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Band 25

Herausgegeben von Oliver Rathkolb

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Sybille Steinbacher (eds.)

PORR AG and its Subsidiaries during the National Socialist Era

Translated by Tim Corbett

With 61 figures

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Preface

In 2024, *PORR* turned 155 years old. The company's history thus spans from the Ringstrasse era in the second half of the nineteenth century through to the new millennium and the age of digitization, artificial intelligence, and global environmental problems. Many generations have shaped and transformed the business and advanced it through their accomplishments. Aside from organic know-how and technical progress, people are the greatest asset for a corporation like ours. They are the decision-makers and they transmit our corporate identity in their daily interactions with each other as well as in their responsibility towards society and the environment. In a nutshell: construction is a people business.

PORR has experienced and outlived many political and social changes. It was founded during the Habsburg Monarchy, at the heart of a European great power, and endured the chaos and upheavals of World War One. In the 1920s, a time shaped by global developments, it adapted to its new role in a small state and attained great technical and economic success. It is not an exaggeration to say that *PORR* was one of the defining master builders of the First Republic.

When the National Socialists assumed power in Germany and German troops marched into Austria during the "Anschluss," dark times began for the company. The company's enforced ideological conformity and its integration into the German construction sector and war economy effected massive changes in *PORR*. Jewish owners and managers were brutally forced out of the corporation by the new rulers and their Nazi managers and the structures of the company were reshaped. In the eyes of the Nazis, large infrastructural construction projects were especially important and were intended, in the truest sense of the word, to cement Nazi hegemony in Europe in the long term. The "Thousand-Year Empire" required factories, streets, and railroads in both its core countries and its occupied territories. For construction companies like *PORR*, after long, crisis-ridden years this provided an opportunity to expand and obtain new large-scale contracts.

This development went hand-in-hand with a constant demand for both skilled and unskilled laborers. Yet, during the war, the core workforce was increasingly

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decimated due to conscription into the Wehrmacht. The subsequent labor shortage urgently needed to be plugged. At first, this was achieved with more or less voluntary laborers from allied countries and occupied regions. However, the longer the war continued, the more the central administration of the German economy resorted to civilian forced laborers, prisoners of war, and concentration camp inmates. Individual companies registered their demand for labor in order to complete their contracts and were consequently supplied with contingents of slave laborers. Working conditions were catastrophic, with the inhumanity of the National Socialist system clearly manifesting itself in the ruthless exploitation of human beings. The racial categorization of laborers in descending order is visible through innumerable devastating biographies.

The present volume by no means intends to whitewash the manifold misdemeanors committed by *PORR*. Between 1938 and 1945, its governing bodies were run by more or less convinced National Socialists, who exploited the ruling system of injustice to generate profit. It is no excuse that the company's competitors behaved in exactly the same fashion. By contrast, it is gratifying to see that there were also many staff members who did not give up their humanity during this period, as examples in this book demonstrate.

PORR formed part of the German economic machine and on the one hand profited from large-scale contracts and projects. On the other hand, its autonomous decision-making potential was massively restricted by the austere Nazi system of granting and settling contracts. Once targets had been issued, the only thing that mattered to inspectors was whether or not they were being met. How they were met was often irrelevant: Humanitarian or ethical considerations were of no consequence.

PORR's national and international success in recent decades can be attributed to autonomous responsibility and self-reflection. Transparency in dealing with internal and external stakeholders is a focus of our company today. This also concerns our engagement with our own history. We wish to hide nothing, nor do we want to whitewash anything in retrospect. *PORR* today understands itself as a "home of construction" and its goal can consequently be summarized in the maxim of "building a better world."

Our orientation toward the future also means engaging with the past. A two-volume history of *PORR* was already published thirty years ago to mark the 125th anniversary of the company's founding: Herbert Matis / Dieter Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft des Capitals, des Credits und der Technik…": Die Geschichte des österreichischen Bauwesens am Beispiel der Allgemeinen Baugesellschaft – A. PORR Aktiengesellschaft (Böhlau Verlag, Vienna). And in 2019, we marked our 150th anniversary with the volume: Manfred Waldenmair (ed.), Bauen verbindet Menschen: PORR AG – Seit 150 Jahren Innovationskraft für Spitzenleistungen (Brandstätter Verlag, Vienna). Neither of these works re-

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mained silent on the period from 1938 and 1945, but engaged with and discussed this era on the basis of the current state of scholarship at the time of publication.

In more recent times, the opening of further archives has made new sources and insights available to historians. We were thus deeply invested in commissioning independent specialists to assess the role of *PORR* during World War Two. I am very pleased that we managed to solicit renowned experts for this demanding task: Univ.-Prof.retd. DDr. Oliver Rathkolb, former Head of the Department of Contemporary History at Vienna University, Univ.-Prof. Dr. Sybille Steinbacher, Director of the Fritz Bauer Institute and Chair for Research on the History and Impact of the Holocaust at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main, as well as Univ.-Prof.retd. Dr. Bertrand Perz, former Professor at the the Department of Contemporary History at Vienna University. They assembled a team of international historians to conduct intensive research in both domestic and foreign archives. This book is the result of their work of several years.

The topics covered here range from an outline of the company's history in the years before the "Anschluss" through its construction activities in Poland, Croatia, Serbia, and Slovakia, to its deployment and treatment of forced laborers. These discussions are augmented by analyses of *PORR's* construction activities commissioned by Böhler Werke in Kapfenberg and St. Marein, changes in its shareholders after 1938, and *PORR's* position as part of Austria's construction sector during World War Two.

The volume "PORR AG and its Subsidiaries during the National Socialist Era" offers a substantiated overview of these sensitive topics. It is based exclusively on provable facts and dispels various myths, false memories, and conclusions. *PORR* was part of a system that was responsible for a lot of injustice. We have owned up to our personal responsibility and made reparations. Mistakes cannot be undone. They must be remembered in order to warn future generations not to make the same mistakes again. History may relate to irrevocable past events, yet we can learn from these events. This is also the intention of the present publication.

I thank all the contributors for their valuable work. It has given us an opportunity to better understand our own past. At the same time, it motivates us to live up very seriously to our responsibility in the present and future and to help build a better world. Our workforce of over 21,000 staff members from more than sixty countries has been shaped by our principles of reliability, solidarity, recognition, passion, and pioneering spirit. We have learned from the dark chapters of our past under National Socialism. Hate, exploitation, violence, and contempt have no place in *PORR*. Through our engagement with the past, we offer a warning to all our markets not to allow old mistakes to be revived ever again.

Karl-Heinz Strauss MBA, FRICS
CEO of *PORR AG*

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Introduction

The present book and the international research project that preceded it were initiated by Karl-Heinz Strauss, CEO of *PORR AG*. The company was interested in researching its history during the National Socialist era and enabled the team of editors of this volume along with its contributors to conduct this research with complete autonomy. The Nazi era was not ignored in previous publications on the company's history – neither in the comprehensive two-volume history by the economic historians Herbert Matis and Dieter Stiefel, "'Mit der vereinigten Kraft des Capitals, des Credits und der Technik…': Die Geschichte des österreichischen Bauwesens am Beispiel der Allgemeinen Baugesellschaft – A. PORR-Aktiengesellschaft" (1994), nor in the book by Dr. Manfred Waldenmair, "Bauen verbindet Menschen: *PORR AG* – seit 150 Jahren Innovationskraft für Spitzenleistungen" (2019). Yet, to date, there has been no broadly conceived international engagement with the issues of forced and slave labor or *PORR's* role in the infrastructural sector of Nazi armament policies.

The editorial team of the present volume began the academic realization of this multiyear project and preparations for a publication on "PORR AG during the National Socialist Era" in March 2021. Their unrestricted scholarly independence as well as unrestricted access to the internal archives of *PORR AG* were secured through a contract between the company and Vienna University, as well as with the Fritz Bauer Institute in Frankfurt am Main, which was invited as a partner institution. This contract also secured the necessary funding for the comprehensive research this project required.

As one of the largest Austrian construction companies, *PORR AG* was involved in numerous construction projects during the Nazi era, both domestically and in the territories occupied by the Nazi state. Thus, in order to provide the basis for a comprehensive and critical analysis, the project research was conducted not only in the company archives, but also in a range of public archives in Austria, Germany, Poland, Slovakia, Croatia, and Serbia. The thematic focal points of the research project were:

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- the Nazification of the entire corporation before 1938 and after the "Anschluss" (including the role of executives and *PORR AG* employees in Nazi organizations) and the expropriation ("Aryanization") of company shares belonging to Jewish shareholders;
- business contacts entertained by employees of *PORR AG* and its subsidiaries with Nazi functionaries in the periods 1933 to 1938 and 1938 to 1945 as well as before the Nazi Party's rise to power in Germany, and the racist and political persecution of employees and executives;
- company decision-making processes during National Socialism;
- the execution of construction projects for the armaments industry in the Nazi state and its occupied territories in Europe as well as the exploitation of forced and slave laborers;
- construction projects for the SS, including the vicinity of concentration camps, as well as the exploitation of forced and slave laborers;
- restitution measures for forced and slave laborers after 1945 (especially in the framework of the Reconciliation Fund); and
- restitution and compensation offered after the war for assets expropriated after 1938.

An international research team was assembled in order to do justice to the *PORR AG's* construction projects in numerous European states beyond the borders of the Nazi state. The following renowned scholars took on the archival research and subsequent analysis: Maria Czaputowicz-Głowacka, MA (Poland), Dr. Mišo Kapetanović (Croatia, Slovenia, and Serbia), Dr. Christian Rabl (Austria and Germany), and Dr. Pavel Szobi (Slovakia). The research work planned and already prepared in Ukraine could ultimately not be conducted due to the war, as the prospective team member fled into exile to Canada.

The individual project parts served not only to reconstruct – insofar as the sources allow – the overarching political frameworks and decision-making processes behind the company's various construction projects and the deployment of forced and slave laborers on the macro-level, but also to analyze through selected examples the working and living conditions of the forced laborers and concentration camp inmates on the micro-level. At the same time, the project offers a comprehensive overview of all the construction projects and the workforces deployed on the construction sites, who came from various parts of Europe and the Soviet Union. Already in the recruitment stage, the practice of deploying citizens of countries collaborating with Nazi Germany was mixed with other approaches, including deploying prisoners of war, brutally abducting civilian foreigners from occupied territories, and exploiting concentration camp inmates as slave laborers. Everyday life on the various construction sites was subsequently hierarchized and diverse.

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The following contributions offer a comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the company politics of the *PORR* management during the Nazi era while at the same time shining a light on a range of construction sites in various parts of Europe from France to Poland, Serbia, and present-day Ukraine.

The editors wish to thank *PORR AG* for their positive collaboration on this project, especially Dr. Manfred Waldenmair, the general coordinator on behalf of the company, and Edith Limbeck, who maintains the company archive. Patrick Wedrac undertook – with great precision and on a freelance basis – the data collection and recording of the microfilmed health insurance documentation of the Austrian Health Insurance Company in Vienna. The project was perfectly managed by Manuela Ritzheim on behalf of the Fritz Bauer Institute for the History and Impact of the Holocaust. Dr. Verena Pawlowsky critically proofread the manuscript both in terms of language and content and conducted the entire copy-editing process in coordination with the authors with great circumspection and expertise. Maria Czaputowicz-Głowacka, MA edited the images and compiled the index of persons with great care.

Oliver Rathkolb,
Bertrand Perz,
Sybille Steinbacher
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Oliver Rathkolb

Historical Overview

1. Historical Background: The Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft and the Construction Boom during the Belated First Turbo-Globalization of the Habsburg Monarchy[1]

While a phase of rapid economic development dawned in continental Europe around 1850, as demonstrated for example by the economic development of France and Prussia, this boom only took off in the Habsburg Monarchy with a delay of around 20 years. The first indication in the imperial capital of Vienna was the urban development that set in after 1850, which included the demolition of the old bastions along with the entire fortification ring around Vienna, followed by the construction of prestigious buildings and hotels for the 1873 World's Fair. The subsequent decades were shaped by numerous infrastructure projects such as the construction of a water supply system for Vienna, the regulation of the Danube, and the development of the railroad system, of which the latter held a special strategic importance for the multinational empire. As Vienna grew to become a metropolis with two million inhabitants, residential construction for the new population of workers was dominated by cheap tenement buildings emerging alongside and within an industrial factory landscape.

It is in the context of this first boom, which ended with "Black Friday" in 1873, that the banking company *Niederösterreichische Escompte-Gesellschaft* founded the joint stock company *Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft* in 1869, from which the present-day *PORR AG* would emerge decades later.

The new company flourished in the first years following its establishment. The annual accounts in these early years reveal outstanding results and dividends for the shareholders. This was short-lived, however, as the speculative economic bubble exploded on May 9, 1873. Following a massive slump on the Vienna Stock Exchange, business also collapsed for the *Allgemeine österreichische Bauge-*

1 For an extensive discussion of this topic, see: Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1.

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sellschaft. The company only recovered from the mid-1880s onward, but never again matched its revenue from the boom years. Only in 1910, following decades of losses, restructuring measures, and sell-offs, did the company consolidate and begin making profit again.

1.1 From a Construction Company to the First "Vertical Corporation"

The numerous construction projects with which the *Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft* was commissioned from the outset and the costs these entailed soon necessitated the incorporation of the company's suppliers. These businesses, most of which had hitherto been independent, included a lumber mill, a parquet flooring factory, several stonemasonries, a brickyard, and even a shipyard. This incorporation resulted in a sort of vertically structured enterprise.

In 1871, a materials store and stonemasonry were established in Vienna's third district. The company additionally established its own limestone quarries at various sites in Lower Austria while also leasing granite quarries. Already in the year of its foundation, the *Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft* bought a modern brickyard on the Neusteinhof estate in Inzersdorf.

Additionally, a construction joinery and a flooring factory were established on a company-owned site on Brigittenauer Lände. All carpentry and metalworking activities would later be concentrated here.

1.2 Innovative Initiatives by Ottokar Stern and Arthur Porr

From 1904 onward, the board of directors of the *Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft* was dominated by Julius von Kink, President of the Chamber of Commerce. At the same time, however, an increasing number of highly innovative technicians was brought onto the executive board as entrepreneurial inventors, such as the 28-year-old civil engineer Ottokar Stern, a graduate of the Technical College in Vienna. He would play a formative role on the executive board until 1938. Other noteworthy board members included the Chief Financial Member Ludwig Wilms, who held this position for fifty years, and Siegfried Josef Pick, another successful civil engineer.

As advised by the entrepreneurially-minded Director of Construction, Ottokar Stern, the *Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft* decided in 1908 to collaborate with the engineer Arthur Porr, an innovative specialist for reinforced concrete, in the establishment of the company *A. PORR Betonbau-Unternehmung GmbH.* This decision was not without entrepreneurial risk, as the use of reinforced concrete in structural engineering was still a contested practice.

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In his professional career, Porr proved to be a brilliant canvasser of commissions on account of the Porr ceiling he developed. His creative potential as an inventor continued to shape the company even after his untimely death in 1915. The establishment of *A. PORR Betonbau-Unternehmung GmbH* would prove to be one of the most important waystations in the development of the most modern construction technology of the time.

Figure 1: In 1908, the "Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft" established the company "A. PORR Betonbau-Unternehmung GmbH" in collaboration with the engineer Arthur Porr, a specialist for reinforced concrete. Source: PORR-Archive.

1.3 Early Projects

The main spheres of business activity for the *Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft* were structural engineering and railroad construction, the latter of which was booming at the time. In the sphere of structural engineering, the company dedicated itself particularly to the construction of residential buildings in the area around Vienna's Ringstrasse and the city's suburbs. In the context of the 1873 World's Fair then taking place in Vienna, it also built various hotels and exhibitions pavilions.

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The housing shortage in Vienna at the time was dire. The *Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft* led by example in constructing affordable housing for its own workforce. It built 25 apartment buildings at its own expense, designed by renowned architects and constructed on sites acquired from the Viennese City Expansion Fund. The company was moreover commissioned to build a total of eight residential buildings along with other structures. These included the Palais Ephrussi and the Palais Lieben, designed by the architects Theophil Hansen and Carl Tietz and built on behalf of the banking companies *Lieben & Co.* and *Ephrussi & Co.*, which together form an entire residential block at the Schottentor intersection.

The company viewed as one of its most important future tasks the acquisition and development of expansive company-owned properties, due to the conviction that larger property complexes cold be developed through uniform plans and systems and in a much more advantageous manner than scattered individual properties.

Figure 2: Palais Ephrussi on Schottengasse with the Votivkirche in the background. Source: Bildarchiv der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek.

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1.4 Notable Construction Projects before World War One

Some of the most renowned construction projects undertaken by the *Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft* between 1869 and 1914 included the wooden replacement building for the Vienna Stock Exchange (1871–1872), the Hotel Britannia on Schillerplatz (1871–1873), the Hotel Austria (from 1874: police headquarters) on Schottenring (1872–1873), the above-mentioned Palais Ephrussi at the Schottentor intersection (1872–1873), the bathhouse Römisches Bad near Praterstern (1872–1873), the building on Albertinaplatz with an entrance to the Hotel Sacher (1873–1874), the pavilion of the newspaper *Neue Freie Presse* and the Egyptian pavilion at the World's Fair (1873), the House of Industry (1907–1909), the Kurmittelhaus in Meran (1906–1907), the Kaasgraben Church in Vienna (1908–1909), the War Ministry on Stubenring (1909–1913), and the Vinschgau railroad from Meran to Mals in South Tyrol (1904–1906).

1.5 Developments after World War One

As one of the largest construction companies in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, the political changes, nationalist economic policies, and hyperinflation that followed World War One plunged the *Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft* into a serious crisis. Following the collapse of the Habsburg Monarchy in 1918, it would take until 1926/1927 for the company to stabilize. Despite several business failures abroad, with the help of loans it slowly became possible to regain a foothold in the very small Austrian market.[2]

In the small Republic of Austria, the residential housing sector practically ground to a halt, yet due to the legacy of its co-founder Arthur Porr, *A. PORR Betonbau-Unternehmung GmbH* was able to develop a new area of expertise: the erection of suspension and anchoring towers in inhospitable and inaccessible landscapes. Some of the so-called PORR towers continue to supply remote areas of Austria with electricity to this day.

The Treaty of Saint-Germain formally took effect on July 16, 1920. One of the first endeavors of the young Republic of Austria was to secure its energy supply with the greatest degree of independence. The newly established borders meant that the country had lost its valuable coal reserves. Yet Austria possessed another important resource for the production of energy: water. In the interwar years, *A. PORR Betonbau-Unternehmung* was involved in the construction of virtually all the country's larger hydroelectric power plants.

2 Matis, Corporate Culture, 209.

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In 1922, Vienna became a separate federal state. During this period, the *Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft* was primarily engaged in the creation of residential and commercial spaces. These included new factories and factory renovation projects as well as the construction of cooperative housing complexes. In 1923, the company management was able to report on the construction of a private residential building – the first it had executed since 1914.

1.6 Entrepreneurial Risk

Due to the precarious economic situation during this time, the *Allgemeine österreichische Baugesellschaft* and *A. PORR Betonbau-Unternehmung GmbH* decided to restructure their enterprises. An initial plan to transform the latter from a limited liability company into a joint stock corporation failed due to the Vienna Stock Exchange crash of 1924. The company management subsequently decided to incorporate the subsidiary into the parent company. On December 31, 1927, *A. PORR Betonbau-Unternehmung GmbH* was liquidated through a merger agreement. The name of the newly established corporation would henceforth be *Allgemeine Baugesellschaft – A. PORR Aktiengesellschaft.*

The spirit of optimism this move engendered manifested in significant changes. The organizational structure, which had hitherto been centralized to a great degree in Vienna, was broken up, international offices were established in Prague, Munich, Cairo, and Paris, stakes in other companies were acquired, and new branches were established. The company slowly grew to become an international corporation. The Residential Housing Subsidy Law of 1929 led to an upturn in the Viennese construction market. The *Allgemeine Baugesellschaft – A. PORR Aktiengesellschaft* erected urgently needed residential buildings at its own expense, with *PORR* alone creating 5,000 apartments in Vienna by 1931. However, the world economic crisis precipitated in 1929 by overdriven construction activities in the USA caused the market to collapse again.

1.7 The Grossglockner High Alpine Road Mega-Project

From 1930 onward, the *Allgemeine Baugesellschaft – A. PORR Aktiengesellschaft* participated in one of the largest projects of the interwar period: the Grossglockner High Alpine Road.[3] At the time, this road was of decisive geopolitical significance as the loss of South Tyrol and, with it, the Brenner route had cut off the inner-Austrian connection between Carinthia and North Tyrol.

3 Rigele, Großglockner-Hochalpenstraße.

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Figure 3: On July 15, 1934, Chancellor Engelbert Dollfuss (1892–1934) visited the construction site of the summit section of the Grossglockner Road, accompanied by the Regional Governor of Salzburg, Franz Rehrl (1890–1947), at the front left. Source: Bildarchiv der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek.

This superlative construction project was executed in largely undeveloped terrain at heights of up to 2,600 meters. Consequently, the demands on humans and machines alike were huge. In some instances, materials had to be pulled over the glacier on skids or transported with special constructions. The company also built 25 residential buildings for the 3,200-strong workforce, with 150 collapsible barracks being moved in tandem with the construction progress.

In 1932, two years after construction began, the project appeared set to fail due to the expanding world economic crisis and the high costs, which resulted in the company *Grossglockner Hochalpenstrassen AG* (*GROHAG*) being liquidated. Yet the authoritarian Dollfuss regime ultimately rekindled the project as an initiative to generate employment and to offer an alternative to the armaments-oriented Nazi employment policies. Despite the high investment of budget funds – around 14% of Austrian expenditure on road engineering between 1930 and 1935 was spent on this project – the actual extent of employment generation ultimately remained modest, with merely 3,200 workers being employed. This led to propaganda efforts to extract political advantage from this mega-project, as the

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authoritarian regime used it to demonstrate its viability as an independent state. The ceremonial opening of the Grossglockner High Alpine Road on August 3, 1935 was attended by 150 domestic and foreign media representatives.

During this phase of its history, the company also executed technologically important initiatives in the construction sector. This included so-called Araneo-engineering, which employed wood and iron for roof constructions in lieu of steel, which was in short supply. Another example was the use of concrete and tin for piles, which had the advantage of compressing the ground, and thereby increasing the piles' loadbearing capacity, while additionally rendering them waterproof. Up until the 1950s, over 40,000 such piles with a total length of 360,000 meters were produced and deployed.[4]

1.8 Modern Design, Functionality, and Distinctive Construction Projects

Architecture in the 1930s became bolder, as is best demonstrated by the building on the corner of Operngasse and Karlsplatz known colloquially as the PORR-haus. It was designed by Fritz Judtmann and Egon Riss, both of whom were known for their modern and functional public works. Another example of this new direction in urban construction was the commercial office building "Zum Römertor" erected in 1934/1935, the city's first welded steel construction. It was built on an extremely narrow plot between Rotenturmstrasse and Rotgasse.

After the end of World War One, between 1919 and 1925, the *Allgemeine Baugesellschaft – A. PORR Aktiengesellschaft* was tasked with renovating the headquarters of the Austrian National Bank. Further significant projects included the construction of a municipal bathhouse in Mödling (1927–1928), the large-scale development of streetcar tracks in rolled asphalt by the company's newly established subsidiary *Allgemeine Strassenbau AG* (*Allbau*), the construction of a paper factory in the Hungarian town of Fűzfő (1928), the addition of a new floor at the Hotel Imperial in Vienna (1928), the construction of the Reichsbrücke in Vienna (1933–1937), the laying of foundations for a paper factory near Haifa in Palestine (1934), and the expansion of a paper and cellulose factory in Lenzing (1938).

A glance at the workforces involved and the revenue accrued[5] reveals that the company's growth up until 1929 was followed by a massive economic decline that lasted until 1932. Only after 1932 did the situation begin to stabilize, meaning that the company was able to grow and slowly accrue income during the era of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg dictatorship.

4 On the use of these piles, see Maria Czaputowicz-Głowacka's contribution to this volume.
5 Matis, Corporate Culture, 209.

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Christian Rabl

PORR AG: The Company's History and Business Policies 1938–1945

1. The "Cleansing" of the Managerial Level 1938–1939

1.1 The "Aryanization" of the Administrative Board

Immediately after the "Anschluss" of Austria to Germany on March 12, 1938, a new staffing policy was adopted on the administrative board of *PORR* in order to adapt the company to the new political situation. The changes were implemented quickly: Just a few days after March 12, a series of decisive administrative board meetings were held. The first step was taken at noon on Thursday, March 17, 1938, when virtually the entire sitting administrative board was forced to step down.[1] The meeting, which was held in the boardroom of the *PORR*-Haus on Operngasse 11 in Vienna's fourth district, was headed – for the last time – by the long-standing President of *PORR AG*, Ernst Christian Mosing. With the very first item on the agenda, the administrative board acknowledged the resignation of two long-term board members, Ottokar Stern[2] and Siegfried Josef Pick.[3] Stern and Pick – both of whom were of Jewish origin – were not present at the meeting and had submitted their statements to the board in writing. In the following months, both of them were forced to leave the country. With the second item on the agenda, the Klagenfurt-born "Baurat h. c. Ing." Max Tazoll[4] was elected Vice

1 Protokoll des Verwaltungsrats, Mar. 17, 1938. PORR-Archive (PA), Mappe Firmengeschichte, Protokolle des Verwaltungsrats der Allgemeinen Baugesellschaft – A. PORR AG, 7. Teil, 1928–1939 (Mappe Firmengeschichte, Protokolle).

2 Ottokar Stern's assets were confiscated, but he managed to flee to Switzerland in the framework of the Gildemeester Operation. Abgeltungsfonds, GZ 2034, Ing. Ottokar und Sylvia Maria Solvey-Stern. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Archiv der Republik (ÖStA/AdR), E-uReang Hilfsfonds; Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 405.

3 Siegfried Pick emigrated to London in July 1939 in the framework of the Gildemeester Operation. Siegfried Pick, May 8, 1942 and Gestapo, July 23, 1942. ÖStA/AdR, E-uReang FLD 7503.

4 Max Tazoll was awarded the honorary professional title "Baurat honoris causa" by the former Federal President Wilhelm Miklas in 1932. At the time, Tazoll had still been director of the

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President in Ottokar Stern's stead. Tazoll, who had studied civil engineering, had been appointed as a consultant at *PORR* by Siegfried Josef Pick in 1934[5] and became a member of the administrative board on April 1, 1934.[6] Under the Austrofascist regime, *PORR AG* had profited from the state's employment creation schemes, not least of all due to Mosing's, Stern's, and Tazoll's networks.[7] However, while Mosing and Stern lost their positions under the new racist auspices of the Nazi state, in the following years Tazoll would go on to become a "company leader" and hence a key figure in *PORR AG*. This is because he entertained excellent connections in all directions: Through his many years of activity – including internationally – at a Frankfurt-based construction company and then, following its bankruptcy in 1932,[8] as Managing Director of the now independent Austrian successor company *Wayss & Freytag AG und Meinong GmbH*,[9] Tazoll commanded an excellent network within the construction sector.[10] Tazoll was also a member of the board of directors of the construction company *Wienerberger Ziegelfabriks- und Baugesellschaft*[11] and, as an early member of the Nazi Party as well as of the dueling fraternity *Bruna-Sudetia*[12] and the pan-German nationalist organization *Deutsche Klub*,[13] he also had excellent contacts in the Nazi camp.[14] Thus, as early as May 1938, Josef Bürckel, the Reich Commissioner for the Reunification of Austria and Germany, appointed him to the board of the City of Vienna for the Administrative Office for Civil Engineering.[15] Following the recommendation of Walter Rafelsberger, the state

construction company *Wayss & Freytag AG und Meinong GmbH*. Zeitschrift des Österreichischen Ingenieur- und Architekten-Vereins 84 (1932) 17/18, 96.

5 Erinnerungsbericht Wilhelm Fessler, undated, 2. PA, Mappe Firmengeschichte. Zusammenfassende Darstellungen.

6 PA, Mappe 498, Max Tazoll. He quit the company on January 15, 1946.

7 Suttner, Das schwarze Wien, 73.

8 On the bankruptcy of the German parent company, see for example: Sanierungsvorschlag für die Wayß & Freytag A.G., in: Neues Wiener Journal, No. 13.774, March 26, 1932, 14.

9 Tazoll began working for *Wayss & Freytag Baugesellschaft AG* in 1905; he was Managing Director of *Wayss & Freytag AG* and *Meinong GmbH* until he switched to *PORR AG*.

10 Max Tazoll, Apr. 19, 1879, NSDAP-Personalfragebogen, Mar. 20, 1940. Bundesarchiv (BArch), R 9361-II-1007936.

11 Lütgenau/Schröck, Zwangsarbeit, 61, fn. 123.

12 Max Tazoll, Apr. 19, 1879, NSDAP-Personalfragebogen, Mar. 20, 1940. BArch, R 9361-II-1007936.

13 Mitgliederverzeichnis des Deutschen Klubs, Sep. 30, 1939, 28. BArch, R 43-II-823; I thank Andreas Huber for referring me to this source. See also Taschwer/Huber/Erker, Der Deutsche Klub.

14 For an example of Tazoll's robust network, see the following report about an award ceremony at the Haus der Technik: Ehrung des Dipl.-Ing. Franz Visintini, in: Neues Wiener Tagblatt, No. 182, July 4, 1944, 3.

15 See for example: Kreisbote, No. 2088, May 12, 1939, cover page.

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commissioner for the Corporate Sector,[16] and of the industrialist August Schmid von Schmidsfelden, he was subsequently appointed[17] as head of the newly established "Economic Committee for the Construction Industry, Ostmark District Group."[18]

Nine other individuals were also appointed to the administrative board on March 17, 1938, all of whom were politically unquestionable from the Nazi perspective: Ludwig Wilms, a procurator and Vice Director of *PORR AG* at the time,[19] and Günther Nouackh were both members of the Nazi Party.[20] Both were also present during the meeting in question – unlike the lawyer Dr. Erich Führer (also a member of the *Bruna-Sudetia* fraternity) and Dr. Rudolf Rath (a member of the *Deutsche Klub*, the SS, and the Nazi Party), who were newly appointed to the administrative board. Following the unanimous election of the four new members, Mosing announced his resignation from the company, which he explained in a letter attached to the minutes by reference to his wife Elisabeth's Jewish ancestry. Mosing's letter leaves no doubt that his resignation as President of *PORR AG* after 16 years in this position was not voluntary:

> "While taking this step, I feel compelled to state for the record that my considerations are not of a political nature but based on the fact that according to the principles of the National Socialist Party, only such individuals should head business enterprises who meet all the demands of the Nuremberg Laws, including with regard to their spouses."[21]

Mosing's explicit reference to the Nuremberg Race Laws is interesting given that these were only formally adopted into law in Austria on May 28, 1938, over two months after this meeting.[22] In his letter, Mosing also cited the names of the four newly elected members of the administrative board. However, while Erich Führer's name was typewritten, the names Rath, Wilms, and Nouackh were added by hand. This presumably indicates that the transformation of *PORR AG* into an "Aryan" business was undertaken hastily and the question of who was to occupy the four vacant positions was not settled until shortly before the meet-

16 Walter Rafelsberger was thus also subordinate to the Property Transaction Office, which administered the "Aryanization" of Jewish property.

17 Sitzung der Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie, Bezirksgruppe Ostmark in Gründung am 21.7. 1938, Protokoll July 23, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Bd. 1.

18 This was a branch of the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry in Berlin, which incorporated all existing associations of the construction and roadwork sector in the "Ostmark." Lütgenau/Schröck, Zwangsarbeit, 61.

19 On Wilms's denazification, see BKA an PORR AG, September 8, 1946. PA, Mappe 1104, Ludwig Wilms.

20 Ing. Günther Nouackh, Bl. 1570, May 29, 1938. BArch, R 9361-II-766554.

21 Ernst v. Mosing, March 17, 1938. PA, Mappe Firmengeschichte, Protokolle.

22 The Nuremberg Race Laws came into effect in Germany on September 15, 1935 and in Austria on May 28, 1938. URL: https://www.demokratiezentrum.org/ressourcen/lexikon/nuernberger-rassengesetze/ (accessed April 4, 2024).

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ing.[23] Another indication of this rushed reshuffling is the fact that Rudolf Rath only acted as a temporary placeholder and already resigned from the administrative board at the following meeting held the very next day, stating "that he had only taken on the position at the election yesterday until a new administrative board member could be appointed."[24] As cited above, Mosing emphasized that his resignation was not for political reasons. He evidently did not oppose the Nazi regime, but rather sympathized thoroughly. Accordingly, he closed his letter with a "sincere German greeting."[25] Following Mosing's resignation, the demission of three further administrative board members was decreed in the meeting on March 17, 1938: Dr. Martin Kink (who was regarded as a representative of the Austrofascist corporate state[26]), the Councilor of Commerce Franz Emil Hollitzer (though he was already reappointed to the *PORR* board on March 25, 1938[27]), and Werner Salvisberg, a Swiss-born board member who was married to Ottokar Stern's daughter Annemarie (Mia) Stern. According to the minutes of the meeting, all three of these individuals resigned in order "to forestall any diffi-

23 Ernst v. Mosing, March 17, 1938. PA, Mappe Firmengeschichte, Protokolle.

24 Protokoll des Verwaltungsrats, March 18, 1938. Ibid.

25 Ernst v. Mosing, March 17, 1938. Ibid. Just three weeks after resigning from the administrative board, Mosing filed for divorce from his Jewish wife Elisabeth. This was possibly a move to evade the threat of having his assets confiscated, since these would no longer have counted as Jewish assets following a successful divorce. Since Mosing was not yet divorced by the cut-off date of April 27, 1938, he was at first liable to register his property, but as the divorce was granted in May, he successfully avoided any financial losses. ÖStA/AdR, E-uReang VVSt VA 4190, Ernst Christian Mosing, and VA 16028, Elisabeth Mosing.

26 Martin Kink returned to *PORR* after the end of World War Two as a public administrator, acting as head of the board of directors from 1958 to 1966. *A. PORR AG* (ed.), 100 Jahre, 3.

27 Hollitzer's short-lived resignation from the administrative board presumably owed to the suspicion that his wife, whom he claimed to have divorced in June 1938, was of Jewish origin. Hollitzer an Regierungsrat Rudolf Rath, August 2, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, E-uReang VVSt VA 30609, Franz Emil Hollitzer. His wife was Ernestine Senders, a singer and actress who was born in Vienna in 1874 and died there on June 17, 1941. Österreichisches Biographisches Lexikon, URL: https://www.biographien.ac.at/oebl/oebl_S/Senders_Ernestine_1874_1941.xml (accessed June 17, 2024). The administrative board minutes of March 25, 1938 note "that the new appointment of the administrative board precipitated by the political change initially necessitated the demission of Councilor of Commerce Franz Emil Hollitzer, among others, until certain questions could be clarified." administrative board member Nouackh subsequently reported that the architect Klee, the commissioner for *Gleichschaltung* (ensuring conformity with National Socialist principles) of the Technical Department – Construction Division had pointed out that there had been no objection to Hollitzer remaining in and/or being reappointed to the administrative board. Hollitzer himself informed the administrative board that his dismissal had not only "deeply troubled" him "personally and psychologically," but also that the situation threatened him with material damages. He also pointed out that he, of all people, had "always longed for the political change accomplished in the past 14 days" and felt "the greatest satisfaction with the realization of Austria's reunification with Germany." Protokoll des Verwaltungsrats, March 25, 1938. PA, Mappe Firmengeschichte, Protokolle.

