltfjellet. The photo is taken in May 1945.

Over time this system made the working ability of those who could not perform due to illness and exhaustion – those who were already the weakest – even weaker.

Towards the end of the war, the supply conditions were disastrous for OT's prisoners of war on the Northbound railroad. The local building administration, lead by Hans Renner, set to work dividing the prisoners into groups based on their working abilities. We can only guess what fate was in store for those who were declared permanently disable to work. At this stage SS had in German concentration camps commenced with mass executions of all categories of "unproductive" inmates, not exclusively Jewish.

Report, written by Hans Renner, construction leader on the Northbound railroad, from a meeting with representatives from "Sonderstab O.", dated march 14th, 1945:

"In order to assess the work potential of the prisoners of war for OT, it is essential to follow the recommendation from "Sonderstab O" which suggest dividing the prisoners into three groups: Those who can work at full capacity, the temporarily impaired and those who are irrevocably no longer able to work. This must be reported promptly to the construction companies, ie. the site managers of the various camps and the senior construction management."



Riksarkivet, RAFA 3309/68/2/28/ photographer: Unknown

The bridge over the river Laksely in Alta, is one of many constructions left by OT in Norway.

“WHAT THE WAR COST NORWAY”

The book “What the war cost Norway” was released shortly after the war ended. It described how the Germans had financed the occupation by taking from Norwegian government finances and by exploiting Norwegian resources. Exempt from the equation however, was what the Germans added to the country, such as workforce and building material. Many of the resources OT needed for their projects came from Germany and were paid over German budgets. While most occupied countries had to give more than they got, the situation was the opposite in Norway. The large construction project probably meant that Norway was given more resources than any other German occupied country.



NTM, photographer: Ingrid Aas

THEY BUILT THE COUNTRY

During the war, 20 airports and power plants were built in this country. At the end of the war, these plants could produce 30% more power than at its beginning. The railroad was extended to the north and to the south. The existing roads were upgraded and numerous new roads, bridges and docks were built. Along the coast over 300 forts were finalized. OT contributed more than any other German entrepreneur to the conclusion of these projects. Around the country many of these constructions are in use today.

Even though the main responsibility for the brutal treatment of the prisoners of war and the forced labour was with SS and Wehrmach, OT was in no way an innocent party. The organisation was part of the Third Reich’s power apparatus, and fronted the Nazi ideology. That is the main reason why approximately 4 000 people died while they were working for OT in Norway.

A hundred years from now OT’s concrete constructions will still stand out in the scenery. The sites of the prison camps, however, will have disappeared. The stories of the prisoners of war and the forced labourers will disappear, too, if we do not take good care of them.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-V01057-3 / photographer: Unknown

The Nuremberg trials: Albert Speer with senior leaders of the Nazi regime.

MEA CULPA?

Albert Speer concluded his defense in Nuremberg by blaming technology. Nazi atrocities could be understood as a consequence of the opportunities presented by modern technology, he argued. This was also the way he finished his memoirs, which was published in 1969, after he had served 20 years in prison. The book's last sentence reads: "Dazzled by the possibilities of technology, I devoted crucial years of my life to serving it. But in the end my feelings about it are highly skeptical".