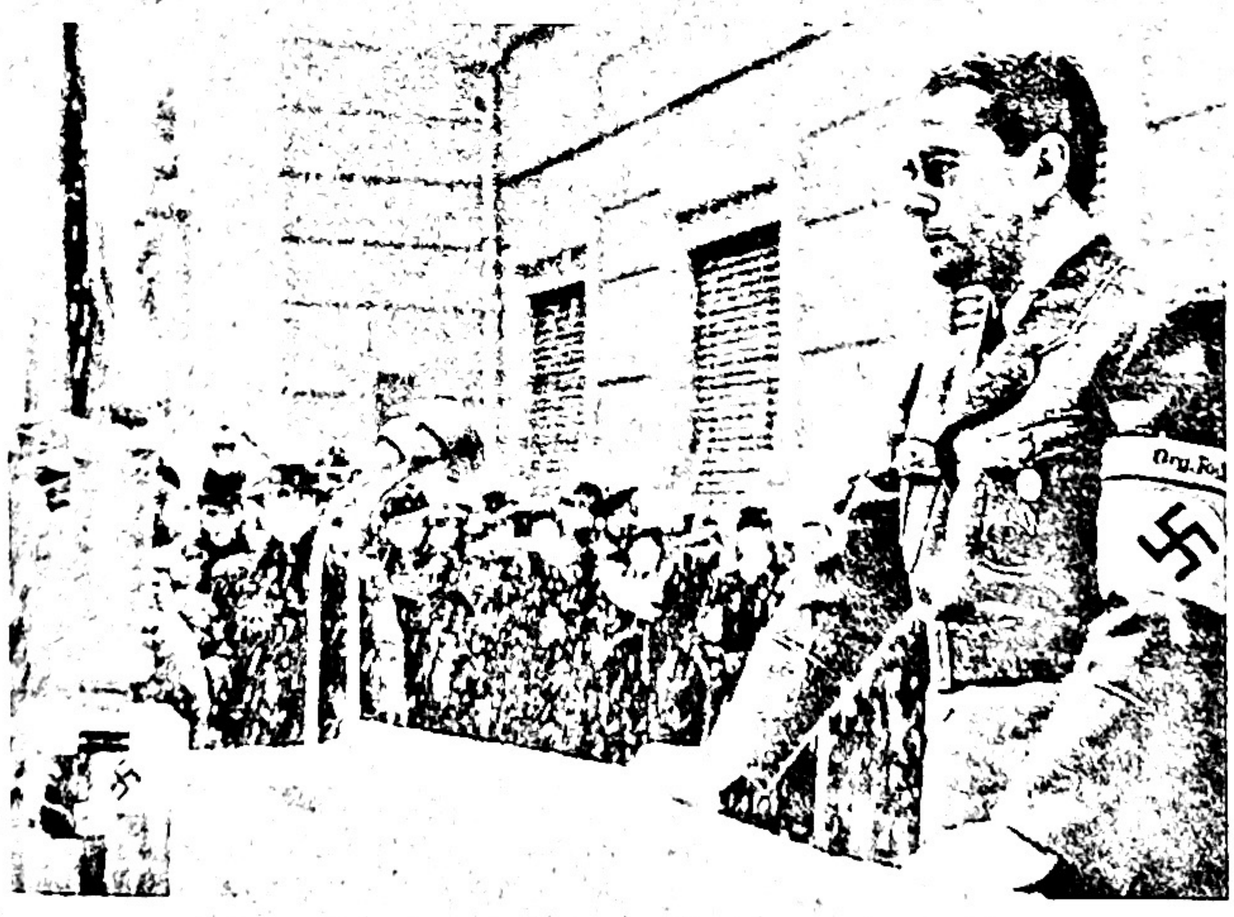
ALBERT SPEER: From Ambition to Immorality
(Speer's Influence Regarding the Treatment of Forced and Slave Laborers in Nazi Germany)



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During the Second World War, Nazi Germany was depended on the use of foreign and slave laborer owing to the shortage of domestic labor arising from the military mobilization of the German workers. However, bringing foreign-born workers, free or slave, into Germany conflicted with Nazi ideology. In order to protect German blood and culture, the Nazi leadership issued numerous decrees establishing a hierarchical treatment of workers. Such treatment resulted in illness and death for hundreds of thousands of the workers. As Reich Minister of Armaments and Munitions, Albert Speer was dependent on the exploitation of foreign and slave laborers to increase armaments production. As a result of his ambition to succeed, and secure the Third Reich's survival, Speer became indifferent to the sufferings of these workers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper is the culmination of three years of research and undergraduate work on the topic of foreign and slave labor in Nazi Germany at the University of California at Santa Barbara. I would like to take this moment to thank the individuals who helped me complete this project and my undergraduate work.

To my mother who has always supported me and my decisions in life. You have and will remain the most important person in my life. This paper is dedicated to you. To Grandpa and Grandma Jacobsen, and Auntie Ella, thank you for giving me the ability to focus on my studies. Without your support, the road to my achievements would have been far more difficult. I wish you could be here to share in my happiness. To the rest of my family, thank you for always supporting me, whether I was in Santa Barbara or in Germany. I love you all.

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This paper marks the end to the first phase of my collegiate career. My success rests with my supporters. With your continued support I will achieve the remainder of my goals in life. Thank you all.

J. Gray, Santa Barbara, June 2001.

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GLOSSARY & ABBREVIATIONS

Arbeitserziehungslager Labor education camp (LEC): penal camps set up to discipline both German and foreign workers.

Bummelanten Workers who are either lazy or slacking at the workplace. Can be used to describe both German and foreigners.

GBA Generalbevollmächtigter für den Arbeitseinsatz (Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment), centralizing function set up in 1942; Fritz Sauckel, who had been Gauleiter of Thuringia, was appointed GBA.

Gauleiter The head of a Gau, a Nazi Party administrative region. There were 32 such districts in 1938, increased to 40 in Greater Germany by 1942. Gauleiters wielded considerable power at the regional level. They ranked just below the senior echelon of party officers, the Reichsleiters.

German Labor Front (GLF): National Socialist party-affiliated association of German workers set up in 1933; compulsory membership; replaced all previous unions. The Labor Front had full control of wages and replaced the collective bargaining system.

OKW Oberkommando der Wehrmacht: Wehrmacht (Armed Forces) Supreme Command, headed by General Wilhelm Keitel as chief of staff and Alfred Jodl as chief of operations.

Organization Todt (OT) Semi-military government agency in the Third Reich for the construction of highways (such as the autobahn) and military installations, headed by Albert Speer after Fritz Todt's death in 1942.

Ostarbeiter "Eastern workers," Russian civilian laborers in World War II; an official designation.

Ostarbeitererlasse Decrees on Russian civilian forced laborers, issued by the RSHA in February 1942 and patterned on the Polenerlasse.

Polenerlasse Decrees on Polish workers, issued on March 8, 1940 as a special package of restrictive decrees regulating the working and living conditions of Polish civilian laborers.

RSHA Reichssicherheitshauptamt (Reich Security Main Office), organizational amalgamation of the state security police (criminal police and political police, "Gestapo") with the Security Service (SD) of the party, from September 1939 functioning as the main office of the SS. The nerve center for National Socialist policies of terror, expulsion, and annihilation.

SD Sicherheitsdienst (Security Service), intelligence unit of the NSDAP.

Speer Betriebe "Protected Factories," named after Albert Speer. Factories mainly in occupied France operating for the German war effort, where the French workforce was protected from the forcible conscription by Sauckel's labor deployment recruitment units.

Untermensch "Subhuman": in Nazi ideology, a person of inferior racial stock.

Vernichtung durch Arbeit "death through work": used to describe the Nazi regime's policy of the killing "inferior" persons through work.

Zentrale Planung ZP, Central Planning: a staff created by Speer in April 1942, consisting of Speer, Körner (Four-Year-Plan Office) and Milch (head of air armaments). ZP dealt primarily with raw materials allocation. However, it also dealt frequently with questions of foreign workers, and issued numerous directives on manpower needs, labor allocation and distribution.

Introduction

John Steiner, a former Czech forced laborer, visited Albert Speer after his release from prison to find the answer to a question that has embodied the post-war vision of Speer. How could a man as intelligent and seemingly friendly as Speer have become indifferent to the suffering of the millions of foreign workers in Germany's war industries who were under his direction? Steiner walked away with this explanation:

> Above all, during the conversation with Speer, I came to the same horrifying recognition as my fellow survivor Samuel Pisar, namely, that I too could have become a perpetrator under certain condition and circumstances. I too could have been driven by ambition and lust for power, to satisfy my own uncivilized drives with dogmatic, militant, and absolutist ideology. I too could have harmed others, done dreadful things to them.[1]

Steiner's explanation is the reality of who Albert Speer was during the Third Reich. The ideologically driven Nazi regime allowed individuals who were ambitious enough to become powerful parts of a system of terror and destruction. Speer was a perfect fit, as he was a "stereotypical bureaucrat who placed his own career above all other considerations."[2]

As an architect, Speer transferred the ideals of the Nazi Party into governmental buildings and Party rallies. These projects expressed not only Speer's brilliance for organization, but also his burning ambition for success. Impressed by Speer, Hitler made him his personal architect and thereafter a close relationship developed. The dynamics of this relationship was based on an attachment to what they offered each other. Hitler found in Speer the architect that he never was, as well as an individual whose ruthlessness and loyalty would direct Germany's war industries to achieve its maximum

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[1] Steiner, Reflections on Experiences in Nazi Death Camps, intro ii
[2] Goldcamp, Review of Matthias Schmidt's book *AS: The End of a Myth.*

output potential. Speer found in Hitler a catalyst for architecture, and the man who could satisfy his ambition for power and success.

With Speer's accession to the position of Minister of Armaments and Munitions, he became focused on one goal. Speer believed that Germany was in a fight for its survival. By increasing armaments production to satisfy the demands of war, he could directly contribute to the Third Reich's survival. By focusing on and successfully accomplishing this goal, Speer would continue to win the favor of Hitler, and increase his power base within the Nazi regime. So focused was Speer on increasing the output of the armaments industry that he became a man focused on statistics and not morality. He was willing to accept the regime's established practice of mistreating foreign and concentration camp/slave laborers, as long as his production expectations were being satisfied.

Speer's powers in the Nazi regime and its authoritarian system of rule allowed him to act ruthlessly to ensure increases in armaments production. This meant that anyone from the individuals employed in Speer's ministry, to German industrialists, to the workers in industry itself could be subject to punishments from Speer, punishments that included fines, imprisonment, and death. At the same time, the workforce of the war industries was the lifeblood of production and therefore the key to the nation's ability to continue the fight. Speer knew the importance of foreign workers, and he therefore implemented and supported improvements in the treatment of workers, which he believed, were necessary to increasing their productivity. But the simple fact remains that Speer was only interested in the bottom line, and he was willing to act as ruthlessly towards Germans as he was towards non-Germans to meet his goals. Speer's running of his ministry can be viewed in this way: Speer saw laborers and anybody else who worked

within his ministry and system not as human beings but as parts of a machine designed to perform a function and provide an output.

In the post-war era, Speer has been given significant scholarly attention. For the most part, this has been limited to descriptions of Speer's architectural projects, his revamping of Germany's war economy, his knowledge of the Holocaust, and his personality. Two recent books on Speer stand out as examples of the differing opinions on him.

The first, Dan van der Vat's *The Good Nazi* takes the position that Speer was an evil person, and that his actions during the Third Reich support this view. Van der Vat writes that Speer's "continual confession of guilt and the monotonous chant of repentance were only a sham."[3] However, van der Vat has an obviously biased perspective: his father was forced to work in one of Germany's armaments factories. The author does establish that Speer had lied on occasion about the extent to which he had knowledge of the Nazi regime's horrific treatment of workers. But van der Vat oversteps his boundaries as he describes Speer as an evil man. He makes unwarranted generalizations regarding Speer and the treatment of foreign and slave laborers in Germany's war industries, thus placing an unjustified amount of personal responsibility for these workers' treatment on Speer.

The second book, Gitta Sereny's *Albert Speer: His Battle with the Truth*, "conducts what is largely a psychological inquest" into Speer's character.[4] Through exhaustive research and personal interviews, Sereny paints what I have found to be an accurate picture of Speer's identity. She gives considerable attention to Speer's

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[3] Van der Vat, *The Good Nazi*, 369.
[4] Wistrich, Review of *Albert Speer: His Battle with the Truth*, 60.

ambitions and relationship with Hitler. However, although Sereny does briefly discuss Speer's attitudes regarding workers' treatment, she fails to integrate those actions into Speer's actions as minister.

Although historians have given Speer considerable attention, they have not yet examined one crucial aspect: how Speer's personal ambitions led to his immorality with respect to the treatment of foreign and slave workers in Germany's war industries. This paper seeks to provide an answer to that question.

Part I. Speer the Architect

Albert Speer was born on March 19, 1905 in Mannheim Germany. He was born into an architectural family, as his grandfather and father were both architects. His grandfather was a professor at the university in Dortmund, and his father had started his own architectural firm in 1892 at the age of twenty-nine. By the time Albert was born, his father had become one of the busiest architects in Mannheim and had amassed a small fortune. Speer was raised in an upper middle class household, complete with servants and a chauffeur. Born the middle of three boys, he found himself distanced from his parents, as his siblings were their favorites. Speer was also the smallest of the three and often found himself struggling to keep up physically with his two brothers. Speer's intelligence compensated for his lack of physical strength. Although somewhat of a slacker, he excelled in mathematics and he took the Abitur (matriculation) examination at the age of eighteen, a year early.

After passing the Abitur, Speer had only one idea, which was to become a mathematician. But this was not to be. His father addressed the young Speer's dream by saying; "Can you imagine yourself spending your life teaching in a backwater university? You'd never make any money. You'd probably end up cramming snotty-nosed little morons."[5] Speer eventually relented to his father's demands and began studying architecture at the Technical University of Karlsruhe. Speer stayed at Karlsruhe for only one semester and then in the spring of 1924 transferred to the Technical University of Munich.