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culties for the corporation and its future activities."[28] Mosing concluded the meeting by handing over the chairmanship to Tazoll, who "thanked the departing members of the administrative board in the warmest terms."[29]

1.2 The (Re-)Appointment of the Administrative Board with Nazi Party Loyalists

Just 24 hours later – on March 18, 1938 – the administrative board met again at the same venue to conclude the restructuring of the company management. This meeting was chaired by Max Tazoll, who had been newly elected Vice President the day before and who was now officially elected the new President in point three on the agenda. First, however, the meeting opened with the election of another three new members of the administrative board: These were director Eduard Heidendorfer (also a member of the *Deutsche Klub* and the fraternity *Teutonia Wien* as well as the former general manager of *Wayss & Freytag*[30]), who was also elected as the new Vice President, along with the Viennese architect and master builder Herbert Soche (who had been a member of the Nazi Party since 1931[31]) and Alois Danninger, a mechanical engineer from Schärding (a Nazi Party member since 1937[32]), who would go on to serve from 1939 to 1941 as general manager of the Steyrermühl paper factory – this company had been broken up into three parts by the Nazi regime[33] and would later become a client of *PORR*.[34]

From a financial perspective, the new management of *PORR* argued in favor of a quick settlement with the expelled administrative board members Stern, Pick, and Kink, each of whom still had a valid contract of employment along with stock portfolios that had to be compensated. During this administrative board meeting, the Viennese lawyer Dr. Engelbert Zinsler was entrusted with handling the negotiations. Zinsler, who regularly took the minutes at the company's administrative board meetings,[35] had also been a member of the *Deutsche Klub* since 1924.[36] The bulk of the stock portfolios previously belonging to Stern and Pick were acquired by the Highest Administration of the House of Hanover-

28 Protokoll des Verwaltungsrats, March 17, 1938. Ibid.
29 Ibid.
30 Mitgliederverzeichnis des Deutschen Klubs, September 30, 1939, 11.
31 BArch, R 9361-I, Herbert Soche.
32 ÖStA/AdR ZNsZ GA 353325, Alois Danninger.
33 Melichar, Arisierungen, 371–386.
34 Danninger had worked at the Steyrermühl paper factory since 1924. The company commissioned *PORR AG* to implement a factory expansion project in 1940. Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 392.
35 Protokoll des Verwaltungsrats, March 18, 1938. PA, Mappe Firmengeschichte, Protokolle.
36 Mitgliederverzeichnis des Deutschen Klubs, September 30, 1939, 32.

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Brunswick-Lüneburg,[37] which in turn led to yet another expansion of the administrative board. As a result of this acquisition of stock by the House of Hanover and the shift in majority ratios that this entailed within *PORR AG* (the House of Hanover-Brunswick-Lüneburg now held 42.7% of *PORR* shares[38]), the company had earned the right to henceforth call itself an "Aryan enterprise."

However, the process of restructuring the administrative board was not yet concluded by this point, as Herbert von Neuman, a cousin of the expelled administrative board member Martin Kink, demanded in a personal conversation with Tazoll, the President of *PORR*, to be appointed in Kink's stead in order to protect the latter's interests on the board. According to a summary from January 1939, Kink still held an expansive stock portfolio with altogether 2,000 shares.[39] Tazoll told Neuman that he would grant his request in time, but since the administrative board was already full at that point, this would first require an additional amendment to the statutes in the course of a general assembly. Until then, Neuman was allowed to participate in administrative board meetings as an "observer." In a further administrative board meeting on May 2, 1938, a decision was made to table a motion at the next general assembly to be held on May 20, 1938 to expand the administrative board from eight members to a maximum of twelve. For the first time, two members of the *PORR* staff participated in this administrative board meeting, namely Heinrich König (as an employee representative) and Leopold Endstrasser (as a workforce representative). Johann Swoboda, a state commissioner, was also present,[40] as was the director of *PORR AG*, Alfred Schuppler, who would later be appointed to the executive board and whose task it was to report to the administrative board about the company's business backlog. The proposal to expand the administrative board was approved at the general assembly on May 20, 1938, and Neuman was officially appointed to the administrative board in the subsequent board meeting.[41]

1.3 Adaption to the German Stock Corporation Law – Appointing the Executive Board and the Board of Directors

On the first agenda item at the administrative board meeting of September 29, 1938, Max Tazoll announced that the "Aryanization" of the company had been completed. In his opening remarks, Tazoll acknowledged the "seriousness of the

37 On the company's ownership structure and specifically regarding the House of Hanover and/or the House of Brunswick-Lüneburg, see Oliver Rathkolb's contribution to this volume.
38 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 390.
39 Protokoll des Verwaltungsrats, January 7, 1939. PA, Mappe Firmengeschichte, Protokolle.
40 Protokoll des Verwaltungsrats, May 2, 1938. Ibid.
41 Protokoll des Verwaltungsrats, May 20, 1938. Ibid.

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times" in which the meeting was taking place, expressing his conviction that "the genius leadership of Adolf HITLER [sic] will succeed in maintaining peace for the German people."[42] The meeting in the *PORR*-Haus on Operngasse was attended by prominent individuals, including "His Royal Highness Ernst August, Prince of Hanover." As the largest shareholder of *PORR AG*, Ernst August of Hanover was appointed to the administrative board along with his business representative Johannes Semler from Berlin (who was not present at the meeting).[43] The next step in transforming *PORR AG* into a "fully fledged German company" was the adaptation of the company structure to the German Stock Corporation Law, which officially had to be decreed by the general shareholders' meeting at the latest by June 30, 1939. A review of the company's shareholding conducted in the framework of the meeting revealed that the House of Hanover together with a shareholder group centered on Franz Emil Hollitzer held by far the largest portion of stock (11,626 shares). Much smaller portfolios were held by Martin Kink (2,000 shares), director Ludwig Wilms (600 shares), the group Schuppler and friends (583 shares), and the not specifically defined group "further friends" (220 shares). Another 7,021 shares were held in diversified holdings.[44]

The meeting was otherwise dedicated to discussing the company's next steps, including the nomination of a board of directors. This right was reserved for Ernst August von Hannover as the largest shareholder. Aside from his eponymous son, he proposed two of his closest acolytes, namely the Prof. Paul von Knoke (as the eldest of the three, he also assumed the chairmanship) and Dr. Johannes Semler (who became Deputy Chairman). As mentioned, Semler had already been appointed to the administrative board in late September 1938. Ernst August von Hannover wished the further members of the board of directors to include two former members of the administrative board, namely Alois Danninger and Eduard Heidendorfer, as well as Hans Wertanek and Heinrich Lutz, who had been appointed head of City Planning by the Nazi Party. When the House of Hanover failed in its efforts to also acquire Martin Kink's stock portfolio, it was decided at a special Shareholders' Meeting on February 3, 1939 to additionally appoint Herbert von Neuman to the board of directors as Kink's representative. The lawyer Engelbert Zinsler continued taking the minutes. Of the nominated candidates, Hans Wertanek was not appointed to the board of directors of *PORR*. As the Managing Director of *Hollitzer-Baustoffwerke*, he had presumably been intended to represent the interests of the Hollitzer group on the board. Instead, he was appointed to the board of directors of the *PORR* sub-

42 Protokoll des Verwaltungsrats, September 29, 1938. Ibid.
43 Ibid.
44 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 408.

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sidiary, *Allgemeine Strassenbau AG* (*Allbau*), which was also newly elected that day.[45] During its inaugural meeting, the board of directors also appointed a new executive board for *PORR*. Aside from Max Tazoll, who continued to chair the administrative board, the new executive board included Franz Emil Hollitzer, Andreas Hutarew, Alfred Schuppler, and Ludwigs Wilms. However, the executive board was to shrink to three members in subsequent years (Tazoll, Schuppler, and Wilms): Andreas Hutarew, who was newly appointed to the executive board in 1939, was enlisted by the Wehrmacht shortly after the outbreak of war and fell on the Eastern Front on June 27, 1941. Another executive board member, Franz Emil Hollitzer, died a few months later (on November 20, 1941).[46] These two seats would remain vacant until the end of the war. Following Hollitzer's death, the House of Hanover also acquired his shares in *PORR*, thereby securing an absolute majority with 52.035% of the stock.[47] The board of directors rarely met in full during the course of the war. Aside from Ernst August von Hanover,[48] Herbert von Neuman also served in the war for several years. Moreover, Heinrich Lutz, the Viennese head of City Planning, had to quit the board of directors since "his administrative authority was of the opinion that his function as a member of the board of directors was incompatible with his position as a civil servant."[49] The board of directors met for the last time during the years of Nazi rule on July 27, 1944.

2. *PORR AG's* Business Policy during the Nazi Era

In a chronicle entitled "The Company's Development following Austria's Incorporation into Germany," director Schuppler portrayed the enthusiasm of the now reformed *PORR AG* for the Nazi regime and the company's future activities after the "Anschluss" as follows:

> "Austria's incorporation into Germany initiated a great upsurge and a significant expansion of the company's sphere of activity. An opportunity now presented itself to participate again generously and for the first time in years [sic] in the construction projects of a great state in the throes of a tempestuous upward development. […] This

45 Aufsichtsratsprotokoll, February 3, 1939. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 2, Aufsichtsratsprotokolle 1939–1944.

46 Aufsichtsratsprotokoll, November 22, 1941. Ibid.

47 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 409.

48 Ernst August von Hanover was already enlisted in early November 1939 and did not participate in a single meeting of the board of directors subsequently. Finally, on November 16, 1943, Paul Knoke junior was granted the authority to speak not only for himself on the board of directors but also to officially represent Ernst August von Hanover. Aufsichtsratsprotokoll, November 4, 1939 and November 19, 1943. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 2.

49 Aufsichtsratsprotokoll, February 11, 1942. Ibid.

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> task was exhilarating to the utmost for Austria's engineers [...]. In the now famous words of Dr. Todt, the leader of the engineering world, Austria's construction sector had to jump onto a moving express train, meaning it had to catch up through a soaring development with what the German construction industry had been allowed to build up through continuous organizational efforts since the year 1933."[50]

Schuppler went on to list some of the largest and most significant projects that *PORR* was currently participating in and which in his view symbolized the structural need for the "Ostmark" to catch up. These included the massive new industrial constructions for *Gebrüder Böhler* in Kapfenberg and St. Marein, the expansion of the factory complexes of *Zellwolle Lenzing AG*, the construction of a power plant in Timelkam, and construction projects for the chemical industry of *IG Farben* in Linz and Moosbierbaum.[51] When the "Anschluss" took place, the Nazi regime already had specific plans to remedy the existing structural deficits in Austria's economy. Only recently, the Austrian economic historian Ernst Langthaler pointed to the early strategic plans of the Reich Office for Economic Development in the Reich Ministry of the Economy for a Four Year Plan for Austria, for which extensive deliberations had already been undertaken in March 1938 and which entailed many specific measures. Examples include the construction of a nitrogen plant, a rayon factory, and the expansion of transportation and blast furnace capacities.[52] *PORR AG* was significantly involved in grand construction projects in the "Ostmark" in many of these areas during the war, which enabled the company to gradually increase its annual construction output up to 1944.

The administrative board members had evidently already been considering the company's future business policy in the first weeks following the "Anschluss." In an administrative board meeting on May 2, 1938, Max Tazoll spoke out against the view expressed by some of the shareholders that the company should give up the construction business altogether due to the excessive risk this involved and instead limit itself exclusively to real estate management. This consideration must presumably be viewed in light of the structural problems plaguing the construction sector in the "Ostmark" after the "Anschluss." Many construction companies lacked workers (both laborers and engineers), machines, and the necessary equity, which is why representatives of the building industry increasingly regarded the acceptance of larger construction contracts as too risky.[53] Tazoll vehemently opposed such considerations on the administrative board, arguing that a withdrawal from the construction sector would neither

50 Manuscript on the company's history, Vienna, June 1942, 20–21. PA, Mappe 1470.
51 Ibid., 23–31.
52 Langthaler, Unterbrochene Beschleunigung, 171.
53 Sitzung der Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie, Bezirksgruppe Ostmark in Gründung am 21.7. 1938, Protokoll July 23, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Bd. 1.

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make economic sense nor be in the interest of the common good. According to the minutes, his words were met with applause by the other members of the administrative board. Thus, the company's increased involvement in the construction sector was secured.[54] However, the executive board came to a strategic decision not to continue accepting pure "building contracts, such as residential buildings or settlements or pure groundworks, which demand mass labor at modest prices."[55] Instead, the company began soliciting contracts to build complex industrial facilities, with *PORR* taking on not just the planning, but also finding itself capable of realizing all the necessary individual construction stages of these projects. This included drawing up the construction plans, developing the construction site, building the access roads and tracks, and installing the necessary power lines as well as water and sewage pipes.[56] Due to the greater complexity of such projects, it was easier with regard to the production costs to justify to the authorities that the company focused on the entire planning and implementation process, which in turn meant that it could demand better prices for these special works.[57] During the course of the war, *PORR* would also participate in various subterranean construction projects, as armaments facilities crucial to the war effort were relocated to underground tunnel systems, as well as in trench construction and large-scale projects of Organisation Todt (OT)[58] in Serbia, France, Ukraine, and Italy.

A study on the productive capacity of Austrian construction companies conducted in the summer of 1938 by the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry, Ostmark District Group – which was headed by Tazoll, the Works Manager of *PORR* – revealed that *PORR AG* was the second-largest construction company in the country at the time, both in terms of laborers (730) and employees (124) as well as in its most recent annual revenue, the latter being based on the company's total revenue in 1937 (7.5 million Schilling). Only the company *Universale Redlich & Berger* had a – significantly – larger workforce

54 Protokoll des Verwaltungsrats, May 2, 1938. PA, Mappe Firmengeschichte, Protokolle.

55 Dreivierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, September 1941, 2. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3 (this folder contains all the reports of the executive board of *PORR* and will therefore no longer be cited separately in the following).

56 Manuscript on the company's history, Vienna, June 1942, 22–23. PA, Mappe 1470.

57 Dreivierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, September 1941, 2. PA.

58 Organisation Todt (OT) was a paramilitary organization within the Nazi state named after its first leader, Fritz Todt. It was initially deployed as a construction battalion that exploited forced labor to execute gigantic construction projects in the territories occupied by Germany, including the "West Wall" and later the "Atlantic Wall." From 1943 onward, the OT was also active in the territory of Nazi Germany itself, responsible among other things for the construction of air defense facilities and subterranean armaments production projects. Seidler, Organisation Todt.

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(with 2,220 laborers and 72 employees) and a larger annual revenue in 1937 of around 9 million Schilling.[59]

At first, both *PORR* and *Allbau* – like the construction sector in the "Ostmark" generally – had to contend with labor shortages. In August 1938, for example, *PORR* noted that it lacked not just several skilled laborers (seven technicians and five technical clerks), but most importantly around 350 unskilled laborers: 100 alone were needed for the construction of the Grossglockner High Alpine Road, another 50 for the construction of the Liesing Valley sewer, and yet again 200 for the construction of a rayon factory in Lenzing and a power plant in Timelkam (the latter two were large-scale projects that would, over subsequent years, yield *PORR* a construction volume in the millions). *PORR* moreover reported that it could not even tender offers for around a dozen further construction projects due to this massive labor shortage. These consisted predominantly of construction projects for the Luftwaffe (including in Vienna, Wiener Neustadt, Zwölfaxing, and Hörsching), for the City of Vienna, and for the Construction Office of the Reichsautobahn.[60] *Allbau*, a *PORR* subsidiary, even characterized the labor shortage as "catastrophic": "The allocation of laborers from Vienna for these urgently needed military and other construction projects is totally insufficient insofar as the laborers being sent are often hardly suitable."[61] *Allbau* also stated that the shortage had prevented the company from submitting any offers for numerous construction projects on behalf of the military as well as various road administration bodies. It moreover noted that the stipulated construction deadlines– especially those of the military and Luftwaffe[62] – were often unrealizable.[63] The other construction companies queried in this instance all answered in very similar terms, so for example *Mayreder, Kraus & Co.*, *Pittel & Brauswetter*, *Universale Redlich & Berger*, *H. Rella & Co.*, and *STUAG*.

In light of this difficult point of departure, Max Tazoll felt compelled to reassure his colleagues on the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry, Ostmark District Group. As the minutes from a committee meeting on July 21, 1938 state:

59 Statistische Angaben der wichtigsten Baufirmen Österreichs aus dem Jahre 1937, Beilage 2, July 20, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Bd. 1.

60 Antwortschreiben an die Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie, Bezirksgruppe Ostmark über bestehende Schwierigkeiten bei der Durchführung von Bauvorhaben in der Ostmark, August 1938. Ibid.

61 Ibid.

62 As an example of a task it deemed unrealizable, *Allbau* cited a request to build a runway at an airfield with an area of 30,000 square meters. The Luftwaffe wanted this runway – including canalization and excavation, a 25-centimeter insulating layer, foundation engineering, tarmac, and tar concrete – to be completed within six weeks. Ibid.

63 Ibid.

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> "Tazoll once again exhorted those present to work together with an exemplary community spirit and especially not to become discouraged should the difficulties keep mounting at first. As the Führer stated, difficulties exist to be overcome. It will not take much longer for everything to be brought into order, including in the construction sector, and to function normally. The large challenges need to be met with full force."[64]

Yet Tazoll also turned to Dr. Rudolf Kratz, Commissioner for Construction in the office of Reich Commissioner Bürckel, addressing the "wishes of the construction sector in the Ostmark."[65] Before discussing at length the four main problems faced by the Austrian construction sector,[66] namely the shortage of laborers, technicians, construction machinery, and building materials, Tazoll used the opportunity to lambast in especially bleak and pathetic terms the Austrofascist regime (under whose construction policies *PORR* had of course profited greatly[67]) and to assure the head of the Austrian construction sector's loyalty:

> "A state's construction sector has always been and will always be a thermometer for the state's health. The construction sector alone in Schuschnigg's Austria already evinced that this state was not only incapable of surviving on its own but had moreover been driven economically into the ground by unscrupulous and irresponsible cheats and profiteers. While the entire construction sector in neighboring Germany experienced an unexpected upsurge, Austria's construction sector atrophied to a downright frightening degree. […] 13 March also extinguished the lethal germ that the Austrian construction sector carried within itself and awakened it to a new and hopeful life. The construction sector of the Ostmark owes this especially to the greatest master builder of all time, our Führer Adolf Hitler. The Führer gave the order to execute a gigantic construction program in the Ostmark. The construction sector in the Ostmark regards it as the greatest honor to implement this order with all the forces at its disposal and through the realization of every available opportunity."[68]

Despite the bleak situation in the construction sector described by *PORR* in August 1938, Tazoll was already able to share news of progress in an administrative board meeting on September 29, 1938. He reported that the volume of contracts had risen from 6 million Schilling in 1937 to 13 million Reichsmark in 1938, with around 8 million Reichsmark of these contracts expected to be real-

64 Sitzung der Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie, Bezirksgruppe Ostmark in Gründung am 21.7. 1938, Protokoll July 23, 1938. Ibid.

65 Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie, Bezirksgruppe Ostmark an Baukommissar beim Reichskommissar Gauleiter Bürckel, Oberregierungsrat Dr. Kratz, gezeichnet Max Tazoll, August 8, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Bd. 1.

66 Intriguingly, Tazoll's summary omitted another key problem facing Austrian construction companies during this period, namely their massively deficient capital endowment. See Bertrand Perz's contribution to this volume.

67 Suttner, Das schwarze Wien, 73.

68 Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie, Bezirksgruppe Ostmark an Baukommissar beim Reichskommissar Gauleiter Bürckel, Oberregierungsrat Dr. Kratz, gezeichnet Max Tazoll, August 8, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Bd. 1.

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ized before the end of 1938. He attributed this rise to a series of new construction projects granted to *PORR* "after the upheaval."[69] From the company's perspective, the policy of completely "cleansing" its governing bodies immediately after the "Anschluss" had therefore paid off. The acquisition of a majority of the stock by the House of Hanover had bestowed upon *PORR* the title of an "Aryan enterprise" along with the assessment of being a "major corporation about which nothing detrimental is known and which is therefore eligible for state contracts."[70]

In early 1939, further consolidation measures were implemented in the construction sector in the "Ostmark" by Fritz Todt, Inspector General of German Roads and Plenipotentiary for the Construction Sector, who had been assigned this task by Field Marshal General Hermann Göring, Plenipotentiary for the Four Year Plan.[71] These included among other things a tighter procedure for the allocation of construction materials and a centralization of agendas in the construction sector. In addition, in August 1939 Todt decreed – though not publicly – that all construction projects that had not yet commenced should be put on hold until October 1, 1939. This was in compliance with Göring's order that, in the framework of the Four Year Plan, all construction projects should be assessed with regard to their importance to the state. This measure stipulated that ongoing construction projects should be accelerated and quickly completed before they could be slowed down by any newly commencing construction projects.[72] The question of the importance of construction efforts (including for the war effort) became even more central following the outbreak of World War Two and, hence, also became key to the further strategic considerations within *PORR AG*.

2.1 Reorientation after the Outbreak of War: The View across the Border

Following the invasion of Poland by Nazi Germany and the subsequent outbreak of World War Two, *PORR* thought it necessary to reorient itself with regard to future areas of operation and the acquisition of contracts. This view was quickly shared by the executive board, as the following quote from an executive board report dated November 4, 1939 shows:

69 Verwaltungsratssitzung, September 29, 1938, 2–3. PA, Mappe Firmengeschichte, Protokolle.
70 Erhebungen zur Leistungsfähigkeit der Baubetriebe der "Ostmark," undated. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Bd. 1.
71 Bausperre gem. 6. Anordnung des Generalbevollmächtigten für die Regelung der Bauwirtschaft, Aug. 4, 1939. Ibid., Bd. 3.
72 Lütgenau/Schröck, Zwangsarbeit, 67–68.

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> "The adaptation of the entire construction sector to a pure war economy makes it absolutely necessary for our company, if it wishes to secure its contracts for the future, to pursue whatever paths will continue to facilitate the acquisition of such contracts while disregarding and no longer pursuing all other construction matters that do not pertain to the assured completion of urgent construction projects. It will be up to us to seek work from those institutions that are commissioning urgent construction projects, specifically institutions tasked to do so by the General Army Office."[73]

The "relevant institutions" identified in this context were Baubüro Speer (responsible for Luftwaffe and air defense construction as well as urgently required settlement construction), Baubüro Dr. Todt (responsible for all industrial armaments construction), Baubüro Krauch (responsible for all chemical industry construction), and *Hermann Göring Werke – Alpine Montangesellschaft* in Linz.[74] *PORR AG* was once again quick to react, as it had been after the "Anschluss": Already in the first weeks after the outbreak of war, the executive board member Hutarew conducted a "study trip" to Krakow in order to inquire about future construction projects in Eastern Silesia and Galicia. Hutarew reported back to the board that the relevant institutions in situ had not yet completed the necessary preliminary work. However, he also reported that the head of the bridge construction department in Krakow, a certain undersecretary Dr. Müller (previously serving in the Ministry of Trade in Vienna) was well-disposed toward *PORR*.[75] Around this time, *PORR* had already "by request of Inspector General Dr. Todt"[76] sent a first construction unit, consisting of an engineer, a foreman, and 30 core laborers, to the Tarnow area in the General Government for work on bridge and road repairs.[77] This deployment was short-lived, however, as it was already completed in the first quarter of 1940 and comprised a construction output of just a few ten thousand Reichsmark.[78] In late 1939, *PORR* and *Allbau* applied – by invitation of the street construction department in Krakow – for another contract in Poland, though neither company was granted the commission. In early 1940, *PORR* once again submitted an offer by invitation of the street construction department, with a contract totaling 1.7 million Reichsmark being approved. *PORR AG* subsequently signed this contract over to *Allbau*. However, when *PORR* "discovered in the past 5 weeks that the conditions had by contrast to the initial

73 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 4, 1939, 4–5. PA.
74 Ibid., 5.
75 Ibid., 8.
76 Aufsichtsratsprotokoll, November 4, 1939, 2. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 2.
77 *PORR* was just one of several construction companies deployed to Poland for repair and restoration works in the days following Germany's invasion of the country. The company *Philipp Holzmann AG* deployed seven construction units simultaneously. Pohl, Philipp Holzmann, 248.
78 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 4, 1939, 8. PA.

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assumptions changed for the worse,"[79] it endeavored to cancel the contract. This move seems to have been successful. Further queries regarding bridge construction projects in Poland were turned down by *PORR*.[80] The company would not become active in the General Government again until 1941, when it conducted work among other places in the vicinity of the Auschwitz concentration camp. Compared to its overall annual construction output, the projects that *PORR* undertook in Auschwitz and Parchwitz for *IG Farben* and in Ostrowiec for the companies *Riedel und Sohn* and *Stahlwerke Braunschweig GmbH* remained modest: According to the annual reports of the executive board, altogether they totaled 4 million Reichsmark.[81]

Concurrently, in 1940 *PORR* began to establish its construction business in Slovakia permanently. That year, *Allbau* was tasked with building several sections of the Slovak state road in the vicinity of Trenčin and Banská Bystrica. The executive board of *PORR* viewed this as a successful pilot project with potential for further expansion.[82] Hence, the board – evidently motivated by increased encouragement from Fritz Todt[83] – decided to establish a local branch of the company in Slovakia in the second half of 1941, which would subsequently garner around a dozen smaller and larger construction contracts.[84]

2.2 Social Support for the Core Workforce of *PORR*

> "This year, too, the company's sense of community, the spiritual and physical development of our workforce, and their joy in teamwork were deepened through sports and games, leisure activities, and a range of amenities and events."[85]

Social support for the core workforce provided in the framework of the German Labor Front constituted one of the key activities for companies with regard to labor politics, especially since the free unions had been systematically dismantled. Explicitly echoing the racist language of the Nazi regime, the executive board of *PORR* repeatedly contrasted the apparently poor work performance of foreign civilian laborers and prisoners of war assigned to the company with the great, even heroic accomplishments of its core workforce. The company rewarded the latter's achievements every year with ever greater sums invested in social support measures. Despite the extreme drop in the number of German

79 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, March 9, 1940, 9. PA.
80 Ibid.
81 See Maria Czaputowicz-Głowacka's contribution to this volume.
82 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 4, 1939, 8–9. PA.
83 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, April 1941, 4. PA.
84 See Pavel Szobi's contribution to this volume.
85 Geschäftsbericht 1942, June 1943. PA, Mappe Geschäftsberichte 1927–1943.

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core laborers (especially due to conscription), the company's social expenditure on behalf of its workforce rose from around 90,000 Reichsmark in 1939 to over 235,000 Reichsmark in 1944 – a significant increase.[86] These yearly expenditures included measures such as paying support for laborers conscripted to the Wehrmacht and funding company sports activities, excursions, Christmas celebrations, activities designed to strengthen comradeship, education and entertainment, shipping charitable packages, magazines, and books to conscripts, and assuring the receipt of various other benefits. The company moreover rented an entire floor of a building on Ungargasse in Vienna's third district, which was divided into several apartments and made available to the families of enlisted laborers who had hitherto been living in residential barracks.[87]

2.2.1 "Aryanizations" in Favor of German Laborers

Since the managers of *PORR* placed a special emphasis on "promoting health and relaxation,"[88] the company decided to seize a unique opportunity in 1940 and "Aryanize" a villa in Heiligenkreuz along with the Karl-Volkert-Haus at the base of the Grossglockner near Heiligenblut. These buildings were henceforth to serve the workforce as company retreats. In Heiligenkreuz, *PORR* acquired a property including several buildings at the address Sattelbach 16 belonging to Isidor (Doro) Stein (born in Vienna on January 11, 1869). Stein had taken over his father Salomon's estate from the early twentieth century onward and established a giant department store empire from his base in Vienna, though he was practically bankrupt by the end of the 1930s.[89] The property consisted of a villa, an administrative building, and a kitchen building, all of which – due to the desperation of the Jewish owner – had gone for a relatively good price.[90] On the property registration form he submitted to the Property Transaction Office in Vienna in June 1938, Stein had initially valued the property at 50,000 Reichsmark.[91] By the end of 1938, he informed the Property Transaction Office that he would possibly

86 Matis and Stiefel argued that due to the high war gains tax, the company may have intended to deliberately keep its profit margin as low as possible, regarding expenditure on social support as the best investment since this was tax-deductible. Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 432–433.

87 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, January 20, 1944, 15. PA.

88 Geschäftsbericht 1943, July 1944, 5. PA, Mappe Geschäftsberichte 1927–1943.

89 Doro Stein was the eldest son of Salomon Stein, who ran the department store empire *S. Stein*. The son expanded the business significantly after his father's death, which consisted of a number of department stores in Turkey and Egypt. Before the outbreak of World War One, which spelled the downfall of the department store chain, the business ranked among the most important exporters of textiles from the Austrian Monarchy to North Africa. Agstner, Kaufhausimperium.

90 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 8, 1940, 17–18. PA.

91 ÖStA/AdR, E-uReang VVSt VA 34.684, Doro Stein.

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not even be able to generate 40,000 Reichsmark in proceeds from the sale of the property.[92] According to a decision (which is not preserved) by the Nazi Governor of "Niederdonau" dated November 1, 1940, the property was valued at just 38,000 Reichsmark, against which Stein nevertheless appealed and was found in the right.[93] *PORR* finally acquired the property including the buildings on December 10, 1940, the contract stipulating a sales price of 45,000 Reichsmark.[94] Doro Stein died just two days later, on December 12, 1940.[95] The sale initially took place in the context of a contract granted to *PORR* in the fall of 1940, with which the company was tasked to construct a bridge for the Reichsautobahn across a valley near Heiligenkreuz. The property was intended to be a "base" for the workforce that would be deployed on the construction site over the following years. Following the closure of the construction site in early 1942, the property in Heiligenkreuz served as a company retreat for the workforce and was used frequently until the end of the war: "Many company laborers were able to relax and find some rest at our company retreat in Heiligenkreuz."[96]

In 1947, *PORR AG* – as represented by its public administrators Martin Kink and Franz Witzmann – reached a settlement with Doro Stein's widow, Maria Stein, and in accordance with the Third Restitution Law restituted the entire property in return for the sales price of 45,000 Schilling.[97]

In 1941, *PORR* made another attractive leisure opportunity available to its German workforce in the Alps: "We have moreover acquired the Karl Volkert-Haus on the Grossglockner road, which we will make available to those of our laborers who love the mountains."[98] *PORR AG* acquired the building from the

92 Schreiben an die Vermögensverkehrsstelle Wien, December 10, 1938. Ibid.

93 Engelbert Zinsler, a lawyer and long-term registrar at *PORR AG*, played a key role in the sale of the property. Zinsler addressed this transaction between *PORR AG* and Doro Stein at his trial before a People's Court after the end of the war. His wife Ludmilla stated in a sworn affidavit (the aim of which was to attest to her husband's good character) that Zinsler himself had encouraged Doro Stein to protest against the decision by the regional government of "Niederdonau" to lower the offer of purchase to 38,000 Reichsmark and to demand instead the sales price of 45,000 Reichsmark originally agreed with *PORR AG*. According to his wife, Zinsler even drafted the complaint letter to the regional government on behalf of Doro Stein. Eidesstattliche Erklärung Ludmilla Zinsler, May 25, 1945, bzw. Kopie einer Niederschrift mit Doro Stein in der Kanzlei Dr. Engelbert Zinsler, Nov. 8, 1940. Wiener Stadt- und Landesarchiv (WStLA), Volksgericht Wien, Vg2Vr2411-45, Volksgerichtsprozess gegen Dr. Engelbert Zinsler.

94 Kaufvertrag zwischen Doro und Maria Stein bzw. der PORR AG, Dec. 10, 1940. Bezirksgericht (BG) Baden, Grundbuch (GB) Heiligenkreuz, Urkundenbuch Nr. 11, TZ 4065/40.

95 Vergleich zur Rückstellung des Anwesens in Heiligenkreuz. Ibid., Urkundenbuch Nr. 4, TZ 1116/47.

96 Geschäftsbericht der PORR AG für das Jahr 1943, 5. BArch, R 8136/3644.

97 Vergleich zur Rückstellung des Anwesens in Heiligenkreuz. BG Baden, GB Heiligenkreuz, Urkundenbuch Nr. 4, TZ 1116/47.

98 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, February 9, 1942, 13. PA.

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Gestapo, who had confiscated it from the association *Naturfreunde* on May 31, 1938 and incorporated it as property of the German state. *PORR AG* – as represented by its executive board members Max Tazoll and director Ludwig Wilms – bought the house from the Gestapo with a contract signed on December 6, 1941 stipulating a sales price of 44,000 Reichsmark.[99] The company's annual report from 1945 revealed that *PORR* was forced to return the Karl-Volkert-Haus to *Naturfreunde*, with the subsequent loss of 43,000 Schilling entered in the profit and loss account for 1945 as a "special expenditure."[100] According to the land register of the cadastral community Zlapp und Hof, the property was only actually restored to *Naturfreunde* on May 22, 1950.[101]

2.3 Building under Conditions of War – Crucial to the War Effort or not?

Following the 9th Decree of the Plenipotentiary for the Regulation of the Building Sector on February 16, 1940, private construction activities came to a complete standstill, while construction projects costing over 5,000 Reichsmark were once again forbidden. All construction projects now required classification as "crucial for the war effort," which only those agencies empowered by Göring to this end were entitled to grant. This total reorientation of the war economy also caused a rupture for *PORR AG*, as numerous construction projects for which the planning had already been finalized now had to either be postponed or cancelled altogether. Immediately following the outbreak of war, the construction of a Reichsautobahn bridge over the Danube near Stadlau (in collaboration with *Wayss & Freytag* and *Mayreder, Kraus & Co.*) was put on hold. Further construction projects that were classed as crucial for the war effort – including works at the cement factories in Kirchbichl[102] and Gmunden – also had to be shut down. Larger construction projects, such as for the Gauhaus Linz or port construction projects in Linz and Krems, were either scaled back or temporarily stalled due to a shortage of laborers and materials.[103] Halfway through 1940, the executive board listed all the construction projects that could no longer be continued or begun due to the changed circumstances. This included roadworks in the vicinity

99 BG Winklern, BG A-155, Katastralgemeinde (KG) Zlapp und KG Hof, Einlagezahl (EZ) 330 and EZ 331. Kärntner Landesarchiv (KLA); BG A-516, Urkundensammlung, TZ-271/42. Ibid.

100 Gewinn- und Verlustrechnung, Dec. 31, 1945. PA, Mappe Geschäftsberichte 1927–1945, and Geschäftsbericht 1945, January 1947, 3. Ibid.

101 BG Winklern, BG A-155, KG Zlapp und KG Hof, EZ 330 and EZ 331. KLA.

102 Construction works in Kirchbichl were resumed by *PORR AG* in 1950. A. PORR AG (ed.), 100 Jahre, 44.

103 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, March 9, 1940, 1–2. PA.