Speer arrived in Munich a few months after Hitler's attempted Bierhall putsch. Speer himself wasn't interested in the political happenings of that time. In fact he was not a card-carrying member of any formal organization in the 1920s. He stayed away from politics and spent most of his free time canoeing, cycling, camping, hiking or skiing. He also spent much

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[5] Sereny, *AS*: *His Battle with the Truth*, 63

of this time with his teenage love, Margarete Weber, who would eventually become his wife. As a student, Speer remained dedicated to his work and didn't participate in any university clubs or sports.[6]

Still not quiet at home at the University in Munich, he followed his best friend Rudolf Wolters, in the autumn of 1925, to the Institute of Technology in Berlin-Charlottenburg. It would be in Berlin where Speer would find his first intellectual mentor, Professor Heinrich Tessenow. Tessenow was an idealist and a champion of simplicity, and he favored naturalistic and nationalistic rather than classical approaches in architecture. The "puritan sentimentalism" of Tessenow's architecture later drew the praise of the Nazis.[7] Tessenow captured Speer's imagination and dedication, and in the spring semester of 1926 Speer, as well as Wolters, began studying under Tessenow.

Speer's dedication to his studies quickly began to pay dividends. With Wolters filling the role of runner-up, he usually won the class projects that Tessnow would assign. Speer wasn't particularly fond, however, of much of the work that was required in his projects, and he would hire other students to do his drafting for him. Wolter's description of Speer as "...a genius but a loafer," is accurate. Speer was not interested in laboring to complete a project or solve a problem. He preferred to farm out his work and do the bare minimum. But the results of his work were consistently sound, as can be seen in Tessenow's praise.

In the summer of 1927, both Speer and Wolters passed their examinations, and he formally graduated in February 1928. Wolters decided to continue his studies to earn his doctorate, but Speer ended his studies after Tessenow offered him a salaried job as his academic assistant. This offer was a rare honor for a new graduate, attesting to Speer's

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[6] van der Vat, *The Good Nazi*, 32
[7] van der Vat, *The Good Nazi*, 34

abilities and dedication to architecture. The job offer was also quite remarkable because of Speer's young age (he was only twenty-three), and Tessnow was one of the country's top professors.

With a steady job and financially independent from his parents, Speer married Margarete Weber on August 28,1928. He and Margarete settled in Wannsee, a suburb of Berlin, and would live there until 1931. Speer took over lecturing for Tessnow, becoming a favorite of the students. It was through the students in Tessnow's classes that he was first introduced to the politics of National Socialism. Tessnow's architectural ideas were attracting a considerable number of students who were associated with the Nazi Party. They convinced Speer to attend a speech given by Hitler at the Neue Welt Bierhall on December 4, 1930. He sat with other academics on the platform where Hitler would speak. Expecting a man in "military tunic, with shoulder straps, swastika armband, and hair flapping over his forehead," Speer instead found Hitler wearing, "blue suit and looking markedly respectable."[8] The emotions of the audience and Hitler's oratory skills captivated Speer, sending him, as he later wrote in his autobiography, on a late night walk to sort out the events of the evening in his mind. He had seen a man who offered hope, a man with "new ideals, a new understanding, new tasks" who could move Germany from hopeless unemployment to economic recovery.[9] Hitler's speech, together with Tessnow's own vision of what qualities should distinguish a leader, eventually convinced Speer that Hitler and the Nazi Party were the future and what Germany needed.[10] On March 1, 1931, he was accepted as a member of the Nazi Party, becoming member number 474,481.

In early 1932, the salaries for professor assistants were reduced, owing to the economic strain on the budget of the state of Prussia, Speer decided to move back to

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[8] Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 44

Mannheim to manage the buildings owned by his family. There his architectural career floundered.

But Speer's fortunes changed again when he returned to Berlin in July 1932 to help the Party with the election. Karl Hanke, a friend within the Party, offered him the job of refurbishing the Gau (district) headquarters in Berlin. He jumped at the chance for any work, and although the job required only painting and other minor adjustments to the building, the final product pleased Hitler.[11]

In April 1933, Speer designed the decorations for the night rally to be held at Tempelhof Field on May 1. His design was for "a large platform and behind it three mighty banners, each of them taller than a ten-story building, stretched between wooden struts: two of the banners would be black-white-red with the swastika banner between them. They were to be illuminated by powerful searchlights."[12] Although Tessnow criticized the design, Hitler enthusiastically accepted it.

With two Party projects under his belt, in June 1933 Speer was offered the job to redo Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels' house. Upon accepting the job, he announced that he would have it completed in two months. An astonished Goebbels told Hitler of the young architect's bold statement and Hitler responded with incredulity. But Speer demonstrated his capability for organization and farming out work. He kept three shifts working day and night, and he punctually completed the building on the promised date. Speer's ability to successfully accomplish such works won him the job of designing the Party Rally of 1933 in Nuremberg. Taking the ideas from his Tempelhof Field design, he added a gigantic eagle of over a hundred-foot wingspan, and again he won Hitler's approval.

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[9] Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 45
[10] Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 43
[11] Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 55
[12] Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 58

In the autumn of 1933 Hitler ordered the reconstruction of the Reich Chancellor's residence in Berlin. He commissioned the job to his personal architect, Professor Paul Troost. Troost, however, was living and working in Munich at the time and required assistance in overseeing the reconstruction. Hitler remembered a young architect who had completed the remodeling of Goebbels' residence in astounding time, and he assigned Speer to help with the swift reconstruction of the Chancellery.[13] Hitler, always interested in Reich building projects, made daily visits to the site to review the progress. Hitler seemed to take a liking to the young architect and after twenty to thirty visits he invited Speer to lunch.

As Speer wrote in *Inside the Third Reich*:

> It was quite obvious that this luncheon would be of decisive significance for my future. A few years later, Hitler came back to it: "I noticed you during my visits to the site," he said. "I was searching for a young architect to whom I would be able to entrust my building plans one day. He had to be young because, as you know, these plans extend far into the future. I needed someone who, with the authority I conferred upon him now, would be capable of carrying on after my death. And that man I found in you.[14]

At this fateful lunch Hitler realized that Speer had been the designer for the 1933 rallies at Tempelhof and Nuremberg. Hitler recognized not only that Speer possessed a talent for organization, but that he also grasped the ideals of the party and was able to embody them in architecture. Hitler saw Speer as the man who could transform his grandiose building ideas into reality. Speer was in essence the "personification of his life's dream."[15] As Hitler's special guest, the twenty-eight years old Speer was "...dizzy with excitement,"[16] having found quite a mentor to replace Tessenow.

The lunch set in motion a relationship that would dominate Speer's life until the end of the war. He became a part of Hitler's small personal circle. He was expected to drop by

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[13] Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 34
[14] Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 63
[15] Schmidt, *AS: The End of a Myth*, 42
[16] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 130

to chat, to be called upon to discuss architectural projects, and when possible to be present for lunch and/or dinner.[17] Many times Speer found himself having to fly to either Munich or the Berghof (Hitler's mountain residence outside of Berchtesgaden) to discuss Hitler's architectural ideas.[18] Over the years a trusting friendship beyond the realm of architecture developed between the two. This friendship would later pay huge dividends for Speer when he became Minister of Armaments and found himself in a position to take liberties not awarded to Reich Marshal Hermann Göring or SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler.[19] The relationship also had a major impact on both individuals' lives. After spending time with Speer, Hitler always seemed happy and relaxed. Speer for his part was so taken with Hitler that when Hitler learned disapprovingly that he had no children after six years of marriage, Speer promptly had six children in the next ten years. When asked by author Gitta Sereny whether he had produced the children for Hitler, the Führer's architect responded, "One might say so."[20]

Speer's star continued to rise in 1934, and the year solidified his position in the Third Reich along the side of Hitler. In the early part of the year he was appointed director of "Beauty of Labor"(a worker's front). From his new post, he developed a new type of "barrack camp for the workforce of the Autobahnen" (Germany's new freeways).[21] These camps designs proved so successful once implemented that they later they were used to house many of the foreign workers in Germany.

On January 21, 1934 Hitler's personal architect, Paul Ludwig Troost, died after a short illness, leaving vacant the position closest to Hitler's heart. There was no doubt in the

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[17] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 106
[18] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 117
[19] Schmidt, *AS: The End of a Myth*, 42
[20] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 110
[21] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 108

Nazi hierarchy that Speer would be the man to replace Troost. State Secretary in Goebbels' Ministry of Propaganda, Walther Funk, even proclaimed to Speer, "Congratulations! Now you are number one."[22]

The major project that Speer inherited from Troost in 1935 was the construction of the Nuremberg party rally area. Some of the complex, which covered an area of 6.5 square miles, still exists today. Following the ideas Hitler sketched while in prison in 1925, he created what is possibly the ultimate lasting expression of National Socialism. The design to embodied the larger-than-life ideals of the Party. The Grossestrasse (great street) that runs down the center of the area points to the old castle of Nuremberg and generates a connection between the old German Kings and the new Reich. The focal Zeppelin Field, which seated an impressive 340,000 people, was the scene for the impressive Cathedral of Light, * created by Speer and traditionally used for the rallies. The new Party Congress Hall, only the shell of which was ever constructed, would have seated more than 50,000 people. The unique feature of the hall was that the speaker, who in most cases would have been Hitler, was to be illuminated by natural light that hit the podium in the center of the hall. The light would have been deflected to the podium from a glass cutout in the roof of the building, thereby giving the speaker a more heavenly look to the audience. The Märzfeld (March field) with a capacity of about 500,000 people, was to be used as a war games area to express the technology and strength of the thousand year Reich. However, the field was never completed and its remains were destroyed after the war.

*The Cathedral of light was "130 antiaircraft searchlights placed around the field at intervals of forty feet, sending soaring into the sky individual beams, which merged finally into a general glow."[23]

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[22] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 115
[23] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 131

But by far the most impressive structure was to be the granite "German Stadium" that would have seated over 400,000 people. The horseshoe stadium, which would have been the largest in the world both then and now, could have hosted any type of sporting event and military games. The stadium was perhaps the prime example of Speer's passion for expressing Nazism and pleasing the Führer. The stadium was completely of his own design, and it was to have "featured several stone towers 100 meters high (twice as tall as Arc de Triomphe) topped with the party eagle."[24] Paul Troost's widow best describes Speer's building projects and enthusiasm for Hitler:

> Had Hitler commissioned her husband to design a building one hundred meters long, Troost would have thought about it and then informed him the next day that because of structural and aesthetic factors the building could only be ninety-six meters long. But if you told Speer, 'I need a building one hundred meters long,' he would instantly say: "Mein Fuehrer, two hundred meters!'[25]

Speer himself points to the inspiration for his implementation of Hitler's architectural ideas when he wrote in 1936 that the, "large buildings, which are now beginning to rise in many places, are meant to be an intrinsic expression of the movement for millennia and thus a part of the movement per se. It was the Fuehrer who created this movement, came to power through its strength, and is still shaping it in every last detail even today."[26]

As evidence of Speer's ever-rising star, Hitler in 1935 gave him a house a few minutes away from, the Berghof. He was one of only three members of the Nazi hierarchy (Martin Bormann and Hermann Göring being the others) to be allowed a residency on the mountain. Speer's house on the "Berg" became the residence for his family, allowing him to spend time with his children. This time was brief, because Hitler's demands, both professional and personal, were great.

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[24] van der Vat, *The Good Nazi*, 59
[25] Schmidt, *AS: The End of a Myth*, 44
[26] Speer, "*Die Bauten des Führers,*" in Bilder aus dem Leben des Führers, 34

With Speer nearly always close by and their relationship deepening, Hitler related to Speer the vision for his greatest building project yet. He assigned Speer in the summer of 1936 the task of developing a renewal program for Berlin. Once again his design incorporated Hitler's ideas. This awesome project was to be the ultimate expression of German town planning. It would make Berlin into "Germania," following Hitler's belief that "...the German nation did not represent some sort of second class power, but is the equal of every other people in the world, even America."[27] In fact Germania was to surpass every other city in the world. The project called for the complete revamping of the center of the city. A north-south axis was to be added to the already existing east-west one. Berlin's numerous train stations were to be reduced to two huge stations, respectively located at the north and south sides of this axis. Along the north-south avenue was to be a triumphal arch, 120 meters in height, which would dwarf the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, only 48 meters in height. The arch was to list the names of Germany's 1.8 million fallen heroes of World War I. (Speer presented Hitler with a replica of the arch for his fiftieth birthday. Hitler was so taken by the present that he spent most of the remainder of the night intensely studying the model.) The north-south avenue, at 120 meters wide and almost five kilometers long, easily out did the Champs Elysees, which was only 100 meters wide and two kilometers long. The buildings were designed to rise gently along both avenues towards the new focal point of the city and the world, the Great Hall. This monstrosity of a building was to have had a dome of 250 meters in diameter and it would have seated over 150,000 people.[28] Atop the dome Speer originally placed a giant eagle with its talons on a swastika, but upon Hitler's suggestion he replaced the swastika with a globe. With a planned completion date of 1950,

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[27] Düfler/Thies/Henke, *Hitlers Städte*, 297
[28] van der Vat, *The Good Nazi*, 69f

Germania would have been Speer's ultimate architectural accomplishment for National Socialism.

On January 30, 1937, the fourth anniversary of the Nazis' accession to power, Hitler officially appointed Speer to the position of "chief planner for the construction of Berlin."[29] The *Völkischer Beobachter* wrote that Speer was "a man who, as both a National Socialist and artist, speaks for himself through his works.... A National Socialist and expert has received a great assignment."[30] His new title was that of Generalbauinspektor (Inspector General of Building) and the organization that he set up to assist him was informally called the GBI.[31] With this new position came sweeping powers and wealth for the thirty-two year old Speer. He was responsible only to Hitler for the building project. He was also given a salary of 1700 ReichMarks (the Mayor of Berlin received only 1654 RM), and an expense account of around 8000 RM annually. All of this was in addition to his salary of 1000 RM for his Nuremberg work.[32]

Although Speer's architecture and building projects expressed his and Hitler's National Socialist fervor, some did not unconditionally embrace Speer's architecture. Leni Riefenstahl, who made the films "Triumph of the Will" and "Olympia," remarked to author Gitta Sereny that "As an architect he was run of the mill, but he was extraordinarily intelligent, burningly ambitious and he had much more than a gift, a genius for organization."[33] Speer's success as the director of the GBI rested not only on the qualities cited by Riefenstahl but also on his "absolute subservience and authoritarianism." It was the

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[29] Schmidt, *AS: The End of a Myth*, 46
[30] Völkerischer Beobachter, 1/31/37
[31] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 144
[32] Schmidt, *AS: The End of a Myth*, 47f
[33] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 136

latter qualities, as well that would lead to his being appointed Minister of Armaments and Munitions.[34]

Once at the GBI, Speer brought in people who were close to him. Of the eighty-five individuals who were employed by the GBI, Annemarie Kempf and long time friend Rudolf Wolters were the most important part of Speer's "brilliant young team."[35] Kempf became his personal secretary and Wolters was responsible for the north-south axis and for re-networking the railroad system of Berlin. Both Kempf and Wolters would remain in the service of Speer throughout his GBI and ministerial tenure.