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of Salzburg-Kasern on behalf of the Head Construction Office of the Reichsautobahn in Munich,[104] quarry works in the Malta Valley (Pflüglhof) on behalf of the Head Construction Office of the Reichsautobahn in Villach, a construction project for *Heiserwerke* in Kienberg-Gaming, the construction of a crane foundation for *Erste Donau-Dampfschiffahrts-Gesellschaft*, as well as the only construction project that *PORR* had been able to acquire in the territory of Germany proper, namely in Geesthacht near Hamburg. The executive board of *PORR* estimated the loss of sales resulting from the cancellation of these projects at around 8.3 million Reichsmark.[105]

The company's management faced new challenges not only on account of its complete reorientation to the armaments industry. The company also found itself structurally challenged by the significant enlargement following the "Anschluss" of those state structures in which it now had to navigate, as it henceforth had to compete against much larger companies from Germany proper in the acquisition of construction projects. The executive board complained that there were hardly any customers left in the "Ostmark" since the allocation of projects crucial to the war effort were now issued exclusively from Germany proper. Many of the companies profiting from these projects were based in Berlin and were able to guarantee a timely completion of the projects due to their size and reputation. The geographical proximity of these German companies to the main Reich offices was an additional advantage, while companies based in the "Ostmark" were mostly unknown to the contracting parties in Germany proper. Yet when companies in the "Ostmark" issued complaints to this effect, they were merely told that "no consideration can be given to local wishes in these exceptional times."[106]

2.4 The Expansion of Armaments Capacities in the "Ostmark"

The concern within *PORR AG* that the company would be consistently disadvantaged in the allocation of large construction contracts proved to be unfounded. While the company was forced to discontinue all construction in the "Ostmark" not deemed crucial to the war effort, *PORR* gradually managed to land new large-scale contracts, including follow-up or expansion projects commissioned by long-term partners. By late 1940, with a view toward the next financial

104 *PORR* had already been contending with repeated problems on this project since 1939. In June 1939, for example, the company reported that it lacked a total of 215 laborers necessary to implement the works in an economically feasible manner. Antworten auf Rundfrage der Bezirksgruppe Ostmark über Mängel beim Arbeitseinsatz, June 1939, 9. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Bd. 2.

105 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, June 30, 1940, 2–4. PA.

106 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, March 9, 1940, 2. Ibid.

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year, the executive board of *PORR* was instead asking itself how it could go about acquiring such contracts that would bring in the most profit "despite price-setting, pressures to save in the field of residential construction projects, and underperformance by the auxiliary peoples deployed in the construction of said contracts."[107] The term "auxiliary peoples" referred to the expansive deployment of forced laborers from abroad in the company's construction program, including both men and women.

For strategic reasons, for example owing to the at first limited reach of the Allied air forces and especially following the failure of the German military's Blitzkrieg strategy, the "Ostmark" became ever more important to the Nazi armaments industry.[108] In 1940, *PORR* was commissioned for new large-scale projects as well as follow-up projects both above and below ground, including for *Gustloff-Werke* in Hirtenberg and Kottingbrunn, *Zellwolle Lenzing AG* and *IG Farbenindustrie Stickstoffwerke Linz* and, in 1941, *Donau Chemie AG* (*IG Farben*) in Moosbierbaum and *Flugmotorenwerken Ostmark* in Guntramsdorf.[109] The special programs initiated by the Luftwaffe and Wehrmacht in the following years, for example the Luftwaffe's "Göring Program"[110] from mid-1941 onward or the Adolf Hitler Tank Program launched in January 1943, necessitated a significant expansion of armament capacities, which could often only be realized through a generous expansion of existing factories or the construction of new factories. The impact can be seen in the case of *PORR*, which dealt with a massive increase in contracts in the Styrian industrial belt as well as in southern Lower Austria, beginning already in 1941. The company benefitted in these areas from partnerships that had already existed for several years: For example, *PORR AG* was commissioned to expand the main factories of *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.* in Kapfenberg and Waidhofen an der Ybbs and, in 1942, to construct a new electric steel casting plant in St. Marein. *PORR AG* additionally took on industrial expansion and construction projects for *Palten-Stahlindustrie* in Rottenmann, for *Vogel & Noot* in Wartberg im Mürztal, for *Schmidt & Co. Schmidstahlwerke* in Liezen, and for *Alpine Montan Hermann-Göring-Werke* in Leoben-Donawitz.

107 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 8, 1940, 10. Ibid.
108 Perz, Projekt "Quarz," 121–122.
109 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, April 1941. PA.
110 The Göring Program launched in mid-1941 was intended to quadruple the capacity of the German Luftwaffe within two and a half years. Perz, Projekt "Quarz," 122–145.

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2.5 The Participation of *PORR* and *Allbau* in OT Construction Projects

From 1941 onward, *Allbau* in particular was increasingly deployed for construction projects on behalf of Organisation Todt in the occupied territories. Following the Nazi regime's invasion of Yugoslavia, the first priority was the restoration of destroyed infrastructure such as roads. In 1941, the *PORR* subsidiary for the first time generated more than half its annual construction output (60% or 2.7 million Reichsmark) outside of the "Ostmark." Aside from road construction projects in Slovakia, *Allbau* also took over two larger construction sections on behalf of OT, one near Brežice in Lower Styria and the other near Jagodina in Serbia.[111] By mid-1941, it had around 900 laborers deployed at these two sections.[112] The following year saw a substantial expansion of these activities by *Allbau* across Southeastern Europe, including further construction sections in Serbia, Bulgaria, and Macedonia.[113] These construction projects were related to the establishment of a supply road running from Belgrade via Niš, Skopje (North Macedonia), and Veles through to Gevgeljia and Thessaloniki, which was of great strategic importance to the Nazi regime.[114] *Allbau* ran several construction sections along this strategic route, including at Jagodina, Lapovo, Niš, and Grdelica (all of which lie in Serbia) as well as Gevgelija (North Macedonia). *Allbau* was moreover involved in the expansion of the road link from Belgrade via Niš and Pirot to Sofia in Bulgaria.

The Nazi regime also aimed to systematically exploit the natural resources of the Balkans, including the copper deposits in the Serbian town of Bor. Consequently, OT Southeast commissioned *PORR AG* with a large-scale project in 1942. Under the direction of the *PORR* employee Wilhelm Fessler, who was transferred from the *Böhler* construction site in Kapfenberg to Serbia in April 1943, *PORR AG* began building a section of a narrow-gauge railroad track that was supposed to run from Žagubica to the copper mines in Bor. The entire railroad track was supposed to connect Bor to the shores of the Danube near Kostolac in order to save time on future copper transports and to circumvent the rapids heading upriver at the Iron Gates.[115]

This project, which from 1943 onward would involve *PORR's* deployment of several thousand (mostly Italian) military internees as well as Hungarian Jews, would eventually constitute the largest single project implemented by *PORR AG*

111 A construction section represents one part of a larger construction project that has been divided up according to its respective technical or quantitative requirements.
112 Vorstandsbericht Allbau, June 30, 1941. PA, Mappe 58.
113 Vorstandsbericht Allbau, April 1943. Ibid.
114 Seidler, Organisation Todt, 75.
115 Chronik der OT-Einheit PORR – Feldpost-Nr. 45093, 1942–1944, verfasst von Wilhelm Fessler, July 1972, 1. PA, Mappe Firmengeschichte, Zusammenfassende Darstellungen.

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during the Nazi era, until it had to be discontinued on account of massive partisan activities.[116] According to the company's executive board, it comprised a construction volume of around 7.7 million Reichsmark. As attested by a commemorative publication marking the company's 90th anniversary in 1959, *PORR AG* continued to look back on its project in Serbia with pride even years later, while at the same time continuing to express its contempt for the thousands of laborers forced to work on this project:

> "The most significant [of these construction projects] was the creation of a 50-kilometer narrow-gauge railroad in Bor in southern Serbia. Despite the inhospitable terrain, the inadequacy of the materials, and above all the incompetence of the laborers, who moreover had a hostile disposition, this project yielded results that, even though it could not be completed due to the end of the war, laid the groundwork for the later completion of this railroad by the Yugoslav state. From this perspective, this was a positive achievement in the middle of a war zone and in the middle of a war."[117]

In contrast to the Bor project, the other OT projects with which *PORR* was entrusted in Kremenchuk in Ukraine and Royan in France were rather diminutive. In Kremenchuk, the company was commissioned to expand a quarry and to complete a section of road from Kremenchuk to Poltava. This contract was issued by the OT Einsatzgruppe Russland Süd in mid-1941and was supposed to be implemented as a joint venture by *PORR AG* and *Allbau.*[118] However, the commencement of work on the quarry kept being delayed – as the executive board of *PORR* reported rather cryptically – "by force majeure"[119] and was finally shelved altogether in 1943. The joint venture with *Allbau* was subsequently dissolved and *Allbau* went on to complete the remaining roadworks independently.[120] *PORR* had to appeal to OT to reclaim around 20 coaches of construction materials that had evidently remained sealed for months on end at the construction site.[121]

In 1943, *PORR AG* participated for several months in the erection of structures along the Atlantic Wall in the French town of Royan. This section of the structure was presumably managed by the OT Head Construction Office in La Rochelle, about 75 kilometers north of Royan. Over the course of 1943, OT deployed up to 300,000 laborers in France, including up to 150,000 French civilian laborers, but also foreign laborers from Poland, the territory of the present-day Czech Re-

116 See Mišo Kapetanović's contribution to this volume.
117 Heinrich König, Chronik der PORR AG, Vienna 1959, 38. PA.
118 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]", Vol. 2, 428.
119 Bericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 20, 1942, 7. PA.
120 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, April 1943, 4 and 7. PA; Vorstandsbericht der allgemeinen Straßenbau AG, June 1942. BArch, R 8136/3644.
121 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, January 20, 1944, 4. PA.

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public, Italy, the Netherlands, and other "eastern workers."[122] Similarly to the Ukraine, the expectations of *PORR AG* for its activities in France would not be fulfilled. The executive board originally estimated that the company would be involved in reinforced concrete constructions totaling 1.5 million Reichsmark, yet the final volume comprised less than 1 million Reichsmark. The executive board complained that while there were enough laborers in France, there were not enough construction materials, specifically iron, concrete, and concrete gravel.[123] This project was already discontinued by OT that same year, with one third of the construction equipment (mostly excavators) belonging to *PORR AG* being transferred to Vienna and deployed at construction sites in the "Ostmark." The laborers returning from France and another portion of the equipment were deployed directly on to Italy,[124] where *PORR* participated from 1943 – also in the framework of OT – in extensive subterranean construction works.[125] These possibly formed part of the "Alpine foreland defenses"[126] that were supposed to reach from the Swiss border to the Adriatic.[127] It is unknown where *PORR* actually ended up being deployed, though it is documented that the company received a management contract in Italy, had a workforce of almost 700 laborers, including its own laborers and foreign (forced) laborers, and was moreover tasked with supervising around 20 Italian companies with a workforce of about 5,000 Italian laborers. The executive board emphasized that this task entailed great responsibility and held great significance and that the company was working in absolute concord with OT.[128] However, due to "extensive labor desertion" by the Italian laborers, only about 600 of the originally 5,000 men remained by mid-1944.[129]

3 *PORR's* Networks within the Construction Industry

3.1 *PORR* and the "Self-Responsibility of the Construction Sector"

The year 1943 witnessed various organizational changes in the construction sector. With the introduction of the efficiency payment principle in January 1943, the executive board of *PORR* hoped that the performance of its (foreign)

122 Lemmes, Zwangsarbeit, 227. Lemmes did not indicate whether this also included female laborers.
123 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, April 1943, 3. PA.
124 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, January 20, 1944, 4. Ibid.
125 Ibid., 5.
126 OT-Chronik für den Monat September 1944, November 30, 1944. BArch, R 3-1637.
127 Lemmes, Zwangsarbeit, 228–229.
128 Bericht des Vorstands 1.1.1944 bis 1.5.1944 für Aufsichtsratssitzung, May 1944, 5. PA.
129 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands für Aufsichtsratssitzung, July 26, 1944, 2. Ibid.

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workforce, which it criticized repeatedly for its deficiency, would significantly improve, as laborers would henceforth no longer be paid in accordance with the hours worked, but their work performance.[130] The Nazi regime had two motives in introducing this measure: On the one hand, this was to incentivize laborers to perform well while on the other hand undermining solidarity between them.[131] A second change during this period concerned the organization of the construction sector as a whole: In the third quarter of 1943, Albert Speer – who had been appointed Reich Minister of Armaments and War Production at the beginning of September 1943 – made the construction industry entirely self-responsible for the construction sector (construction and crafts).[132] This applied to the entire construction sector in Nazi Germany, but excluded the occupied territories. The plenipotentiaries previously tasked with mandating and supervising the construction sector were suspended and a prominent industry representative, appointed by the industry itself, was granted all plenipotentiary powers by Speer. This representative henceforth mandated the sector and decided which projects should still be implemented, with a Main Construction Committee charged with organizing and realizing construction. This main committee formed 14 special committees, two of which also included representatives of *PORR AG*.[133] Alfred Schuppler, an executive board member of *PORR*, was appointed to Special Committee 1.[134] This formed part of a group of special committees with district representatives and was dedicated to "construction projects of the regional representative for special questions regarding chemical production and of the Reich Office for Economic Development" in the armaments inspection district XVII in Vienna.[135] Meanwhile, the director of *PORR*, Josef Ullrich, was appointed to Special Committee 10, which was responsible for eliminating air raid damages. Ullrich represented the armaments inspection districts in the Vienna and "Niederdonau" regions.[136] The purpose and main responsibility of the Main Construction Committee was "to secure, improve, and increase production in the

130 Bericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, April 10, 1943, 1. Ibid.
131 Buggeln/Wildt (eds.), Arbeit, XVII.
132 Botzet, Ministeramt, 133.
133 Dreivierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, October 1943, 2–3. PA.
134 The members of Special Committee 1 largely worked pro bono and were subordinate to the respective district representative of the main committee. The inaugural assembly was followed by two meetings of the district representatives on October 22, 1943 and February 15, 1944. Hauptausschuß Bau beim Reichsminister für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion, Abschließender Bericht über die Tätigkeit des Sonderausschusses 1 bis einschließl. 30. 4. 1944, July 4, 1944, 1. BArch, R 3-621.
135 Vorläufiger Organisationsaufbau, 8. Ibid.
136 Ibid., 20. Josef Ullrich was born in Krakow on July 22, 1881 and lived in Vienna. An architect by training, he already began working for *PORR* in 1903 and remained with the company nonstop through to 1953, finally working as head site manager. Ullrich was also a shareholder of *PORR AG*. Datenblatt Josef Ullrich. PA, Mappe 547.

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construction sector."[137] In essence, the main committee along with its special committees decided which projects should be discontinued in a particular military district and which should be expedited. The construction industry hoped that this new allocation of responsibility would create more order in, a greater intensification of, and less bureaucracy for the construction sector – in other words an overall improvement compared to the situation under the previous plenipotentiaries.[138]

Bruno Gärtner, who had been director and an executive board member of *Wayss & Freytag* since 1934, was appointed to head the Main Construction Committee, where he represented the larger construction companies. Gärtner was not unknown to *PORR*, as he had previously headed the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry, which after the "Anschluss" also included the Ostmark District Group under the direction of Max Tazoll. Moreover, both the *PORR* executive board member Tazoll and the *PORR* board of directors member Eduard Heidendorfer had previously worked at *Wayss & Freytag*, the former as director and the latter as Managing Director. Gärtner's new position allowed him to enforce far-reaching decisions – especially concerning the pricing system – in favor of large construction companies, before the balance of power began to tip clearly in favor of OT from mid-1944 onward and the main committee was dissolved.[139] Following a decree by Hitler from September 2, 1943, Organisation Todt was also tasked with "implementing construction projects of every kind crucial to the war effort" within Nazi Germany itself.[140] This empowerment of OT led to a gradual loss of influence on behalf of the large construction companies from 1944 onward.[141] The good standing of *PORR AG*, especially within the "Ostmark," was evinced in a dispute recorded in the *Böhler* files in Kapfenberg that arose between Kopetschke from the Building Inspection Department of *Böhlerwerke* on the one hand and *PORR AG* on the other regarding laborer recruitment. In an internal memo, Kopetschke criticized the "lack of interest on behalf of the *PORR* company with regard to 'labor acquisition'."[142] He attributed this lack of interest to the fact that the company had hitherto been able to work almost entirely without competition. According to him, this had been confirmed in negotiations concerning the potential partici-

137 Geschäftsordnung, 2. Durchführungsverordnung, December 22, 1943, 5. BArch, R 3-621.
138 Dreivierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, October 1943, 2–3. PA.
139 Buggeln, "Menschenhandel," 201–202.
140 Kopie des Erlasses des Führers über die Organisation Todt, Sep. 2, 1943. BArch, R 3-1637; Perz, Projekt "Quarz," 158–160.
141 On the resulting power struggle between the OT head Dorsch and minister Speer, see Buggeln, "Menschenhandel," 202–203.
142 Bauüberwachung an Zentraldirektor Dr. Leitner, July 7, 1942. Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (StLA), Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 521.

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pation of the company *Pittel & Brausewetter*[143] in the construction works in Kapfenberg: "They [*Pittel &Brausewetter*] told us that the *PORR* company has especially in recent times been using its connections within industrial circles in the Ostmark to receive many larger contracts for which it cannot supply its own workforce."[144] The connections to the industrial sector that Kopetschke was here referring to presumably revolved not least of all around Tazoll, who – as discussed above – entertained many connections due to his numerous functions, including on advisory boards. Moreover, as a member of the student fraternity *Bruna-Sudetia*, a former member of the *Deutsche Klub*, and a member of the National Socialist League of Alumni, Tazoll without a doubt also had good connections within the Nazi Party.[145]

3.2 Strategic Joint Ventures

This case notwithstanding, *PORR* appears to have been on generally good terms with other companies in the construction sector. This allowed the company time and again to enter into (strategically necessary) joint ventures in the framework of its various construction activities, both in the "Ostmark" and in the occupied territories. Naturally, each such venture followed its own strategic logic, and not all of them were successful. As early as May 18, 1938, for example, Max Tazoll and Alfred Schuppler had signed an extensive cooperation agreement in the name of *PORR AG* with the Frankfurt-based company *Neue Baugesellschaft Wayss & Freytag AG*, which had been reconstituted following its bankruptcy in 1932.[146] This agreement stipulated that the companies would bid as a joint venture for three prospective large-scale construction projects and, in the event of a com-

143 It should be noted here that *Pittel & Brausewetter*, like *PORR AG*, had bid for the construction sections 2, 3, and 4 of the project in St. Marein and that the former's bid had been a little lower than the latter's. The management of *Böhler* nevertheless chose *PORR* since its ongoing construction projects in Kapfenberg meant the latter would be able to transfer laborers and machines more quickly to St. Marein. *PORR* and *Böhler* therefore entered into further negotiations in early April 1942, and since *PORR* was willing to make some concessions, it finally received preference over *Pittel & Brausewetter.* Aktenvermerk über die Verhandlungen zwischen Böhler und PORR, Apr. 7, 1942. Ibid.

144 Bauüberwachung an Zentraldirektor Dr. Leitner, Jul. 7, 1942. Ibid.

145 Max Tazoll, 1879. BArch, R 9361-II-1007936.

146 In order to prevent that companies from the "Ostmark" were pushed out of the market after the "Anschluss" by the mostly larger German companies, which were also usually better equipped with materials, machines, and laborers, the formation of joint ventures between companies from Germany proper and the "Ostmark" were strictly regulated in a "Law to Protect the Austrian Economy" passed on April 14, 1938. Such joint ventures required approval. See Bertrand Perz's contribution to this volume; Lütgenau/Schröck, Zwangsarbeit, 63.

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mission, would also conduct the work jointly. The projects in question were the construction of a power plant on the Danube at Ybbs-Persenbeug,[147] unspecified construction plans for *Reichswerke Hermann Göring* on the territory of Austria, and the construction of the Tauern power plant on behalf of *Alpen-Elektro-Werke AG* in Vienna.[148] However, the joint venture was awarded none of these contracts, with *PORR AG* only being involved to a limited degree in the latter project, realizing a few dam and tunnel works in Heiligenblut for around 200,000 Reichsmark. A joint venture between *PORR AG*, *Wayss & Freytag*, and *Mayreder, Kraus & Co.* for the construction of a Reichsautobahn bridge over the Danube near Stadlau did materialize, but only until construction was discontinued shortly after the outbreak of war.[149] *PORR AG* presumably saw an advantage in such joint ventures in the immediate aftermath of the "Anschluss" because they allowed the company to bid for such large-scale construction projects despite their shortage of skilled and auxiliary laborers. For *Wayss & Freytag*, by contrast, the joint venture offered an opportunity to establish itself economically at an early stage in the newly incorporated "Ostmark." This was all the more important since its former Viennese subsidiary, *Wayss & Freytag AG und Meinong GmbH*, which had become independent in 1932, intervened against its former German parent company's attempts to acquire contracts in the "Ostmark."[150]

PORR entered into another joint venture with *Grün & Bilfinger*[151] in Carinthia.[152] The project in question related to the construction of a pilot drift for the Katschberg tunnel in Rennweg on behalf of the Head Construction Office of the Reichsautobahn in Villach. However, this project – like all highway construction projects – was discontinued in 1942. Both *PORR* and *Grün & Bilfinger* would later be involved in the "Bergkristall" tunnel construction project in St. Georgen an der Gusen in 1944.[153] *PORR* additionally constructed several buildings for the factory complex of *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.* in Kapfenberg and St. Marein in a joint venture with the company *Dittrich.* This included constructing a canal for an annealing plant in St. Marein and several structures for a new slagheap at the main factory of *Böhler* in Kapfenberg.[154] From 1943 onward, *PORR AG* entered into intermittent joint ventures with *Pittel & Brausewetter* in Rottenmann. Since 1940,

147 Oertel, Donaukraftwerk Ybbs-Persenbeug.
148 Gedächtnisprotokoll Übereinkunft zwischen Wayss & Freytag sowie PORR AG, March 15, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, E-uReang VVSt, St. 476.
149 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, March 9, 1940, 3. PA.
150 Korrespondenz zu Wayss & Freytag betr. Nibelungenbrücke. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-2-1. See also Bertrand Perz's contribution to this volume.
151 On the history of *Grün & Bilfinger*, see Stier/Krauß, Drei Wurzeln.
152 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, February 9, 1942, 6. PA.
153 PORR AG an Grün & Bilfinger, January 31, 1958. Archiv Bilfinger & Berger, A-546.
154 Aktenvermerk betreffend Bauvergabe, Hoch- und Tiefbau Böhler, March 21, 1944. StLA, A. Böhler, Mappe 521.

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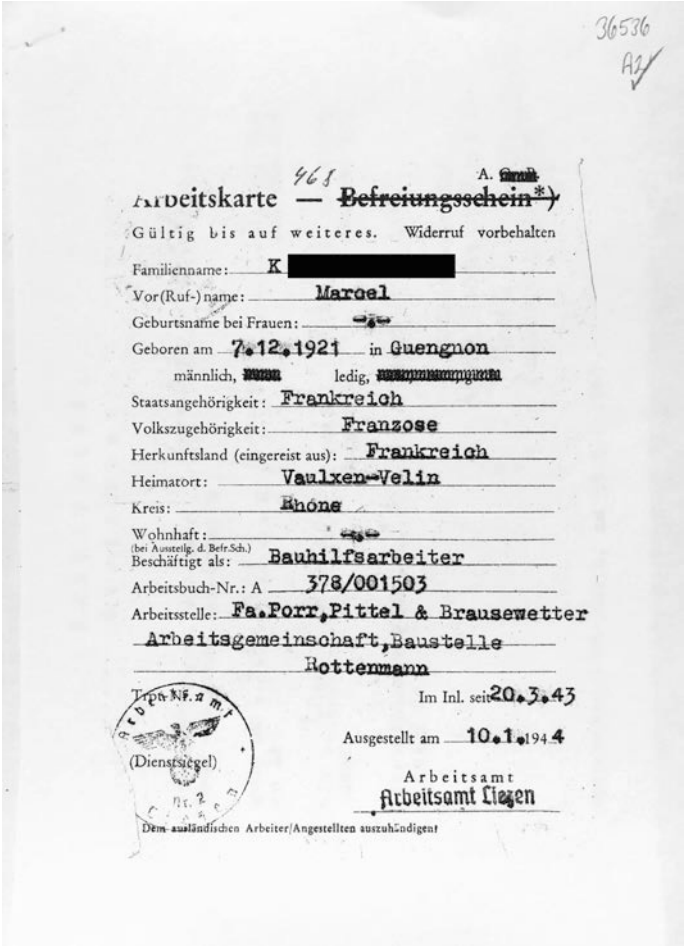

36536
A2

468 A. [redacted]

Arbeitskarte — ~~Befreiungsschein*)~~

Gültig bis auf weiteres. Widerruf vorbehalten

Familienname: K [redacted]

Vor(Ruf-)name: Marcel

Geburtsname bei Frauen: —

Geboren am 7.12.1921 in Guengnon

männlich, [redacted] ledig, [redacted]

Staatsangehörigkeit: Frankreich

Volkszugehörigkeit: Franzose

Herkunftsland (eingereist aus): Frankreich

Heimatort: Vaulxen-Velin

Kreis: Rhone

Wohnhaft: —
(bei Ausstellg. d. Befr.Sch.)

Beschäftigt als: Bauhilfsarbeiter

Arbeitsbuch-Nr.: A 378/001503

Arbeitsstelle: Fa.Porr,Pittel & Brausewetter
Arbeitsgemeinschaft,Baustelle
Rottenmann

Im Inl. seit 20.3.43

Ausgestellt am 10.1.1944

(Dienstsiegel)

Arbeitsamt
Arbeitsamt Liezen

Dem ausländischen Arbeiter/Angestellten auszuhändigen!

Figure 1: Work ID of the French forced laborer Marcel K., who was deployed in Rottenmann for the joint venture between *PORR* and *Pittel & Brausewetter*. Source: ÖStA/AdR, Österreichischer Versöhnungsfonds (ÖVF), 36.536.

PORR AG had already been realizing several construction projects for *Rottenmanner Eisenwerke*[155] and later for *Palten-Stahlindustrie*, including various halls, a new press building, a crane track, and a generator facility.[156] This contract was granted to *PORR AG* by *Rottenmanner Eisenwerke* in 1940 and, according to the executive board of *PORR*, had accrued 1.98 million Reichsmark by the end of 1944.[157] However, following a labor shortage that began in 1942 and which led to a

155 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 8, 1940, 8. PA.
156 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 2, 412.
157 Jahresberichte des Vorstands 1940 bis 1944. PA.

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reduction in construction output, *PORR AG* and *Pittel & Brausewetter* decided to enter into a 50-% joint venture. This is because *Pittel & Brausewetter*, by contrast to *PORR*, had available laborers at this time, as the executive board reported to the board of directors.[158] During the construction or reconstruction of the rayon factory in Lenzing beginning in 1940[159] – which at almost 5.5 million Reichsmark constituted the second-largest individual project that *PORR* would implement in the "Ostmark" – the company entered into a joint venture with *Universale Redlich & Berger.*[160]

3.3 *PORR* and the House of Hanover

The largest new project that *PORR* took on in 1939 was located in Wels, where the company was commissioned by *Flugzeug- und Metallbauwerke Wels GmbH*,[161] *FMW* for short, to construct various buildings and subterranean structures. This project generated a construction output of at least 3.35 million Reichsmark by 1942. The owner and largest shareholder of *FMW* was no stranger to *PORR AG:* Ernst August of Hanover had already acquired the company *Ludwig Hinterschweiger & Co.* in 1938, which originally produced agricultural machinery, and remodeled it into *Flugzeug- und Metallbauwerke Wels GmbH* in August 1939, just before the outbreak of war.[162] The necessary structural adaptations and new constructions were conducted by *PORR AG*. In subsequent years, *FMW* specialized in the repair and maintenance of airplanes, for which it also deployed massive numbers of foreign forced laborers. In early 1944, *FMW* was commissioned to produce components for the jet aircraft Messerschmidt Me 262. However, heavy damages sustained during Allied air raids meant that this work could not be implemented in Wels. Instead, production of the Messerschmidt Me 262 was transferred underground to Gusen, where *PORR AG* was once again involved – albeit in a limited capacity – in the realization of the subterranean tunnel projects code named "Bergkristall."[163]

158 Bericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 20, 1942. Ibid.
159 On the history of the company *Lenzing-AG*, see Sandgruber, Lenzing.
160 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," 417–418.
161 Kitzmantel/Neuwirth/Witibschlager, Flugzeug- und Metallbauwerke Wels.
162 The findings on *FMW* are based on research conducted by the Viennese historian Sabine Loitfellner. NS-Zwangsarbeit in Rüstungsfirma der Welfen, URL: https://www.ndr.de/geschichte/chronologie/Zwangsarbeit-in-Ruestungsfirma,welfen144.html (accessed Dec. 1, 2023).
163 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, January 1945, 5. PA.

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3.4 *PORR* and the Architect Karl Fiebinger

Another person involved in the front line of Project "Bergkristall" was the engineer and architect Karl Fiebinger (born in Vienna in 1913), who might generally be labeled one of the key figures of Nazi construction policies – especially large-scale armaments and tunnel construction projects involving the deployment of concentration camp inmates.[164] Before establishing his architectural firm, Fiebinger had worked as a "summer technician"[165] at *PORR AG* for a few weeks in the summer of 1938. Later on – during a phase that by his own account was difficult professionally[166] – the company supported him with contracts. Fiebinger's apologist "memoirs" revealed that he continued to cross professional paths with *PORR AG* in subsequent years during World War Two, repeatedly working on large-scale projects for the Nazi regime with the company. The "Construction Office of Dipl. Ing. Karl Fiebinger" was regularly entrusted with planning on construction sites at which *PORR AG* would subsequently implement the construction works. For example, at the beginning of his career, Fiebinger was brought on board for the planning work of a cement factory in Kirchbichl in Tyrol by his former professor at the Technical University in Vienna, Ernst Melan,[167] with *PORR* subsequently participating in the realization of the project until it was discontinued in 1939 as it was not considered crucial to the war effort. Further construction projects on which Fiebinger worked in the planning stage and *PORR* in the construction phase included structures on behalf of *Stickstoffwerke Linz*, *Flugmotorenwerke Ostmark*, and *Vereinigte Metallbauwerke AG* in Liesing in Vienna,[168] as well as for parts of a new factory building for *Böhlerwerke* in St. Marein im Mürztal.[169] Fiebinger's architectural office was moreover involved to a significant degree in the planning of the subterranean armaments production projects in Ebensee (codename Kalkstein)[170] and in St. Georgen an

164 Perz, NS-Architektur; Quatember, Karl Fiebinger.

165 Karl Fiebinger, Lebensbeschreibung, Strobl, August 14, 1945, 77–85, here 77. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 260, Claims and Restitution Reports on Property Administered by the Military Government in Upper Austria, compiled 1945–1951, Baustelle Ebensee (Property Register; June 1945–December 1945).

166 On Karl Fiebinger's massively self-exculpating self-portrayal regarding his actions during the Nazi era, see Perz, KZ-Zwangsarbeit, esp. Exkurs 2, 44–45.

167 Befragung Karl Fiebinger, May 7, 1947. NARA, RG 319-270.84.2.7, British Interrogation Report No. 517.

168 Karl Fiebinger, Lebensbeschreibung, Strobl, Aug. 14, 1945, 77–85, here 78–79. NARA, RG 260, Claims and Restitution Reports on Property Administered by the Military Government in Upper Austria, compiled 1945–1951, Baustelle Ebensee (Property Register; June 1945–December 1945).

169 See characteristically: Bericht Baustelle Werk XII, Mar. 11, 1943. StLA, A. Böhler, Mappe 501-1; Baudirektion Böhler an Fiebinger, Mar. 25, 1942. Ibid., A. Böhler, Mappe 522.

170 Freund, Konzentrationslager Ebensee.

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der Gusen (codename "Bergkristall")[171] – with *PORR AG* being involved in both of these projects, too.

4 Construction Projects of the Nazi Era in Numbers

The following overview of construction projects undertaken by *PORR AG* and *Allbau* focuses predominantly on the period between the "Anschluss" of Austria to Germany and the end of World War Two in May 1945. On the basis of the documentation that has been preserved (mostly reports submitted by the executive board to the board of directors as well as minutes from meetings of the board of directors), over 100 construction projects could be identified in which *PORR AG* and *Allbau* were involved in the territory of the "Ostmark," in the occupied territories, and in countries allied with the Nazi regime.[172] These documents also reveal highly detailed (if sometimes incomplete) information on annual construction output[173] as well as construction output per construction site. Due to the large number of construction sites, it is not possible here to discuss in detail each of their individual histories. This overview serves rather to trace the basic development of the company's construction business and to focus on the largest or most significant construction projects of each year during this period. Part of the analysis moreover focuses on the question of which projects undertaken by *PORR AG* benefited from the deployment of forced laborers.[174]

171 Perz, KZ-Zwangsarbeit.

172 The following information is drawn substantially from the statements made in reports by the executive board of *PORR AG* and *Allbau* to their respective administrative boards.

173 From a bookkeeping and fiscal perspective, annual construction output needs to be distinguished from revenue: "Companies in the construction sector report on their performance in a given period not in terms of revenue, but of construction output. The Main Association of the German Construction Industry defines annual construction output as the sum of all construction output, regardless of whether this output has been generated by a general contractor or a subcontractor. […] It is moreover irrelevant whether the projects have been completed and billed (the account settled) or whether they are still in production (not settled)." Ziouziou, Bau-Marketing, 167–188.

174 The information for 1943 is based on statements by the executive board regarding the order situation of *Allbau* at the end of September 1943. Vorstandsbericht Allbau, Sep. 30, 1943. PA, Mappe 64; a later report of the executive board from January 1945 lists an annual revenue for 1943 of 4,700,000 Reichsmark, though without offering further information on how this revenue was split over the various construction sites. Vorstandsbericht Allbau, January 1945. PA, Mappe 67.

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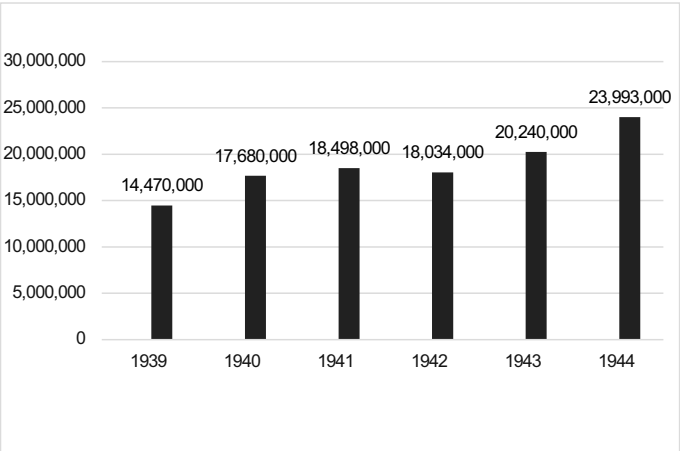
4.1 Annual Construction Output of *PORR AG* – 1939–1944

The following offers an overview of how the company's annual construction output developed, a matter about which the executive board of *PORR* reported to the board of directors at regular intervals. The executive board's quarterly and semiannual interim reports also contained information on the construction output the company aimed or hoped for in the coming year. These de facto forecasts often fell short for various reasons, for example due to the discontinuation of construction projects not deemed crucial to the war effort during an ongoing financial year or due to delays on account of labor shortages, unavailable building materials, or weather-related problems (such as flooding or especially harsh winters). A more reliable overview of the actual annual construction output can be gleaned from the annual reports, each of which retrospectively illuminates the year gone by. The following figures are therefore based on the annual reports of the executive board of *PORR* for the years 1939 to 1944. Unfortunately, there are no figures for the final months of the war from January to May 1945, though it might be presumed that most construction projects had already been discontinued by this point in time.



Graph 1: Annual Construction uutput of *PORR AG* in Reichsmark. Source: Jahresberichte des Vorstands 1939 bis 1944. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3; calculations by the author.

The annual construction output of *PORR AG* for the period 1939 to 1944 (see Graph 1) revealed that the company initially experienced a significant increase in its construction output between 1939 and 1941, rising from 14.47 million Reichsmark in 1939 to around 18.5 million Reichsmark in 1941, an increase of about 28%. Cessations and cancellations of already scheduled construction projects (such as roadworks) on account of the war in the financial year 1942 led

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to a marginal decrease in comparison to 1941 of about half a million Reichsmark. Yet *PORR AG* quickly managed to more than compensate for these losses, most of which occurred in the "Ostmark," with new projects in the occupied territories as well as new large-scale projects in the "Ostmark." Moreover, *PORR* benefited from the Nazi regime's total focus on armaments, as the renewed and marked increase in the company's annual construction output showed, which had reached a new record at almost 24 million Reichsmark in 1944. Regarding the entire wartime period from 1939 to 1944, this meant that the construction output of *PORR AG* increased by about two thirds (65.81%). Considering the shrinking supply of German laborers as the war progressed, this enormous growth in construction output was only possible due to the massive deployment of foreign (forced) laborers.

4.2 Annual Construction Output of *Allbau* – 1940–1944

Specific data regarding the annual construction output of the *PORR* subsidiary *Allbau* is only available for the period from 1940 to 1944. Nevertheless, the preserved reports of the executive board of *Allbau* allowed for some conclusions to be reached and for specific differences to be determined with regard to the corporate development of *PORR AG:* What was particularly striking was that *Allbau* – presumably due to the fact that its main business was road construction – was already generating the bulk of its annual construction output outside of the "Ostmark" by 1941, predominantly through its involvement in infrastructural projects on behalf of Organisation Todt in the occupied territories. Most of the contracts *Allbau* acquired in this context were for large-scale construction projects in the territory of OT Southeast in Serbia and in Ukraine, alongside numerous contracts for roadworks in Slovakia. While its revenues in the "Ostmark" broke off completely from 1942 due to the discontinuation of construction work on the Reichsautobahn, shrinking to merely 8 to 10% per annum by the end of 1944, revenue rose significantly in the occupied territories and in Slovakia from 1940 to 1943, meaning that the company's annual construction output remained relatively stable (see Table 1).

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Table 1: Annual Construction Output of *Allbau* in Reichsmark.

Year	"Ostmark" (Including Germany Proper)	Occupied Territories / Friendly Countries Abroad	Total Construction Output	% Generated Abroad
1940	2,150,000	1,150,000	3,300,000	34.85
1941	1,600,000	2,700,000	4,300,000	62.79
1942	400,000	3,000,000	3,400,000	88.24
1943[175]	300,000	3,470,000	3,770,000	92.04
1944	470,000	2,980,000	3,450,000	86.38

Source: Vorstandsberichte Allbau, 1940–1945. PA, Mappen 57, 59, 61, 64 und 67; calculations by the author

4.3 Annual Construction Output of *PORR AG* – "Ostmark" versus Occupied Territories/Friendly Countries Abroad

In contract to *Allbau*, *PORR* generated most of its annual construction output within the "Ostmark" throughout the duration of the war. Only in 1944, the last full year of war, did its construction output within the "Ostmark" more or less match that generated without, as Graph 2 shows.

A glance at the company's construction output abroad shows that the focus of its business activities lay on construction projects in Slovakia and Serbia (OT Southeast), augmented by some smaller construction projects in occupied Poland and, from 1943 onward, additional projects in the framework of OT in Italy and France (see Figures 2 and 3).

4.3.1 The Development of *PORR's* Construction Activities 1938–1945

In 1938, *PORR AG* was commissioned by *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.* to implement large-scale construction and expansion projects at the latter's production sites in Kapfenberg-Hafendorf and Kapfenberg-Deuchendorf. The construction sites in Kapfenberg and the company's collaboration with the *Böhler* corporation generally would prove to be especially long-lasting and lucrative for *PORR:* Altogether, the construction output for these two projects in the period between 1939 and 1944 would account for almost 10 million Reichsmark. Together with the extensive expansion works on the *Böhlerwerk* in Waidhofen an der Ybbs with

175 See also my contribution "PORR AG and its Forced Laborers 1938–1945" (Chapter 6) in this volume.

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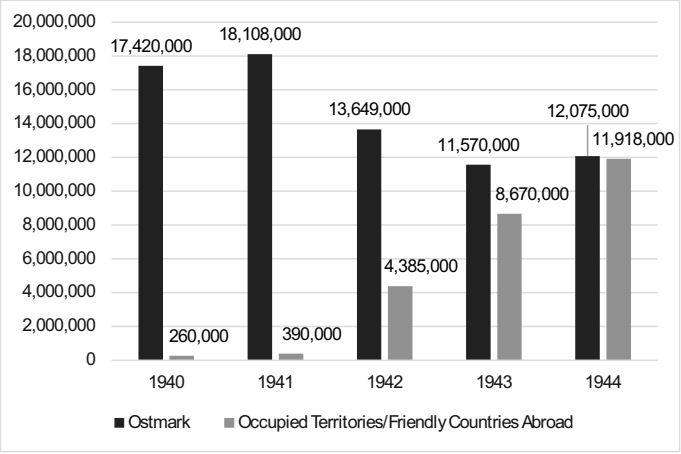

Graph 2: Annual Construction output of *PORR AG* in Reichsmark – "Ostmark" versus Occupied Territories/Friendly Countries Abroad Source: Berichte des Vorstands 1940 bis 1945. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3; calculations by the author.

which *PORR AG* was tasked from 1941 onward (3.7 million Reichsmark from 1941 to 1944) and the construction of a new electric steel casting plant in St. Marein im Mürztal in which *PORR* was heavily involved from 1942 onward (4.9 million Reichsmark from 1942 to 1944), *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.* was by far the largest contracting party of *PORR AG* in the period from 1939 to 1944, with a total construction output of altogether 18.6 million Reichsmark.[176] Another large-scale project that *PORR* was commissioned with as early as 1938 and which ran until 1943 entailed the renovation of a steam power plant and the construction of several new buildings (including residential buildings) in Timelkam ("Oberdonau") on behalf of *Österreichische Kraftwerke AG* and *Neue Heimat GmbH.*[177] Between 1938 and 1943, this project generated a construction output of 3.3 million Reichsmark. Additionally, *PORR* and *Allbau* continued to work on some of the existing roadworks projects until 1940. These included works on the Mittelpinzgauer Reichsstrasse in Saalfelden, the construction of the Mühlgraben Bridge in Völkermarkt, and works on the Grossglockner High Alpine Road near Heiligenblut. However, the construction output of these road projects was relatively minimal. The year 1939 witnessed a significant rise in the company's volume of orders with altogether twelve new construction projects. This raised the total number of ongoing construction sites run by *PORR* to 18. The largest new project by total volume was the above-mentioned project in Wels on behalf

176 See my contribution "The Construction Activities of PORR AG in Kapfenberg and St. Marein" (Chapter 7) in this volume.

177 Manuscript on the company's history, Vienna, June 1942, 24. PA, Mappe 1470.

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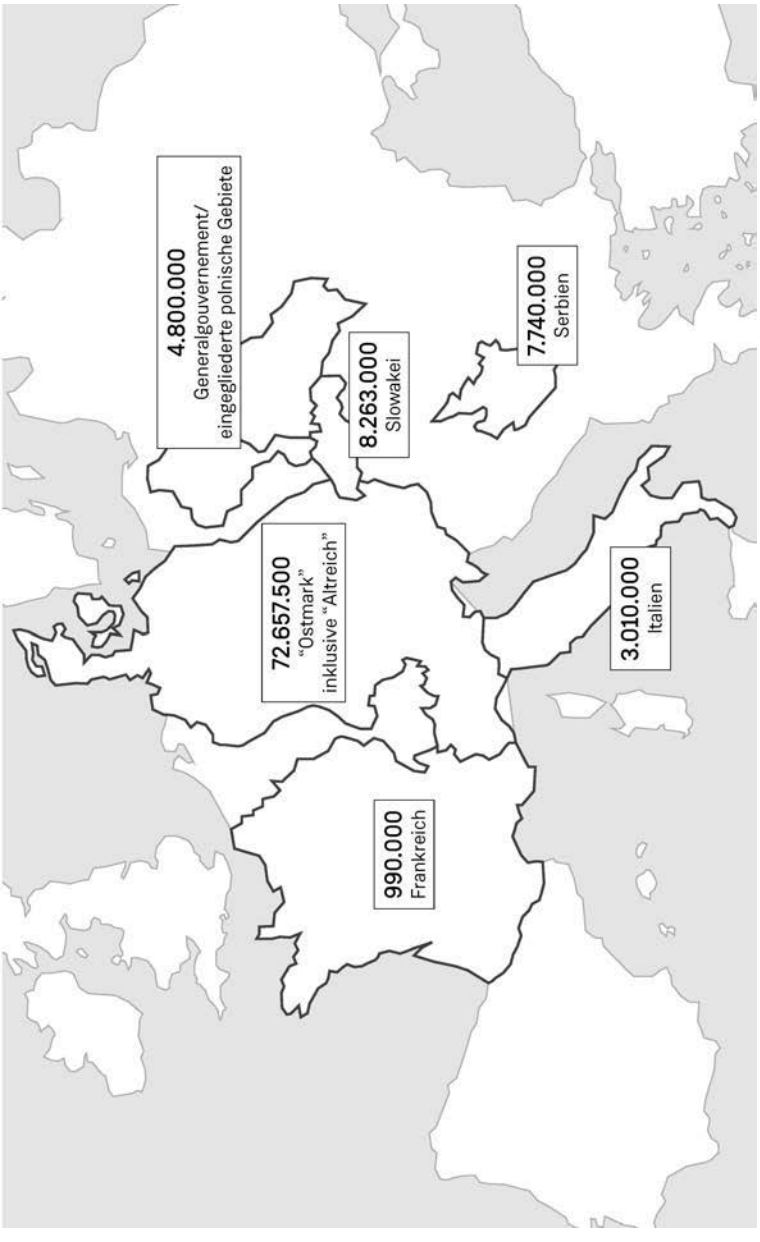

Figure 2: Construction output of *PORR* and *Allbau* by country in Reichsmark, 1939–1944. Source: Vorstandsberichte Allbau, 1940–1945. PA, Mappen 57, 59, 61, 64 and 67 as well as Berichte des PORR-Vorstands 1939 bis 1945. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3; calculations by the author.

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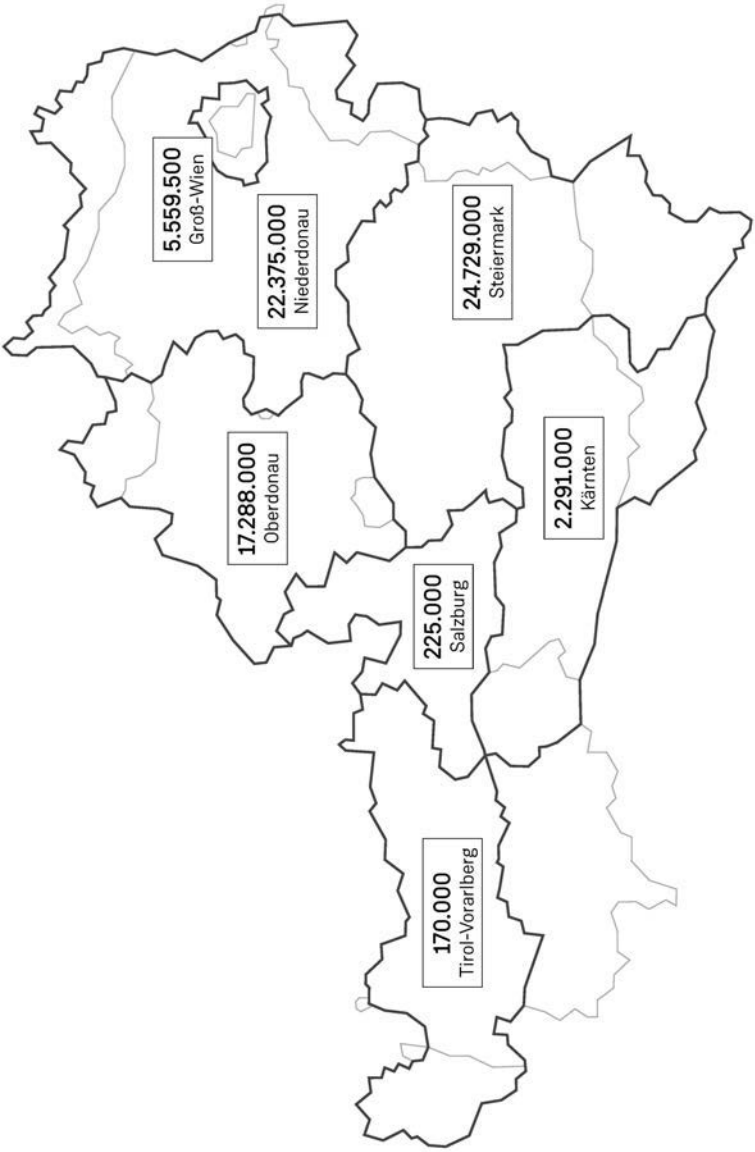

Figure 3: Construction output of *PORR* in the "Ostmark" in Reichsmark, 1939–1944. Source: Berichte des Vorstands 1939 bis 1945. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3; calculations by the author.

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of *Flugzeug- und Metallbauwerke Wels GmbH*. In late 1939, *PORR AG* commenced work on a project in the so-called Pflüglhof in the Malta Valley in Carinthia, extracting and processing stone on behalf of the Head Construction Office of the Reichsautobahn in Villach, for which prisoners of war were deployed. However, due to the ongoing labor shortage, the project did not bring in the construction output of almost 2 million Reichsmark that *PORR* had hoped for. The majority of these new projects in 1939 were rather small in scope. So, for example, *PORR* was commissioned by the regional government in "Oberdonau" to construct an air raid shelter for the Gauhaus Linz. The company's annual construction output in 1939 totaled 14.47 million Reichsmark, though there is no specific information regarding the proportion generated within as opposed to outside of the "Ostmark" that year.

The number of construction contracts continued to rise in 1940, with 23 more contracts coming in, meaning that the total number of active construction sites had more than doubled to altogether 40. This is all the more astounding given that a whole series of construction sites had to be put on hold or (if they were not deemed crucial to the war effort) discontinued altogether.[178] The majority of the company's construction projects were still located within the "Ostmark," with an increasing number of Nazi state institutions commissioning work in the context of infrastructural development. This included the construction of airfields in Markersdorf an der Pielach and Langenlebarn on behalf of the Luftwaffe, work on a highway and a valley bridge in Heiligenkreuz on behalf of the Head Construction Office of the Reichsautobahn in Vienna, the construction of a port in Krems on behalf of the Head office of the Reich Waterways, and the construction of a bunker on the present-day Dr.-Karl-Renner-Ring on behalf of the Nazi Party in Vienna. However, the annual construction output for these projects was mostly minimal, each project only bringing in a few hundred thousand Reichsmark. *PORR AG* was able to acquire rather more lucrative contracts for large-scale projects on behalf of the metal and chemical industry, which also expanded significantly in 1940 due to the armaments production projects expedited by the Nazi regime. Geographically, these projects focused on the large industrial zones in "Oberdonau," "Niederdonau," and Styria. To cite some representative examples of the larger projects begun or expanded in 1940: The works commissioned by *Zellwolle Lenzing AG*, which had already collaborated repeatedly with *PORR AG* since 1936,[179] were already discussed above.[180] Another large-scale contract was commissioned by *Gustloff-Werke* in Hirtenberg, of which the head of the board of directors, Dr. Walther Schieber, was also the head of the executive

178 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, June 30, 1940, 2–4. PA.
179 Manuscript on the company's history, Vienna, June 1942, 23–24. Ibid., Mappe 1470.
180 Sandgruber, Lenzing, 64.

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board of *Zellwolle Lenzing AG.*[181] Another large-scale contract was commissioned by *IG Farben* (*Chemie Linz*), which accrued a construction output of around 3.1 million Reichsmark between 1940 and 1944. *PORR* also received numerous commissions from the metal industry in Styria in 1940, among others from *Hermann-Göring-Werke* in Leoben-Donawitz (with a total construction output of around 3.56 million Reichsmark between 1940 and 1944) and from *Rottenmanner Eisenwerke* (later *Palten-Stahlindustrie*), totaling almost 2 million Reichsmark between 1940 and 1944. *PORR* had already been well-connected in the steel cities of Leoben, Kapfenberg, and Liezen in the Mur and Mürz valleys, which were dominated by the ironworking industry, before the "Anschluss." With the outbreak of war, the company deftly exploited these business relations to its advantage, with its annual construction output rising to altogether 17.68 million Reichsmark in the second year of the war.

This increase in construction sites continued in 1941 – despite the fact that yet more construction projects were discontinued as they were not deemed crucial to the war effort (*Perlmooser Zementwerke AG* in Kirchbichl, roadworks and bridge construction projects in Stadlau in a joint venture with *Wayss & Freytag*, and the construction of the Mühlgraben Bridge in Völkermarkt) and several smaller construction projects were brought to a conclusion (the air raid shelter in the Gauhaus Linz and works on the Grossglockner High Alpine Road near Heiligenblut). In 1941 alone, the company acquired 23 new construction projects (with a sum total of 45 construction sites). These consisted once again of large-scale industrial projects in the territory of the "Ostmark," for example construction work for *IG Farben* (*Donau Chemie AG*) in Moosbierbaum near Atzenbrugg, with a construction output of 5.4 million Reichsmark in the period from 1941 to 1944, and the construction of a new steel mill for *Schöller & Bleckmann* in Ternitz, with a construction output of almost 4 million Reichsmark by 1944. From 1941 onward, the company also started to acquire an increasing number of projects in the occupied territories. For example, *PORR* – partly operating in a joint venture with the Munich-based building contractor Hanns Krötz – acquired a commission to construct a transformer building at the Auschwitz concentration and extermination camp, which first required pile-driving and foundation works.[182] *PORR AG* also acquired a commission in a joint venture with *Allbau* for roadworks and the expansion of a quarry on behalf of OT in the vicinity of Kremenchuk in Ukraine. However, both of these projects were hampered by the course of the war on the Eastern Front and finally had to be abandoned altogether without any significant progress having been made. The activities of *Allbau* and *PORR AG* in the Balkans took on altogether greater

181 Ibid.
182 See Maria Czaputowicz-Głowacka's contribution to this volume.

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dimensions: The works conducted on behalf of the OT-Einsatzgruppe Südost mostly involved infrastructural development in Serbia, Macedonia, and Bulgaria, including the construction of parts of a highway between Belgrade and Thessaloniki. In 1942, *PORR* was moreover commissioned to construct a 42-kilometer narrow-gauge railroad including a tunnel between Bor and Žagubica in Serbia with a total construction output by 1944 of almost 7.7 million Reichsmark. New industrial construction projects in Slovakia constituted an increasingly important source of income, even leading *PORR* to establish a separate branch office in Bratislava in 1941. These projects included works for *Rosenberger Textilwerke AG* in Ružomberok and for *Stölzle Glasindustrie AG* in Lednické-Rovne. This increase in construction projects also impacted the company's annual construction output, which climbed to a new record of almost 18.5 million Reichsmark in 1941. Only around 2% of this was generated outside of the "Ostmark."

In 1942, the Nazi regime suffered its first unequivocal setbacks in its criminal war of expansion. This development also had an impact on the construction activities of *PORR* as the acquisition of new projects declined markedly. While *PORR AG* was commissioned with 14 smaller projects in 1942, 15 existing construction sites were shut down, either because construction had been completed (for example on smaller bunker projects) or because they were not deemed crucial to the war effort (as in the case of all roadworks in the territory of the "Ostmark"). During the course of the year, *PORR* nevertheless operated almost 50 construction sites domestically and abroad, with an emphasis on projects crucial to the war effort. The highest status was accorded to the OT projects in Serbia as well as to the construction of the Atlantic Wall in the vicinity of Royan, the latter of which was, however, already discontinued by the end of the year.[183] The company was not commissioned with any new construction projects within the "Ostmark" in 1942 – with the exception of the above-mentioned construction of a new electric steel casting plant in St. Marein im Mürztal. Slovakia was the only location where *PORR AG* received a few larger new commissions, for example from the Slovak *Papierfabrik AG* in Ružomberok, from *Hermann-Göring-Werke* in Podbrezova, and from *Dynamit Nobel GmbH*. As a result, its annual construction output in 1942 shrank minimally, but still made up just over 18 million Reichsmark.

At the latest by 1943, the company's 13 new projects, excluding only a small project for the Industrial Railroad Construction Society in Vienna, were all concentrated in the occupied territories. These consisted predominantly of OT projects in Serbia and Ukraine (Podolia) and of buildings and subterranean projects in Poland (Ostrowiec), and in Parchwitz (then Germany) and Slovakia (for *Georg Schicht AG* in Bratislava). The largest new contract commissioned in

183 On Organisation Todt in France, see Lemmes, Zwangsarbeit.

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1943 was for works for OT in Italy.[184] Not least of all due to its railroad construction activities near Žagubica in Serbia, the total production output of *PORR* for the year 1943 again rose significantly. The proportion of work performed outside of the "Ostmark" rose by almost 43%. This allowed *PORR AG* in the 75th year of its existence to achieve a record construction output of over 20 million Reichsmark.[185]

From mid-1944, the OT projects – as well as numerous construction projects in the "Ostmark" – came to a standstill due to the development of the war. They were impeded so severely by the Allied air forces or by partisan activities that they had to be either secured or discontinued altogether. Nevertheless, altogether twelve new projects were begun at this time, albeit financially modest in scale. From the summer of 1944, *PORR* began participating in the relocation of armaments facilities underground in the vicinity of the Mauthausen sub-camps Ebensee and Gusen II. All other new contracts in this period were commissioned by OT in the southeast, where – despite the development of the war – the company achieved a construction output of almost 7.5 million Reichsmark in the year 1944 alone. In the second half of the year, additional OT projects were commissioned at an unknown location in Bavaria and on the border between Burgenland and Hungary in the vicinity of Jennersdorf, where *PORR* participated in the construction of the South-East Wall.[186] This project cost the lives of thousands of forced and slave laborers deployed there. In many cases, laborers working for *PORR* (including many forced laborers) were withdrawn from running construction projects and deployed for clearing operations or for the construction of the South-East Wall. Aside from defensive construction works in the east and southeast of the "Ostmark," almost all the other construction projects of *PORR AG* gradually ground to a halt. Nonetheless, the executive board still reported another record annual construction output for 1944, totaling almost 24 million Reichsmark, around half of which had been generated in the occupied territories and in Slovakia.

4.3.2 Contracting Parties, Construction Output, and Other Metrics

The annual construction output as recorded in the executive board reports of *PORR* for the period from 1939 to 1945 offers a precise picture of the respective contracting parties and/or the contracting branch (see Table 2).

184 Ibid.

185 Bericht des Vorstands im Geschäftsbericht 1943, July 1944, 3. PA, Mappe Geschäftsberichte 1927–1945.

186 Ibid.; Interview mit Franz Witzmann (1904–1990) für die ORF-Sendung *Österreich II*, VHS-Kassette, no place of publication, undated. PA.

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Table 2: *PORR* Construction Output by Contracting Party, 1939–1945.

Contracting Party or Branch	Total Construction Output in Reichsmark
Organisation Todt	21,237,755
Gebrüder Böhler & Co.	18,619,000
IG Farben	12,350,000
Zellwolle Lenzing AG	5,480,000
Hermann-Göring-Werke	4,850,000
Schöller & Bleckmann	3,980,000
Railroad and Highway Construction in the "Ostmark"	3,621,000
Flugzeug- und Metallbauwerke Wels	3,350,000
City / Municipality / Companies in Vienna	1,998,500
Wehrmacht and Luftwaffe	1,546,000

Source: Berichte des Vorstands 1939 bis 1945. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3; calculations by the author

In addition to its actual core business, namely construction, *PORR AG* also owned a whole series of properties as well as shares in various companies.[187] For example, *PORR AG* owned the absolute majority of *Union-Baumaterialien-Gesellschaft* (*UBM*) and of *Allbau* as well as 90% of the shares of *Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft m.b.H.*[188] As already demonstrated above, the company's annual balance sheets and accounts statements reveal that its annual construction output in the period from 1939 to 1944 rose by around 60%, from 14.5 million Reichsmark to almost 24 million Reichsmark. The business reports presented to the general assembly year after year moreover reveal that the company's annual profits also rose quite considerably – especially from 1942. While the company was making profits of only around 260,000 Reichsmark per year from 1939 to 1941, this increased to 311,000 Reichsmark in 1942, rose further to almost 400,000 Reichsmark in 1943, and finally exploded in 1944 – due to the final settlement of a discontinued large-scale construction site (which was not specifically named)[189] – at around 2.7 million Reichsmark. The company's equity ratio also rose significantly during the war, from 29.8% in 1939 to more than 44% in 1944.[190] This development allowed the company to pay a substantial annual dividend of

187 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 404–410.
188 Geschäftsbericht für das Jahr 1939, May 22, 1940. PA, Mappe Geschäftsberichte 1927–1945.
189 Band "Allg. Bauges. A. PORR AG, Gesch. Ber. 1943–69, nachträglicher Geschäftsbericht für die Jahre 1944 und 1945," January 31, 1947, 3. Ibid.
190 Matis, Corporate Culture, 210.

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238,140 Reichsmark to its shareholders up to and including 1943.[191] The company's bank deposits also reveal a clear upward trend in this period: While the company had bank deposits of less than 100,000 Reichsmark in 1939, this figure rose 33-fold – with only a small drop in 1942 – to 3.3 million Reichsmark in 1944.

While the final phase of the war also entailed the loss of machinery and other working materials, this did not have a significant impact on the capital assets of *PORR AG* over the years: While the company had capital assets of around 6.4 million Reichsmark in 1939, this figure still stood at 5.7 million by the end of 1944. As the executive board repeatedly stated, efforts had already been made at an early stage to remove as much of the construction machinery and vehicle fleet as possible from threatened areas – such as "Greater Vienna" – and thereby to secure it beyond the now imminent end of the war. To be sure, a substantial portion of the company's capital assets probably survived the war intact, which undoubtedly represented a strategic advantage with regard to acquiring new contracts in the context of postwar reconstruction efforts.

Last but not least, the annual balance sheets and business reports also include information on salaries and wages as well as annual social contributions. Although the number of laborers grew steadily from year to year, the company's expenditure on salaries and wages remained relatively constant, although it should be noted that there is no data available for the years 1942 and 1943. In 1939, expenditure on salaries and wages totaled 7.5 million Reichsmark, rising to around 9 million Reichsmark for each of the years 1940, 1941, and 1944.

By contrast, the category of "voluntary social contributions," which consisted of various company policies benefiting the German core staff, rose gradually from around 90,000 Reichsmark in 1939 to around 235,000 Reichsmark in 1944, although the number of (German) employees of *PORR AG* decreased significantly by early 1943, stagnating at around 700 individuals by the end of the war. The sums spent therefore predominantly benefited the deployed core laborers and their families. The available data suggests that the company's development up to the end of 1944 – especially considering the ongoing war – was thoroughly successful. The tide only turned in the final months of the war in 1945, as numerous demands on state contracting parties and/or businesses had to be written off as unrecoverable, fighting led to the destruction of machinery and other company assets belonging to *PORR* at several construction sites in the "Ostmark," and even some of the company's real estate was damaged. In the annual report for the year 1945, completed retrospectively in 1947, the public administrators Witzmann and Kink referred among other things to the de-

191 The annual accounts including the balance for the years 1944 and 1945 were only retrospectively compiled in 1947 by the company's public administrators. It may be assumed that no more dividends were paid in 1944 and 1945.

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struction of provisional structures that had been located on valuable property belonging to *PORR* "at Kärntnertor," while the so-called *PORR*-Haus on Operngasse in Vienna's fourth district suffered only minimal damage. Altogether, the balance of the year 1945 reveals a loss of around 2 million Schilling.

5 The Final Months of the War and the First Postwar Months

In the final months of the war, numerous large construction sites had to be entirely disbanded, with valuable construction machinery and materials being lost in many instances as a result. The situation in Serbia was particularly drastic: According to the executive board, the bulk of the company's equipment at the railroad construction site between Žagubica and Bor could not be saved.[192] By contrast, and despite initial damages in air raids on Vienna, the company managed to transfer a significant portion of the construction machinery, vehicles, and materials in the territory of the "Ostmark" to a temporary storage site in Gersthof[193] or to Upper Austria and Salzburg, thus protecting it from further damage.[194] Considering the later division of Austria into four occupation zones, this would prove especially advantageous for the company's continued business operations in the postwar period. Despite the adverse conditions of the latter stages of the war, *PORR AG* remained active until the end, for example on the borderland between the "Ostmark" on the one hand and Italy and Slovenia on the other, where "increased planning and later also construction activities"[195] were taking place in the context of construction works for the South-East Wall. In late December 1944, *PORR AG* was still deploying around 700 core laborers, over 1,700 foreign civilian laborers, and more than 600 prisoners of war.[196] Up to May 1945, all construction sites were discontinued one after the other, yet the core workforce was naturally often still present at the construction sites at the time Austria was liberated, as was the respective inventory.

192 Records speak of up to 100 coaches of inventory. Heinrich König, Chronik der PORR AG, Vienna 1959, 39. PA.

193 Some of the inventory was hidden in Vienna's eighteenth district, where *PORR AG* owned a thickly forested property on which it had erected barracks specifically for use as storage space; Interview mit Franz Witzmann (1904–1990) für die ORF-Sendung *Österreich II*, VHS-Kassette, no place of publication, undated. PA.

194 Band "Allg. Bauges. A. PORR AG, Gesch. Ber. 1943–69, nachträglicher Geschäftsbericht für die Jahre 1944 und 1945," January 31, 1947. PA; see also Heinrich König, Chronik der PORR AG, Vienna 1959, 39. Ibid.

195 Band "Allg. Bauges. A. PORR AG, Gesch. Ber. 1943–69, nachträglicher Geschäftsbericht für die Jahre 1944 und 1945," January 31, 1947. PA.

196 Altogether 155 foreign civilian laborers were deployed for the construction of the South-East Wall in late 1944, but – according to the executive board of *PORR* – no prisoners of war or "work Jews"; Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, January 1945, 9. PA.

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In Vienna, the former procurator Ottokar Rakosnik was temporarily appointed as public administrator in the first days after the end of the war, with Franz Witzmann, Otto Amon, and Konrad Reif as his deputies. As early as July 20, 1945, Franz Witzmann (who later became a city councilor for the Social Democratic Party in Vienna) and Martin Kink (who later became President of the Chamber of Commerce) were appointed as public administrators,[197] since *PORR AG* – on account of the "Aryanization" of large portions of shares by the House of Hanover – had been classed as German property in accordance with the Potsdam Agreement.[198]

5.1 *PORR* Takes the Reins Again

Due to the extensive wartime damages that needed to be remedied, *PORR AG* continued to receive plenty of public and private contracts after the end of the war, with restoration works commencing immediately in many federal states. *PORR* moreover profited tremendously from innumerable roadworks and large-scale industrial projects in the postwar years in which it had already been involved during the Nazi period – regardless of whether the structures in question had partly been destroyed, only been in the planning stages, or had not yet been completed:

> "[This] was in turn an incentive to begin reconstruction works (of industrial complexes) or to continue other projects at a later time (highway and power plant construction). Even though many construction projects […] could not initially be completed, the company nevertheless found itself in an advantageous strategic position in cases where it had already previously been involved in large-scale projects that resumed after 1945."[199]

The division of Austria into four occupation zones and the great influence of the Soviet occupiers on *Ost-PORR* that this entailed would subsequently lead to the establishment of a separate *West-PORR*.[200] This move was precipitated by the partial relocation of company facilities to western Austria in the final months of the war in agreement with the responsible command of Military District XVIII and the regional government of Salzburg. Wilhelm Hau, the Executive Secretary of *PORR* at the time, later reported that his brother had been the responsible bureaucrat in the Salzburg regional government at the time and ensured that the

197 Band "Allg. Bauges. A. PORR AG, Gesch. Ber. 1943–69, nachträglicher Geschäftsbericht für die Jahre 1944 und 1945," January 31, 1947. PA

198 Heinrich König, Chronik der PORR AG, Vienna 1959, 41. PA.

199 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 426.

200 PORR-Nachrichten, Sonderdruck, 125 Jahre PORR, March 1994, 23–25. PA.

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company's wish to relocate would be approved. Hau himself, who was from Salzburg, was tasked by the company management in the final weeks of the war in 1945 to find a suitable site for the relocation of company facilities, eventually settling on a site in Strasswalchen in Salzburg.[201] After the end of the war, Hau was also an advocate pushing for the establishment of a *PORR* branch office in Salzburg and, by his own account, his endeavor to receive a business license was once again successful due to a personal connection: "I was supported by a relative of President Dr. Kink, who worked in the head office of the Chamber of Commerce and whom I knew from elementary school."[202] Hau solicited the first contracts for *PORR* in the immediate postwar period through a former middle school acquaintance named Mayr, who had just been appointed Regional Building Director. At first, *PORR* was also assigned captured SS personnel for use as construction laborers, yet these laborers constantly tried to escape. According to Hau, this was a futile endeavor since all the construction sites were surrounded by soldiers of the US occupation force.[203] Hau later tried together with director Schuppler (an executive board member of *PORR* during the Nazi era) to have the company participate in works on the Tauern power plant. Once again, he was successful in this endeavor thanks to personal connections: Hau's brother-in-law was an acquaintance of the later Regional Governor of Salzburg, Franz Rehrl.[204]

5.2 Denazification within *PORR*

PORR AG constituted one of the largest construction companies in Austria after the end of the war, hence the state (under pressure from the occupying powers) paid close attention to the progress of denazification efforts within the corporation. In the framework of "measures to cleanse the company of Nazi elements," *PORR AG* undertook 19 dismissals and 18 redundancies, which were approved by the "Committee of Ministers for the Cleansing of Leading State and Economic Institutions of Nazi Elements."[205] However, the company still had one former Nazi Party member on the payroll, namely the former executive board member Ludwig Wilms, leading the committee to instruct the company "to dismiss or relieve from office […] any members of the executive board and the board of directors who are in any way incriminated through their membership in the Nazi Party."[206] The committee subsequently decided on August 31, 1946 that Wilms –

201 Wilhelm Hau, Salzburg, August 8, 1990. PA, Mappe 496.
202 Ibid.
203 Ibid.
204 Ibid.
205 BKA an PORR AG, September 8, 1946. PA, Mappe 1104, Ludwig Wilms.
206 Ibid.