In his capacity as director of the GBI, Speer's desire for absolute control manifested itself in his conflict with the mayor of Berlin, Julius Lippert. Speer regarded Lippert as a threat to his authoritarian control over the reconstruction of Berlin. As mayor, Lippert did in fact desire a voice in the project. The city was, after all, partially funding the reconstruction. Power-hungry Speer responded to Lippert's attempted roadblock with an edict that gave himself total control. When Lippert refused to acquiesce, Speer took his case directly to Hitler, who promptly removed Lippert as Berlin's mayor. Speer even went as far as to send correspondence letters between himself and Lippert to SS Reichsfuehrer Heinrich Himmler for "confidential attention."[36] This was an early example of Speer's willingness to use of the existing regime's organs of terror to satisfy his own ambitions and goals.

At the end of January 1938, Hitler commissioned Speer to build a huge new Chancellery on Voss-strasse just south of Brandenburg Gate. The completion date of the building was to be January 10, 1939. Speer, who had had no previous inkling of Hitler's

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[34] K-H Ludwig. *Technik und Ingenieure im Dritten Reich*, 414f
[35] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 145
[36] BA NS 19 2046. Memorandum from the personal staff of the SS Reichsführer Heinrich Himmler, 1/11/41

deadline, was initially floored upon hearing of it. Nonetheless he announced that the new Chancellery would be completed by January 9, 1939.

To design the Chancellery, both interior and exterior, and then to construct it in less than one year was the ultimate test of Speer's abilities. But as usual he responded superbly under the pressure. He hired a workforce of about "8000 craftsmen and laborers, working in two shifts."[37] 4,500 of these workers were on site, while the rest were assigned the tasks of "working on materials, fixtures, and fittings elsewhere."[38] Hitler made constant visits to the building site to observe progress, but he never once suggested to Speer that he modify his design. On January 7, 1939 Speer revealed the new Chancellery to a delighted Hitler with two days to spare.

From January 1939 until February 1942, and with Germany's continuation of the war, Speer's duties as GBI gradually expanded. When British bombs began to fall on Berlin, the GBI was assigned the task of providing the inhabitants of the city with the necessary air-raid shelters. By August 1941 the GBI had built some 30,000 shelters and was commissioned to build 83,000 more. The GBI was also employed by the Wehrmacht for the purpose of repairing bomb-damaged buildings of the future Germania.[39] (Ironically some of the bomb damage actually helped Speer in the reconstruction of Berlin, as many of the bombs destroyed buildings marked for demolition.)

Several developments in late 1941 and early 1942 pushed Speer towards the position of Minister of Armaments. Speer took the new title of Chief of Defense Construction, which was directly related to the GBI's recent work. The GBI also worked on design plans for three new factories that were intended to build Junker Ju 88 aircraft, and it took

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[37] van der Vat, *The Good Nazi*, 82
[38] Ibid.
[39] van der Vat, *The Good Nazi*, 98f

over the construction at the experimental rocket station at Peenemuende on the Baltic Sea. Finally, in January 1942 the GBI began repairing and extending the railways in Nazi-occupied Russia, for which Speer assigned almost half of the GBI's 60,000 plus workforce.[40] These new tasks assigned to the GBI, especially the latter two, were infringements on Fritz Todt's "Organization Todt", which was normally assigned suck tasks. Yet Todt himself was less inclined than Speer to see his authority being invaded. Most likely Todt welcomed the additional help, especially in view of the chaotic supply line situation in the East.

A devoted National Socialist and a member of the "old guard," Todt was highly respected by Hitler. Todt had developed the Autobahnen in the early 30s, giving work to thousands of unemployed. Todt was originally appointed General Building Inspector of the German Road System on July 30, 1933, and his responsibilities increased with the expansion of the war. On March 17, 1940 he was appointed Reich Minister of Armaments and Munitions and one year later he became General Inspector of Water and Energy. Todt also controlled the development of new technologies and their implementation.[41]

But by 1942 Todt had become increasingly disillusioned by the war. He now believed that Germany's chances of winning were slim, commenting that "Germany… could not keep pace with the arms potential of the enemy."[42] Hitler's declaration of war against the U.S. particularly upset Todt, since America's industrial muscle would now be put to full use against Germany. Despite his misgivings, though, Todt only expressed his opinion to Hitler, and he never tried to undermine the Führer or the war effort.

Fritz Todt's life ended abruptly when his plane exploded in the air on the morning of February 8, 1942, shortly after takeoff from Hitler's eastern headquarters at Rastenburg.

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[40] van der Vat, *The Good Nazi*, 99f
[41] Schmidt, *AS: The End of a Myth*, 58
[42] Institut für Zeitgeschichte ED 99/9, Speer Interrogation, Written Statement by Walter Rohland about Todt's and Speer's positions on the war.

Although foul play has always been suspected, the explosion and subsequent crash of Todt's plane have never been satisfactionly explained. The most plausible explanation seems to be that the plane's self destruct mechanism was accidentally activated by a pilot who was unfamiliar with the plane.[43] Whatever the cause of the explosion, the end result was clear. Upon hearing the news of the crash, Hitler simply said that, "... Professor Speer was the only man who could replace Todt."[44]

Thus in early February 1942, Speer's life was transformed yet again by another man's death. He had returned late on February 7th from Dnyepropetrovsk in the Ukraine on an inspection tour of the GBI's staff there, and made a brief stop in Rastenburg. Speer, who had not seen Hitler in some time, met with the Fuehrer in the early hours of the morning of the 8th.[45] Todt had offered to take him back to Berlin with him on the morning of the 8th, and Speer had originally accepted Todt's offer. But when his meeting with Hitler lasted until after 3:00am, he decided to pass on the flight and instead caught up on some much needed sleep. A few hours later Todt was dead.

Six hours after Todt's death, Hitler appointed Speer Minister of Armaments and Munitions.[46] The appointment came as a surprise to Speer, as he had only expected to be given control of the construction projects that were directed through Todt's Organization Todt. Instead, all of Todt's powers, including that of General Inspector of Water and Energy and new technology development/implementation, were handed over to him.

Hitler's choice of an architect to replace the highly respected Todt was not unwarranted. By February of 1942 it had become quite clear that the Russian campaign would not be a Blitzkrieg (lighting war) but rather an extended campaign that would put greater demands

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[43] Baur, *Ich flog Mächtige der Erde*, 214
[44] Irving, *Hitler und seine Feldherren*, 374
[45] Schmidt, *AS: The End of a Myth*, 60
[46] Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 210

of production on Germany's war industries than the earlier campaigns in Poland and France had. With Todt's death Hitler needed a man who could not only replace Todt, but also achieve more than Todt had ever accomplished. Through his architectural work for the Reich, Speer had shown that he was qualified to replace Todt. He was an organizational genius, had an inconceivable work ethic, was burningly ambitious and had demonstrated his loyalty to his friend and Führer by accomplishing any task given to him. These qualities of Speer's would change the face of war production in Germany, allowing the country to fight until May 1945. But they also encouraged Speer to take whatever measures he saw necessary to fulfill the production demands of the German war machine and insure the Third Reich's survival.

Part II. Reich Minister Speer

Before exploring Speer's actions regarding the treatment of foreign and slave laborers we need to explain, the power base that he inherited and then expanded. In the short span of a few months Speer dramatically changed the powers and influence that the Ministry of Armaments had over war production. What must also be considered were the powers possessed by other ministries and agencies that contributed to the existing policies of treatment for foreign laborers at the time Speer assumed the Ministry of Armaments.

Speer inherited an Armaments Ministry lined with the faults of a corrupt National Socialist system and threatened by the "rivalries and intrigues"[47] engaged in by other Nazi leaders. Speer's first problem was that he was threatened with the loss of many his powers immediately after his appointment by Hitler, this despite the fact that Hitler authorized Speer to take over Todt's responsibilities in all regards. It was especially Göring, as head of the Four-Year Plan, who posed the greatest threat to Speer. Todt's death provided Göring with an opportunity to expand his power base by taking over Todt's armament production powers.

Speer's second problem was that the ministry's relationship with industry was in need of reorganization. Before his appointment the running of the armaments industry had enjoyed considerable influence by members of the armed forces and members of the armaments and other ministries. He realized that many of these individuals hindered the operations of industry, which in turn slowed the research, development, and production of armaments. Before Speer could increase armaments production a new organizational system had to be implemented.

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[47] Kershaw, *Hitler 1936-1945 Nemesis*, 504

The third problem encountered by Speer was that the Ministry lacked a comprehensive agency within it for addressing and controlling labor allocation in armaments production. Indeed, the Reich lacked any such ministry at all. German Labor Front (GLF) represented German workers as well as the foreign workers in Germany but it lacked power over the deployment of workers. As more men were being drafted into military service, Speer acknowledged the need for an agency or ministry that could provide a stable workforce for the armaments industry and the war economy.

The last problem for Speer was that the powers of his newly acquired ministry were nowhere near all encompassing. His ministry only had control over the production of armaments for the Wehrmacht. The Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine each controlled its own armament production. This was one of the prime failings of Todt's Ministry. He had failed to bring the three branches of the Armed Services' armaments production under the control of his ministry. In addition to the division of production, the Ministry of the Economy controlled the allocation of raw materials. The result was constant quarreling between Todt, the Luftwaffe, and the Kriegsmarine over raw materials, especially the stockpiling of such valuable materials as steel and coal by each ministry for it own production purposes.

With respect to the first of the problems faced by Speer, the first power move against him power base came on February 13, 1942. He met with top-level service and industrial representatives, who included Göring's deputy Erhard Milch and Minister of the Economy Walther Funk. Under the direction of Göring, Milch and Funk had planned to nominate Milch as overseer of armaments production and thus cut away at Speer's already minimal power base. But Speer had anticipated such a move against him, and he had obtained Hitler's guarantee that if he encountered any resistance or threats to his

power, he should defer the meeting to Hitler's Cabinet Room, where Hitler himself would announce his unequivocal backing of Speer. This Hitler did, and through his announcement to the members of the meeting, made it clear that they were expected to follow Speer's direction. The meeting also showed that the well-known close relationship between Hitler and Speer had carried over to Speer's new position as Reich Minister of Armaments and Munitions. As long as he remained in Hitler's good graces, his power was uncontestable. This would remain the case for almost two years, until an extended hospitalization allowed Speer's enemies to make serious inroads on his power base and Hitler's reliance on him.

By February 18, 1942, with Hitler's backing, Speer had secured his position as supervisor of armaments production, and he was officially appointed Reich Minister of Armaments and Munitions on the following day. After the war he explained that, " I could do within the widest limits practically what I wanted."[48] Having protected the powers that were given him, Speer rapidly moved towards the consolidation of his ministry and the reorganization of German armaments production. The first decree, and perhaps the most remarkable, was ordered by Speer on February 19, 1942 and signed by Hitler on the 21st of the following month. It allowed for the penalization of armaments manufacturers who made false claims for labor, parts, equipment, or raw materials. The penalties could range from penal servitude to death. What is important about this decree is that it was not the Volksgerichtshof or Peoples Court that decided the punishment for violators, but rather Speer himself. Known as the "Decree for the Protection of the Armaments Industry," it would only be used twice by him.[49] A short time after the

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[48] Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 217
[49] Schmidt, *AS The End of a Myth*, 120

issuing of the decree, Speer sent two managers to a concentration camp without trial for using skilled workers as domestic servants. Speer's own explanation for this decree was that it was designed to be primarily a scare tactic to bring industrialists under the control of his ministry.[50] The decree is revealing of Speer's ruthless character. He demanded results from the people working under him, and if members of industry weren't toeing the line then he was willing to use the regime's system of terror against them.

Regarding Speer's second challenge, his next step in reforming the armaments industry and simultaneously consolidating his power was the expansion of the system of Selbstverantwortung (self-responsibility) of industry. The system, originally introduced by Todt, was based on the idea that the armaments industry was to be left free from government and military influence as long as it met the production quotas set for it by the Armaments Ministry. Speer set up within the Selbstverantwortung system the Hauptausschuss and Ringe (Main Committee and Rings). He acknowledged that he himself did not have the expertise regarding the operating details industry and production. The Hauptausschuss and Ringe, in other words, placed leading members of industry, such as Walter Rohland in the case of tanks, in charge of development, material requirements and production abilities. The Hauptausschuss and Ringe placed production programs in the hands of those who were involved in the actual production process. This decentralization of armaments production, with Speer's guidance from above, was one of the main reasons for the initial successful increases in production that he was able to achieve. Within six months ammunition output rose by 94%, production of guns 27%, tanks 25%, and overall production by 60%.

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[50] Schmidt, *AS The End of a Myth*, 120.

Another reason for Speer's successful increases of production output lay in two emergency measures enacted to minimize the industrial production delays caused by Allied bombing raids. The two measures implemented were the disbursement of industry and the establishment of Special Staffs. The disbursement of industry entailed the creation of small factories where parts of airplanes, submarines, tanks, etc. would be produced and then shipped to a main factory where final assembly would take place. In this way, a bombing raid against an aircraft factory would only minimally disrupt overall production. Disbursement would also lead to the development by the Speer Ministry of underground factories, discussed later, that were immune from Allied bombing.

The Special Staffs had various functions, but they were primarily established to expedite post air raid reconstruction of damaged factories. Each section of industry such as ball bearings or aircraft had its own staff. In addition to the staffs' reconstruction responsibilities, they were also in charge of maintaining production, obtaining scarce materials and finding personnel for specific factory work.

Speer's third problem and in his eyes the most urgent one that needed to be addressed in his first weeks as minister, was Germany's labor shortage.[51] At the time the Wehrmacht, Luftwaffe, Four Year Plan Office, Reich Labor Office and Reich Food Office were all recruiting and distributing their own laborers. This division of labor recruiting and deployment caused shortages in the workforces of many factories within Germany, resulting in decreased productivity. Speer's short-term solution to this problem was to transfer the needed workers from factories or areas that had surplus labor to the labor deficient factories. But he did not anticipate problems with the local

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[51] Speer, *Inside the Third Reich*, 291.

Gauleiters, who opposed the transfer of any of the labor force in their own Gau to another Gau.

Dealings with the Gauleiters would be a constant burden for Speer throughout his ministerial career, especially when he wanted to cut back or altogether stop the production of civilian goods in favor of the production of armaments. Most Gauleiters did not wish to cut back or stop the production of civilian goods because they believed that the German populace should have the ability to purchase durable goods (rugs, women's hair dyes). They believed that the German populace shouldn't have to endure the hardships of war and make personal sacrifices. This belief in part reflected the widespread German confidence in winning an unconditional victory. The Gauleiters were overly optimistic, accepting Goebbels' propaganda that "Our victory is assured."[52] Speer himself can also be held accountable for the Gauleiters' resistant attitudes. Every time he reported successful increases in armaments production with little cost to civilian production, Speer simply made the Gauleiters less amenable to cutting back civilian production in their respective Gau. The failure to realize or acknowledge that Germany was in a life-or-death struggle that required restrictions on civilian production was one of the major blunders of the Nazi leadership during the war. Speer was one of the few who did realize this sobering fact, but by mid 1944 when the economy was finally put on a "total war" status, it was too late to change the fate of the Third Reich.

With most Gauleiters actively opposed to his policies for labor, Speer believed that the solution to the problem was to have a Gauleiter appointed as head of the procurement of labor. What Speer was ideally searching for was a Gauleiter with whom he enjoyed good relations. In this way he would be able to control, or at least have an

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[52] Speer interview, May 31, 1945, in the files of the USSBS, 11

indirect influence over, the procurement of labor, even though this responsibility was not within his ministry's formal purview.[53]

Speer's chosen Gauleiter was Karl Hanke of Silesia. Hanke and Speer had known each other since 1932, and Hanke had given Speer his first job contracts for the Nazi Party. But Hitler denied Speer's request for Hanke. Instead, thanks in part to Martin Bormann's influence, Hitler appointed Fritz Sauckel Gauleiter of Thuringia Generalbevollmächtigter für Arbeitseinsatz or GBA (Plenipotentiary-General for Labor Supply). Sauckel's appointment came on March 19, 1942 and represented the first time that Hitler had rebuffed a request of Speer's. Sauckel was a member of the "old warriors" and Martin Bormann's friend.[54] (*Martin Bormann was originally chief staff officer of Rudolf Hess. In 1941 he became head of the party Chancellery, and eventually the office secretary to the Führer in April 1943.) He was appointed not only because of his better relations with other Gauleiters, but also as a block by Bormann to Speer's growing power. Bormann realized that if Hanke were to be appointed as minister of the GBA, then Speer would have control over the new established ministry. Thus Bormann persuaded Hitler to appoint Sauckel who would act independently of Speer. Speer consented to the appointment of Sauckel, but was in immediate conflict with the new minister. In Speer's mind Sauckel was under his authority as Minister of Armaments. However, Sauckel was appointed by Hitler and viewed himself as answerable only to Hitler.

Although Sauckel as minister of the GBA controlled a separate entity from

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[53] van der Vat, *The Good Nazi*, 126
[54] Ibid. 127

Speer's ministry, he was in many ways reliant on Speer. In addition, Speer's participation in the treatment of forced laborers in the armaments industry can be better defined through a definition of Sauckel's powers.

Sauckel was responsible for the procurement of laborers to fill the gaps in the workforce of German industry. He was also responsible for the workforce in the agricultural sector. Speer set the quotas for the number of workers required by industry, but it was Sauckel's responsibility to provide the specified number. With the duration of the war, Sauckel's duties became even more important to the survival of Germany as continual drafts depleted the men in Germany's workforce.

When Sauckel became minister, Germany controlled most of Europe. Hitler and others in the Nazi leadership believed that the peoples of Europe were the solution to Germany's labor shortage. Sauckel's original recruitment of workers from some of the occupied territories of Europe was successful, especially in the Ukraine, where people were sent to Germany in trains decorated with flowers, expecting to find a better life. But Sauckel ran into difficulties once news of the harsh living conditions and overall treatment of workers found its way back to recruitment areas. Both Hitler and Speer pressured him to fulfill the quotas of workers. Sauckel turned almost immediately the forced recruitment of local populaces. In addition to the procurement of labor, Sauckel's ministry had control over the GLF and Gauleiters, both of which had the right to inspect and demand improvement in the living conditions and care of foreign workers in Germany.

Addressing the last of the above noted problems, with the question of responsibility for labor procurement settled, Speer took one final step in the weeks following his appointment to expand his power and control over the war economy.

Originally, Speer's ministerial responsibilities were "that of an expediter of special programs and a coordinator for production of urgently required weapons and munitions."[55] Control of the war economy from the allocation of raw materials, to the basic direction of the armaments industry, to final production rested with the German armed forces, the Four-Year Plan Office, the Ministry of the Economy and the Ministry of Labor. Speer realized that if he were to successfully direct the armaments production of Germany, then one central agency for directing Germany's war economy had to be created.

Speer's solution was the creation of the Zentrale Planung (Central Planning Board), which was established by decree on April 25, 1942. The Zentrale Planung was a bold move by Speer to gain control over Germany's war economy at a time when the nation's war economy desperately needed centralized control. Göring signed the decree establishing the Zentrale Planung, after it was agreed to set up the board within the parameters of the Four-Year Plan. Placing the Zentrale Planung under the Four-Year Plan was necessary to appease Göring, who would never accept another agency diminishing the powers of the Four-year Plan Office. However, in actuality this arrangement was no more than an agreement allowing Göring to maintain his prestige, as he would never exercise any power over the board.

The Zentrale Planung was composed of three individuals: Göring's Deputy Chief under the Four-Year Plan, Paul Körner, Generalluftzeugmeister Erhard Milch, and Speer himself. The board was created under an agreement between Speer and Milch, who enjoyed good relations with one another and who both saw the necessity of having a board that would direct the war economy. Körner was added to the Zentrale Planung for

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[55] Homze, *Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany*, 90

the sole purpose of giving Göring the perception that members of his staff had control of the board. Göring believed that by having Milch and Körner in the Zentrale Planung he would have a majority, and that he, not Speer, could thus indirectly control the board. But the reality was quite the opposite. Speer and Milch formed the majority over Körner and Milch accented to Speer having control over the Zentrale Planung. * This is not to say that Milch was completely subordinate to Speer, as he retained the Luftwaffe's armaments production. But it was Speer's and Milch's good working relationship that allowed the Zentrale Planung and Germany's war economy to function as efficiently as it did.

The decree that established the Zentrale Planung was designed to put the board in charge of the management of the war economy.[56] As Zilbert explains,

> "Under the decree the Zentrale Planung could make all decisions affecting new plans or the continuing of existing plans; decide on the creation or improvement of synthetic raw material production; control the allocation of existing raw materials, especially of iron and other metals, to allocate the supply of power and coal in productive uses, and decide on the allocation of available transport space."[57]

In his capacity as czar of raw materials allocation, Speer could influence the armament production output of the Luftwaffe and Kriegsmarine. These two branches of the military became reliant on Speer for their industries' raw materials and they thus saw that it was in their best interest to keep up a good working relationship with Speer. This reliance on Speer and his successful management style would eventually lead to him

*The evidence of his non-participation reveals Körner's lack of influence in the Zentrale Planung in the meeting records of the Zentrale Planung.

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[56] Zilbert, *AS and the Nazi Ministry of Arms*, 119
[57] Ibid. 120

gaining control over naval production in March 1943, the war production in the occupied territories in September 1943, and finally aircraft production in September 1944. Even the SS and its system of concentration camps was in some ways reliant on Speer for building materials for barracks and sanitary systems.

The Zentrale Planung did not limit itself only to the development, production and allocation of raw materials. Meetings of the board also discussed topics of the deployment of foreign workers and the Ernährungslage (food supply situation). The board met a total of 6 times from May 1942 until March 1944 to discuss the deployment of workers. The meetings consisted on reports from Sauckel of the number of workers that he had made available for deployment, discussions of what industries (including agriculture) had a deficient workforce, and where workers would be deployed and where other sources of labor could be found in occupied Europe.

The Zentrale Planung met on two occasions, April 23, 1943 and May 18, 1944, to discuss the Ernährungslage in Germany and the occupied territories. Although Speer and the board were not directly involved in food production for Germany and the occupied territories, these two meetings are relevant to the assessment of Speer's actions. Through both meetings Speer became informed of the food status, allowing him an understanding of the amount of food that could be supplied to both citizens and workers. The April 1943 meeting discussed the calorie intake needed by an average person as well as a working person's intake according to body weight. A non-working person weighing 70 kilograms would require around 1680 calories a day to sustain their body weight, while a working person weighing 70 kilograms would require between 2700-3000 calories a day. The records of the meeting indicate no difference between the calorie intake of a German and a non-German. But the Food Ministry is on record as saying that it limited its

analysis to German workers. The Food Ministry goes on to explain though that the "work can be guaranteed through sufficient food."[58] The Ministry also reported at this meeting that the amount of food being produced in Germany and occupied Europe was decreasing. Although the board made no decisions during the meeting to push for increasing the rations of workers, Speer obviously took interest in the facts presented to him. As will be discussed in detail later, during the next two months he would push for increased rations for the struggling Russian workers in Germany.

The meeting of May 1944 continued the discussion on the decreasing amount of food being produced. It also focused on how the disruption of the German transportation system by the Allied bombings was making it more difficult to transfer food to the areas that needed it. Speer had remained quiet at the meeting of April 1943 while the discussion about food and workers took place. But in the May meeting he used the Food Ministry's report of the worsening food situation in Germany as support for his Speer Betriebe (Speer Factories) in France. The problem of bringing French workers to Germany was twofold. First many such workers didn't wish to work in Germany. Second it became Germany's responsibility to house and feed these workers. Speer's idea of Speer Betriebe was meant to counter this problem. Workers whose factories were either producing armaments or domestic goods for Germany were made exempt from the being drafted to work in Germany. He was thus able to build a much more compliant workforce in France, which in turn provided an increased output in French industry. This in theory, at least, also allowed for ration amounts for German and foreign workers in

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[58] BA R3 1773

Germany to be maintained at the present levels. This program of Speer Betrieben was eventually extended into Belgium, Holland and Luxembourg.[59]

The records of the Zentrale Planung do not indicate that Speer or the board made sweeping decisions on the treatment of the foreign workers in the industries of Germany, including decisions as to the rations given to these workers. Any meetings which discussions went beyond the original guidelines set for the Zentrale Planung appear to have been informational meetings to allow the board members a complete grasp of the status of Germany's war economy at a given moment.

In regards to Speer's own accountability towards workers, the records of the Zentrale Planung show that the topic of workers' treatment received only sparse attention. At the meeting of October 30, 1942 the topic of Bummelanten (slacking/lazy workers) was discussed. The cases of Bummelanten were of major concern to Speer and industrialists. After first arriving in Germany, many foreign workers (especially the Russians) had a general desire to work. But the poor treatment of the workers, particularly that of the Ostarbeiter (eastern workers), reduced their motivation to provide an acceptable work performance. For this reason the number of Bummelanten began to rise. (It is important to also state that the word Bummelanten is not limited only to describing foreign workers, but German workers as well.) To check the growing number of Bummelanten cases in the war industries, Speer at this meeting encouraged the continuance of an already established policy towards Bummelanten. In the cases of Bummelanten, a worker could be arrested by the SD or SS and put into a concentration camp or a labor education camp. * Speer intended this treatment to be used as a scare

*Labor education camps will be discussed in detail later

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[59] van der Vat, *The Good Nazi*, 163

tactic saying, "We only need this to happen a couple of times, then word will get around."[60] In reality the issue of Bummelanten workers was a major cause for worry. Ensuring that workers met performance expectations was in the forefront of Speer's mind, as the workers' performance was directly related to his ability to increase armaments production. Speer's willingness to use the regime's system of terror to accomplish his goals expresses his ruthless desire for results.

With the sweeping powers over the war economy that Speer held through his ministry and the Zentrale Planung, one might conclude that he could influence the treatment of foreign laborers in the Reich. But the historical record shows that Speer only took minimal action through the Zentrale Planung to improve the treatment of the laborers toiling for him. He did so primarily when either his deputies or his own observation uncovered notably poor treatment. Although millions of foreign workers toiled in Germany's war industries under Speer's dictatorship of the war economy, their treatment was primarily governed by other agencies.

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[60] BA R3 1697

Part III. The Dictator of Foreign and Slave Labor

When Speer took control of the Ministry of Armaments and Munitions, he became partial head of a war economy deeply dependent on the deployment of foreigner laborers. In turn he became dependent on these foreign laborers, and eventually on slave laborers, to sustain and even increase the productivity of the German armaments industry. With each passing year of war greater numbers of foreign laborers were brought into the Reich. By August 1944 around 7.8 million foreigners and POWs were working within the boundaries of the Greater Germany. "Of these 2.8 million came from the Soviet Union, 1.7 million from Poland, 1.3 million from France. Altogether people from 20 European countries were put to work in the Reich by this time."[61] The number of foreigners deployed in the armaments industry was about 50%.[62] The average age of the foreign workers was around 20, but there were also workers as young as 15. In addition to these laborers, there were "approximately 500,000 mostly foreign concentration camp inmates" deployed in war industries by August 1944.[63]

The deportation of foreigners to the Reich to meet the quotas set by Speer was a huge challenge for Sauckel, one that he met with efficiency and brutality. For example, at the height of Sauckel's recruitment of laborers from the Soviet Union, he was able to transport 40,000 civilians per week to Germany. During the period between his appointment as Minister of the GBA and March 1944, Sauckel brought a total of 5 million foreigners to the Reich for deployment. He admitted at a meeting of the Zentrale Planung that of this number only 200,000 had come of their own volition.[64]

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[61] Herbert, Ulrich. *Arbeit, Volkstum, Weltanschauung : über Fremde und Deutsche im 20. Jahrhundert.* <http://foxnstn.ca/~avg/index.html.> May 28, 2001.
[62] Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany*, 149
[63] Herbert, Ulrich. *Arbeit, Volkstum, Weltanschauung : über Fremde und Deutsche im 20. Jahrhundert,* <http://foxnstn.ca/~avg/index.html.> May 28, 2001.
[64] BA R3 1722

In wasn't until late 1942 that concentration camp inmates began to be used in armaments production. Speer introduced this new system where, at the request of companies, groups of 500 concentration camp inmates would be "made available on loan and for a fee."[65] However, this new system evolved slowly: only 32,000 prisoners were used in the armaments industry before the spring of 1944. Only when the incoming supply of Russian laborers decreased or in fact ceased did Speer turn to the use of concentration camp inmates in the armaments industry on a much larger basis.