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who was head of the Business Administration Department of *PORR* at the time – should be sent into retirement.[207] *PORR AG* appealed against this decision, arguing that Wilms, as the company's liaison with the Soviet authorities, still played an important role, moreover since he was well-informed about the company's operations both before and after 1938. The company also pointed out that Wilms was no longer serving as a head of department, but solely as a liaison. The deadline for Wilms's retirement was consequently deferred by three months.[208] The following months witnessed renewed interventions by the management of *PORR* on Ludwig Wilms's behalf, and once the latter was finally – following the changed legal situation from February 1947 onward – recategorized as less incriminated, the authorities no longer objected to his continued employment.[209]

5.3 Conflict among Senior Employees Concerning Premiums

In 1947, a case was brought before the Labor Court in Vienna by 19 *PORR* laborers who had all worked for *PORR* as group leaders or site managers at various construction sites during the Nazi era. The case was prompted by the increased Soviet influence being exerted on *Ost-PORR* as well as the unresolved legal question of what should henceforth be done with German property. In mid-1946, a Soviet controlling officer had been appointed, who was promoted to general manager of *Ost-PORR* on March 1, 1947. The two public administrators – Pick and Witzmann – were obliged from this point forth to consult with this Managing Director in all matters of importance. One of these matters concerned the pending payment of premiums from the Nazi era to group leaders and site managers. The two public administrators were now prevented from making good on their prior assurances to this group of workers and to pay them the promised premiums from the Nazi-era construction sites. According to an agreement concluded during the Nazi era, group leaders were entitled to premiums totaling 3% of the net profits of their respective construction unit, while site managers were entitled to 3% of the next profits of their respective construction site. After the end of the war, the respective group leaders and site managers had reached an agreement with the public administrators of *Ost-PORR* to defer payment of the receivable sums until such a time that *PORR* began making a profit again. They also agreed unanimously to accept fixed sums in place of percentages – altogether totaling almost 90,000 Schilling – which were now payable. However, since the changed circumstances did not allow for payment to be made, 19 *PORR*

207 Ibid.
208 BKA an PORR AG, November 30, 1946. Ibid.
209 BM für soziale Verwaltung an PORR AG, January 3, 1948. Ibid.

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laborers finally decided to bring their case to the Labor Court to claim their premiums. The Labor Court in Vienna ultimately ruled in their favor and sentenced *Ost-PORR* to pay the claimed sums plus 4% interest within two weeks and also to cover the costs of the trial.[210]

There were evidently also significant conflicts concerning financial matters with the long-term manager and head of the executive board during the Nazi era, Max Tazoll. The partially preserved correspondence between Tazoll and the reinstated administrative board members Martin Kink and Siegfried Josef Pick reveals that Tazoll tried to claim back-payments of royalties from the Nazi era. Tazoll had quit the company on January 15, 1946[211] and initially concluded a legal settlement with *PORR AG* regarding "the problems in question."[212] This entailed the payment in 1949 of arrearage totaling 15,000 Schilling.[213] In January 1955, evidently to the company's surprise, Tazoll demanded payment of an additional 65,000 Schilling. Although it saw no legal necessity to do so, *PORR* acquiesced to this demand "in order to negate all future resentments." Hence, the company agreed to pay Tazoll another 65,000 Schilling in installments under the condition that he renounce all further claims against *PORR*.[214]

Despite these human resources "burdens" from the Nazi era that still needed to be settled in or out of court, *PORR AG* found itself in a thoroughly promising situation after World War Two on account of the comprehensive reconstruction of Austria. The company managed very quickly to reestablish itself economically after the end of the war. As a result, and despite all problems that undoubtedly also confronted the corporation in the first postwar years, *PORR AG* weathered the economic transition from the Nazi era through the years of Allied occupation relatively seamlessly. A substantial reason for the company's later economic success was its mass-deployment of forced laborers during the Nazi era.

210 Urteil des Arbeitsgerichts Wien, 13bCr529/48, November 11, 1948. PA, Mappe 614.
211 Mitarbeiterblatt. PA, Mappe 498, Max Tazoll.
212 Martin Kink an Max Tazoll, December 10, 1953. PA, Mappe 1103, Max Tazoll.
213 PORR an Tazoll, January 20, 1955. Ibid.
214 PORR an Tazoll, January 20, 1955. Ibid.

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Maria Czaputowicz-Głowacka

The Activities of *PORR AG* in the German-Occupied Polish Territories

During World War Two, *PORR AG* carried out a total of six projects in the territory of present-day Poland, five of which were of greater significance. In 1939, *PORR* became involved in construction work in territories annexed by Germany. Of particular note are the contracts that the company accepted for the construction of industrial structures for *IG Farben* factories in Auschwitz as well as in the Lower Silesian town of Parchwitz (after 1945: Prochowice). The company was also active in the General Government, constructing a smelter and a cement plant in the city of Ostrowiec in the central Polish Holy Cross region. These contracts were implemented on behalf of large corporations, namely *IG Farbenindustrie AG* and *Hermann Göring Werke*, but also for smaller construction companies situated in Nazi Germany and its occupied territories, such as the Munich-based company *Muy & Pitroff* and the company *Riedel und Sohn* based in Bielitz (Bielsko). *PORR AG* moreover appears on the payrolls of the Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police in Auschwitz. The company deployed not only forced laborers from Poland and other European countries, but also inmates from the Auschwitz III Monowitz concentration camp (hereafter: Auschwitz-Monowitz) and from a labor camp in Ostrowiec. *PORR AG* profited enormously from these contracts during World War Two.

This chapter focuses on each of these individual projects, beginning with the first and smallest, namely the reconstruction of a destroyed bridge in Tarnów. It subsequently investigates the company's activities in the territories annexed by Nazi Germany. There, *PORR AG* quickly agreed to collaborate with *IG Farben* and accepted two large-scale contracts at the latter's *Buna* factory in Auschwitz. Both the development of this collaboration as well as the implementation of the works will be examined here – despite the sparsity of source materials – with a particular focus on the living conditions of the Auschwitz-Monowitz inmates working at the construction site. The chapter will then examine the contract that the company carried out on behalf of *IG Farben AG* at another of the latter corporation's construction sites, namely in the Lower Silesian town of Parchwitz. Neither of the works in Auschwitz or Parchwitz were completed.

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PORR AG was also active in Ostrowiec in the General Government, where the occupation authorities had taken over the local smelter, which had been operating for over half a century previously. Special attention will be payed to the fate of the Jews of this town, whom the company exploited to implement its contracts.

1 Source Materials

The activities of *PORR AG* in the General Government and the territories annexed by Nazi Germany had to be reconstructed from fragmentary documents held in various archives. Of fundamental importance are the relevant collections of the company archive in Vienna, especially the reports to the board of directors and the construction site books.

With the help of the Kanfer estate held in the archive of the Department of Contemporary History at Vienna University, specifically settlement and contract drafts as well as notes prepared during various meetings, the emerging collaboration between *PORR AG* and *IG Farben* on the site of the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz can be reconstructed. Documents from *IG Farben* moreover reveal crucial information on the contracts *PORR* received in Auschwitz, particularly weekly reports detailing the construction of a factory building as well as correspondence and visual materials, all of which are held at the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum. A portion of the weekly reports is preserved in the Federal Archive in Berlin, which also houses blueprints and construction documents pertaining to the buildings designed for the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz. The archive in Bielsko-Biała includes bills belonging to *IG Farben*, including some from *PORR AG*, as well as from companies with whom *PORR* collaborated. By contrast, not much information has been preserved concerning the collaboration between *PORR* and the company *AEG-Telefunken* in the latter's Berlin-based archive, although the latter received numerous contracts in Auschwitz. The same is true of the archive of *Bayer AG*, which includes no material whatsoever concerning the company's contracts in Auschwitz. However, information could be found in Krakow and Katowice on local companies that collaborated with *PORR AG* in Auschwitz and Ostrowiec.

Materials on the contracts *PORR AG* received in Ostrowiec can also be found in the Military Archive of the Federal Archive in Freiburg, which includes the files of the Radom Armaments Command Center. Additional maps and visual materials are held at the Historical and Archaeological Museum and at the Cultural Center in Ostrowiec, which also includes fragmentary materials on the Ostrowiec Plants (*Zakłady Ostrowieckie*).

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Postwar sources also offer pertinent insights: The Federal Archive in Koblenz includes documents from the Transaction Offices for State Property dating to 1949 and relating to the *Salzgitter* group of plants. These contain detailed financial data revealing the activities of the smelter and cement plant in Ostrowiec during the occupation period. Another important group of sources consists of trial documentation from the postwar period. The materials researched for this project included documents from the archival collections of the Institute of National Remembrance (Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, IPN), from the Central Office of the State Justice Administrations for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes in Ludwigsburg and the Records of the United States Nuremberg War Crimes Trials pertaining to the *IG Farben* trial.

A particularly valuable historical source base consists of reports from – and interviews with – contemporary witnesses. While these only make a modest contribution to the reconstruction of precise facts (for example, not a single report could be found that cites the name *PORR*), these are nevertheless useful for gaining an insight into the working conditions reigning on the construction sites. These materials are held at the Jewish Historical Institute (Żydowski Instytut Historyczny, ŻIH) in Warsaw and in the collections of the USC Shoah Foundation.

Subsequent research in various local archives in Poland[1] revealed that *PORR AG* was not active in other localities.

2 The Early Activities of *PORR AG* in the Territory of Present-Day Poland: The Reconstruction of a Bridge in Tarnów and the Company's Subsequent Strategy

PORR AG became active in Poland very quickly after the country was occupied by the Wehrmacht. Already in the late fall of 1939, *PORR* sent an executive board member to Krakow to ascertain where there might be business opportunities for the company.[2] As early as November 1939, *PORR* accepted its first contracts from the military administration. These included the reconstruction of a bridge in Tarnów in the Krakow District of the General Government that had been destroyed in battle.[3] This contract was not substantial, garnering the company only around 100,000 Reichsmark. *PORR* was evidently not satisfied with this output,

1 Specifically the State Archives in Kielce, Sandomierz, Lublin, Łódź, and Rzeszów, and in the State Archive of the Majdanek Museum and the Martyrs' Museum in Żabikowo near Poznań.
2 Bericht des Vorstandes zur Aufsichtsratssitzung am 4. November 1939, 8–9. PORR-Archiv (PA), Berichte an den Aufsichtsrat 1939–1944. Hereafter PA, Berichte.
3 Vorstandsbericht PORR AG November 1940, 7. Bundesarchiv (BArch), R 8136/3644.

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as it commented on a further offer for a bridge reconstruction project: "Due to our recent experience, we have also rejected queries regarding bridge construction projects."[4]

Other works planned by the company in Poland were not implemented. Although *PORR* signed a large-scale contract for road construction works in Galicia at the turn of 1939/1940, the company soon decided to step back from the project. The executive board justified this decision quite vaguely with the remark that "the circumstances have by contrast to our original assumptions changed so much for the negative that we are currently endeavoring to have the already signed contract cancelled if possible."[5]

This decision corresponded to the general changes the company was undertaking at the time as it considered how it should adapt to wartime business activities.[6] Ultimately, *PORR AG* decided to extend its activities beyond the borders of Nazi Germany, thus including the borders of the "Ostmark," where it was only receiving a small number of contracts due to constraints and the adaptation of the building sector, while at the same time it faced significant competition. The company attributed the fact that it was still turning a stable profit despite these circumstances to its decision "not to take on pure building construction projects such as residential construction or settlements or pure earthworks, as these require[d] mass labor at very modest prices," and that it had limited itself instead "to the implementation of high-quality and difficult engineering works both above and below ground."[7] The decision to concentrate the company's business activities on pile foundations proved especially lucrative. This was directly connected to the activities of its subsidiary company, *Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft*, as stated in documents from 1941: "At our behest, Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft will engage in increased advertising activities for the use of express piles. Since pile foundations are still well-paid at present, the expansion of this sphere of activity strikes us as sensible, also considering that it does not make large demands on our workforce. We hope this

4 Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftslage mit Stand vom 9. 3. 1940, 8–9. PA, Berichte.
5 Ibid. For additional sources demonstrating that *PORR* did not implement any projects in the vicinity of Krakow and also did not make use of the local construction authority, see Archiwum Narodowe w Krakowie [National Archive in Krakow] (ANK), Akta niemieckich władz, instytucji i osób z czasów okupacji hitlerowskiej – zbiór szczątków zespołów [Documents of German Authorities, Institutions, and Individuals from the Nazi Occupation Period – Collection of Archival Source Fragments], 29/426/15; Archiwum Akt Nowych [Archive of New Sources] (AAN), Rząd Generalnego Gubernatorstwa w Krakowie [Administration of the General Government in Krakow], 2/111/0/2.12/518/3.
6 Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftslage mit Stand vom 9. 3. 1940, 1–2. PA, Berichte.
7 Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftslage mit Stand vom 30. 9. 1941, 1–2. BArch, R 8136/3644.

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decision will prove successful."[8] Indeed, this move would bear fruits just three months later, and the advertising campaign for "pile foundations" was successful.[9]

> "As a result of the significant income from license agreements that Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft m.b.H. secured over the past business year on account of the large-scale pile-driving works commissioned through us, the company will achieve its best result to date. Regarding the production of pile-driving equipment by Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft, the company is currently working almost exclusively on orders from Allgemeine Baugesellschaft-A. PORR A.G."[10]

Sure enough, that very year *PORR AG* was granted the commission for a large-scale contract, namely to conduct pile-driving works in Auschwitz. Further contracts in the territories annexed by Nazi Germany and in the General Government followed, which would soon constitute the lion's share of the work conducted by *PORR AG*.

3 Collaboration with *IG Farbenindustrie AG:* Auschwitz and Parchwitz

During World War Two, *PORR* carried out significant projects on behalf of the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz. The latter commissioned *PORR* to lay piled foundations for a power plant and some smaller factory buildings and to construct a substation. The company partly conducted these works independently and partly in the framework of a consortium with the Munich-based building contractor Hanns Krötz. It also collaborated closely with the company *Riedel und Sohn* in Bielitz and *Bauunternehmung Billik, Schicho & Co.* in Prague. The contracts were carried out on behalf of *IG Farben AG* and for other companies acting as subcontractors of *IG Farben*, such as *Allgemeine Elektricitäts-Gesellschaft* in Berlin and *Muy & Pitroff* in Munich. In March 1944, the company also received payment from the Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police in Auschwitz for expansion works conducted at the Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II Birkenau camps. The company deployed inmates from the Auschwitz-Monowitz camp alongside forced laborers and laborers from the civilian sector to implement these works.

8 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftslage mit Stand vom 30.6.1941, 13. BArch, R 8136/3644.
9 Ibid., 1–2.
10 Bericht des Vorstandes über das Jahr 1941, 14. PA, Berichte.

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3.1 *IG Farben* in Auschwitz

IG Farbenindustrie AG already began searching in 1937 for a location for a new factory intended to produce synthetic rubber and liquid fuel.[11] When the war broke out, the company's executive board directed its gaze at the territories in Eastern Europe beyond the reach of the French and British air forces. Research has to date not reached a consensus regarding why Auschwitz-Monowitz of all places was chosen as the new factory site and whether one reason may have been the intention to deploy the inmates of the already operational concentration camp in Auschwitz for the required work. All the sources indicate that multiple factors influenced this decision, including good transportation links, access to energy and water, and not least of all the labor reserves offered by the concentration camp.[12]

The planned factory was of such significance to the wartime industry that it was granted the highest level of urgency. With a value of around 600 million Reichsmark, this was one of the most expensive investments of Nazi Germany during World War Two.[13] Otto Ambros, the later director of the *Buna* factory in Auschwitz, was also quick to realize the factory's propagandistic potential, namely to contribute to the "Germanization" of the East:

> "With its Auschwitz project, I.G. Farbenindustrie has designed a plan for a new factory of the greatest proportions. The company is determined to use its best forces to construct a vibrant factory with a formative effect comparable to that of many complexes in western and central Germany. I.G. Farbenindustrie is thereby fulfilling the high duty of contributing in its own way and with all its powers to ensuring that the establishment of this industry will become a solid cornerstone for a powerful and healthy Germandom in the East."[14]

Many construction companies were commissioned to establish the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz, most of which were based in Germany proper and in German-occupied territories. In March 1943, 150 companies were involved, including 55 from Upper Silesia, with this figure rising to 257 just one year later.[15] In order to implement their projects on behalf of *IG Farben*, these companies

11 On *IG Farbenindustrie* and its collaboration with the Nazi authorities, see among others Hayes, Industry.

12 This argument was made by Wagner, IG Auschwitz, 49–55.

13 Steinbacher, "Musterstadt" Auschwitz, 205.

14 Zur Gründung des Werks Auschwitz. Niederschrift über die Gründungssitzung am 7. April 1941 in Kattowitz [Geheim!] [Einschreiben]. BArch, R 8128/1775, Bl. 160. For more information on the Germanization of Auschwitz in particular and of eastern Upper Silesia in general, see Steinbacher, "Musterstadt" Auschwitz, 205–223.

15 Wochenbericht 94/95 für die Zeit vom 8.3.–21.3.43. BArch, N 2503/1974, 35; IG Farben Werk Auschwitz, Tygodniowe Sprawozdanie [Weekly Reports], Vol. 6, 532–540. Archiwum Państwowe Muzeum Auschwitz-Birkenau (APMAB), D-Au III Monowitz/1/9a.

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hired laborers from *IG Farben* and agreed to be co-responsible for their supervision, which means that the master builders of these companies were responsible for discipline and the working pace on the construction site. The workforce consisted of civilian and forced laborers, both male and female, from Poland, Germany, and elsewhere in Europe as well as prisoners of war and inmates from the Auschwitz concentration camp.[16]

Construction work on the factory was begun using inmates from the Auschwitz camp who had been assigned to the *Buna* work detail. These inmates were initially driven out to the construction site, but from April 1941 they had to walk the six- or seven-kilometer route. Then, beginning in May, they were transported to the construction site by train in a cattle car, as one inmate remembered:

> "We would be woken at three in the morning and were then divided into groups of a hundred, accompanied by constant beatings. The detail comprised 1,500 to 1,800 individuals. We had to walk about ten minutes to the ramp where the cattle cars stood. We were packed into these cars in groups of 120 each. I must add that a quarter of the car had to be kept clear for the kapo and the foremen. The journey took about 15 to 20 minutes, after which each detail would commence the work they had been assigned. […] When the working day was done, there was a roll call and we returned to the cars. In the morning, we took 20 minutes to get to work, but the return trip to the camp would take two or three hours. This is because this route was also used by military transports and we sometimes had to wait for a long time, while in the mornings we were given priority. The doors and windows of the cars were closed. It was impossible to breathe and that wore people down more than all the labor."[17]

In order to accelerate the construction of the factory, *IG Farben* decided in the summer of 1942 to also house inmates in the barracks camp established for civilian laborers. This so-called *Buna* camp (also known as *Buna-Monowitz*) initially housed mostly Poles, but the proportion of Jews rose steadily. From June 1942 onward, Jews made up 90 to 95% of the inmates.[18] The inmates of Monowitz were almost exclusively male, with the exception of a group of up to 20 women.[19] In November 1943, after an administrative reorganization, the *Buna-Monowitz* camp became the main component of the Auschwitz III Monowitz camp, an

16 This question was addressed in great detail by Setkiewicz, Z dziejów.

17 All Polish quotes in this chapter were translated from Polish to German by Pascal Trees and from German to English by Tim Corbett. Akta Krakowskiej Okr. Komisji Badania Zbrodni Niemieckich w sprawie karnej b. komendanta obozu koncentracyjnego Oświęcim-Brzezinka Rudolfa Hossa [Files of the Krakow Regional Commission for the Investigation of German Crimes in the Criminal Trial against Rudolf Höss, Former Commandant of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Concentration Camp]. Instytut Pamięci Narodowej [Institute for National Remembrance] (IPN), Główna Komisja Badania Zbrodni Hitlerowskich w Polsce [Main Commission for the Investigation of Nazi Crimes in Poland], GK, 196/87, 81.

18 Schmaltz, Konzentrationslager.

19 Megargee (ed.), Encyclopedia, Vol. I, 216.

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independent component of the Auschwitz concentration camp complex, which also included 33 other sub-camps built at industrial plants, mines, and other sites.[20] *Buna* was the first large concentration camp established by a private company.[21] At its peak in August 1944, over 11,000 people were housed in *Buna-Monowitz*. The mortality rate in the camp was high, with the weakest inmates moreover being regularly "selected" and murdered in the gas chambers.[22] The average life expectancy in the camp lay between three and four months.[23] Piotr Setkiewicz, a Polish historian and head of the Research Center of the Auschwitz-Birkenau State Museum, estimated that

> "due to the heavy labor, insufficient provisions, bad living conditions, and the sanitary situation, altogether 10,000 people perished out of the over 20,000 inmates of the Auschwitz concentration camp who were deployed at the factory construction site in Monowitz by IG Farben between 1941 and 1945."[24]

Aside from the inmates imprisoned in the Buna-Monowitz concentration camp, altogether eleven purpose-built barracks camps were erected all around the factory to house forced and civilian laborers, prisoners of war, and "re-education prisoners," for whom the living conditions were also very difficult.[25] This was a very heterogeneous group of laborers. Forced and civilian laborers differed in the manner by which they had been acquired. In contrast to forced laborers, civilian laborers applied voluntarily to work, although they were often compelled to do so on account of unemployment or hunger. However, they had limited means of quitting the work if they so wished. Among both the forced and civilian laborers, national belonging not only determined living and working conditions but also their place in the factory and camp hierarchies. Laborers who came to Monowitz from Germany were treated differently from those who came from Poland, who consisted of people from the surrounding villages who signed up for work in order to avoid being deported to Nazi Germany as well as forced laborers brought

20 Piper, Zatrudnienie, 13.
21 Wagner, Gerüchte, 231.
22 Given the constant supply of new inmates, *IG Farben* consciously and from profit-driven motives did not invest in their living conditions, even though these resulted in a high mortality rate. Wagner, IG Auschwitz, 237.
23 Figures cited from Schmaltz, Konzentrationslager, 34. For more detail on the living conditions in the camp, see also Wagner, IG Auschwitz.
24 See Setkiewicz, Z dziejów, 163. Florian Schmaltz opined by contrast that Setkiewicz's calculations arrived at the lowest possible number of victims and argued in favor of also including the victims of the sub-camps at the Fürsten-, Janina-, and Günthergrube mines. Schmaltz, Konzentrationslager, 33.
25 As evidence of the hard conditions under which even free laborers had to live in Monowitz, Hayes cited the fact that a great number of foreign laborers quit their positions earlier than planned. Up to September 1942, free laborers made up 23% of the workforce. Hayes, Industry, 356–357.

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to Auschwitz from the General Government. The so-called eastern workers constituted yet another category in terms of treatment, namely those laborers from territories of the Soviet Union occupied by Nazi Germany, the General Government, and the Reich Commissariat of Ukraine, many of whom were female. Laborers from Western Europe were treated differently again, and better.[26] In December 1943, the civilian and forced laborers, who numbered a little under 20,000, comprised three groups of more or less the same size: German and Polish laborers and a third group made up of laborers from other states. Around 14% of the civilian workforce were female, with most of the women being deployed as auxiliary laborers. In addition to the civilian workforce, smaller groups composed of prisoners of war from the United Kingdom and Italy were deployed at the construction site alongside inmates housed in the so-called Schmelt camps and in education camps.[27]

3.2 The Participation of *PORR AG* in the Construction of the *IG Farben* Factory

Complications already arose as early as April 1941, meaning even before construction work on the factory in Monowitz could commence. Ground surveys revealed that the subsoil was instable and that there was groundwater at a depth of about ten meters, thus calling the entire future of the construction project into question.[28] A solution was proffered a month later at a meeting with representatives of *IG Farben* by Dr. Oskar Muy, a German technician, who pointed to the possibility of using express pile technology in the construction work,[29] an innovative method by which foundation piles are driven into the ground. The patent for this method was held by *Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft m.b.H.*, of which *PORR AG* was in turn the majority owner and also the primary licensee of the express pile system. Aside from *PORR*, this system was also used by the

26 Hojka, Robotnicy cywilni. For more detail on the deployment of foreign laborers in occupied Poland, see Łuczak, Polityka ludnościowa, 501.

27 More precisely: "Total number of civilian laborers: 6,113 Germans, 6,814 Poles, 6,568 foreigners, altogether 19,495; 5,050 concentration camp inmates, 599 Schmelt Poles, 1,147 English prisoners of war, 58 Italian prisoners of war." Wochenbericht Nr. 44 für die Zeit vom 16. 12.–22. 12. 1943. BArch, N 2503/1974, 16. The aim of Organisation Schmelt was to profit from the forced labor of Jews by placing them in labor camps established at the factory sites that were most important to the wartime industry. The organization was founded in 1940 and initially focused its activities on Upper Silesia, though its sphere of activity later also expanded to other areas. Megargee (ed.), Encyclopedia, Vol. I, 699.

28 Setkiewicz, Z dziejów, 60.

29 Krötz an PORR, June 28, 1941. IfZ UW, Nachlass Kanfer, unpaginated. This topic was also addressed by the executive board of *IG Farben* at a construction meeting that also took place in May 1941. 4. Baubesprechung am 6.5.41 in Ludwigshafen a/Rhein. BArch, R 8128/1775, 136.

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special building contractor Hanns Krötz, the Berlin-based company *Mast Beton- und Tiefbau*, and Muy's Munich-based company *Muy & Pitroff*.[30]

In June 1941, Camill Santo, the site manager at the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz, explained that "about 20,000 piles will have to be driven. All relevant companies have been queried to this end."[31] All the sources indicate that these companies were licensees of *Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft m.b.H.*

That same month, the head of the executive board of *PORR AG*, Max Tazoll, met with Hanns Krötz to suggest a consortium with his special construction firm to implement the contract on behalf of *IG Farben*. Following lengthy negotiations, the Vienna-based *PORR AG* and Krötz's Munich-based company established the consortium *Allg. Bauges. A. PORR A.G., Wien, Dipl. Ing. Hanns KRÖTZ, München Fundierung Ausschwitz, O.S.*, which was to be run by *PORR AG*. The latter managed the construction work and deployed a site manager, for which it was compensated with 2% of the total billing amount.[32] However, these agreements were short-lived: Not even a year later, the consortium was liquidated and *PORR AG* continued the construction work by itself, though it continued to employ Hanns Krötz for the project.[33] Krötz was responsible for maintaining contact with the company *Muy & Pitroff*, which had not joined the consortium but had regularly signed over contracts and provided construction materials to the consortium.[34]

The Berlin-based company *Mast Beton- und Tiefbau* also did not join the consortium, although it had initially considered collaborating with *PORR AG* and Krötz's company. Instead, it proceeded to carry out works independently at the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz, as it considered this course of action more profitable.[35] Documents compiled later reveal that this company recommended a different foundation-laying system to *IG Farben* in January 1942 – namely so-called Franki piles – and assured the company that these were an improvement on the express piles. "It is correct that only Franki piles can be sheathed right up to the tip, while express piles only receive a short sheath in the head section."[36] *IG*

30 For more information on the activities of Wiener- Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft m.b.H. during World War Two, see Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 406–407, 415. The information on licensees of the express pile patent is cited from: Brief an Krötz, June 26, 1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated; Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftslage mit Stand vom 9. 3. 1940, 11. PA, Berichte.

31 6. Baubesprechung am 18. 6. 1941 in Lu.[dwigshafen]. APMAB, D-Au III Monowitz, Tygodniowe Sprawozdanie [Weekly Report] IG Farben, Vol. 1, 53.

32 Vereinbarung, June 22, 1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.

33 Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftslage mit Stand vom 5. 3. 1942. PA, Berichte. Unfortunately, we have no information on the reasons for this change.

34 Aktennotiz, June 21, 1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.

35 Beton- u. Tiefbau Mast mit Basbecker Baustoffindustrie Aktiengesellschaft an PORR, August 19, 1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.

36 Brief an Dürrfeld. Behördenbesprechung Auschwitz, December 11, 1941. BArch, R 8128/1809, 16.

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Farben did indeed employ this method and the Franki pile system was used on some of the buildings in Monowitz.

On July 9, 1941, an index card for the Auschwitz contracts with the running number 5767 was filed in the central office of *PORR AG*, which was meant for internal circulation.[37] It stated that work was to commence on July 15, yet there would in reality be some delay.

The consortium's first works were conducted at the electric power plant that had been built on-site to serve the needs of the factory. Walther Dürrfeld was responsible for these works. He was the technical head of the construction of the *I.G. Auschwitz* factory and from 1944 the factory's director. The electric power plant constituted a large complex including boiler, pump, and machine houses as well as a turbine room and the substations "30 KV-Schaltanlage Ost und West and 6 KV-Schaltanlage Ost und West", as well as cooling towers, transformer buildings, a control room, and finally side rooms including a workshop. Piled foundations were to be driven below each of the machine, pump, and boiler houses.[38] The commission to create piled foundations under the electric power plant necessitated the most extensive earthworks altogether at this construction site. For this contract, *PORR AG* drove 3,415 piles into the ground – more than a fifth of all the piles employed in Monowitz. This job took until mid-October 1942.[39]

PORR did not only work on the electric power plant: Through to August 1941, the company also drove piled foundations under the processing plant and the *Buna* camp, with the company *Peter Bauwens Bauunternehmung* supervising these works.[40] *PORR* agreed to ensure a rapid working pace and promised to drive

37 Baubeginnmitteilung, July 9, 1941, with the handwritten instruction: "Cite the name!," under which the word "Auschwitz" was written. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.

38 Baubeschreibung für das Kraftwerk "AZ." BArch, DO/1/32503, unpaginated. As the manufacturing schedule for the factory kept being expanded and the notion was raised of also adding the production of isooctane, the scope of the electric power plant was expanded, too. This was henceforth intended to serve both the factories for the production of synthetic rubber and liquid fuel, respectively. The expansion of the electric power plant was discussed from November 1941 onward and Walther Dürrfeld, the technical head of the construction of the I.G. Auschwitz factory, declared in a meeting in April 1942 that a second boiler house would have to be constructed to support the planned increase in production. Besprechungsbericht. Baubesprechung am 13.4.42, 14.30 Uhr, Me 69. BArch, R 8128/1778, 85; Besprechungsbericht. Baubesprechung Montag, den 19. Januar 1942, 14.30 Uhr, Me 69. BArch, R 8128/1775, 98.

39 Wochenbericht Nr. 72/73 für die Zeit vom 5. 10.–18. 10. 1942. APMAB, D-Au III Monowitz/3/6/4, 320.

40 Work on this building was not documented separately in the construction site log at the company's head office in Vienna, though it is not clear why not. In all likelihood, it was subsumed under the main contract from *IG Farben* and listed in the construction site log under project number 5767. Baustellenbuch II.c., 1941. PA. These projects are nevertheless attested to in numerous other documents. Brief an Wunderlich, September 25, 1941; Peter Bauwens Bauunternehmung an PORR, September 2, 1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.

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50 piles into the ground each week.[41] Unlike the work on the boiler house in the electric power plant, the work in the *Buna* camp did not proceed without problems, as the piles did not withstand the endurance test. A decision was consequently made in October 1941 to alter the project, as it was proving too complicated. The problems were blamed on the lack of skilled laborers and the issue was to be mitigated by reinforcing one of the building's walls.[42] Despite these adaptations, a construction site inspection found in April 1942:

> "Some of the express piles produced by the company PORR Wien for construction project 939 could be moved simply by the rattling of a human hand. This suggests that the upper sections of these piles have broken off and therefore no longer possess the necessary stability."[43]

Despite these difficulties, *PORR* continued to receive contracts.[44] The company subsequently worked on buildings for the electrodes factory as well as those erected for styrene distillation, feed water purification, and butol distillation. These works involved driving 940 piles into the ground. The construction of the styrene oven required an additional 51 concrete piles.[45] The progress report on this project notes: "On March 3, 1943, the company *PORR* completed the piled foundations of Az 921 and thereby finally concluded the pile driving works it was commissioned to carry out in Auschwitz."[46] The following year, *PORR* took on

41 Peter Bauwens Bauunternehmung an PORR, August 15, 1941; Arbeitsgemeinschaft PORR/Hanns Krötz Fundierung Ausschwitz an Bauunternehmung Peter Bauwens, September 19, 1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.

42 Peter Bauwens Bauunternehmung an PORR, October 18, 1941 and October 22, 1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.

43 GEHEIM! Niederschrift über die am 23. April 1942 im Werk Auschwitz der I.G. Farbenindustrie Aktiengesellschaft durchgeführte 4. Behördenbesprechung. BArch, R 8128/1792, 11. Due to the necessity of erecting the new buildings on special foundations and because the work took a very long time, the question was raised again in the spring of 1942 of whether Monowitz really was the most suitable location for the factory, yet it was ultimately decided to stick with this site. Wagner, IG Auschwitz, 78.

44 In the second half of 1941, *PORR* submitted an offer in response to another call for tenders from Auschwitz, this time relating not to specific buildings, but to industrial structures generally. The call amounted to the round sum of 1 million Reichsmark. It cannot be ruled out that the call was specifically intended for these contracts. If this was the case, then this new contract was not separately listed in the reports of the executive board but was "tacked on" to the projects already running in Auschwitz. In any case, these contracts are not listed separately in the reports. Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftslage mit Stand vom 30. 9. 1941, 7. BArch, R 8136/3644.

45 The number of piles is cited in: Wochenbericht Nr. 72/73 für die Zeit vom 5. 10.–18. 10. 1942. APMAB, D-Au III Monowitz/3/6/4, Vol. 4, 307–314; Wochenbericht Nr. 68–69 für die Zeit 7.–19.9.42. Ibid., Vol. 3, 249; IG Farben Werk Auschwitz, Wochenbericht Nr. 92/93 für die Zeit vom 22. 2. bis 7. 3. 1943. Ibid., D-Au III Monowitz/3/1/9a, Vol. 6, 596.

46 Ibid.

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further projects, this time not for foundation works, but for the construction of a transformer building that also belonged to the electric power plant complex.

PORR undertook these projects in Monowitz directly on behalf of *IG Farben*, though sometimes solicited via the Berlin-based company *Allgemeine Elektricitäts-Gesellschaft*, which had been mandated by *IG Farben* to construct the power plant. By contrast, *PORR* undertook the works on the transformer building as a subcontractor of *Muy & Pitroff*.[47]

The sources show that *PORR AG* also worked for the Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police in Auschwitz.[48] The Central Construction Office was not subordinated to the Auschwitz concentration camp, but rather the SS Main Economic and Administrative Office (SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt, SS-WVHA). Its purpose was to coordinate construction at the concentration camp as well as the surrounding terrain, meaning the 40-square-kilometer sphere of interest for the SS.[49] The Central Construction Office acted uniformly as investor, planning office, and contractor for the construction and renovation works on the camp terrain. The architects of the Central Construction Office also built the crematoria in full awareness of what their function would be: "they ensured that the greatest possible number of people could be killed in the shortest time possible and that the traces of this crime could be eliminated as effectively as possible. The factory of annihilation, which was planned in collaboration with the employees of the Central Construction Office, functioned ever more effectively."[50]

The Central Construction Office stored the correspondence between *PORR* and the Auschwitz camp administration concerning the company's involvement in construction activities there. Together with *Riedel und Sohn* and *Billik, Schicho & Co.*, *PORR* agreed to acquire laborers from Italy (250 individuals), France, and the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia for the work in Auschwitz.[51] The

47 Muy & Pitroff was very active on the construction site in Monowitz. See among other things Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach, oddział w Bielsku-Białej [State Archives in Katowice/Bielsko-Biała Section] (APKBB), Wspólnota Interesów Przemysłu Farb Spółka Akcyjna Zakład w Oświęcimiu [IG Farben AG Werk Auschwitz], 13/485/0/-/38, 69, 151; 13/485/0/-/39, 31, 655–657, 897; Document Dü[rrfeld] 1213, 1406, and 1444. National Archives Collection of World War II War Crimes Records, Record Group 238, Reel 66.