From this point on the deployment of concentration camp labor increased dramatically. Himmler, as head of the SS, was more than willing to allow the use of his concentration camp inmates to support the labor needs of the Reich. The ambitious Himmler viewed this as an opportunity to expand his power base in the armaments industry. Speer was aware of Himmler's motives, but he still found it necessary to utilize concentration camp labor on a wider scale. He wrote to Himmler in February 1944 requesting that he "assist armament production to a greater degree than previously by deploying concentration camp inmates in functions that I regard as especially urgent."[66] The deployment of concentration camp inmates was not limited to only the industrial sector, but in construction projects of the OT as well. A total number of 270,000 inmates were deployed in such projects, 170,000 of these in underground projects. The number of inmates deployed by Speer in the industrial sector was slightly lower, 230,000.

Even though the 500,000 concentration camp inmates deployed for all labor purposes under Speer's Ministry is small compared to the 7.8 million foreign workers similarly deployed, the former figure represents roughly 80% of the total number of

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[65] Herbert, Ulrich. *Arbeit, Volkstum, Weltanschauung : über Fremde und Deutsche im 20. Jahrhundert*, <http://foxnstn.ca/~avg/index.html.> May 28, 2001.
[66] BA R3 1583

inmates available for labor.[67] The use by Speer of nearly the all the available concentration camp inmates is an indication of how desperately he needed labor to sustain or increase production output.

It is true that Speer was head of the war economy, and that he accepted the exploitation of the workers in Germany's war industries and construction projects. However, he believed that Germany was in a battle for its survival. Speer realized this from the moment that he assumed control of the Ministry of Armaments and Munitions. He also knew that a partial key to victory rested on his ability to turn around and increase armaments production. But it was not his intent to allow the maltreatment of workers. In passively allowing such maltreatment Speer would have been hindering his own career in view of the fact, which Speer recognized, that the productivity of a worker is largely a function of his or her material and mental well-being as the productivity of a worker is connected to his or her health and happiness. It was a policy towards foreign workers preceding Speer's accession to minister, and the continuation of this policy by the RSHA and GLF, that determined the maltreatment of workers who toiled in Germany's war industries and construction projects.

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[67] Herbert, Ulrich. *Arbeit, Volkstum, Weltanschauung : über Fremde und Deutsche im 20. Jahrhundert*,

Part IV. The National Socialist Regime's Policy of Maltreatment

By November 1938 there was already a manpower shortage in Germany, especially in the area of agriculture, as many workers were taking industrial jobs. The need for outside sources of labor to satisfy the labor demands of the Reich was acknowledged at this time by the regime. However the problem could not be solved internally by, allowing German women, for example, to take positions in the workforce. Such a policy would have conflicted with some of the basic foundations of National Socialist ideology.

At the beginning of the war there were 3.5 million unemployed women who could have been put to work in war industries.[68] But if German women had been introduced in factory jobs, it would have represented a break with the regime's ideology of "Kinder, Küche, Kirche" (Children, Kitchen, Church). This ideology was meant to keep German women at home, caring for the family and raising the future children of the thousand-year Reich. Göring remarked in February 1937 that, "as an matter of principle, women belong in the family; therefore they should not work."[69] Secondly "the notion of industrial work for women was very unpopular with both sexes."[70] Thirdly, Hitler himself resisted any attempts to mobilize women into the workforce.[71] He believed that work would cause moral harm to women and lower the morale of the soldiers at the front.[72] As a consequence the total number of German women who were actually deployed in the workforce from 1939-1944 remained around 14 million. [73] Only 25% of these women

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<http://foxnstn.ca/~avg/index.html.> May 28, 2001.
[68] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 41
[69] BA R43 II/355, fol. 12
[70] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 40
[71] Duelffer, *Nazi Germany 1939-1945*, 160
[72] Kleist, *Zwischen Hitler und Stalin*, 193
[73] Zilbert, *AS and the Nazi Ministry of Arms*, 38

were employed in the industrial sector as compared to over 50% of foreign workers brought to Germany.

Realizing how important a complete deployment of women in the war industries could be, Speer made efforts to change the status quo. On a number of occasions during Zentrale Planung meetings, he brought up the topic of deploying German women. But Sauckel and even Speer's trusted ally Milch constantly rebuffed him. Sauckel argued at the February 16, 1943 meeting that "Germany should rely on further recruitment of foreigners, since any limitation would mean longer hours and harder work for German women and youth."[74] Speer expressed his own belief as to the considerations limiting German women's deployment. In postwar interrogations,

> "Nobody thought that we could lose the victory. The words of Churchill-blood, sweat and tears" would have been the right slogan for us, too. Instead of that we only had "Our victory is assured." Because of this mentality no Gauleiter wanted to make any personal sacrifices." (I.e. women's deployment)[75]

Speer's opinion was correct. Simply put, his inability to incorporate German women into the workforce derived from the regime's stubborn insistence on continuing for ideological reasons a policy that was increasingly inconvenient. However, the regime also acted out of more pragmatic considerations: it feared strife with the German population were it to attempt to deploy more of its women. Also the readily available number of civilians in the occupied territories, combined with prisoners of war, made a deployment of foreign labor in some ways the more practical choice.

However, the deployment of foreign laborers presented problems of its own, and was viewed with skepticism in some quarters from the beginning. On November 11, 1938 the Office of Economy and Armaments in the OKW held a meeting to discuss the

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[74] Homze, *Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany*, 212
[75] Speer interview, May 31, 1945, in the files of the USSBS, 11

deployment of foreign laborers from the First World War. During the meeting it was reported that in light of Germany's past experience the nation "ought to refrain entirely from deploying any foreigners in the industrial sector."[76] But this in fact was not a viable option for Germany. The need for workers was too great. As Ulrich Herbert explains, there were three solutions to obtaining the necessary workers for industry, "The first was to call a halt to the arms economy: this would have meant the end of the regime and its war policy, and was therefore unthinkable. Two options remained: making the available labor resources more intensive and effective, or absorbing new workers from outside reservoirs of the labor market."[77] Although the regime did implement measures for intensifying and more effectively using the available resources at the time, the results varied. Thus the deployment of foreign laborers emerged as the most viable solution to the labor problem.

With the regime's decision made to deploy foreign workers within the Reich, a new question arose for the regime. What type of treatment should the workers receive? The first deployment of foreign workers during the war came via the occupied territories of Poland. According to the ideological viewpoint of National Socialism (and portions of the German populace) these territories contained inferior or untermenschen peoples. Polish workers were now on Reich soil and laboring next to Germans, thus limiting interaction between the two, so as to avoid the contamination of the German race and culture, became a concern of the regime.

In June 1939 Göring expressed the idea that would eventually form part of a policy for the containment of foreign workers: "During the war, hundreds of thousands will be deployed in Germany from plants in the Protectorate not vital to the war economy, and put to work especially

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[76] BA/MA RW 19 WI.IF 5/1288, fols. 394-5
[77] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 36

in agriculture…they will be under supervision and quartered in barracks."[78] What this amounted to was a segregation of Poles from the German populace. But soon after the initial deployment of Polish prisoners of war in the Reich, it became evident that harsher measures were needed to ensure that German blood and culture were protected. An SD report of November 20, 1939 clearly demonstrates how the deployment of a mere 350,000 Poles was becoming a major concern of the regime:

> Although various offices within the party and government have already issued guidelines on the treatment of Polish prisoners of war, we are still receiving, on a daily basis, numerous reports of excessively friendly behavior by a portion of the population toward such Polish prisoners.[79]

Furthermore, the SD was also receiving reports of German girls becoming sexually involved with Polish workers.[80]

The SD's concern about the treatment of foreign workers and their interaction with the German populace reflected the fact that "the SD viewed itself as an agency for preventive crisis management."[81] As head of the RSHA, of which the SD was a part, Himmler was quite against foreigners, especially those from the East, arriving in Germany to work. Although Himmler acknowledged that foreign workers were needed for the war effort, he believed that they should be treated with the harshest of measures, as he held them to be biologically inferior to Germans.[82]

Himmler's views gave rise to the Polenerlasse (decrees on Poles), which established guidelines for the treatment of Polish workers. These decrees, which eventually became the model for the Ostarbeitererlasse, were "the first step toward an increasingly more consolidated special code for foreign workers in Germany, differentiated by nationality, and formed the basis

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[78] IMT, vol. 33, 152-3, second session of the Reich Defense Council, June 23, 1939, Doc. PS 3787.,
[79] BA R 58/145
[80] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 64
[81] Ibid. 66
[82] Ibid. 70

of a comprehensive system of surveillance and repression of Polish workers."[83] In accordance with the decrees, Poles must wear a "P" on their clothing, their sexual contact with Germans was forbidden; they were to be housed together, and denied use of public transportation, and their wages were to be lower than those paid their German counterparts.[84] The enforcement of the decrees, and of terror on the foreign workers, was left to the SD, now officially the protector of German blood and culture.

A second phase of foreign labor deployment within the Reich began with the conquest of France and the Low Countries. Germany now had access to millions of workers, who were more often skilled workers. The arrival of these workers meant that a new policy for the treatment of western workers had to be developed. The peoples of Western Europe held a higher status according to the Nazi regime's racial ideology than did the easterners. This was especially true of the Dutch whom the Nazis viewed as the near equivalent in "blood" to the German people. However, a set policy did not immediately emerge. In August 1940 the GLF stated that western workers were entitled "in all cases to the same wages, salaries and other worker conditions" as their German counterparts.[85] Göring followed up the GLF decree in September 1940 with his own decree on the treatment of Western workers in the Ruhr mining industry. The workers were to be housed in segregated camps, their sexual intercourse with German women was to be prevented, and the GLF would attend to the workers' treatment.[86]

Much like the development of the policy on the treatment of Poles, a more rigid policy was not developed until some time after the initial deployment of workers in the Reich. On January 14, 1941 the RSHA issued a decree that distinguished between the racial stock of western workers. The Dutch, Danish, Norwegian and Flemish were to be considered of

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[83] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 71
[84] Ibid, 72
[85] BA RD 89/15; Circular, Reich Labor Ministry, Aug 2, 1940.
[86] GstAB Ijs 4/64; circular, Göring as representative for the Four-year Plan, Sept 4, 1940

Germanic stock and treated as such. The French and Walloons were considered racially alien but nonetheless were superior to eastern workers. The eastern workers' place within this hierarchy fell the further east their place of origin, with the Russians on the bottom.[87] This decree was in essence a finalization of the GLF's and Göring's decrees, and solidified the rationale for preferable treatment to western workers as compared to easterners.

In early 1941 Germany had been at war for almost 1½ years with large contingents of foreign workers on its soil for most of this time. The presence of foreigners in Germany became especially noticeable for the German populace. An "increasing dislike for the foreign workers was detected among the German workers,"[88] and by early 1941 too both the German workers and populace did not support the wages foreign workers were receiving. Germans became enraged when these workers complained about their food and housing. Herbert writes that, "Many Germans lost all sympathy at the point where what was alien and other became something public and visible, fundamentally impairing German culture and civilization."[89]

The opinions of the populace did not go unnoticed by the SD. After compiling reports from citizens, workers, and employers, the SD concluded that "…the foreign workers as a whole cannot generally be regarded as willing to work.[90] In the same report the RSHA responded to foreign workers' lack of enthusiasm for working in Germany:

> "…it was of critical importance to apply the existing German law on labor deployment, and to punish refusal to work, etc. more stringently in foreign workers. This was the only way to improve the work ethic among the foreign workers, who had been treated leniently in the past in order to win them over…"[91]

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[87] BA R 58/1030, fol. 95
[88] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 101
[89] Ibid. 102
[90] BA R 58/990, fol 66ff; RSHA to all SD Head Sections, April 25, 1941.
[91] Ibid.

The RSHA first moved to establish a harder line of treatment towards foreign workers in May 1941 with the official establishment of Arbeitserziehungslager or Labor Education Camps (LEC), to be run by the SS.[92] The LEC's became one of the most notorious expressions of the Nazi regime's planned terrorizing of foreign workers. The first LEC was established in October 1939 for cases of Bummelanten among German workers on the Westwall (Germany's counter to France's Maginot Line). Several other camps followed with the main purpose that of punishing German workers. But by the end of 1940 this form of punishment had grown to include Polish workers as well. The camps established prior to May 1941 became the models for newer ones. The RSHA's decree on the official establishment of LEC's was more of a clarification of the camps' rules and regulations. Simply put, the purpose of the camps was to punish Bummelanten workers with harsh treatment, poor living conditions, and long working hours. The rationale was that when a worker returned to their factory after such treatment, they would be in such poor health that other workers would seek to avoid being sent to a LEC. Thus the performance of all workers would increase, for fear of LEC's.

The horrors that awaited workers sent to LEC's is summed up in a statement made in May 1944 by head of the SD Ernst Kaltenbrunner, "First of all I want to say that LEC's are by no means rest homes. The work and living conditions in an LEC are generally more severe than in concentration camps."[93] Inmates of LEC's were imprisoned for a maximum of 56 days, during which it was not uncommon for a prisoner to lose 20kg, as the food rations were incredibly small. Inmates worked 12 hours a day, 7 days a week doing the toughest type of labor (cleaning rubble, digging bunkers, etc.). Daily beatings of inmates with wooden or rubber truncheons were not uncommon nor were executions by hangings and shootings. The death rate of LEC's inmates

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[92] Mason, *Social Policy in the Third Reich*, 338
[93] Arbeitserziehungslager, <http://foxnstn.ca/~avg/index.html.> May 28, 2001.

varied by camp falling between 10% and 25%. A former prisoner thus wrote of his experience in an LEC: "Having been in a LEC once, you'll do anything to never return."[94]

After the official establishment of LEC's in Greater Germany by the RSHA, employers' requests for punishment in cases of Bummelanten rose dramatically. Between June and December 1941 there were a total of 51,000 workers arrested for refusal to work of which 40,000 were foreigners. This is compared to around 2,000 requests for arrests in cases of Bummelanten from employers between January and May 1941.[95] The support for this program of punishment was therefore not only supported by the regime but by employers as well.

The third phase of foreign labor deployment in the Third Reich began with the invasion of Russia on June 22, 1941. Although Russian prisoners of war and civilians were not originally brought to Germany in large numbers, this changed when it became apparent to the regime that the conquest of Russia would take longer than originally expected. On October 31, 1941 Hitler issued an order "that the labor of Russian prisoners of war should also be extensively exploited for the needs of the war economy."[96] On November 7 Göring issued detailed instructions for the deployment of Russian workers. In this decree Göring stated what Russians could expect upon arriving in the Reich:

> ...No contact with German population, in particular not solidarity. German worker always basically the boss of the Russians...Food provision a matter for the Four-Year Plan. Russians to arrange own food (cats, horses, etc.). Clothing, housing, maintenance a bit better than what they had back home, where some still live in caves...Range of punishment: from cutting food rations to execution by firing squad; generally nothing in between.[97]

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[94] Arbeitserziehungslager, <http://foxnstn.ca/~avg/index.html.> May 28, 2001.
[95] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 114
[96] Ibid. 145, (Head/OKW/Wehrmacht Command/L, Oct 31,1941, Doc. EC 194, Case VI, Appendix Doc. Book 67; IMT, the decree was signed by Keitel)
[97] BA/MA RW 4/v. 308, fol. 227

With the November 7th decree Göring set a policy of "maximum exploitation, the worst conceivable treatment, and food and the death penalty even for petty misdemeanors" for the Russian laborers.[98]

In a meeting on December 3, 1941 the RSHA discussed the matter of Russian deployment. A key idea that came from this meeting was that "in order to better control them (Russian civilians) these persons would be retained and deployed like prisoners of war."[99] Eventually the RSHA issued decrees on February 2, 1942 that established what type of living conditions eastern workers would receive. Known as the Ostarbeitererlasse or decrees on eastern workers, they expanded upon the Polenerlasse from 1940. The Russians were to be housed in guarded labor camps that were surrounded by barbed wire. They were to receive low pay, and meager rations, and their movement outside the camp was to be restricted. They were also required to wear an armband at all times with "Ost" on it. Their punishment was to include hard labor, withdrawal of rations, flogging and death depending on the severity of the infraction. There was also to be an extension of sending Russians to LEC's and concentration camps for Bummelanten and/or escape attempts. The enforcement of these decrees was to be left in the hands of the camp commanders, as well as the Gestapo.[100] The Central Inspection Department of the GLF also had the nominal task of watching out for the welfare of foreign workers. But in reality the department was responsible for making sure that workers were treated in the "prescribed way" that is, according to the harsh decrees of the regime.[101]

The Ostarbeitererlasse came six days before Speer's appointment as Minister of Armaments and Munitions. It represented the completion of establishing a racially hierarchical policy regarding the treatment of foreign workers toiling inside the Third Reich. The RSHA was

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[98] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 150
[99] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 106
[100] Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Germany*, 146
[101] IMT Vol. 5, p 114, 29.05.46

the driving force in the making and enforcement of this policy. However, it had the support not only of the Nazi regime's leadership (i.e. Hitler and Göring), but also of German industry and even the German populace. As Herbert suggests,

> If Polish workers could be hanged from the nearest tree without trial, just because they had slept with German women, there certainly need be no fear that Germans might protest against the poor wages or housing conditions of the Poles.[102]

The populace wasn't offering only passive acceptance of the regime's policy. Even after the Ostarbeitererlasse the public occasionally expressed its unhappiness with what they believed to be the exceptionally good amounts of food that foreign workers were receiving. This complaint came after a ration reduction for the German populace on April 6, 1942. On April 19 the food rations for the Russian prisoners of war and eastern workers were correspondingly reduced to match the reductions of the German populace. This reduction took place in spite of a Food Ministry report in March of that year stating that "the labor deployment of eastern workers as whole was at serious risk unless rapid changes were introduced in their treatment and food."[103] Thus Speer became minister at a time when the racial policies of the regime, in which he played no part, had already been established and implemented for almost 2½ years with virtually no opposition. The horrific treatment of foreign workers that Germany relied upon to keep its war machine running, was therefore not his creation, and he would have had to overcome a long-established precedent if he had wanted to improve their living conditions.

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[102] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 135
[103] BA/Ma RW 19 WI/IF 5/3690, pp. 19-20

Part V. The Prevailing Treatment of Foreign Workers

As noted, an individual worker's treatment was based on his or her race/nationality. Treatment of workers also varied in accordance with the type of work they were performing and where they were employed. As Herbert suggests, "the fact that there were often striking differences between conditions in the various individual camps and factories is a good indication that the official regulations despite all the frenetic regimentation, still permitted a great deal of leeway...."[104] Variations in conditions of work would reach a maximum towards the end of the war as communication and transportation lines were being destroyed. It is therefore difficult to provide a completely accurate picture of the treatment that every foreign worker received. However it is necessary to provide examples of how decrees issued by the RSHA and the Nazi leadership affected workers. In this way the improvements in workers treatment that Speer himself contributed to can more readily be seen. One can also assess the results of his passive acceptance of the Nazi regime's policies.

Foreign laborers working in the Reich typically experienced "excessively long hours; a poor diet, wages, housing, and clothing; deficient medical care; barbed wire, defamatory abuse; and maltreatment."[105] The workers' sole purpose was to provide the necessary output to satisfy the demands of war. As mentioned before the RSHA had issued decrees to make sure that Nazi ideology was implemented both inside and outside of the workplace. Two reports from agencies of the regime portray the treatment of prisoners of war and eastern workers. In November 1943 a commission of the Economic Staff/East after a tour through the Ruhr region reported that,

> In the districts we visited, the eastern worker is generally left to his fate, aside from in a small number of exemplary firms, since he is viewed solely as an easily replaceable means of production conscripted from the vast eastern region. The firm directors have, almost uniformly, no understanding of the heart of the issue pertaining to the eastern worker and do not wish to become interested in this matter. As a consequence, even the

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[104] Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany*, 164
[105] Ibid., 167

> most necessary and essential things, such as food and lodging, leave something to be desired, are inadequate, prepared with indifference, dirty-indeed, in some instances mediocre beyond any possible standard or criterion…Thus, for example, it will be impossible to extinguish the image of wretchedness and misery [we saw] in the camp of the Bochum Association:…workers run down and in a poor state of health, rotten morale, the camp neglected and filthy, inadequate diet, floggings, families torn apart, attempts to escape by women.[106]

"An official of the Foreign Office" wrote in the summer of 1943, after inspecting several Ostarbeiter camps,

> Despite the officially allotted rations for eastern workers, it has been possible to establish beyond any doubt that the diet in the camps indeed consists of half a liter of turnip soup for breakfast, a liter of turnip soup at noontime in the factory, and for dinner in the evening, a liter of turnip soup. In addition, the eastern worker receives a daily ration of 300 grams of bread. This is supplemented by a weekly ration of 50 to 75 gr. of margarine and 25 gr. of meat products, which are distributed or withheld according to the whim of the camp directors…The greatest scourge of the camp is TB, which is also widespread among the workers under 21 years of age. It should be underscored that within the framework of the sanitary and health conditions the eastern workers find themselves in, German and Russian factory doctors are prohibited from prescribing any medicines for these workers. Those who are sick with TB are not even isolated from the others. The sick are compelled by flogging and beating to go about the performance of their work duties…For reasons of hygiene, eastern workers are hosed down with cold water during the winter out in the assembly grounds of the camp. As penalty for the mere theft of a few potatoes, hungry eastern workers are executed in extremely brutal fashion before the assembled inmates of the camp.[107]

These two reports show a dualism in camps of eastern workers and prisoners of war. On the one hand, workers were poorly treated by the firms that employ them. The directors of the firms took the position that these workers filled an immediate need for labor, but they saw no need to invest in these workers future well being. Since the regime didn't support the equal treatment of eastern workers as compared to Germans, providing the workers with adequate living conditions cost the firm unnecessary money. The second report shows the degree to which

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[106] Ibid, 167 (Wirtschaftstab Ost-Chefgruppe Arbeit, Reich Ministry for Occupied Territories, report, n.d. December 1943, pertaining to inspections, November 24-December 5, 1943, nuremberg Doc. NI 3013.)
[107] Ibid, 169 (Notes, Legation Councillor Starke, Foreign Office, August 16, 1943, Nuremberg Doc. NG 2562.)

the SD influenced the lives of workers. The camp directors (either SD or SS men) controlled the allotment of food to the workers, denied them medical treatment, and handed down the most severe punishment for the smallest of crimes. The policy of racially motivated treatment of foreigners that was decreed by the regime was accepted by German firms, and enforced by the SD and GLF.

The issue of the type of housing that workers received is important since Speer controlled the allocation of raw materials, including building supplies through his position as head of the Zentrale Planung. Part of the problem regarding the housing conditions of foreign workers was that the deployment of foreign workers was intended to be temporary, so housing was provided in a similar manner.[108] The war was not expected to last for six years, the expectation was that, with the decommissioned soldiers retaking their former positions in industry, the continued expansive use of foreign workers in Germany would not be required.

Because of an early lack of housing, many of the early foreign workers deployed in the Reich were housed in private homes, halls, empty wings of factories, and GLF camps. But housing eastern workers in private homes was not acceptable for the ideological reasons already stated, and it was abruptly discontinued in early 1940. Many western workers, however, did retain this privilege until 1942.[109] The need for quick housing of workers led to the use of the old Autobahnen barracks that Speer had designed for German workers. Speer in fact encouraged the use of these barracks. However there were not enough of the old Autobahnen barracks to house millions of foreign workers, and so in places where these barracks were not available, it became the responsibility of individual firms to build barracks. In addition the firms, and not Speer, were responsible for providing the materials for building the barracks.[110] To assist the firms,

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[108] Homze, *Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany*, 264
[109] Ibid. 265
[110] Ibid. 265

Speer's ministry did circulate "blueprints for the construction of three types of model barracks, thirty-three yards by ten feet in size."[111] Ideally, the three types of barracks would have held eighteen civilian workers, 36 Russian prisoners of war, or 12 women workers respectively. But the decision as to the actual number of occupants of both the Autobahnen and planned barracks was left to the individual firms, GLF and SD.

Individual firms, however, did act without pressure from the GLF and SD, but still provided foreign workers with inadequate and crowded housing as a cost cutting measure. An example of one of the hundreds of German companies that so acted was Daimler Benz. Like so many others, this firm was interested in turning the greatest profit possible. In his revamping of the war economy, Speer introduced a "fixed price" system for buying products from German companies. The system insured that the cheaper the production costs, the higher the profits. Speer intended this system to end the production of high-end war goods and to induce companies to focus on mass production. But as a side effect the system encouraged companies to cut costs wherever they could.[112] Since the regime also encouraged the harsh treatment of foreign workers, it was all the easier for firms to exploit them through cost cutting measures.

In Daimler Benz's Sindelfingen Camp, that housed the workers employed in the company's Genshagen factory, workers lived in barracks made from rotten timber. The walls were mildewy and most barracks were not waterproof. Beds were a stool width apart and workers were only allowed one shower per week. The food given to most of the workers was barely above starvation rations, and it often caused stomach and bowel pain. Illness and disease was rampant within the camp.[113]

The housing conditions for most workers became worse over the course of the war. Most

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[111] Ibid. 265
[112] Gregor, *Daimler-Benz in the Third Reich*, 95
[113] Ibid. 187

labor camps were located next to factories or within short walking distances of these, so as to maximize the amount of time a worker could spend at the workplace. As a result, when the Allied bombing of factories took place, the camps often suffered a fair amount of destruction. The already acute housing shortage was taxed to the limit. Replacement housing was not constructed immediately after air raids, as the first priority was to have factories up and running in the shortest amount of time. In keeping with Nazi racial ideology western workers were given housing priority. As in the case of Daimler Benz as the western workers barracks of its Sindelfingen factory were destroyed by air raids, some eastern workers were forced to sleep in slit trenches as the westerners took their places in the barracks.[114] The loss of housing owing to air raids was not only limited to eastern workers though. In the case of a Krupp factory in Essen, French prisoners of war were forced to sleep "in an underpass of the railway line."[115] The damage to Krupp's fifty-seven labor camps that were victims of air raids, exemplifies the immense destruction of barracks that could occur. "Twenty two were destroyed, twenty two others were destroyed twice, and three camps were partially destroyed."[116]

In many senses the treatment of foreign workers was a revolving door. The regime set and enforced decrees driven by racist ideologically, which in turn allowed companies to exploit foreign workers and achieve higher levels of profits at minimal costs. In addition, although the war industries of Germany were undermanned throughout the war, the belief that there was an endless supply of laborers (especially from the east), encouraged the continued harsh treatment of workers. A GLF representative, regarding the treatment of Russian workers, is quoted as saying, "If one of them isn't worth a damn, another one can be who is. The Bolsheviks are

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[114] Ibid. 193
[115] Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany*, 165
[116] Homze, *Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany*, 268

human beings without souls—if a hundred thousand die, a few hundred thousand will come in their stead."[117] This idea was counter to Speer's goals. Since Germany was already short of manpower, Speer was interested in utilizing all manpower. It didn't matter to him whether a worker was German, French or Russian. However, as minister of armaments Speer was obligated to find ways of raising the production output of industry in the spite of the regime's ideological system of treatment that contributed to illness and death of workers. On occasion, Speer was able to improve the treatment of foreign workers.