48 APMAB, Zentralbauleitung, Firmy – kartoteka firm i instytucji [Companies – Index of Companies and Institutions], Vol. 7, D – Firmy/14/58, nr inw. 3555 ["Investment Number"], 42.

49 On the "SS sphere of interest," see document 96 in: Bartosik/Martyniak/Setkiewicz, Początki obozu Auschwitz, 370–371; document 45 in: Bartosik/Martyniak/Setkiewicz, Rozbudowa, 278–279.

50 Preuss, Architekci Zagłady, 377–378. On the Central Construction Office, see also: Preuss-Złomska, Architekci Zagłady.

51 Schriftverkehr zur Zusammenarbeit mit der Firma Riedel und Sohn und zur Rekrutierung von Arbeitern aus Italien und Frankreich in: APMAB, D – Firmy/3558/3, 113–114; Schrift-

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correspondence reveals, however, that *PORR* had difficulties getting the laborers assigned that it applied for.[52] This suggests that the work planned around the turn of the years 1942/1943 was not completed.[53]

The sparse sources do not reveal for what exactly the SS-WVHA paid *PORR AG*. What they do reveal is that the work in question was related to the expansion of Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II Birkenau, the payment was logged in March 1944, and it comprised a small sum of merely 1,064.61 Reichsmark.[54] The only other determinable fact is that during the period that *PORR* received this payment, the Central Construction Office was concentrating on the expansion of a network of air raid bunkers, on construction works in the terrain bordering the camp, and on the construction of water basins for the purpose of extinguishing fires potentially caused in the Birkenau camp by air raids.[55]

3.3 The Labor System and Working Conditions

There is information available concerning some of the laborers deployed for work for which *PORR AG* had been commissioned. Kurt Wunderlich was responsible for the entire site management, for which he received a monthly salary

verkehr zur Zusammenarbeit mit der Firma Billik, Schicho & Co. und zur Rekrutierung von Arbeitskräften aus dem Protektorat in: APMAB, D – Z. Bau./ 3581/2, 258; APMAB, D – Firmy/ 3558/4, 40, 48–49, 164–165; APMAB, D – Firmy/3558/3, 142–143.

52 The construction site log and financial reports covering the various periods that the company was active there contain no indication that any work was implemented on behalf of the Central Construction Office, yet the impression arises that the data in the financial reports is not all too precise. As already demonstrated above with regard to numerous buildings, individual construction projects were by no means always listed separately.

53 This conclusion is moreover supported by the circumstance attested to in *IG Farben* documents that the application system for new laborers was devised in such a manner that new companies as well as companies combining into consortiums were given preference in the allocation of new laborers. The management of *IG Farben* complained about this system, which made it necessary to constantly hire new companies. As there are no source materials preserved concerning the collaborations between *PORR* on the one hand and Billik, Schicho & Co. or Riedel und Sohn on the other, nor about the laborers these consortiums recruited, one may assume that these collaborations were so to speak "fictitious" and were only realized when the companies Billik, Schicho & Co. and Riedel und Sohn, who conducted extensive works in Auschwitz, required new contingents of laborers. Wochenbericht 94/95 für die Zeit vom 8.3.–21.3.43. BArch, N 2503/1974, 37–38.

54 The sum is cited in the document APMAB, Zentralbauleitung, Firmy – kartoteka firm i instytucji, Vol. 7, D – Firmy/14/58, nr inw. 3555, 42. We know that the work was connected to the expansion of infrastructure in the Auschwitz I and Auschwitz II camps from document 65, in: Bartosik/Martyniak/Setkiewicz, Początki, 355–359.

55 Documents 77, 86, 91, and 102, in: Bartosik/Martyniak/Setkiewicz, Rozbudowa, 38–39, 396–297, 424–427, 448–449, 484–487.

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of 682.63 Reichsmark.[56] However, his working relationship with the company's head office in Vienna was not without friction. In October 1941, he informed head office that "dissatisfaction and a certain unrest" reigned among the workforce, which Wunderlich attributed to the late arrival of construction material deliveries.[57] Head office responded by expressing its unmistakable expectation that the engineer would master this crisis himself, as a letter from Vienna states: "We must urge you to consider that it is naturally the responsibility of the local manager to quell and/or eliminate such unrest. After all, a little persuasion suffices to put people at ease."[58] Despite this rebuke, head office nevertheless decided to assist the site manager in his activities by sending an additional employee, the vice foreman Franz Weber. Another on-site employee was the machine maintenance technician Rudolf Hilber, who was paid jointly by *PORR* and Krötz.[59]

Wunderlich moreover coordinated the activities of the master craftsmen employed by the consortium, who were in turn responsible for directing the workforce on behalf of the company. What the sources demonstrate with certainty is that at least 23 of these master craftsmen worked on-site in the first two months that *PORR* was active in Monowitz.[60] Some of them had already been employed by *PORR AG* for many years and thus had experience of other construction sites.[61] All the circumstances suggest that the laborers present in *Monowitz* from the year 1943 onward could not have been ignorant of what was happening nearby in the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. As the German historian Bernd C. Wagner wrote: "The 'gassing' of inmates deemed no longer capable of labor was consequently a general topic of discussion on the construction site. Engineers and employees of *IG Farben* along with free laborers, forced laborers, and inmates openly discussed the SS program of annihilation."[62]

56 Brief an PORR, September 26, 1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.
57 Brief an Wunderlich, October 6, 1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.
58 Ibid.
59 Work commenced on the construction site in Auschwitz on July 14, 1941. What can be reconstructed from the sources is that Hilber worked between eight and fourteen, but mostly ten hours per day. Although he sometimes had Sundays off, he mostly worked on this day, too, even if a little less than usual, namely five, six, or even eight hours. He received 50 Reichsmark for his 77.5-hour working week, which corresponds to an hourly wage of 0.65 Reichsmark. See among other things Brief an Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft m.b.H., October 7, 1941; Brief an PORR, August 8, 1941; Brief an PORR, August 25, 1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.
60 This number has been deduced from a list of individuals whose paychecks were to be corrected. Differenz-Aufstellung zur Lohnliste Nr. 1–4f. d. Zeit von 14.7. bis 7.9.1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.
61 One document notes that laborers were also being rented from another construction site of *PORR AG*. Brief an PORR, September 8, 1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.
62 Wagner, Gerüchte, 240–241.

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The relationship between foremen and laborers varied, as described by the Polish historian Franciszek Piper: "Civilian laborers and the civilian supervisors were generally benevolent toward the inmates, while mid- and upper-level SS wardens and kapos competed in the mistreatment of their prisoners."[63] The preserved sources are not sufficient to paint a clear picture of the life of laborers in the service of *PORR AG*, yet reports from inmates in Auschwitz-Monowitz do reveal what conditions on the construction site were like in general, which allows us in turn to deduce what these must have been like in the construction section run by *PORR AG*. The memories of the inmates suggest that conditions were largely dependent on the individual attitudes of the people with whom they had to interact. This included both master craftsmen and SS men, meaning the wardens, as one prisoner recalled:

> "There were days on which we had good guards. They were the lazy ones who did not want to spend the whole day watching us. It only took a certain amount of time to know who was good and who was bad for us. But if the foreman noticed that a guard was not driving us, he only had to give that guard a couple of cigarettes: That was enough for the guard to start chasing us again."[64]

Another prisoner who was deployed for foundation works, but in the main camp, recalled the situation in similar terms. He emphasized that the work was always more difficult in the presence of a foreman, as this meant having to work under the supervision of an additional person – not just the Kapos and SS men. The former inmate Jerzy Skotnicki testified that the prisoners were subordinate to "the technical heads of the company […] who endeavored to extract the greatest possible productivity from us."[65]

Both civilian and forced laborers, including concentration camp inmates, conducted the work on behalf of *PORR AG*.[66] *PORR AG* was paid for its workers by *IG Farben*, which, after taking a substantial commission, settled accounts with the SS for the hiring of prisoners.[67] Although there is no data available for the entire period during which *PORR AG* was active in Auschwitz, the weekly reports from

63 Piper, Zatrudnienie, 23–25.

64 Protokół z przesłuchania świadka Jakuba Wolmana przez Komisję dla Badania Zbrodni Niemiecko-Hitlerowskich w Oświęcimiu w dniach 13 i 14 kwietnia 1945 r., w Krakowie [Minutes of the Interrogation of the Witness Jakub Wolman by the Commission for the Investigation of German-Nazi Crimes in Oświęcim on 13 and 14 April 1945 in Krakow]. IPN, GK 196/87, 81.

65 Zeznania świadka Jerzego Skotnickiego. Proces R. Hossa [witness statement by Jerzy Skotnicki. Trial against R. Höss]. IPN, GK 196/108, 123–124.

66 For a complete summary of the laborers deployed by *PORR AG* on the basis of the available source materials, see the table at the end of this chapter.

67 The billing procedure between *IG Farben* and the SS is discussed in Piper, Zatrudnienie, and Hayes, Industry, 265–269. On the bills submitted among the companies themselves, see Setkiewicz, Z dziejów, 100–107, 186–194.

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the construction site for the month of May 1942 reveal that the company was deploying 302 forced and civilian laborers at this time. This number only grew marginally in subsequent weeks, finally ranging around 330. In June, the company deployed concentration camp inmates on its construction site for the first time: Of the 336 laborers then working on the site, 49 were now concentration camp inmates. Over the following months, the number of laborers ranged from 318 to 390, although this no longer included inmates, as the main camp was plagued by typhus during this period and hence *IG Farben* was not renting out any laborers. During the winter, the number of laborers deployed by *PORR* decreased significantly to between 130 and 170 individuals. From April 1943, this once again included concentration camp inmates, whose number initially lay at around 20, but rose again to around 40 by the fall. From January 1944, the number of laborers decreased significantly once again, as *PORR* stopped deploying inmates and also henceforth only employed a limited number of laborers – around 60 individuals. The final preserved list of laborers dates from March 1944 and cites 40 individuals employed each week.[68] We do not know whether *PORR* ever deployed women and, if so, what proportion of the workforce they constituted.

The involvement of *PORR AG* in work on the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz can be aptly demonstrated in a broader comparative context on the basis of the consecutive weekly reports from the construction site. For example, in May 1943, altogether 17,164 civilian laborers were deployed at the construction site, of whom 7,681 were working for *IG Farben.* Additionally, 3,053 concentration camp inmates were deployed at this time along with 627 men incarcerated in the Organisation Schmelt camp. During this time, 155 laborers – including 20 concentration camp inmates – were deployed by *PORR AG.*[69] According to one of the last preserved reports, altogether 27,024 laborers were deployed in early March 1944, including 20,426 civilian laborers, 3,094 concentration camp inmates, 599 forced laborers, as well as 840 British and 65 Italian prisoners of war. This workforce was being used by 257 construction and assembly companies.[70]

There are only fragmentary references preserved regarding the laborers deployed by *PORR AG.* For example, a list of civilian laborers in Monowitz who were issued with clothing stamps cites just four names of men who were working for *PORR:* Willy Hudy, Johann Gworek, Emil Izgmeszko, and Rudolf Kania.[71] The

68 See APMAB, IG Farben Werk Auschwitz, Wochenberichte, and the table at the end of this chapter.

69 Wochenbericht Nr. 12 für die Zeit von 6.5. bis zum 12. 5. 1943. APMAB, D-Au III Monowitz/3/1, Vol. 1, IG Farben Werk Auschwitz, Wochenberichte, 52–60.

70 Wochenbericht Nr. 9 für die Zeit 24.2.44–1.3.44, 532–540. APMAB, D-Au III Monowitz/1/9, Vol. 6, IG Farben Werk Auschwitz, Wochenberichte.

71 Their full details are: Willy Hudy, pile-driver, born 1912, housed in Dwory; Johann Gworek, pile-driver, born 1877, housed in Dwory; Emil Izgmeszko, laborer, born 1923, housed in

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archive in Bielsko-Biała moreover contains a bill that *IG Farben* issued to *PORR AG* for "the services of Italian laborers provided to you in the period from August 9 to August 22, 1942."[72] The bill cites four categories of laborers, whose hourly wages ranged from 0.62 to 0.83 Reichsmark. Altogether 1,799 hours of labor were billed for this period. We can thus conclude that *PORR AG* deployed somewhere between twelve and sixteen Italian civilian laborers during this period. This finding correlates with other sources that reveal a high number of Italians – altogether 952 – among the civilian laborers deployed at the *IG Farben* factories in October 1942.[73] They enjoyed a high status and were thus treated preferentially by the factory management. Italians were moreover the only group alongside Germans and so-called Volksdeutsche (German-speakers from other countries) who were granted supervisory positions at the construction site. They were assigned to German companies that hired them as foremen while also providing them with unskilled laborers.[74] They were presumably also deployed in this capacity by *PORR AG*.[75]

In April 1945, Jakub Wolman testified before the Commission for the Investigation of German-Nazi Crimes in Oświęcim concerning the foundation-laying works at the *Buna* factory. Wolman, a Slovak Jew, had been an inmate in Auschwitz since March 1942. It is unclear whether he was directly deployed by *PORR* or by another company implementing the same work, but in any event his testimony allows for the labor system at the *PORR AG* construction site to be precisely reconstructed. As Wolman recalled:

> "[…] they deployed us for so-called subterranean construction, meaning that we were to lay the foundations for the factory buildings. To this end, one-meter wide holes were driven to a depth of 16 meters and filled with concrete; this then became the foundation of the factory buildings. Electrical machines were used for this work, with a civilian

Dwory; and Rudolf Kania, laborer, born 1910, housed in Poremba 157. Arolsen Archives (AA), 2.1.7.1 Lists of all persons of United Nations and other foreigners, German Jews and stateless persons from those parts of Poland that had been territory of the German Reich until 1945, Name register of foreign civilian workers, who worked in the area of Auschwitz for the *IG Farben industry AG*, factory Auschwitz and other firms and applied for order cards for clothing 15.12.1942–7, URL: https://collections.arolsen-archives.org/en/archive/2-1-7-1_2865000 (accessed October 9, 2023).

72 Rechnung Nr. 603121. APKBB, 13/485/0/-/36, 145.

73 Wochenbericht Nr. 72/73 für die Zeit vom 5.10.–18.10.1942. APMAB, D-Au III Monowitz/3/6/4, Vol. 4, 307–314.

74 Wochenbericht Nr. 54 Teil III-11-1942 für die Zeit vom 1.6.–7.6.1942. APMAB, D-Au III Monowitz/3/6/1, 103–107. More information on the Italians deployed in the *IG Farben* factory can be found in Setkiewicz, Z dziejów, 320.

75 Rechnung Nr. 603121. APKBB, 13/485/0/-/36, 145. *PORR AG* tried around the turn of the year 1942/1943 to acquire an additional 250 laborers from Italy: APMAB, D – Firmy/3558/3, 113–114.

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foreman and four inmates operating each of these machines. I also operated one of those machines."[76]

Other documents – the so-called pile-driving minutes – reveal that one pile-driving machine initially allowed for three, later six, and finally eight piles to be driven per day.[77] At the peak of construction activities at the electric power plant, six of these machines were in operation, driving 146 piles into the ground each week.[78]

In total, *PORR AG* drove around 5,100 piles during construction works in Monowitz, with the company earning 3,630,000 Reichsmark for these contracts. The company was present on the construction site until May 1944: Around mid-May, the weekly report noted that "the Auschwitz construction site of I.G. Farbenindustrie A.G. […] is nearing completion."[79]

Figure 1: The *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz. This photograph was taken by Soviet functionaries after January 27, 1945. Source: APMAB 510 Dz.II/2.

76 Protokół z przesłuchania świadka Jakuba Wolmana. IPN, GK 196/87, 11.
77 Rammprotokolle Nr. 1 und 2. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.
78 Brief an IG Farben, October 1, 1941. IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated; Wochenbericht Nr. 51 für die Zeit vom 11. bis 17. Mai 1942. APMAB, D-Au III Monowitz/3/6/1, 82–94.
79 Bericht des Vorstandes über die Tätigkeit der Konzerngesellschaften in der Zeit vom 1. Jänner 1944 bis 1. Mai 1944 anlässlich der Aufsichtsratssitzung der Allgemeinen Baugesellschaft – A. PORR Aktiengesellschaft am 5. Mai 1944, 3. PA, Berichte.

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Figure 2: Construction site of *IG Farben* in Auschwitz, photograph dated November 20, 1942. Source: APMAB 21, 472/6.

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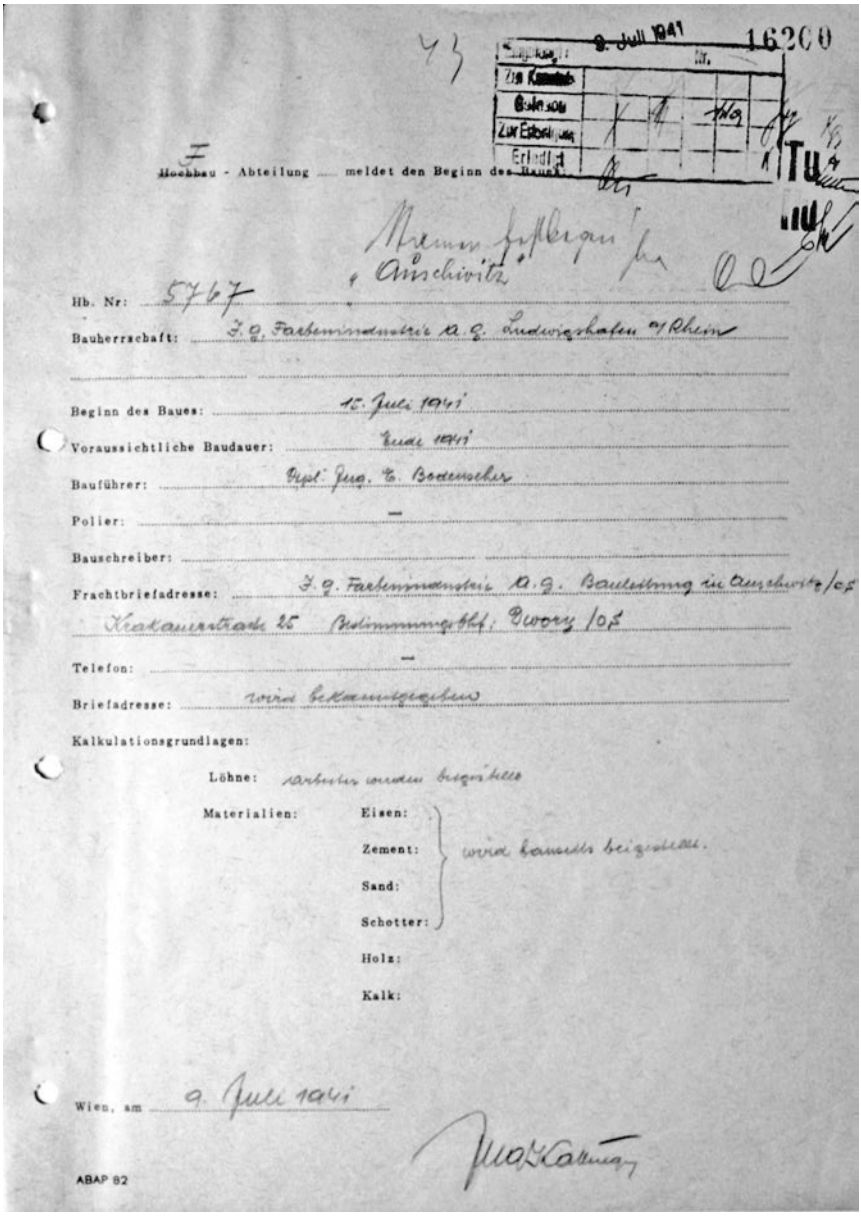

9. Juli 1941 16200

Hochbau - Abteilung meldet den Beginn des Baues.

Hb. Nr: 5767

Bauherrschaft: I.G. Farbenindustrie A.G. Ludwigshafen a/Rhein

Beginn des Baues: 15. Juli 1941

Voraussichtliche Baudauer: Juni 1941

Bauführer: Dipl. Ing. E. Bodenseher

Polier: —

Bauschreiber:

Frachtbriefadresse: I.G. Farbenindustrie A.G. Bauleitung in Auschwitz/OS Krakauerstraße 25 Bestimmungsbhf: Dworz/OS

Telefon: —

Briefadresse: wird bekanntgegeben

Kalkulationsgrundlagen:

Löhne: Arbeiter werden beigestellt

Materialien: Eisen: Zement: Sand: Schotter: wird bauseits beigestellt.

Holz:

Kalk:

Wien, am 9. Juli 1941

ABAP 82

Figure 3: Index card number 5767 from the head office of *PORR AG*. Source: IfZ UW, NK, unpaginated.

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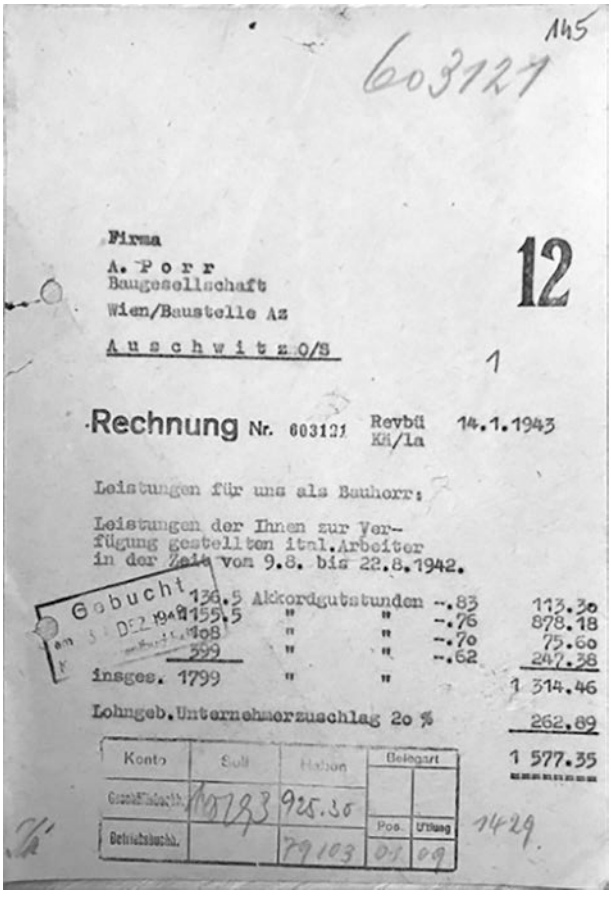

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603127

Firma
A. Porr
Baugesellschaft
Wien/Baustelle Az
Auschwitz O/S

12

1

Rechnung Nr. 603121 Revbü Kü/la 14.1.1943

Leistungen für uns als Bauherr:

Leistungen der Ihnen zur Verfügung gestellten ital.Arbeiter in der Zeit von 9.8. bis 22.8.1942.

Gebucht am 5. DEZ 1943

136.5	Akkordgutstunden		-.83	113.30
1155.5	"	"	-.76	878.18
108	"	"	-.70	75.60
399	"	"	-.62	247.38
insges. 1799	"	"		1 314.46

Lohngeb.Unternehmerzuschlag 20 % 262.89

1 577.35

Konto	Soll	Haben	Belegart	
Gesellschaftsch.	10783	925.30		
Behelfsbuch.		79103	Pos. 01	Uflag 09

1429

Figure 4: Bill for the work of Italian laborers. Source: Archives in Bielsko Biala, 13/485/0/36.

3.4 Further Collaboration with *IG Farben:* The Construction Site in Parchwitz, Lower Silesia

PORR also collaborated with *IG Farben* on other projects. A report from the executive board of *PORR* from June 1944 stated: "Free staff members and equipment from this construction site [Auschwitz] have been transferred to Parchwitz, where the works we have been commissioned for have taken on large proportions."[80]

80 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstandes anlässlich der Aufsichtsratssitzung vom 26. Juli 1944, 2–3. PA, Berichte.

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In Parchwitz, a town near the Lower Silesian city of Liegnitz, *IG Farben* was building a pharmaceutical factory, the so-called Erion facility. Construction began in 1942 and proceeded quickly, with work scheduled to conclude in April 1944, after which production could commence.[81] This was not a large-scale contract, with essentially only five buildings scheduled to be constructed: a production building, a tableting building, a staff building, a hall for locomotive vehicles, and a secondary structure including railroad tracks. The largest of these was the production building with an area of 55 by 20 meters. The costs were projected to total 485,000 Reichsmark.[82] Yet *IG Farben* ended up changing the plans and decided to establish a large-scale factory. Production of the most important pharmaceutical compounds, which had hitherto been synthesized in Wuppertal-Elberfeld, among other places, would henceforth be moved to Parchwitz. These compounds included Evipan, Phanodorm, Suprarenin, Cyren, Marfanil, Novocain, and Anaesthesin.[83] Presumably, the relocation of the production site was supposed to protect it from Allied air raids. The project was titled "Pharma-Relocation Feldwerk," avoiding the use of the town name so as not to compromise the project during the war.

A note from August 1944 proves that this building project also formed part of Germany's wartime economic policies: "As part of Special Operation Brandt, the company is relocating parts of its most important pharmaceutical compounds to the Feldwerk."[84]

Special Operation Brandt involved the murder of people living in psychiatric hospitals, sanatoria, and care homes in order to free up facilities for temporary hospitals and field hospitals. This operation was a continuation of Operation T4, which was launched as early as 1939 with the aim of systematically murdering disabled patients. When the Nazi authorities officially ceased the practice of forced euthanasia in August 1941, the second phase of these "euthanasia" murders began, which included so-called wild or decentralized "euthanasia" as well as Special Operation Brandt. The latter was named after Karl Brandt, the Reich Commissioner for Emergency and Health Services.[85] In the framework of this operation, the circle of victims was expanded to include "elderly people, people injured in air raids, forced laborers, and welfare children. Doctors and

81 Baufortschrittsmeldung vom 1.7.1943. BArch, R 3112/463, unpaginated.
82 Baubeschreibung Erion-Anlage, Parchwitz. BArch, R 3112/463, unpaginated.
83 Pharma-Verlagerung (Bau- und Montage-Terminplan). BArch, R 3112/369, unpaginated.
84 Betr: Pharma-Verlagerung Feldwerk, 4023-9130 – VIII Ch o 004, August 1, 1944. BArch, R 3112/369, unpaginated.
85 The scholarly literature includes discussions of the conceptual framework for this second phase of Nazi euthanasia murders. This has been called the phase of "wild," "decentralized," or "regional" euthanasia, with Operation Brandt also being defined in various terms by individual scholars. See Schwarz, Mord durch Hunger; Perz/Albrich/Dietrich-Daum/Hinterhuber/Kepplinger/Neugebauer/Roilo/Seifert (eds.), Schlussbericht, 44.

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nurses murdered around 90,000 institutional residents through neglect, hunger, and pharmaceuticals."[86] The accessible documents do not reveal what role the factory in Parchwitz was intended to play in this context once it was completed. However, it may have formed a part of the special operation insofar as it was one of the sites where those pharmaceuticals were produced that were used to murder patients.[87]

The factory in Parchwitz was a large-scale project that was given priority. The plan was to erect 24 structures, including eight factory buildings with a total capacity of over 46,000 cubic meters. The construction costs totaled 2.5 million Reichsmark, with the necessary construction materials being guaranteed for this project. The work was supposed to be carried out at high speed, beginning in October 1943 and with a planned completion date of March 1944. Three months were scheduled for the assembly, but the works ultimately dragged on into October 1944.[88]

PORR AG was supposed to commence work on the construction site in the final quarter of 1943 and was initially commissioned to implement a small contract with a value of 150,000 Reichsmark.[89] Yet the work was postponed into the year 1944, during which the contract also changed, rising in value first to 250,000, then to 580,000, and finally to 650,000 Reichsmark. The company managed to complete work with a value of 180,000 Reichsmark in the first half of 1944, concluding the rest in the second half.[90]

In Parchwitz, *PORR AG* was responsible for constructing the factory buildings and for drainage.[91] It presumably carried out these works in collaboration with an unknown Lithuanian construction company. Company documentation states: "There are also Lithuanian laborers deployed at this construction site," while documents of *IG Farben* state: "Contract with a Lithuanian construction company, workforce already on its way."[92] As the sources show, *IG Farben* planned to

86 Weitere Mordaktionen, in: Die nationalsozialistischen "Euthanasie"-Morde, URL: https://www.t4-denkmal.de/Weitere-Mordaktionen (accessed Mar. 28, 2024).

87 *IG Farben* had a history reaching back to the 1920s of experimenting with pharmaceuticals on patients in psychiatric institutions, individuals housed in various residential facilities, and prisoners. Roth, I.G. Farbenindustrie AG.

88 Kurzbezeichnung des Bauvorhabens: Pharma-Verlagerung (Bau- und Montage-Terminplan). BArch, R 3112/369, unpaginated.

89 Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftslage mit Stand vom 30.9.1943, 8. PA, Berichte.

90 Jahresbericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftsführung im Jahre 1943, 2–3; Halbjahresbericht des Vorstandes anlässlich der Aufsichtsratssitzung vom 26. Juli 1944, 6; Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftsführung im Jahre 1944, 8. Jeweils PA, Berichte.

91 Baustellenbuch II, P, 1943, Nr. 5819. PA. Matis and Stiefel wrote – without reference – about "the construction of factory buildings and sewerage as well as of factory roads on behalf of IG Farben AG." Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 426.

92 Bericht des Vorstandes über die Tätigkeit der Konzerngesellschaften in der Zeit vom 1. Jänner 1944 bis 1. Mai 1944 anlässlich der Aufsichtsratssitzung der Allgemeinen Baugesell-

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construct the factory with the assistance of 740 laborers. Yet there is no information preserved regarding how many in fact worked for *PORR*, and under what conditions, nor who these laborers were. Due to the approaching front, the factory project in Parchwitz was never completed.

4 Work in the General Government: Ostrowiec

During the war, *PORR AG* implemented two contracts in the General Government. The company drove piled foundations for smelter buildings in the central Polish town of Ostrowiec on behalf of *Ostrowiecer Hochöfen und Werke AG* and for a newly emerging cement plant. The works lasted from late 1942 to mid-1944, with *PORR AG* acting as a subcontractor of the company *Riedel und Sohn*, who were in turn acting on behalf of *Reichswerke Hermann Göring* (the corporation had been registered in 1937 as *Reichswerke AG für Erzbergbau und Eisenhütten Hermann Göring*), which had absorbed the Polish-owned *Zakłady Ostrowieckie* at the beginning of the occupation. The construction work was conducted among others by Poles employed at breadline wages in the smelter as well as by Jewish men and women imprisoned in the labor camp adjacent to the factory. The imprisoned Jews were robbed, beaten, and raped in the camp on the smelter grounds. Older individuals and those who attempted to escape were in danger of being shot dead. When the German positions at the factories in Ostrowiec finally had to be evacuated, the prisoners were deported to Auschwitz.

4.1 The Town of Ostrowiec and the Ostrowiec Factories under German Occupation

Following the occupation of Poland by the Wehrmacht, the town of Ostrowiec in the Holy Cross region lay within the General Government, where the occupation authorities imposed a harsh policy involving the maximum exploitation of economic and human resources. The vicinity of the town, which belonged to Radom District of the General Government, was of special interest to the German authorities due to its well-established manufacturing and armaments industries. On December 4, 1939, they decided to continue production in the local factories and to harness their potential for the German war effort. Very soon, almost three quarters of the region's industrial enterprises had been entirely adapted to ar-

schaft – A. PORR Aktiengesellschaft am 5. Mai 1944, 3. PA, Berichte; Niederschrift des Ergebnisses der Vorprüfung für Anträge auf Einstufung in die Rangfolgeliste des G.B.-Bau. BArch, R 3112/369, unpaginated.

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maments production.[93] The enterprises in question received provisional managements and new names: The Polish company *Spółka akcyjna Wielkich Pieców i Zakłady Ostrowieckie* was transformed into *Hochöfen und Werke AG Ostrowiec*, which together with *Zakłady Starachowickie* – now known as *Stahlwerke Braunschweig G.m.b.H. Starachowice* – and the smelter *Stalowa Wola* were henceforth absorbed by *Reichswerke Hermann Göring*.[94] Like all companies in the General Government, these were directly subordinated to the Wehrmacht.[95]

Ostrowiecer Hochöfen und Werke constituted an important industrial center and one of just three factories in the General Government capable of producing crude iron and aluminum rolled products. As of late 1942, the Ostrowiec-based enterprise also constituted the largest producer of steel.[96] The smelter delivered iron and cast-iron pipes to the metalworking factories in the region that had been deployed for wartime production.[97] These factories also produced cast steel parts, railroad freight cars, and armaments ranging from parts for tanks and submarines through to torpedo launchers.[98]

The occupation power exploited not only the industry of the vanquished country, but also its workforce. As early as October 1939, a decree was issued concerning the use of Polish citizens for forced labor. As a result, the laborers of the smelter in Ostrowiec gradually returned to their work stations, although their numbers never ended up reaching prewar levels during the occupation period.[99] Management positions in the factories were predominantly held by Germans and "Volksdeutsche," of whom only few worked in the smelter: just 48 in 1940, rising to 149 in 1943. Additionally, 1,200 worked there alongside 60 Serbs who served as security guards. The laborers included Poles and Jews: Altogether 800 Jews worked there in early 1942, this figure rising to almost 1,500 by late 1943. This rise was due to the liquidation of the Ostrowiec Ghetto, as a result of which a part of the Jewish population was deported to the labor camp adjoining the factory, while the rest was deported to the Treblinka extermination camp.[100]

93 The figures for 1942 are cited in Meducki, Przemysł, 53.
94 Ibid., 25–31.
95 Following the closure of smaller factories and their conglomeration in March 1944, there were 104 industrial factories operating in the General Government with a workforce of altogether 180,419 individuals. See Geheim. Statistischer Überblick über die W-Betriebe der Rü In im GG. Nach den Beschäftigtenmeldungen vom 29. 2. 1944. BArch, R 70-POLEN/77, 211–212. An interesting source on the workforce management of the armaments industry in the General Government is the following report: Bericht zur kriegswirtschaftlichen Lage in Generalgouvernement (III). Ibid., 149–161.
96 Meducki, Przemysł, 57.
97 Precise details on the quantity of raw materials produced in January 1944 can be found in: BArch, R 70-POLEN/77, 187.
98 Meducki, Przemysł, 81–82.
99 Ibid., 113.
100 Diploma Thesis Zgadzajska, 9. IPN, Ds. 7/82.

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The new administrators of the smelter systematically strove to maximize the exploitation of the Polish laborers working there. The working day was extended to twelve hours, the wage was extremely low, and the card-based system of food provisions was not sufficient to match the workforce's needs,[101] meaning that the laborers were malnourished. At the same time, they were subjected to a system of political and administrative supervision that at times morphed into severe repression. Laborers were arrested among other things because they had been active in the Communist Party before the war or because they had participated in sabotage operations at the beginning of the occupation. Smelter laborers who did not submit to the new authorities were terrorized, interned in the labor training camp on the factory site in Starachowice, deployed for forced labor in Nazi Germany, or deported to concentration camps.[102] A few dozen individuals were shot dead in Ostrowiec and its surroundings.[103] Anti-German activities increased among the workforce in reaction to their ruthless exploitation. Of all the armaments factories in the General Government, these activities were most pronounced at the factory in Ostrowiec. The laborers engaged in a strategy of slowdown strikes, meaning they worked deliberately slowly. Moreover, 43 acts of sabotage were executed[104] and a strike was organized against a planned increase in labor standards – an extremely rare incident in the industrial sector of the General Government, which was ultimately successful.[105]

The decision to deploy the local Jewish population for labor in the smelter in Ostrowiec, particularly in the context of its expansion during the occupation period, proved significant for the factory. This decision was part of a broader economic and political strategy pursued by the occupiers in this district. Before the war, 10,000 Jews had lived in Ostrowiec, where they made up a little more than 50% of the population.[106] The occupying forces planned to annihilate the entire Jewish population of the General Government under the code name "Operation Reinhardt," and indeed succeeded in murdering around 1.7 million Jews in this context.[107] Beginning with the liquidation of the Radom Ghetto on August 4,

101 In 1942/1943, the monthly wage for a laborer was around 200–300 Złoty, while the German foremen received between 1,400 and 2,000 Złoty. Ibid., 20–21.

102 For more information on the labor training camp for Polish prisoners in Starachowice, see Marszałek, Obozy pracy, 99.

103 The documentation compiled during the investigation of crimes committed during the occupation period at the factory in Ostrowiec Świętokrzyski includes an index of altogether 194 smelting laborers against whom the German occupiers committed acts of repression. Wykaz pracowników huty represjonowanych przez okupanta. IPN, Ds. 7/82, 206–234.

104 Banaszek et al., Dzieje, 56–59.

105 Ibid., 114.

106 Figures from the year 1921 are cited in Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 15, 513.

107 On Operation Reinhardt, see among other things Akcja "Reinhardt." Historia i Upamiętnienie; Libionka (ed.), Akcja Reinhardt.

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1942, around 300,000 Jews from Radom District alone were deported to the Treblinka and Belzec extermination camps over the following three and a half months, where they were murdered.[108] This included around 11,000 residents of the Ostrowiec Ghetto, who were deported from the town on October 16, 1942. Another 2,000 individuals were murdered during the liquidation of the ghetto itself.[109]

Operation Reinhardt aimed not only to annihilate Jews, but also to expropriate their property and to exploit Jews for labor. For this reason, in Radom District, which was home to many armaments factories working for the Wehrmacht, the Holocaust took a slightly different course than in the rest of the General Government.[110] A decision was made to "postpone" the annihilation of a part of the Jewish population capable of working, leading to 700 Jews from Ostrowiec living – after the deportations on October 6, 1942 – in a labor camp that had been established in part of the former ghetto, which was henceforth referred to as the "Little Ghetto."[111] From there, the inmates would go to work in the smelters and factories of Ostrowiec, the Jäger brick factory, the fish ponds, and the companies *Bauer und Losch*, *Oemler,* and *Trawers.*[112] Several dozen individuals were also deployed for clean-up operations in the ghetto itself. During the winter months, the ghetto population rose to 3,000 as Jews returned who had managed to hide from the deportations. In January 1943, a selection took place in the ghetto, during which all inmates without a work certificate were deported to the ghettos of Sandomierz and Bliżyn. During the next resettlement that took place on April 10, 1943,[113] the labor camp known as the "Little Ghetto" was liquidated and the 2,000 remaining Jews were relocated to a labor camp at the factories in Ostrowiec. The Jews interred in the labor camp were deployed among other things for the construction works that *PORR* had just begun. They included men, women, and even children.

Altogether 137 such labor camps were established across the territory of the General Government, in which over 122,000 individuals were imprisoned, pri-

108 Urbański, Zagłada, 190.

109 Encyclopaedia Judaica, Vol. 15, 513.

110 The Plaszow concentration camp in Krakow District constituted an exception, as it continued to operate. For more information on the economic exploitation of Jewish laborers, see Karay, Żydowskie obozy.

111 These figures are cited in Rutkowski, Martyrologia. On the German policy of ghettoization, see Michman, Angst.

112 For reports and testimonies of witnesses who were brought from the ghetto to work in the smelter, see: Relacja Berek Warszawski [Report by Berek Warszawski]. Żydowski Instytut Historyczny [Jewish Historical Institute] (ŻIH), 301.3764; Aussage des Zeugen Max Waxman im Verfahren gegen Soltau. BArch, B 162/6431, 1169–1174; Brociek/Penkalla/Renz, Żydzi ostrowieccy, 105–110.

113 Urbański, Zagłada, 196.

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marily Jews but also Poles and Ukrainians of both genders.[114] There were 14 such factory camps for Jews in Radom District, in which altogether 26,296 people were housed in January 1944. The peculiarity of these so-called Julags was that they had been established at the behest of private corporations and were located on these corporations' property. The managers of these corporations actively campaigned for this possibility to acquire Jewish laborers, as their sustenance cost practically nothing and they therefore generated enormous profits. A police official stationed in Ostrowiec, who was questioned as a witness after the war, described the situation in the town after April 1943 as follows: "All the Jews who were not evacuated were brought to the labor camp at the armaments factory. […] The camp at the armaments factory was subordinated only to the Gestapo. The Gestapo therefore interacted with the Jews, whereas we did not."[115] Reimund Zwierzyna, an Austrian, was camp commandant and at the same time head of security of the factories in Ostrowiec.[116] The camp was guarded by a company security detail made up of Ukrainians, Germans, and Austrians as well as a Jewish order police.[117]

The corporate forced labor camp in Ostrowiec, which opened on April 1, 1943, was located on the meadows of Częstocice, between the smelter and the brick factory and thus also in the immediate vicinity of the newly erected brick factory.[118] It consisted of several wooden barracks that were surrounded by barbed wire and lit with floodlights. The corners of the camp were punctuated with guard towers.[119] A former inmate recalled the conditions in the camp as follows:

> "There were oblong men's barracks with triple-level plank beds on either side. The straw sacks and bedding were brought from the town. These were former horse stables. The women were housed in a residential building. There were 70 people to a room. And yet there was a consensus that the conditions in the camp were good. There were vegetable

114 Marszałek, Obozy pracy, 144. Christopher Browning conducted an in-depth analysis of how such camps operated and also discussed the history of the labor camp for Jewish prisoners in Starachowice. Browning, Remembering.

115 Vernehmungsniederschrift Franz Ferdinand Schwarze. BArch, B 162/6429, 633.

116 Reimund Anton aka Josef Zwierzyna, born in Czernowitz in 1886, was a former officer in the Austrian military who during World War Two served first in Warsaw, then in Ostrowiec. After the war, he was handed over to the Polish authorities and pleaded not guilty before court, but was nevertheless sentenced to death on September 16, 1948 and executed. The documentary material from his trial, which consists of witness testimonies and documents, is an important source base on the fate of the inmates in the Ostrowiec labor camp. IPN, S 19/09/Zn; IPN, Ra 115/1; IPN, GK 164/5088; IPN, GK 187/110; IPN, Ds. 7/82, Vols. 1 and 2.

117 Karay, Żydowskie obozy, 256–259.

118 There was also a camp of the so-called local construction authority in the General Government located in Ostrowiec, which was run like a labor camp and in which around 300 young Poles and Ukrainians were interned. This camp operated from late 1942 to July 1944. Marszałek, Obozy pracy, 100.

119 Relacja Hadasa Halberstadta. ŻIH, 301.271, 4.

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gardens in the surrounding meadows, sports events were organized, and there was a Jewish kitchen where one could get a good half a kilo of bread and two portions of soup each day. We were also given clothing that the Germans brought from Majdanek."[120]

By contrast, the documents from the trial conducted to prosecute Nazi crimes at the factories in Ostrowiec detail acts of violence and murder. The report on the development and results of the investigation concludes:

"Cruelty toward the inmates were a daily occurrence in the camp. […] Together with the Jewish police, who were made up of the dregs of society, Rhode and the Ukrainian guards plundered and murdered, and […] Commandant Zwierzyna and the guards he commanded participated, too. Even before the camp was liquidated, about 50 inmates were shot dead, three of them on October 20, 1943, 40 on October 7, 1943 (they were murdered in Firlej near Radom, to where they had been deported), two on March 20, 1944, two in May 1944, and seven in July 1944. On Zwierzyna's orders, four of the executed inmates were thrown into the Martin furnace while the laborers looked on."[121]

The inmates of the camp worked at the Jäger brick factory, the fish ponds located nearby, and the factories in Ostrowiec, both in production and in the expansion of the smelter and cement plant.[122] Around 3,000 Jews passed through this camp in the time it was operational. Aside from local Jews from Ostrowiec, inmates from Płaszów, Piotrków, and Radom as well as from Austria and the Soviet Union were deported there.[123] It cannot be exactly determined how many of the inmates

120 Ibid., 2–3. Nonetheless, the camp in Ostrowiec is recalled in the testimony of its inmates – particularly of those who were sent there from Płaszów – in a comparatively mild manner. They emphasized that at least the inmates there did not die of hunger. Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation (VHA), Mannie Schneider, Int. 22337, Web, Segm. 66 (accessed July 14, 2023); ŻIH, 301.3213, 1. These testimonies also mention cultural, religious, and sports events that were allowed by the camp commandant. ŻIH, 301.3213; VHA, David Shear, Int. 490, Web, Segm. 33–59 (accessed July 14, 2023). Majdanek was a concentration camp on the outskirts of Lublin that operated from October 1941 to July 1944. An estimated 130,000 individuals were interned in this concentration camp, of whom 80,000 perished. The vast majority of the deceased were Jews (about 60,000), followed by Poles, Belarussians, Ukrainians, and Russians. Historia obozu, Państwowe Muzeum na Majdanku, URL: https://www.majdanek.eu/pl/history (accessed March 26, 2024).

121 Martin furnaces (more specifically Siemens-Martin furnaces) are steel-melting furnaces. Cited in IPN, Ds. 7/82, 369. On crimes and violence in the camp, see also IPN, S 19/09/Zn. Other testimonies also mentioned rapes of female inmates. ŻIH, 301.3097; 301.3056, 5.

122 Around 600 camp inmates worked at the Jäger brick factory and the fish ponds. "The Jews suffered greatly there, especially those who had to work in the brick factory. Even during the winter, the laborers stood up to their waists in water when the fish ponds had to be cleaned. The working day often lasted from six in the morning to eleven at night, with the laborers, male and female alike, being accosted with blows and permanent shouting and cursing." Relacja Berek Warszawski. ŻIH, 301.3764.

123 Banaszek, Dzieje, 55–56.

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of the Ostrowiec labor camp perished there. The Polish historian Longin Kaczanowski estimates the number of victims at 2,000.[124]

The camp was finally liquidated due to the approaching front. On August 2, 1944, the Radom District Armaments Command Center noted in its war diary: "The Jews of the Ostrowiec blast furnaces and factories are being deported."[125] Sure enough, after eight days of being held in the camp barracks without being let out to work and during which they received only starvation rations, the Jews were deported to Auschwitz. They were not subjected to a selection there, but the men were put to work in the Jauer coal mines and the women and children fell victim to medical experiments conducted by Josef Mengele.[126]

4.2 The Expansion of the Ostrowiec Factories and the Work Conducted by *PORR AG*

The economic policy of the General Government aimed to exploit the existing infrastructure to the maximum extent and to maintain production. The investments planned by the occupying forces were provisional in character,[127] though the factories in Ostrowiec constituted an exception in this regard. The smelter there was expanded and a new factory was constructed – a brick factory. *PORR AG* received the commission for both of these projects in November 1942.[128] The company was probably chosen because of the experience it had acquired in Auschwitz-Monowitz and the contacts it had forged there with other enterprises active in Ostrowiec. One of its contracts was implemented directly on behalf of *Ostrowiecer Hochöfen und Werke* and involved driving 560 piled foundations into the ground.[129] The second was implemented on behalf of the company *Riedel und Sohn*, which had taken on a large contract for the smelter.[130]

W. Riedel und Sohn Eisenbeton u. Hochbau was a German company in which Wilhelm Riedel senior and Wilhelm Riedel junior held 60 and 40% of the shares, respectively. The company had its headquarters in the Silesian town of Bielitz, in territory that had been annexed by Nazi Germany, but it also had a roadworks department in Krakow, the capital of the General Government. The company

124 Kaczanowski, Hitlerowskie fabryki, 7.
125 BArch, RW/23/18, 88; Berek Warszawski described the liquidation of the camp in his memoirs. ŻIH, 301.3764.
126 Ostrovṭsah, Memorial Book. On Josef Mengele, see Keller, Günzburg.
127 Meducki, Przemysł, 95.
128 Both projects are listed in the construction site book under one and the same number, 5805. Baustellenbuch II, O, 1942. PA.
129 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft des Capitals […]," Vol. 1, 426.
130 Werk Zementfabrik, Anlage 5e-II F (Rückstellungen zum 20.6.1948); Anlage 4/II D, Blatt 3 (Gegebene Auszahlungen). BArch, B 326/198, unpaginated.

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started its operations as early as 1940, and in that year it had the highest revenues and employed the most workers (23 employees and 1,778 laborers).[131] *Riedel und Sohn* implemented numerous projects on behalf of the SS and *IG Farben* in Auschwitz. Aside from bills preserved from these collaborations, there are also preserved photographs and records of the working hours of concentration camp inmates that the company deployed in large numbers.[132] The works conducted in Auschwitz by *Riedel und Sohn* were so extensive that *IG Farben* and the Central Construction Office discussed whether to stop giving the company contracts because it would possibly no longer be capable of realizing them.[133]

As the companies *Riedel und Sohn* and *PORR* had already worked together on construction sites in Auschwitz, it could be that the former invited the latter to collaborate in the General Government, too. This assumption is supported by the fact that *PORR AG* is cited in *Riedel und Sohn* documents as a "company based in Auschwitz."

An Ostrowiec contract first appears in *PORR AG* documents in November 1942. This was a small contract to drive piled foundations for the cement plant, which would earn the company 200,000 Reichsmark[134] and already had to be completed by the end of the year. It is presumably no coincidence that this contract was offered immediately after the labor camp for Jews had been established on the site of the former ghetto. *Ostrowiecer Hochöfen und Werke* constituted the main employer for the ghetto inhabitants forced to perform labor.

Half a year later, after the inmates had been relocated to the company camp on the factory grounds, a quarterly report of *PORR AG* mentions a new "foundation works contract" in Ostrowiec. Further work on the piled foundations in Ostrowiec with a value of 600,000 Reichsmark was scheduled to be completed by the

131 Riedel u. Söhne. Baugeschäft. Archiwum Państwowe w Katowicach [State Archives in Katowice] (APK), 12/379/0/13/733, 13, 33, 44; 12/379/0/13/734, 1, 3; Lieferschein Nr. 27 über die bei [der] Bezirkskrankenkasse in Krakau am 2. Februar 1945 eingezahlten Beiträge zur Arbeitslosenversicherung und zum Arbeitsfonds von Betrieben mit mehr als 4 Beschäftigten. ANK, 29/426/491, 201–202.

132 Rechnungen: APKBB, 13/485/0/-/37, 615; 13/485/0/-/38, 143–145, 885–887; 13/485/0/-/39, 191. The company was definitely involved in constructing factory buildings 787-9 and 796 as well as 966 and 732. BArch, R 8128/1809, 49, 54, 130.

133 Besprechungsbericht AZ, dated May 20, 1942, contains complaints about Riedel und Sohn to the effect that the company was taking on many contracts but not delivering on them. APMAB, IG Farben Wochenberichte, Vol. 2, 2 (121).

134 Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftslage anlässlich der Aufsichtsratssitzung vom 23. November 1942, 7. PA, Berichte. In contrast to the smelter, which had been a Polish enterprise before the war and was taken over by the German occupation and Wehrmacht authorities, the Ostrowiec cement plant was an entirely new construction project intended to satisfy the requirements of the armaments sector during the war. The cement plant was erected immediately adjacent to the smelter and the Częstocice sugar factory.

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end of 1943[135] and, from the company's point of view, were carried out without a hitch. As early as June 1943, an inspection took place on the construction site with a representative of the Radom Armaments Command Center in attendance together with representatives of the General Government, the district government, the company management of *Ostrowiecer Hochöfen und Werke*, and the Reich Institute for Water, Soil, and Air Hygiene in Berlin.[136] However, the situation changed in subsequent months. Following the completion of a part of the contract, as a report from the executive board of *PORR AG* put it in late September 1943, "the pile-driving works in Ostrowiec" had to be "unfortunately put on hold because this construction project (a cement plant) has been discontinued for the time being."[137] As a result, the contract could not be completed and the rest of the agreed sum – no less than 440,000 Reichsmark – was not paid to the company.[138] Construction works on the cement plant were presumably discontinued because the military situation seemed uncertain and the German authorities were redefining their priorities.

Not even three months later, *PORR AG* received a small but urgent commission, now no longer working as a subcontractor for another company, but receiving the commission totaling 270,000 Reichsmark directly from *Ostrowiecer Hochöfen und Werke*. *PORR* was commissioned to expand the smelter, a decision that was probably made due to the growing number of orders. Among other things, the contracting party had in early December 1943 received an order in the framework of the submarine program as well as a further order to produce tank parts.[139] Additionally, 180 railroad cars carrying factory equipment and machinery from a steel mill in Belgium arrived in late 1943 with the order to assemble them in Ostrowiec. The assembly hall was consequently expanded, with additional halls, a railroad car paint shop, and a Martin furnace with a capacity of 40 tons being constructed.[140] To this end, the smelter petitioned the General Government for support in the form of credit.[141] As a result, the company planned to construct two additional furnaces with a daily production capacity of 350 tons of steel each and five Martin furnaces with an annual production capacity of 200,000 tons of steel each. In the long term, a new power plant and an

135 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstandes anlässlich der Aufsichtsratssitzung am 10. April. 1943, 7. PA, Berichte.
136 Eintrag, Wednesday, June 9, 1943. BArch, RW/23/17, 53.
137 Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftslage mit Stand vom 30. 9. 1943, 5. PA, Berichte.
138 Ibid.
139 Eintrag, Friday, December 3, 1943. BArch, RW/23/17, 144; Gruppe Marine, BArch, RW/23/18, 25.
140 Diploma Thesis Zgadzajska, 15–17. IPN, Ds. 7/82; Meducki, Przemysł, 95. Zgadzajska mentioned the construction of only two assembly halls, Meducki mentioned three.
141 Mob-Kredit für Ausbau Ostrowicer Hochofen und Werke A.G. AAN, 2/111/0/5.7/1362.

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assembly hall were to be constructed capable of producing around 400 railroad cars per month. Finally, all steel mills were to be renovated.[142]

It is not exactly clear in which construction project *PORR AG* was involved, though it resumed its construction activities in Ostrowiec with full force in December that same year. In the last two weeks of 1943, the company was commissioned to drive piled foundations with a value of 170,000 Reichsmark, followed by another contract in 1944 with a value of 100,000 Reichsmark, with the latter job ultimately running to 150,000 Reichsmark.[143] This collaboration appears to have progressed smoothly, for the contract was expanded and the company moreover received queries regarding its availability for additional projects.

However, by this time the Red Army was already approaching Ostrowiec, and as early as May 1944 a report from the executive board of *PORR AG* stated that "for certain reasons we are trying to return our pile drivers as quickly as possible" and that the construction site "will be evacuated shortly."[144] Beginning in July, production was discontinued in one factory after the other and the machines were dismounted. Under the supervision of the Armaments Command Center, 1,080 railroad cars and ten trucks full of equipment were evacuated to the territory of Nazi Germany.[145] A large number of the Polish skilled laborers were also deported to Nazi Germany and forced to perform labor there, while the Jewish laborers were deported to Auschwitz.[146]

4.3 The Working Conditions

Not much is known about the working conditions at the construction sites operated by *PORR AG* in Ostrowiec. The system most probably entailed private companies paying their contracting parties for the laborers the latter provided (which in this case means that *PORR AG* paid both *Ostrowiecer Hochöfen und Werke* and the cement plant) and the contracting party in turn paid the SS. At least this was the system in place at the nearby camp of the company *Hugo*

142 Diploma Thesis Zgadzajska, 15–17. IPN, Ds. 7/82.
143 Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftsführung 1943, 5, 8, 10. PA, Berichte.
144 Bericht des Vorstandes über die Tätigkeit der Konzerngesellschaften in der Zeit vom 1. Jänner 1944 bis 1. Mai 1944 anlässlich der Aufsichtsratssitzung der Allgemeinen Baugesellschaft – A. PORR Aktiengesellschaft am 5. Mai 1944, 3. PA, Berichte.
145 Überblick des Dienststellenleiters über die in der Berichtszeit aufgetretenen wesentlichen Probleme. BArch, RW/23/18, 108.
146 The City Commissary of Ostrowiec stated in this matter: "A portion of the machines and equipment was brought to Salzgitter, as were the German and leading Polish workforce (technicians and foremen)." Zeugenaussage. BArch, B 162/6430, 725–736, here 736.

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Schneider AG (*HASAG*) in Skarżysko-Kamienna, where the SS charged *HASAG* 5 Złoty per male laborer and 4 Złoty per female laborer per day.[147]

It is unknown who exactly *PORR* deployed at its construction site, including whether there were also non-Jewish Poles among the workforce or only Jews. In their postwar statements, the German laborers working there said they recalled nothing, with the director of the smelter for example stating: "Even if I try to picture the factory grounds, I cannot say whether there was once a barracks camp for Jews there."[148] No memories of non-Jewish Poles who worked there during the expansion of the factory could be identified. It therefore cannot be ruled out that, due to the shortage of skilled laborers, they remained in the production sector as experienced ironworkers (although a significant portion of the prewar Polish workforce had also consisted of Jews) while the construction work was primarily carried out by Jews.

The Jewish police were active within the camp, tasked with maintaining order and mediating with the German factory authorities and the company security detail.[149] The Jewish police assigned the inmates specific tasks each day, depending on the needs of the respective smelter departments. The inmates either conducted their work independently or as auxiliary laborers. Inmates were assigned to special groups for a particularly dreaded job, namely loading and offloading materials.[150] As one female prisoner recalled: "Each group of ten individuals had a group leader supervising. The relationship with the foremen was generally friendly as the latter were happy to be bribed with liquor or money."[151]

The work was heavy and very taxing. One prisoner, Jerzy Korngold, recalled the work that he and his wife had to perform in the camp:

147 Karay, Death, 44. This book also describes in great detail the conditions under which Jews had to work in the factory. This topic has also been researched by Alicja Bartnicka. Bartnicka, "Pytały […]." The entire Nazi-era history of the Leipzig-based armaments company *Hugo Schneider AG* (*HASAG*) was researched with a particular focus on the exploitation, forced labor, and mass murder of Jews by Martin Clemens Winter in Leipzig. Martin Clemens Winter, Das HASAG Puzzle: Forschungsblog zu nationalsozialistischer Unternehmenskultur, Zwangsarbeit und Judenmord, URL: https://hasagpuzzle.hypotheses.org (accessed March 29, 2024).

148 Vernehmungsniederschrift […] Gerhardt Knatke. BArch, B 162/6431, 1098. The former smelter director and the fiduciaries of Ostrowiecer Hochöfen und Werke also testified that they had not seen any Jews in the camp. Vernehmungsniederschrift […] Karl Smeets. Ibid., 1126–1127; Vernehmungsniederschrift […] Fritz Hofman. Ibid., 1184–1187.

149 Ostrovṭsah, Memorial Book. The inmates had quite divergent recollections about the company security detail – some remembered the men from the company security details as traitors and others as human beings who tried, despite the tragedy of the whole situation, to minimize the suffering of the inmates.

150 Relacja Hadasa Halberstadta. ŻIH, 301.271.

151 Ibid., 3.

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> "My wife worked in the construction department. The work was very heavy. They had to work in the open air even when there was heavy frost. Three or four women had to unload a 30-ton railroad car. They had to drag stones and sand weighing 40 to 50 kilograms up four floors via a narrow concrete stairwell. The work was unbearable."[152]

Such recollections reveal that women – just like men – had to perform physically very taxing labor. One of the prisoners who worked on the construction site of the cement plant also recalled the scale of work that the inmates were forced to perform: "So we were better, then …, better of course than in Plaszow, but you had to work. Work 12 hours a day."[153] The work was moreover dangerous and accidents consequently happened easily as nobody cared about safety measures. Inmates recalled the work on the cement plant being easier in comparison to the work in the smelter: "Work on the cement plant was easier. The factory was not considered essential to the front, but the SS people who did not want to go to the front lines left it operational so they had some kind of occupation."[154]

No memories are preserved from Ostrowiec that specifically mention *PORR AG*. Nor did anyone recall who deployed them and under what conditions. One exception is a statement by a former inmate who said that "some private companies, like the company Riedl, deployed people to construct their Martin furnaces."[155]

5 Conclusion

PORR AG profited greatly from the occupation of Poland by Nazi Germany and from the occupation policies adopted toward both Poles and Jews. It appeared on the scene in occupied Poland at the same time as the Wehrmacht, as it was commissioned by the latter to restore a destroyed bridge in Tarnów. The company was keen to exploit the occupation policies applied in the territories annexed by Nazi Germany and in the General Government. Although it did not receive the commissions for all the projects for which it submitted tenders – for example in the case of *Elektro Ober-Lazisk*, an electric power plant that supplied the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz – it carried out large-scale projects at three factory sites.

At first, the primary activity of *PORR AG* was to use the express pile technology it had patented with its partner company to drive piled foundations for

152 Relacja Jerzego Korngolda. ŻIH, 301.57, 6. Sara Friedman recalled similarly that she was forced together with other women to carry sacks of cement, which was very heavy work. VHA, Sara Friedman, Int. 19942, Web, Segm. 82–87 (accessed July 14, 2023).
153 VHA, Mannie Schneider, Int. 22337, Web, Segm. 64–65 (accessed July 14, 2023).
154 Relacja Jerzego Korngolda. ŻIH, 301.57, 6.
155 Relacja Hadasa Halberstadta. ŻIH, 301.271, 3.

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Figure 5: Constructions workers at the Ostrowiec factory. Source: Centrum Tradycji Hutnictwa w Ostrowcu Świętokrzyskim.

Figure 6: Laborers on the construction site, Ostrowiec factory. Many women are visible amongst the laborers, who are being supervised by foremen. Source: Centrum Tradycji Hutnictwa w Ostrowcu Świętokrzyskim.

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Figure 7: Members of the company security detail in front of the guardhouse at the labor camp in Ostrowiec Swietokrzyski. Source: Centrum Tradycji Hutnictwa w Ostrowcu Świętokrzyskim.

Figure 8: Labor camp for Jews at the Ostrowiec factory. Source: Centrum Tradycji Hutnictwa w Ostrowcu Świętokrzyskim.

buildings. The company was able to deploy many machines simultaneously at its construction sites, meaning that it could work faster than its competitors and thus developed an advantage over them. At the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz, it was able to drive up to 140 piled foundations per week.[156] The company also constructed an electric power plant, factory halls, warehouses, sewage systems, and purification plants in Auschwitz.

156 Wochenbericht Nr. 76/77, 2.11.–15.11.1942, 41. APMAB, D-Au III Monowitz/3/6/4.

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The contracts implemented by *PORR AG* were essential to the German wartime economy, while the work it undertook was central to the companies emerging in situ. At the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz, *PORR AG* saved an entire construction project by taking over the foundation works together with two other companies. To implement its works, *PORR AG* hired laborers from the companies with whom it had previously worked as a consortium, which allowed it to take over the entire contract. In Ostrowiec, too, *PORR AG* was one of the companies that played a particularly important role in expanding the smelter. Of the altogether 69 companies contracted in this context, *PORR AG* earned the fourth-highest commission.[157]

PORR AG conducted work on behalf of large companies who were in turn implementing the economic policies of the Nazi state, specifically *IG Farben Aktiengesellschaft* and *Reichswerke Hermann Göring*. The former constructed new factories in the territories annexed by Nazi Germany, while the latter took over Polish industrial complexes in the General Government and harnessed them for the German wartime economy. Both of these large corporations worked with leading officials of the Nazi state and completely subordinated their production to Nazi politics. At the *IG Farben AG* factories, which *PORR* helped construct, strategic materials were produced for the war effort and Nazi racist policy: In Auschwitz, where the mass murder of European Jews was taking place, these included synthetic rubber and liquid fuel, while in Parchwitz, these included pharmaceuticals that were being produced in the framework of the systematic murder of sick, disabled, and elderly people. The expansion of the Ostrowiec factory moreover served to increase the production capabilities for armaments contracts commissioned by the Wehrmacht. The company also received a contract from the Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and Police in Auschwitz.

PORR AG also collaborated closely with the company *Riedel und Sohn*, a German company that had been founded in 1940 in the Upper Silesian city of Bielsko/Bielitz. This company prospered enormously from the large-scale contracts it carried out in Auschwitz on behalf of *IG Farben* and the Central Construction Office in Auschwitz. In fact, it took on so many contracts that the SS site management and the heads of *IG Farben* expressed concern about whether it could actually fulfil its obligations. *PORR AG* collaborated with *Riedel und Sohn* both in Auschwitz and in Ostrowiec.

157 Anlage 4/II D, Blatt 3 (Gegebene Auszahlungen). BArch, B 326/198, unpaginated. It is unclear why only 20,000 Reichsmark were recorded here. Perhaps *PORR AG* received the rest of the payment from Riedel und Sohn, for whom it had been acting as a subcontractor in this case.

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PORR AG carried out its work with the use of labor from concentration camp inmates and forced laborers. In the 33 months that the company operated at the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz, it deployed a workforce of both civilian and forced laborers that eventually peaked at 389 individuals. For at least nine months, the company also exploited the labor of as many as 45 concentration camp inmates who were brought to the site from one of the sub-camps established by *IG Farben* close to the Auschwitz III Monowitz camp. Only fragmentary information is preserved regarding the laborers deployed by *PORR AG*, yet the living and working conditions in Monowitz can be reconstructed from the reports of other laborers who were forced to work on the factory construction site.

The work in Ostrowiec was also conducted by prisoners, in this case from a so-called Julag, meaning a labor camp for the Jewish population, which the Ostrowiec factory management had established on its grounds. Even though this camp was not run as strictly as a concentration camp, living conditions there were extremely hard: There were public executions for the smallest infractions, rapes, and once even a selection of particularly weakened inmates. Former inmates recalled that the work was extraordinarily difficult and exhausting. There is no information preserved on the laborers deployed at the last construction site of *PORR AG*, namely at the *IG Farben* factory in Parchwitz.

In Auschwitz, *PORR AG* generated revenue of altogether 3,630,000 Reichsmark, while in Parchwitz and Ostrowiec, where the company was unable to complete its work due to the approaching front, it generated revenue of around 1,300,000 Reichsmark. These projects were given priority for Nazi Germany's war effort and defense capabilities, meaning that money and materials were readily supplied, as were laborers, who were otherwise difficult to procure during the war.[158] The deployment of forced and civilian laborers alongside inmates – both women and men from concentration and labor camps – evidently also saved on costs since the companies had to pay significantly less for their labor than they did for free workers.

The contracts granted to *PORR AG* allowed its partner company, *Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft*, to make significant profits during the war. *PORR AG* conducted its foundation works with the express pile method, for which *Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft* held the patent. This meant that the latter company generated increasing amounts of profit in subsequent years.[159] The contracts that *PORR AG* conducted in the territories annexed by Nazi Germany and in the General Government made a large contribution to this profitability.

158 Almost every report from *PORR AG* mentions the prevailing labor shortage in some form.
159 Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftslage mit Stand vom 9.3.1940, 1; Bericht des Vorstandes über die Geschäftslage anlässlich der Aufsichtsratssitzung vom 23. November 1942, 2. PA, Berichte.

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Table 1: Laborers deployed by *PORR AG* for the construction of the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz.

Weekly Report Number	Timeframe	Number of Laborers	of whom Concentration Camp Inmates
49	Apr. 27–May 3, 1942	302	
50	May 4–10, 1942	327	
51	May 11–17, 1942	332	
54	Jun. 1–7, 1942	324	
55	Jun. 8–14, 1942	336	49
56	Jun. 15–21, 1942	328	40
57	Jun. 22–28, 1942	321	40
58/59	Jun. 29 – Jul. 12, 1942	389	
68/69	Sep. 7–19, 1942	318	
70/71	Sep. 21 – Oct. 4, 1942	319	
72/73	Oct. 5–18, 1942	305	
76/77	Nov. 2–15, 1942	236	
78/79	Nov. 16–29, 1942	228	
92/93	Feb. 22 – Mar. 7, 1943	179	
7	Apr. 1–7, 1943	159	16
8	Apr. 8–14, 1943	170	20
9	Apr. 15–21, 1943	167	20
10	Apr. 22–28, 1943	177	20
11	Apr. 29–May 5, 1943	138	21
12	May 6–12, 1943	155	20
13	May 13–19, 1943	138	21
14	May 20–26, 1943	143	21
15	May 27 – Jun. 2, 1943	146	23
16	Jun. 3–9, 1943	137	20
17	Jun. 10–16, 1943	131	20
18	Jun. 17–23, 1943	130	17
19	Jun. 24–30, 1943	137	21
20	Jul. 1–7, 1943	136	23
21	Jul. 8–14, 1943	138	24
22	Jul. 15–21, 1943	132	20
23	Jul. 22–29, 1943	134	23(?)
24	Jul. 29 – Aug. 4, 1943	131	28
26	Aug. 12–18, 1943	133	25

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(Continued)

Weekly Report Number	Timeframe	Number of Laborers	of whom Concentration Camp Inmates
27	Aug. 19–25, 1943	135	25
28	Aug. 26 – Sep. 1, 1943	135	25
29	Sep. 2–8, 1943	137	25
30	Sep. 9–15, 1943	149	38
31	Sep. 16–22, 1943	150	40
32	Sep. 23–29, 1943	149	40
34	Oct. 7–13, 1943	152	41
35	Oct. 14–20, 1943	151	40
36	Oct. 21–27, 1943	148(?)	40
37	Oct. 28 – Nov. 3, 1943	148	40
38	Nov. 4–10, 1943	152	41
39	Nov. 11–17, 1943	156	44
40	Nov. 18–24, 1943	151	42
41	Nov. 25 – Dec. 1, 1943	150	41
42	Dec. 2–8, 1943	152	43
43	Dec. 9–15, 1943	148	35(?)
44	Dec. 16–22, 1943	134	39
1	Dec. 30, 1943 – Jan. 5, 1944	135	45
2	Jan. 6–12, 1944	117	40
3	Jan. 13–19, 1944	69	
4	Jan. 20–26, 1944	68	
5	Jan. 27 – Feb. 2, 1944	67	
6	Feb. 3–9, 1944	62	
7	Feb. 10–16, 1944	62	
9	Feb. 24 – Mar. 1, 1944	56	
10	Mar. 2–8, 1944	43	
11	Mar. 9–15, 1944	40	

Source: APMAB, D-Au III Monowitz/3/4, IG Farben Werk Auschwitz, Wochenberichte

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Mišo Kapetanović

The Involvement of *PORR AG* and *Allbau* in Organisation Todt in Yugoslavia

1 Introduction

In contrast to the policies they pursued in Poland and Slovakia, *PORR AG* and its subsidiary company *Allbau* did not concentrate their wartime activities in Yugoslavia on economic development or the establishment of specialized affiliate companies. Instead, they focused on restoration works and infrastructural projects. The first part of this chapter addresses the extent to which *PORR AG* and *Allbau* as well as Organisation Todt (OT) and its "Einsatzgruppe Südost" exploited forced labor in former Yugoslavia (especially in Serbia). The chapter subsequently analyzes records, witness testimonies, and historical documents in order to comprehend in detail the scale and form of forced labor in this context.