[117] IMT, Nuremberg Doc. D 361, 35:78, 02.25.42

Part VI. Speer's Intervention

Upon taking over Todt's position as Minister of Armaments and Munitions Speer recognized his goal was to raise the productivity of Germany's war machine. He was only interested in results. If industry and workers could not meet the bottom line then Germany would lose the war, and Speer would lose his power and his job. Speer openly admitted to Sereny:

> The truth is, my responsibilities were such that my estimate of the importance of slave workers and their conditions of life would have been minimal. If one reads my ministry's *Chronik* one can see how very minor a matter were sixty thousand concentration camp workers or two million foreigners among the six million armament workers and eventually the twenty-eight million workers altogether. I'm not happy to face it," he added, "but in the context of my life then, these workers' only significance was what they could produce toward our war effort; I didn't see or think of them as human beings, as individuals.[118]

He was a man who lacked morals during the span of the Third Reich, but this does not mean that he was blind or indifferent to the treatment of workers. Although the restructuring of industry allowed for an initial increased output in armaments production, a continued increase was reliant on industry having enough workers to operate efficiently. The racial policies of the regime before Speer's accession to power continued to have a negative effect in industry. Foreign workers, especially the easterners, were living and working under conditions that were not only doing personal harm to individuals but were counter productive to the German war effort. The treatment meted out by the SD, GLF, and individual firms was impairing the productivity of workers. This was exactly the opposite of what Speer wanted. Seeking to increase the production output of industry during his tenure as minister, he tried to improve the treatment of foreign workers in so far as this would increase their

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[118] Sereny, AS: His Battle with the Truth, 338

productivity. Although Speer's actions did not save the workers from employment in the Reich, they did allow many a higher standard of living.

-Food and Treatment

In March 1942 Speer met with Hitler to discuss the food and wages given eastern workers. During the course of this meeting Hitler remarked to Speer that the Russians should receive better treatment.[119] The remark by Hitler led to Speer's request "that the Russians under all circumstances were to receive sufficient food and the Russian civilians were not to be put behind barbed wire and treated like prisoners of war."[120] But increases in rations for eastern workers never took place and in fact decreased owing to the German populace's reaction to the reductions in their own rations, as earlier discussed.

Until October 1942 the treatment of eastern workers for the most part did not change. They were given treatment along the lines set for them by the Ostarbeitererlasse in February of the same year. Speer himself did not try again to secure increased rations for Russian workers until August of 1942. Speer's ministry then complained of the malnutrition of Russian laborers, and received the OKW's support to increasing their rations. The next decision on these laborer's rations was made on September 30, 1942 at a meeting composed of "representatives from the Reich Chancellery, the party chancellery, the Four-Year Plan, the GBA office, and the POW section of the OKW."[121] No representatives of the Speer ministry were present at the meeting, showing that on this matter Speer's influence consisted more of an advisory, than of a decision-making role. The meeting concluded that Russian rations could not be increased before German civilian rations were restored to April levels. The final result was that in October the Russian rations were increased by only 10%.

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[119] Boelcke, *Deutschlands Ruestung*, 86

Moreover, Sauckel found that the requests for the better treatment of Russians made by himself, Speer, and others were not being implemented at the grass roots level; as the individuals who directly determined workers' treatment did not take the requests seriously.[122] The organs of control and influence that had been set up by the RSHA were thus still clearly functioning and guiding the treatment of foreign workers throughout 1942.

During 1943 there was a political turn about in opinion's regarding the deployment of Russians in Germany. This allowed for the improved treatment of foreign workers. The deteriorating condition of the war in the east, especially with the loss of Stalingrad and the Sixth Army, gave for the Nazi leadership cause to worry. The war no longer had a foreseeable end. The year brought the Allies' advancement on all fronts, and the reality for the Nazi regime was that the war was quickly becoming a struggle for sheer survival. This did not mean that the regime's leadership was at this time willing to commit to total war. But with a war economy that was short around 1.5 million workers, it was clear that something had to be done.[123] But as Speer had already contended, the productivity of the eastern workers had to be increased. The surest way to do this was through better food and treatment.[124]

The RSHA was the first, and the most important, organ of the Nazi regime to change its policy on foreign workers' treatment. It had realized that wartime conditions were changing and that certain aspects of foreign workers deployment in the Reich had to be changed too. The RSHA's first step was to issue of a decree in early 1943 stating that the eastern workers' food rations should be increased, and the restrictions on their leaving their camps relaxed.

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[120] Speer Doc #II, IMT pp 391 19.6.46
[121] Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 182
[122] Ibid. 182
[123] Ibid. 151

Influenced by the April 1943 meeting of the Zentrale Planung, Speer himself went to Hitler in May to speak on the topic of Russian miners' rations. In accordance with Speer's suggestion, Hitler decided "that the German as well as Russian miners should receive a substantial amount of supplementary rations…the Russian prisoners of war are to receive rewards in the form of tobacco and similar items, for special efforts and achievements."[125]

On June 23, 1943 Speer also participated in "a high level meeting of officials to arrange an improvement in the diet of workers in the Ruhr, foreigners in arms factories and even Russian prisoners of war."[126]

Speer thus acted twice in 1943 alone to secure increased rations for all foreign workers. But even favorable decisions reached (with Hitler's endorsement) were not necessarily implemented. As noted earlier, the organs of control—the SD, GLF, camp commanders, and individuals firms—were the final implementers of policy. The RSHA had at the beginning of the year decreed that rations should be increased for the eastern workers, but it would seem that in the case of camps in the Ruhr the improvements favored by Speer and the RSHA were not implemented.

But Speer did not always advocate increasing rations for workers. He continued his hard-line position in regards to Bummelanten workers. These workers hindered the performance of the war economy and needed to be disciplined. In December 1943 Speer addressed the case of Bummelanten regarding prisoners of war writing, "For example, there has been a successful attempt to educate or penalize less effective workers among the prisoners of war by distributing two types of meals. The overwhelming majority of the prisoners of war tried to regain the privilege of better meals by better work."[127] Although this

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[124] Ibid.
[125] Speer Doc. #13, IMT pp 391 19.6.46
[126] van der Vat, *The Good Nazi*, 151
[127] BA R3 1818, fol. 164ff; circular, Armaments Ministry, to Plant Managers, December 23, 1943.

was a retreat from his policy of sending Bummelanten to LEC's or concentration camps, Speer nonetheless was willing to offer punishing solutions to the problems they brought to the war industry.

Speer's greatest achievement in regards to workers and food rations was perhaps his "Speer Betriebe". These factories, as already mentioned, kept French workers in France. Speer fought for his program continually in 1944, when Sauckel was desperately trying to bring French workers to Germany. Although these workers of some 10,000 factories were still laboring for the German war effort, they worked at their own factories and lived in their own residencies. The program also reduced the pressure on the already taxed food situation for workers. In addition to the Speer Factories affects on food, they saved French workers from subjection to the Nazi regime's treatment.

In early 1944 Speer's turn to the use of slave labor from the SS concentration camp system. Speer thereby signified his willingness to exploit these prisoners for the purpose of Germany's war machine. Interestingly, however, the health of the concentration camp inmates used in war industries actually improved because of their separation from the camp. Once at a factory they became eligible to receive additional rations, cigarettes, and other items from the Food Ministry. Oswald Pohl, who held a position in the SS equivalent to Speer's, commented that "the food situation of concentration camp inmates working in factories is being improved constantly, and because of special bonuses in the form of food and constant medical attention, there has been a marked increase in their weight...."[128] This is not to say that Speer was the savior of the concentration camp inmates who labored in his war industries. But he was able to improve their lives.

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[128] Speer Doc 44, IMT, pp393 / letter from Office Chief Schieber to Speer May 7, 1944

-Building

The topic of foreign workers' barracks has already been treated. But Speer's influence on building barracks for concentration camps as well as general building projects in Germany requires more extended consideration. The subject of concentration camp barracks is of particular interest as this was a sphere that supposedly was outside of Speer's influence.

Speer made one visit to a concentration camp, Mauthausen, on March 30,1943. Here he saw buildings "that strike me as more than lavish under present-day conditions."[129] Speer was here participating in a VIP tour of the camp, one in which he was shown barracks made of stone and an otherwise high level of inmate accommodations. * It is not usual that Speer regarded these supposedly "temporary" buildings as luxurious. Concerning excessive use of building materials, Speer could be very sensitive. On one occasion he searched a passenger train's compartments for unnecessary uses of metal. In response to his tour, Speer wrote to Himmler that concentration camp construction methods should "…use the least possible amount of material and labor…"[130] At this moment Speer was making an assumption of concentration camp conditions based his visit to one camp. But before fully pushing for a reduction in building standards, Himmler and Speer agreed that a group of assistants from both ministries should make a tour of all concentration camps.

The results of this inspection tour, one that most certainly excluded all death camps, was that only one camp seemed to have been poorly constructed. At Auschwitz Speer's assistants found the sanitary conditions to be catastrophic. Speer responded to this report with an allotment of such building materials as iron, cast iron pipes, water pipes, and round

*VIP Tours tried to portray a positive picture of camps to non SS visitors.

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[129] BA NS 19 new/1542
[130] Ibid.

bar steel.[131] (I do not delve into what else may have been witnessed at Auschwitz by Speer's assistants, such as gassings. It does not concern the topic of this paper.) The amount of relief that Speer's measures gave to Auschwitz inmates cannot be measured. Limited to minor sanitary provisions they most likely did little to relieve the suffering of the inmates. However, there is one specific case in which decisions by Speer made a significant difference in the lives of concentration camp inmates.

In August 1943 the RAF bombed Germany's secret rocket testing facility at Peenemuende. Hitler considered the development and production of both the V-1 and V-2 rockets (V-1 was the world's first cruise missile, the V-2 the world's first ballistic missile) to be of the utmost importance to Germany's war effort. At first Speer was supportive of the program, but by the end of the war he found it to be a great waste of time, materials and money.

After the RAF raid it was apparent that the rocket program had been discovered and that its safety was now threatened. On August 22, 1943 Hitler, Speer and Himmler met to discuss the future of the rocket program. Himmler convinced Hitler to use concentration camp inmates to construct the rockets, thus ensuring the secrecy of the program. It was also decided that industry would supply the management and engineers, while Speer's ministry would provide the financial support. Speer was not enthusiastic about the use of concentration camp labor for the program, but he was forced to comply with Hitler's order.

On the suggestion of Hans Kammler, head of SS construction, the rocket program was to be set up in existing mines within the Harz Mountains, outside of the small town of Nordhausen. The complex was given the name Mittelwerk but was informally known as

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[131] Ibid.

Dora. Construction began on August 28, 1943 with the arrival of over a hundred inmates from Buchenwald concentration camp.[132]

Construction at Dora, which was classified as a sub-camp of Buchenwald until October 1944, when it became an independent concentration camp, was conducted at a furious pace. Kammler supervised the construction and gave orders to his commanders: "Don't worry about the victims. The work must proceed ahead in the shortest time possible."[133] Because of this directive, prisoners' conditions and treatment were unimaginably horrible, and the Dora camp became perhaps the worst concentration camp during the span of the Third Reich.

The Dora underground complex consisted of two main tunnels, each of which accommodated two sets of railroad tracks. Kammler's staff created provisional underground barracks that consisted of four tiered bunks with straw for beds. What resulted for the inmates working underground was as follows:

> In addition to the grueling work of moving heavy equipment in and out of the tunnels at top speed, two circumstances led to especially horrible conditions. The first was the continuance of the mining of main tunnel A through the south side of the mountain. Construction and mining work by SS camp prisoners most closely approximated the inhuman Nazi concept of "annihilation through work." Strenuous physical labor for twelve of more hours a day, without adequate heavy equipment or concern for safety, was combined with the usual starvation diet of the camps…Catastrophic hygienic conditions rarely equaled even in the SS camp system were Dora's second special circumstance. Since there were no latrines available, oil drums were cut in half and topped with boards. The stench was terrible, and the treatment of cholera and other diseases was so serious that the whole German civilian workforce had to be immunized. There was no washwater at all, and the drinking water supply for the prisoners was extremely limited; they never bathed and were constantly thirsty…the (straw) mattresses became completely filthy and a haven for lice and fleas. The only time most prisoners saw the outside world was during weekly roll calls, when they often stood for hours in wind, rain, and snow while dressed in thin uniforms that were little better than rags.[134]

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[132] Neufeld, intro to *Planet Dora*, XII
[133] Herbert, *A History of Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany*, 174
[134] Neufeld, intro to *Planet Dora*, XIV

As a result of these horrific conditions, ones that can only be compared to the scenes described in Dante's Inferno, * approximately 2,882 of the prisoners died between October 1, 1943 and March 31, 1944. This number represents 22.5% of the prisoner workforce of around 11,000 that existed in Dora at the end of March.

Speer made his fateful visit to Dora on December 10, 1943. This time he was not given the VIP tour that he had received at Mauthausen. Here Speer saw the SS's implementation of Vernichtung durch Arbeit (death through work) at its worst. He and his assistants observed all that was described above. Some assistants were so horrified by what they saw at Dora that they were given two weeks leave of absence. Even the normally dispassionate Speer was affected. When asked by Sereny what his feelings at the time were he responded, "I was appalled.' 'Yes', he repeated, almost as if in retrospect he was surprised at having given way to feeling, 'Yes, there I was appalled."[135] Having been to hell and returned, Speer's actions after leaving the camp can only be described as Speer like.

At Dora Speer witnessed the suffering and mortality that accompanied SS rule of the underground facility. But he lacked the power over the project to influence or control the treatment accorded to the prisoners. They were inmates of the SS concentration camp system and therefore subject to the brutality of SS treatment. However, Speer ordered the immediate construction of barracks with complete sanitary facilities outside of the tunnels. In this way the prisoners would be saved from the misery of the tunnels, if only for the hours that they were allowed to sleep. The first sets of barracks were completed in March 1944 with continued building after that time. The result was a dramatic decline in the death rate of the camp inmates. From the beginning of April until the end of October 1944 only 995 or 7.8%

*Dr. A Poschmann from the OT used this analogy when talking to Speer about the camp's conditions after a visit. It was primarily because of this discussion that Speer made his decision to inspect the camp himself.

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[135] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 406

of Dora's prisoners died. Unfortunately the death rate at Dora did increase there after with the deteriorating conditions in Germany; 8,936 or 69.7% of the prisoners died between November 1944 and April 1945.

But however much Speer was horrified by Dora he was still impressed by the results that had been attained by Kammler. Speer gave Kammler high praise for his accomplishments in a letter of December 17, 1943, writing that Dora, "far exceeds anything ever done in Europe and is unsurpassed even by American standards."[136] To give praise to the creation of hell is incomprehensible to most people, but in the context of the time and of the man who Albert Speer was it becomes understandable.

At this time Speer had already begun to lose favor with Hitler, as he began to give Hitler less optimistic reports about the country's armaments production and capabilities of withstanding a prolonged war.[137] Quick results on a valuable project such as Dora was important to Speer's retention of power and Germany's survival. Even though the credit for construction at Dora belonged to Kammler and the SS, the project still rested within the Armaments Ministry's domain. Needless to say, the quicker that V-1 and V-2 rockets were produced, the better was Speer's position with Hitler. Confronted with the worst of the regime's expression of terror and Vernichtung durch Arbeit, Speer could not resist his Führer and the seductions of his own power.

By April 1944 Speer began to accept as inexorable the direction in which the war was heading. As commissioner of construction in Germany, he realized that no new construction projects would be of any service to Germany's war effort. He wrote to Hitler on April 19th that "the only building the country could afford at this point was quick reconstruction of

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[136] BA R3 1585. Speer letter to Kammler, 12/17/43
[137] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 402

bomb-damaged plants and workers' housing."[138] However, Speer's request was ignored. Hitler had on the 14th already ordered the construction of six "mushroom factories" and would not change his mind. The "mushroom factories" were huge underground factories immune to air attack, and hardly recognizable to the naked eye. The factories were planned to be over one million square feet in area. Construction of airplanes, particularly the world's first jet fighter, the ME 262, would take place within their depths. Although Speer was Chief of the OT, Hitler gave his subordinate Xaver Dorsch personal control over the project. As Speer began to face reality, Hitler turned to individuals who would continue to support positive visions of the future. Speer's lack of control over the project was a sign that his star was falling.

In brief none of the "mushroom factories" was ever completed, and they are simply another example of the Nazi regime's waste of time, money and manpower. The project, though, did cost the lives of thousands of slaves from the concentration camps of the SS. The OT might have been in charge of construction, but it was the SS that determined the workers' treatment and substandard living conditions, ones that in many respects resembled Dora.

Speer was extremely opposed to the mushroom factories building project. He in fact was willing to offer his resignation over it. He did not do so upon further reflection of his position's power, and what this meant to Germany's, and not the Nazi Reich's, survival. By May 1944 the friendship between Hitler and Speer had begun to sour. Speer no longer believed in total victory, and Hitler knew this. But Hitler realized that Speer was the only man who could keep industry running and he therefore could not dismiss him. In addition

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[138] Ibid. 426

the unique bond that the two shared would remain intact until Hitler took his own life less than a year later.

Part VII. Speer's Ruthlessness

During his tenure as Hitler's architect and as Reich Minister for War Production, Speer was a ruthless man who expected nothing less than 100% effort from the people working under him. He was fully absorbed in his own power, working for the Führer and a German victory. Only in May of 1944 did he abandon this last belief. At this time he continued his work, but replaced his goal of the Reich's survival with that of Germany's survival.

When Speer was appointed Minister of Armaments and Munitions, his job was to raise armaments production to meet the changing and expanding demands of the war. Speer committed himself to this new job with the same intensity that he had brought to his architectural work in the past. His work ethic was unsurpassed within his ministry, and perhaps within the entire Nazi leadership. As Sereny explains,

> Speer worked like a demon. Whether he was in Berlin, at Fuehrer HQ; on his endless inspection trips to the Eastern Front; to the defense constructions in the West; to factories in the Ruhr, the North, the Ostmark [Austria], France, Czechoslovakia, Poland—his day always started before dawn, never ended until deep in the night, which from the very start of his ministerial appointment, he very often spent in his office when he was in Berlin, sleeping perhaps three hours on a cot.[139]

Speer committed himself so much to his work that he neglected his family. Only on rare occasions would his wife or children see him. These brief times usually occurred when Speer was with Hitler at the Berghof, since his family's residence was located less than a mile from there.

This man who worked over sixteen hours a day on average expected the same effort from the people working under him. He "surrounded himself with able men who replaced his faith with inspired work and great personal devotion. Most of the men that Speer

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[139] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 336

appointed to his ministry were reflections of himself—technicians willing to work hard and usually very young."[140]

However, when Speer was appointed minister of armaments he was obliged to absorb former members of Todt's staff, such as Dorsch. These individuals were highly loyal to their former employer, and saw Speer for who he was. Dr. Walter Schieber, state secretary in the Munitions Ministry, described him as lacking "Todt's warmth. Even his heart is cool. All that counts for him is the object. He will squeeze everything out of us."[141] Speer's secretary Annemarie Kempf, and one of the few people to be constantly close to him, explained to Sereny that she believed Speer was too busy to think or feel about the lives of the foreign and slave laborers toiling for him in the war industries.[142]

But Speer's ruthlessness did not end with respect to foreign and slave laborers. It extended to the people working under the apparatus of his ministry. Speer was not the type of man who would allow people to hinder his progress. This was the case during his preliminary construction of Berlin. Julius Lippert posed a threat to Speer's complete authority over the project. His solution was to use the existing power organs of the regime, Hitler and the SS, to remove Lippert from office. Speer's drive for power and results led to his development of the "Decree for the Protection of the Armaments Industry." The decree gave him sole power to determine the punishment of factory managers and owners who made false business claims. Industry's output was of critical importance to Speer, as this was directly intertwined with his power. If the war industries failed to achieve maximum output because of the industrialists, the latter were punished. If the cause instead lay in a deficient workforce, a reflection of the draft and the regime's own misguided views about

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[140] Homze, *Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany*, 88
[141] Kehrl, *Krisenmanager im Dritten Reich*, 244
[142] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 338

German women's deployment, then Speer found, through Sauckel and the SS, new workers to fill the vacancies. If the cause of poor production instead lay in the maltreatment of workers, Speer sought to improve their food rations or better their housing and sanitary conditions. If the cause was Bummelanten in the workforce, then he was willing to use existing policy and send German and foreigner workers alike to LEC's or concentration camps. During Gitta Sereny's conversations with Speer, she was able to occasionally witness the cold ruthless minister who was Albert Speer:

> Here was not the reasoning Speer, my urbane host. Here was Hitler's great Minister who had ruled Germany's economy and the lives of millions…in each case I was suddenly keenly and somewhat frighteningly aware—I can still feel my stomach muscles knotting—of the authority coiled inside this man…[143]

Of course for Speer the supreme motivation for success was that he kept his power and his favor with Hitler. But during an illness that Speer suffered between January and April 1944, Speer and Hitler were separated from each other, and this weakened their relationship. Hitler began to be dependent on others inside Speer's ministry. He called Karl Saur, department head of the armaments ministry, for production figures, and now trusted Saur's opinion on armaments production. This was in part owing to Saur's optimistic reports on future production, which ran contrary to Speer's reports of economic collapse. Dorsch, another subordinate of Speer's, was given responsibility for the construction of the mushroom factories. Even Himmler undercut Speer's power through the successful employment of his slave laborers in war industries, including the rocket program. Hitler's gradually diminishing reliance on Speer led him to believe that Hitler had lost faith in him. This belief was consistent with Speer's other conviction that the war was lost. The general result was a break between Speer and Hitler. At this time Speer should have walked away

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[143] Ibid. 222

from his position as minister. But failed to do so because of his past relationship with Hitler and his desire to keep the power that he had amassed. Speer instead committed his energy to the preservation of Germany and its post-war industrial capacity, as he defied Hitler's scorched earth policies in the final months of the war.

The production capacity of the German war industry reached its peak in August-September 1944. After this time the Allies' continual bombing wreaked havoc on Germany, crippling its industry, and communication and transportation networks and slowly beating the country into submission. Speer's apathy towards workers in industry from mid-1944 until the end the war might be summed up by his visit to the Landsberg mushroom factory site in February 1945. Faced with the poor conditions of the workers there, Speer merely told an officer in his entourage, "Get in touch with Himmler; see what can be done."[144] Rudolf Neuhaus, a German engineer accompanying Speer when he had made this comment, believed that Speer was simply uninterested in the plight of the workers.[145]

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[144] Ibid. 481

Part VIII. Judgement

After the end of the war Speer expected to be part of the rebuilding of Germany, either in a governmental or private capacity. Instead he found himself, along with twenty-one other members of the Nazi Party leadership, in the dock of the Nuremberg Tribunal. The purpose of the trial was not simply to enable a victor to wreak vengeance on the enemy. The Nazis, it was widely believed, had acted in such a way before and during the war as to make their punishment a moral imperative. Speer and the twenty-one others were charged with four counts of guilt.

1) Conspiracy (to commit war)
2) Crimes against Peace
3) War Crimes
4) Crimes against Humanity

In Speer's case, the court primarily concerned itself with the last two counts since Speer was appointed minister in 1942, when the war was already 2 ½ years old.[146] A description of counts III and IV is as follows:

> Count III (War Crimes); "namely, violation of the laws of customs of war. Such violations shall include, but not to be limited to, murder, ill-treatment or deportation to slave labor or for any other purpose of civilian population of or in occupied territory, murder or ill-treatment of prisoners of war or persons on the seas, killing of hostages, plunder of public or private property, wanton destruction of cities, towns or villages, or devastation not justified by military necessity."[147]
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> Count IV (Crimes against Humanity); "namely murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, and other inhumane acts committed against any civilian population, before or during the war; or persecutions on political, racial or religious grounds in execution of or in connection with any crime within the jurisdiction of the Tribunal, whether or not in violation of the domestic law of the country where perpetrated."[148]

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[145] Ibid. 481
[146] Smith, *Reaching Judgement at Nuremberg*, 218
[147] The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.
<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/proc/imtconst.htm#art6> May 28, 2001
[148] The Avalon Project at Yale Law School.
<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/imt/proc/imtconst.htm#art6> May 28, 2001

Speer was found guilty on both of these counts, and sentenced him to twenty-years. The judges of the Tribunal (one from each of the Allied powers) did not come to such a judgement easily. The Soviet judge wished to see Speer convicted on all four counts and hanged, while the American, British and French judges saw him guilty on only counts three and four, as well as disagreeing among themselves on the severity of the punishment. That Speer had inherited an existing system of foreign labor deployment worked in his defense. Even though he had held immense powers of control over the war economy, through his ministry and Zentrale Planung positions, the treatment of workers had been controlled by agencies such as the GBA and RSHA. In addition, Speer was able to show to the court that he had made improvements (or at least suggested improvements) in the treatment of foreign workers. Nonetheless, the court found Speer guilty of exploiting foreign and slave laborers for the purpose of maintaining Germany's war industries.

Speer's benefited from the fact that the prosecution was not aware of his visits to labor camps like Dora and the Landsberg factory site. Had the court been aware of these visits, Speer's complicity in the Nazi regime's policies of terror would, have been more fully appreciated. Although the court never believed Speer to have been truly ignorant of the maltreatment of workers, the extent of his knowledge could not be proved at the trials.

Perhaps the two most important features of Speer's case that mitigated his sentence were his break with Hitler and his transformation into the remorseful person that the larger world came to know after his release from prison in October 1966. Speer had admitted to the court that "if Hitler had had a friend, he would have certainly been a friend."[149] But the dynamics of the relationship were never detailed during the trial. Speer's defense wisely concentrated on his break with Hitler's scorched earth policies, his admission that the war

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[149] Sereny, *AS: His Battle with the Truth*, 237

was lost, and his planned, but never executed, attempt to assassinate Hitler in early 1945. A closer portrayal of his relationship with Hitler would have shown Speer to be more in tune with the regime's policies of destruction.

Second, Speer was also the first defendant to accept responsibility for his actions. Not that Speer desired the punishment of the court. But he did express the belief that as a member of the Nazi leadership he was duty bound to the German people to accept responsibility. The judges believed his expressions of regret for his exploitation of workers and his participation in the evils of the Third Reich. Even chief prosecutor Justice Robert Jackson accepted the transformation of Speer; the other judges noticed that Speer was the only witness who Jackson seemed to respect. The Speer who was presented to the court at Nuremberg was truly a far cry from the ruthless minister of the Third Reich and the man whom Sereny encountered from time to time in her conversations.

The court's judgement was based on the evidence and representations provided by the prosecution, Speer's defense, and the Speer of the Nuremberg courtroom. The court had not seen the ruthless leader of Germany's war economy. The man who because of his focus on Hitler and his own ambition was one who had been essentially indifferent to the sufferings of the millions of workers toiling in Germany's war industries. The court did realize that Speer had enacted improvements in workers' treatment to generate greater performance, rather than for humanitarian reasons. Nonetheless, the workers, even concentration camp inmates, had benefited, as the court also recognized. Again, the court might have been less lenient had it possessed more intimate knowledge of the Speer's personality during the Third Reich, of his close relationship with Hitler, and of his obsessive drive for power, as well as the fact that he had visited the worst of the labor camps in Germany, and knew of their conditions.

Speer's actions during his reign as Armaments Minister are not excusable, but they are explicable. Those actions demonstrated that a man's ambition for power and praise can guide him down a path where he is indifferent to suffering, a path in which power allows a man to act as ruthlessly as permitted, to achieve his goals.

Speer was not an inherently evil person. He was, however, an extraordinarily ambitious man as well as brilliant. It was the Nazi regime that allowed and encouraged men such as Speer—exemplary technocrats—to act ruthlessly. Perhaps what makes so compelling the question of how Speer could have been indifferent to the sufferings of millions is another question that underlines it: would you or I have acted in a similar manner? John Steiner, the former forced laborer quoted in the introduction to this paper, answered this question with exceptional candor when he noted, "I too could have been driven by ambition and lust for power, to satisfy my own uncivilized drives with dogmatic, militant, and absolutist ideology."[150]

[150] Steiner, Reflections on Experiences in Nazi Death Camps, intro ii

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