Nazi Germany's strategy – as reflected in the political developments of the time – initially involved carefully observing Yugoslavia and exerting economic influence on the country, before later transitioning to a more aggressive tactic. Between 1940 and 1941, when Yugoslavia was dealing with internal tensions and at first adopted a neutral foreign policy, the country was nevertheless forced, under considerable pressure from the Axis powers, to implement significant political changes. A coup in March 1941, which was followed by an invasion by the Axis powers in April, triggered the collapse of the state.[1] The occupation regime established in the aftermath of Yugoslavia's collapse enabled a colonialist subjugation of the country along with a massive exploitation of its resources, which in turn required the development of necessary infrastructure.

This chapter examines Yugoslavia's transition from being a region of economic interest to the Axis powers to becoming a direct target of exploitation following the invasion in 1941. The focus lies on *PORR AG* and *Allbau* and the reorientation of their primary interests from economic activities to infrastructural and renovation works. Given the complex logistics of the war and the territorial division of the regions in question, both companies ended up relying

1 Sundhaussen, Geschichte Jugoslawiens, 101–105.

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to a great extent on forced labor. The following analysis reveals both the scope and form of forced labor deployed by *PORR AG*, *Allbau*, and OT and elucidates their systematic reliance on coercive practices. It examines the recruitment, living conditions, and treatment of the forced laborers, who consisted of local Serbs as well as members of the Jewish and Roma minorities, all of whom were subjected to extreme exploitation and brutality. The chapter discusses specific road and bridge construction projects in Serbia as well as the construction of railroads for the mines in Bor in order to assess the scope of these projects and the significant role that forced labor played in the realization of the Nazi war machinery's strategic goals.

1.1 Documenting Coercion: The Many Forms of Forced Labor Deployed in Occupied Serbia

During the occupation of Yugoslavia by the Axis powers, which lasted until 1945, the country was effectively disintegrated. This rupture would have a significant impact not only on Yugoslav historiography but also on archival practices in the postwar period. This is because the archival materials predominantly originate either from the pre-occupation period associated with the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1918–1941, the "first Yugoslavia") or from the postwar period, meaning the era of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (1945–1991, the "second Yugoslavia"). Materials relating to World War Two are scattered across national archives like the Archive of Serbia, the Military Archive, and various regional archives. Many infrastructural projects realized during the occupation period, like the Sava Bridge project, were severely damaged by Allied air raids in 1944 and hence many documents were not preserved, thus rendering archival research even more difficult. The criminal nature of the occupation regime, which included both the deployment of forced labor and the operation of concentration camps, meant that the documentation preserved from this period became politically charged after 1945 as the Yugoslav state took on the task of ascertaining the truth and claiming compensation for the losses suffered. There is consequently a marked contrast between sources dating from the occupation period, including those of *PORR AG* and *Allbau*, which focused on technical questions of development and production, and later accounts from local eyewitnesses that highlighted the bad living conditions and the suffering of the deployed laborers.

This chapter draws on a range of primary sources in order to illuminate the history of forced labor in occupied Yugoslavia and Serbia during World War Two. These include above all the *PORR* database (including the *PORR* Archive) and a selection of archival materials from the Archives of Yugoslavia along with documents from the State Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Com-

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mitted by the Occupiers and their Collaborators (1943–1948) and from the Plenipotentiary for the Serbian Economy (1941–1945), which are held at the National Archives and Records Administration in the United States (Record Group 242). These are augmented by fragmentary records of the collaboration regime held in Serbian archives and documents from a similar collection (the so-called Nedić Archive) at the Serbian Military Archive. Other sources include confiscated German documents at the latter archive and selected documents from regional archives in Belgrade, Jagodina, Niš, and Bor (specifically the respective Historical Archives of Belgrade, Jagodina, Niš, and Bor and a branch of the Historical Archive of Negotin based in Bor). Despite all efforts, no relevant documents were found in other regional archives such as the Historical Archive of Šumadija in Kragujevac or the Historical Archives of Užice and Leskovac. Finally, this chapter made use of the online interview archive "Zwangsarbeit 1939–1945," which includes a number of interviews recounting individual experiences at the sites of deployment.[2]

Records concerning the crimes and destruction wrought by the occupation can primarily be found in the Archives of Yugoslavia in Belgrade, particularly in the collections of the above-cited State Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators (1943–1948). These records contain extensive information on the Bor mines and the labor camps established in its vicinity – both topics have also been well-researched in scholarly literature to date. However, these collections as well as other collections do not reveal much about infrastructure in the wartime context, such as roads.

Incomplete and contradictory records hampered postwar efforts to document wartime forced labor. For example, it was often difficult to distinguish between compulsory and forced labor, and a lot of former forced laborers did not register with the State Commission. This is because of the distrust held toward the new authorities due to the cultural normalization of compulsory labor, the fear of being labeled a collaborator, and the lack of meaningful compensation. Given the fragmentary and often incomplete source basis, this study draws on a broad range of materials – this should be borne in mind in the following.

2 Interview archive "Zwangsarbeit 1939–1945," URL: https://archiv.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/de.

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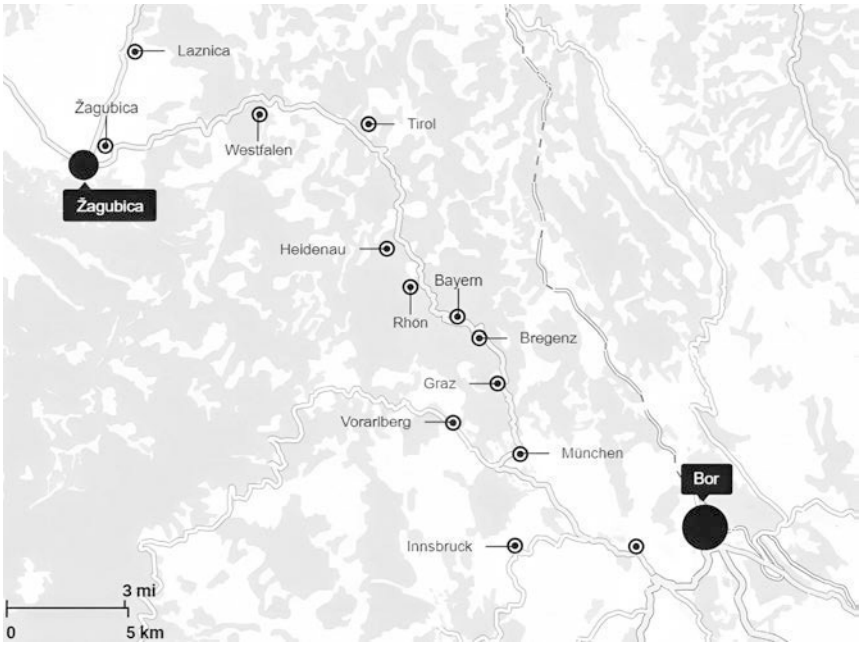

Figure 1: Map of the labor camps established for the construction of a narrow-gauge railroad, which were named after cities and regions in Nazi Germany. Homolje region, eastern Serbia. Source: The author produced this map on the basis of Map No. 3. "Bor környéki altáborok" [Sub-Camps around Bor], in: Csapody, Bori munkaszolgálatosok, 58.

1.2 Occupied Yugoslavia 1941–1944

The year 1941 marked a brutal turning point. With the occupation, all pretense of cooperation ceased. Nazi Germany installed a puppet regime, ruthlessly integrated the occupied territories into its industrial war machine, used terror to pursue its interests, and committed genocide against particular population groups in the newly created Independent State of Croatia (Nezavisna Država Hrvatska, NDH), including Jews, Roma, and Serbs.[3] This strategy also entailed the large-scale forced deployment of laborers. The Axis powers divided up the Yugoslav state, with Nazi Germany directly occupying parts of present-day Slovenia and Serbia and supporting the Ustaša regime in the Independent State of Croatia. Meanwhile, Italy took over control of territories in Slovenia, southwest Croatia, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Kosovo.[4]

3 Tomasevich, War and Revolution, specifically: Axis Exploitation of the Yugoslav Economy: Part I, 611–664; Korb, Im Schatten; Hadži-Jovančić, The Third Reich.
4 Petranović, Istorija, 25–51; Božović/Vavić, Surova vremena, 41.

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Figure 2: Map of military troops showing the road network in Serbia 1. Source: https://web.archive.org/web/20110629030403/http://wwii-photos-maps.com/lagesudost/July%20%201944/slides/Lage%20%203-Jul-1944%20(2).jpg.

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Figure 3: Map of military troops showing the road network in Serbia 2. Source: https://web.archive.org/web/20110629030422/http://wwii-photos-maps.com/lagesudost/July%20%201944/slides/Lage%20%203-Jul-1944.jpg.

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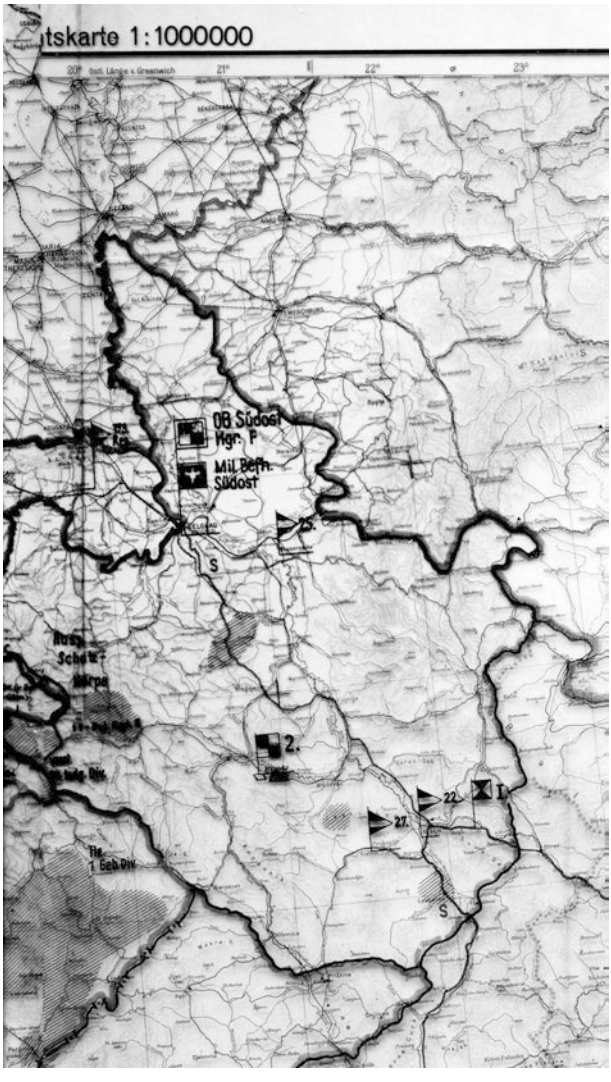

Figure 4: Map of military troops showing the road network in Serbia 3. Source: https://web.archive.org/web/20110629030422/http://wwii-photos-maps.com/lagesudost/July%20%201944/slides/Lage%20%203-Jul-1944.jpg.

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The demands of the wartime economy forced Nazi Germany from 1941 onward to fundamentally change course in its policies in Yugoslavia, away from ostensible cooperation and the propaganda of development and toward ruthless economic exploitation.[5] This transition was especially apparent in Serbia and partly also in North Macedonia. The collaboration regime was headed by Milan Nedić, who was in power from August 29, 1941 to October 4, 1944. The Nedić regime played a decisive role in advancing the integration of the region into the economic system of Nazi Germany.[6] Due to its strategic value, the mining sector – particularly the mines at Bor in eastern Serbia (which yielded copper, chrome, and gold) – were indispensable to the Nazis. To ensure the efficient extraction and transportation of resources, Germany prioritized the expansion of infrastructure, especially the region's transportation network. The derelict condition of the infrastructure south of Belgrade necessitated comprehensive improvements in order to achieve the economic goals of the occupation.[7]

1.3 Organisation Todt and Forced Labor in Occupied Yugoslavia

Despite the territorial fragmentation of the region, OT was active beyond the newly drawn borders, thereby easing the transportation of resources and the implementation of infrastructural projects. OT established the so-called Einsatzgruppe Südost (OT Südost) in order to administer the region. It was run by an individual called Vogl, who was appointed Engineer General for the Balkans.[8] The units of Einsatzgruppe Südost were notorious for their brutality toward forced laborers; numerous reports document the harsh conditions as well as the high mortality rates among forced laborers.[9] Although OT Südost was technically active in several countries, its main offices were located in Belgrade. Branch offices were established in strategically important locations such as Bor, Zagreb, Skopje, and Thessaloniki.[10]

OT pursued two essential strategies in order to achieve its goals on site: exploitation of resources and infrastructural development. In Serbia, OT concentrated on extracting important raw materials and ores, including bismuth,

5 Schlarp, Wirtschaft.
6 Ristović, General M. Nedić, 637.
7 Kube, Außenpolitik; Wendt, Südosteuropa; Pajić, Prinudni rad, 19.
8 Vogl ran Einsatzgruppe Südost, acted as the OT representative of the General Engineer in Sofia, and was deputy to the OT General. Yet none of the numerous documents he signed include his given name.
9 Klemann/Kudryashov, Occupied Economies; Grünfelder, Arbeitseinsatz.
10 Allied Forces (ed.), Handbook, 203.

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manganese, antimony, molybdenum, chrome, and bauxite.[11] OT also initiated a general overhaul of the existing infrastructure in order to maximize the flow of materials. The 600-kilometer Balkan transit route was key to these efforts, as it formed the logistical lifeline running from Belgrade via Kragujevac, Niš, Skopje, and Veles to Thessaloniki (see Figure 3). This logistical network was expanded with an additional route running from Niš to Sofia. In order to accelerate the transportation of resources and military troops, OT also concentrated on the expansion of important transportation links such as the Belgrade–Niš–Skopje railroad as well as on bridge construction projects across the Danube and Sava rivers.

OT's business model, which consisted of a combination of the direct recruitment of laborers and the sub-contracting of private companies (including *PORR AG* and *Allbau*), guaranteed a rapid implementation of projects. After all, this approach allowed OT to make use of expertise from the construction industry while at the same time exerting tight control over its projects. A decisive factor was that OT deployed forced labor to a massive extent, including prisoners of war, concentration camp inmates, and individuals who had been forcibly deported from occupied territories (including Serbia).[12] This exploitation of laborers, which was conducted under the harshest conditions, allowed OT to carry out large-scale construction projects in the shortest of times. By collaborating with OT, companies like *PORR AG* and *Allbau* were implicated in a system based on slave labor and simultaneously subject to the overarching control of OT. This complex dynamic of military and civilian elements along with forced labor practices exemplify the decisive role played by OT in the infrastructural development of Nazi Germany and in the advancement of the latter's logistical and strategic wartime aims.

OT used both open and indirect channels for the acquisition of forced laborers. In coordination with the Plenipotentiary for the Serbian Economy, headed by Franz Neuhausen from 1941 to 1944, who exerted significant pressure on Milan Nedić's puppet government, OT was significantly involved in demanding laborers for infrastructural projects.[13] The Nazi regime employed a whole range of labor practices involving violence and force, including downright forced labor, but also compulsory service, deportations, and labor migration from Germany, through which the boundaries between voluntary and forced labor were deliberately blurred.[14] Certain population groups, especially Jews and Roma, were exploited to a particularly brutal degree and were subjected to a

11 Dick, Builders, 61.
12 Ibid., 65 and 181.
13 Janjetović, Arbeitskräfterekrutierung, 322.
14 Janjetović, Regimenting Unfree Labor, 1; Schmid/Pissari (eds.), Forced Labor, 7.

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targeted forced labor policy that often constituted merely a preamble to their ultimate extermination.[15] The records do not reveal whether *PORR* or *Allbau* also deployed female laborers, yet we do know that OT recruited a considerable number of women in Serbia, specifically on site at the mines in Bor, and deployed them for services (cooking, cleaning) and in military brothels.[16]

The German economy exploited a significant proportion of the available workforce – not just for projects in the Balkans, but also within Nazi Germany. The mobilization of laborers, especially from the territory of Yugoslavia, was characterized by ruthless efficiency. Of the 375,000 to 398,000 Yugoslav prisoners initially deployed for labor, approximately 100,000 Serbian prisoners remained in Nazi Germany from 1944 onward.[17] The sources reveal that the forced laborers included not only Serbian resistance fighters but also many Yugoslav camp inmates who were deported to work on various construction sites across Nazi Germany as well as on the infamous Atlantic Wall and especially the so-called Blood Road in northern Norway. The horrific transports of Yugoslav prisoners to the Nazi detention camps underscore the far-ranging brutal impact of OT's activities, during which more than 1,000 inmates perished on account of poor provisions and mistreatment by the guards.[18] Moreover, the inclusion of efficiency and performance criteria in the contracts aimed to intensify the exploitation of laborers in order to maximize the productivity of the forced labor regime.[19] A portion of the Serbian workforce deployed in Nazi Germany were – theoretically – voluntarily deployed, which was evident in certain respects: The laborers were not subject to compulsory service and the work offered the possibility of higher wages along with protection from German reprisals. From late 1941 through to the spring of 1943, the total number of Serbian labor migrants deployed in the German war industry ranged between 35,000 and 45,000 individuals.[20]

15 Pissari, Suffering, 41–50; Koljanin, Nemački logor, 38–39; Aly, "Endlösung."
16 For further contextualized information on women and labor in Bor, see Pajić, Prinudni rad, 19.
17 Rutar, Arbeit; Janjetović, Exploitation; Schmid/Pissari (eds.), Forced Labor.
18 Ognjenović, The Blood Road, 205.
19 Freund/Perz, Zwangsarbeit.
20 Janjetović, Dobrovoljni radnici.

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2 *PORR AG* and *Allbau* within Organisation Todt, Einsatzgruppe Südost

2.1 *Allbau's* Involvement in Roadworks and Infrastructural Projects

Allbau played a significant role within OT in the construction and improvement of important transportation links. Its activities extended to important areas of present-day Slovenia (1941–1942), Serbia (1941–1944), and North Macedonia (1941–1944). Key projects included the maintenance and expansion of existing infrastructure, for example in Brežice and Jagodina, as well as the development of important road connections such as Route I (Belgrade–Niš–Skopje–Thessaloniki) and Route II (Belgrade–Niš–Pirot–Sofia). These projects, which had a significant impact on the areas around Kragujevac, Jagodina, Paraćin, Niš, Bela Palanka, Pirot, Grdelica, Skopje, and Gevgelija, were decisive in assuring the improved connection between and use of these routes. However, precise documentation on these projects has mostly been lost due to intense bombardment by the Red Army's air force in late 1944. The same is true for attempts to document individual forced labor in the postwar period, as this was accorded only secondary importance by the Yugoslav state in contrast to the documentation of human losses and material damages. While regional sources do not reveal much about the presence of *PORR AG* and *Allbau* in Serbia, excepting these companies' role in works at the Bor mines, their activities are documented in the company archive (*PORR* database) and in OT records.

2.1.1 Road Construction and the Balkan Transit Route

In the first year of its existence, *Allbau* undertook significant activities in so-called Lower Styria, an annexed region of present-day Slovenia. The project involved the development of a comprehensive road network reaching 70 kilometers along the Sava Valley and connecting the cities of Zidani Most (Steinbrück) and Brežice (Rann), finally culminating on the outskirts of Zagreb (Agram). In 1941, a budget of 1.2 million Reichsmark was granted to connect Lower Styria with the rest of Styria, which then formed part of Nazi Germany. In 1942, OT provided *Allbau* with another assignment of 350,000 Reichsmark, as documented in an *Allbau* executive board report.[21] The document also includes forecasts for the costs of infrastructural projects in Gevgelija near the Greek border, amounting to 240,000 Reichsmark for the year 1941.

21 Allbau-Vorstandsbericht, April 1943, 1. PORR-Archive (PA), Bestand Allbau Vorstandsberichte und Hauptversammlungsprotokolle, Mappe 62.

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The figures cited in the executive board reports of *PORR AG* and *Allbau* include estimates of the anticipated revenue from the companies' individual contracts, which were based in turn on the potential revenue of the respective construction projects. These consequently represent calculations and forecasts that were not always realized in the form cited, usually due to external factors like labor and material shortages. However, they do serve as an indicator of the relative presence of the respective company. For example, an earlier report from *Allbau* compiled three months after the beginning of the occupation confirms the existence of two active construction sites: Brežice (Rann construction section in Lower Styria, 70 kilometers) and Jagodina (various road connections, altogether over 90 kilometers).[22] The same report reveals that the company was heavily involved in both locations, with a budget of 500,000 Reichsmark for the construction site in Brežice and 400,000 Reichsmark for that in Jagodina in Serbia.[23] It also reveals that there were 900 laborers deployed by the company in the southeast.[24] Considering the labor recruitment practices at these construction sites, this figure probably refers to those laborers responsible for the administration of the project and the supervision of the construction works. The report finally also refers to ongoing negotiations about future construction sites, which suggests that *Allbau* was planning to expand its business operations in the region.[25]

In 1942, *Allbau* continued its expansive activities, albeit with adjusted financial means. Although the budget for the Brežice project was reduced to 350,000 Reichsmark, the company's efforts to acquire more contracts were extended to other occupied territories. The construction project in Gevgelija was continued with a budget of 160,000 Reichsmark. Significant amounts of funding were also provided for various other construction sites, including Kragujevac (260,000 Reichsmark), Jagodina (370,000 Reichsmark), Niš (820,000 Reichsmark), and the territories of Pirot and Dimitrovgrad in eastern Serbia that were occupied by Bulgaria (900,000 Reichsmark) – totaling 2,750,000 Reichsmark.[26] Compared to the income *PORR* and *Allbau* generated from their Balkan business, the 400,000 Reichsmark that the companies earned altogether from projects in Vienna, the area around the Lower Danube, and in the southern Russian operation run by OT were rather modest.[27] These accounted for only 10% of their entire

22 Allbau-Vorstandsbericht, June 30, 1941, 1. PA, Bestand Allbau Vorstandsberichte und Hauptversammlungsprotokolle, Mappe 58.
23 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 3.
25 Ibid.
26 Allbau-Vorstandsbericht, April 1943, 1. PA, Bestand Allbau Vorstandsberichte und Hauptversammlungsprotokolle, Mappe 62.
27 Ibid.

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orders for the southeast region, which totaled 3,580,000 Reichsmark.[28] The *Allbau* executive board report underscores the great significance of OT Südost for the company and the significance of its activities in the Balkans for its total revenue.

Despite the escalating war and the subsequently changing dynamics through the course of 1943, *Allbau* demonstrated its endurance in the region. While the company ended its business operations in present-day Slovenia, it intensified its already strong presence in the occupied territories of present-day Serbia and North Macedonia. Its collaboration with OT, which had a budget of altogether 3,170,000 Reichsmark for these territories in 1943, contributed to the company's optimistic perspective on the future.[29] Additional construction sites were opened in Užice (100,000 Reichsmark) and along the Balkan route in Lapovo (130,000 Reichsmark) and Skopje.[30] Skopje was controlled by Bulgarian occupation troops and the costs of this construction project were included in a budget of 500,000 Reichsmark. The above-cited report reveals that the company's collaboration with OT Südost, its most significant contracting partner, ran to a total order volume of 3,770,000 Reichsmark. Although the dynamics of the war changed over the rest of 1943, the report for the following year remained positive, emphasizing that laborers as well as heavy machinery could be successfully deployed.[31] OT's program for 1944 included the continuation of works from the previous year as well as the expansion of important existing transportation links. These future plans demonstrate that *Allbau* could expect to continue receiving contracts in these areas. Its annual report published a few months later – in January 1944 – reveal that the company was deploying altogether 800 employees in southeastern Europe on behalf of OT Südost.[32]

Company documentation and regional archives contain various records concerning the activities of *Allbau*. While the company's own documents refer to activities in Serbia, archival research there reveals only little evidence of the company's presence. Although the company documentation reveals that it deployed a staff of between 800 and 900 individuals, it remains unclear how many of these were actively employed at any specific time and how many had been recruited on site, meaning in Serbia, Slovenia, or North Macedonia. Conspicuously, *Allbau* is mentioned neither in the records of the German admin-

28 Ibid.
29 Allbau-Vorstandsbericht, October 1943, 1. PA, Bestand Allbau Vorstandsberichte und Hauptversammlungsprotokolle, Mappe 64.
30 Ibid.
31 Ibid., 2.
32 Allbau-Vorstandsbericht, January 20, 1944, 1. PA, Bestand Allbau Vorstandsberichte und Hauptversammlungsprotokolle, Mappe 65.

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istration in Serbia (for example those of the Plenipotentiary for the Serbian Economy) nor in regional archives.[33]

During the occupation period, the local workforce of *Allbau* was made up of a complex mixture of laborers, with fluid boundaries between more traditional compulsory labor and more extreme forms of forced labor. If one draws parallels to the practices employed at the Bor mines, which are dealt with in more detail in the following section, then there were probably camp inmates deployed at the construction sites on the Balkan transit route. This is documented in labor lists of Jews and Roma from the Banjica camp in Serbia. There were also forced laborers being exploited on these construction sites, including both those with fixed working schedules and those who were acquired through the so-called *kuluk* and other ostensibly voluntary practices. The fact that *kuluk*[34] was being practiced, with its roots in regional customs of the prewar era, suggests that the concept of forced labor really was normalized during the occupation period.[35] This normalization meant that the laborers subjected to these difficult conditions often accepted their situation as an inescapable reality of the war. This circumstance decreased the likelihood that they would have reported directly about their connection to *Allbau* after the war. They regarded OT as being primarily responsible for their situation. Only individuals who had been imprisoned and those who applied for compensation had a motive to emphasize their belonging to *Allbau*. But even among the latter group, most individuals cited OT as their recruiter and superior.

The relationship between *Allbau* and the local workforce is additionally obscured by the company's status as a subsidiary of *PORR AG* and as a contractor within the broader OT system. While the relationship between OT and *Allbau* is clear, the specifics concerning the interaction between the company and the local laborers deployed on the construction projects is less clear. Despite limited local records, there are indications that *Allbau* participated in OT construction projects and was connected to the latter corporation. The death of two *Allbau* laborers during an air raid on Belgrade (in the present-day Palace Albanija, which was then the headquarters of OT), as documented in OT records, evinces the close geographical proximity of the company to OT enterprises (see Figures 1

33 The research conducted in 2022 and 2023 comprised field research in the Historical Archives of Belgrade, Niš, Šumadija in Kragujevac, Užice, Pirot, and Jagodina.

34 This usage of the term is based on the definition employed in the following specific historical document: Erläuterungen zu den Posten der Bilanz der provisorischen Verwaltung, Stand 20.4.1941, 52. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 242, Records of the Office of the Deputy for the Serbian Economy T-75, Roll 80, Slide 52.

35 Janjetović, Forced Labor, 32.

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and 2).[36] An executive board report from *PORR AG* dated May 4, 1944, refers to the same incident as a "terror attack" that occurred on April 17, 1944, during which the *PORR* office in Belgrade was apparently damaged.[37] By contrast, other records, for example from the Plenipotentiary for the Serbian Economy, which discuss the death of two OT officers on construction sites in Kragujevac and Jagodina, primarily mention OT and not *Allbau*.[38] The regional archives in Jagodina are among the few that contain some records concerning construction works on the road between Kragujevac and Jagodina. These also mention the attack during which the above-mentioned OT officers were killed, but also other incidents, such as when laborers were run over with OT vehicles.[39] This pattern of documentation, in which OT is especially highlighted without any specific mention of its connection to *Allbau*, reflects the unclear position held by the contractor within the OT system.

Other than that, the sources cited above do not offer any detailed insights into the specific conditions and circumstances reigning on the construction sites themselves. One important source is a report contained in the files of the State Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators, which concentrates primarily on the mines and camp in Bor. It offers some insight into the situation faced by forced laborers – though not those working in Bor, but rather those deployed in the greater vicinity of Belgrade. This report, which was authored by Aleksandar Nedeljković, a medical assistant in the district office of the insurance company for casualties in Belgrade, illuminates the brutal reality of the construction site at Beli Potok, on the southern edge of Belgrade on the way to Niš, a route on which *Allbau* was active. Nedeljković's report reveals the difficult conditions that forced laborers were subjected to as they worked on a viaduct between Beli Potok and the village of Zuce. These laborers, who presumably lived in their own homes, were forced to perform long twelve-hour shifts from six in the morning to six in the evening. As there were no means of transport, they were often forced to spend the night on site in simple barracks without roofs, windows, or doors. As they were formally being paid (though of course not very much), they had to provide themselves with food and other daily necessities while being forced to endure the otherwise deficient conditions, which resembled those in Bor. Nedeljković's report con-

36 Gefallene Soldaten, Rolle 49306_6910_0064, Stefan Matz, OT Belgrad. Bundesarchiv (BArch); Gefallene Soldaten, Rolle 49306_6910_0479, Johann Sojak, OT Belgrad. Ibid.

37 Bericht an den Aufsichtsrat, May 5, 1944, 7–8. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, No. 3, Berichte an den Aufsichtsrat, 1939–1944.

38 Ermordete oder gefallene Volksdeutsche, die im Polizei- bzw. Selbstschutzdienst oder im Zoll-Grenzschutz eingesetzt wurden, 1 u. 2. NARA, RG 242, Records of the Office of the Deputy for the Serbian Economy T-75, Roll 67, Slides 1162 and 1163.

39 Jovanović/Tanić, Izveštaji komande, 27, 33, 104, and 118.

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tains depictions of numerous incidents during which laborers were exploited to their physical limits by the OT supervisors, while fundamental safety measures were often ignored.[40] The report clearly describes the living conditions of the forced laborers on the construction sites along the Balkan transit route while confirming the forced nature of the work in all clarity.

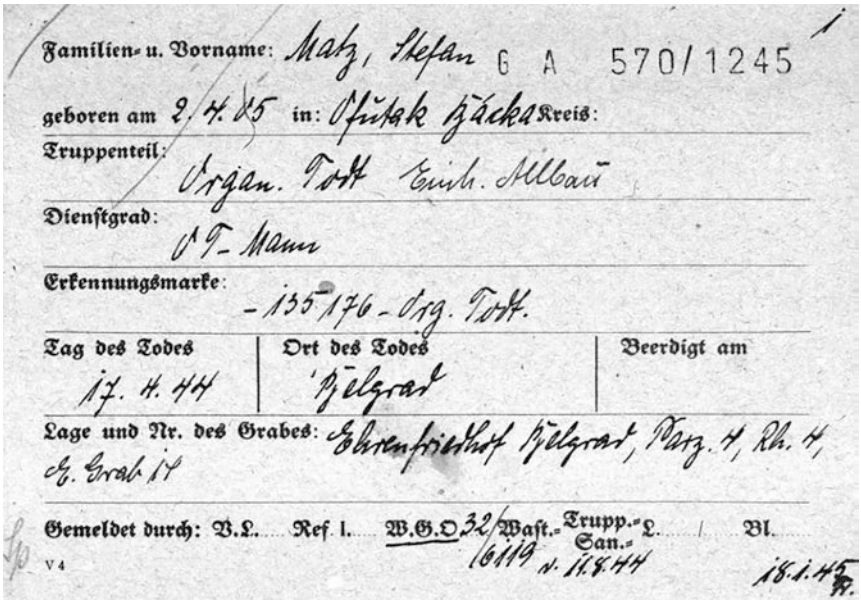
Familien- u. Vorname: Matz, Stefan G A 570/1245
geboren am 2.4.05 in: Ofutak Bačka Kreis:
Truppenteil: Organ. Todt Einh. Allbau
Dienstgrad: OT-Mann
Erkennungsmarke: -135176- Org. Todt.
Tag des Todes: 17.4.44 | Ort des Todes: Belgrad | Beerdigt am:
Lage und Nr. des Grabes: Ehrenfriedhof Belgrad, Platz 4, Rh. 4, G. Grab 14
Gemeldet durch: V.L. Ref. I. W.G.O. 32 Wast.-16119 Trupp.-San.-L. v. 11.5.44 Bl. 18.1.45

Figure 5: Grave card of Stefan Matz, OT/*Allbau* laborer, who was killed during the aerial bombardment of the OT head office in Belgrade on April 17, 1944. Source: Gefallene Soldaten, Rolle 49306_6910_0064, Stefan Matz, OT Belgrad. BArch.

The reconstruction works initiated after the air raids of 1941, which included the *Allbau* projects, were largely obliterated during the second Allied bombardment in 1944, which also goes some way to explaining the absence of local sources.

Of key significance in this context is the distinction between forced and compulsory labor. While the former involved the formalized coercion of forced recruits and concentration camp inmates, the latter constituted a grey area that was to some extent covered up by the nominal wages paid out to the laborers.[41] On the local level, and above in all in the framework of the above-cited Commission,

40 Zapisnik o saslušanju Aleksandra Nedeljkovića [Record of the interrogation of Aleksandar Nedeljković], May 22, 1945. Arhiv Jugoslavije [Archives of Yugoslavia] (AJ), Bestand 110: Državna komisija za utvrđivanje zločina okupatora i njihovih pomagača [State Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators], Mappe 598, Borski rudnik [Bor mines], Fasz. 53 (AJ 110/598-53).

41 On compulsory labor, see: Linne, Struktur; Schölzel, Zwangsarbeit.

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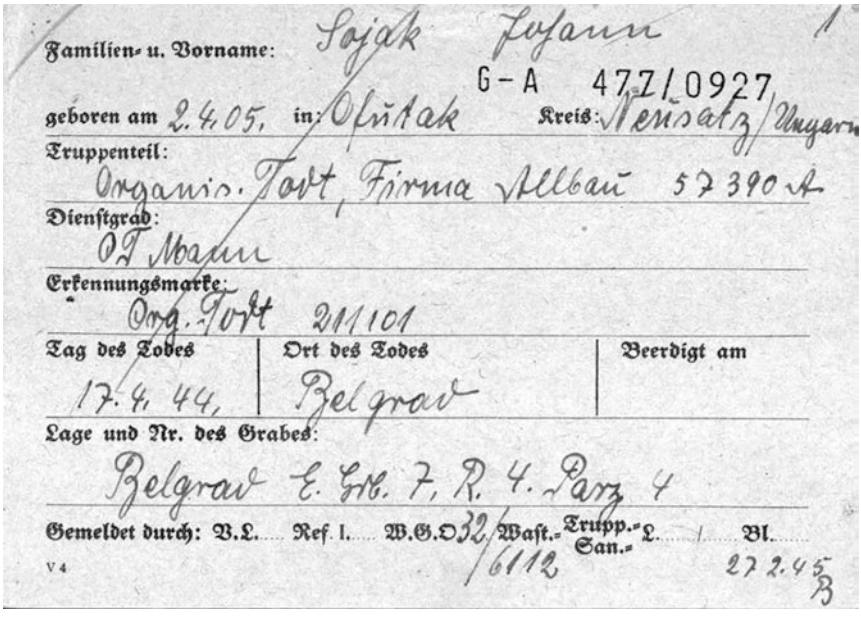
Familien- u. Vorname: Sojak Johann
G-A 477/0927
geboren am 2.4.05, in: Ofütak Kreis: Neusatz/Ungarn
Truppenteil: Organis. Todt, Firma Allbau 57390 A
Dienstgrad: OT Mann
Erkennungsmarke: Org. Todt 211101
Tag des Todes: 17.4.44, Ort des Todes: Belgrad, Beerdigt am:
Lage und Nr. des Grabes: Belgrad E. Grb. 7, R. 4. Platz 4
Gemeldet durch: V.L. Ref. I. W.G.O 32/6112 Wast.- Trupp.- San.- L. Bl.
V 4
27.2.45 B

Figure 6: Grave card of Johann Sojak, OT/*Allbau* laborer, who was killed during the aerial bombardment of the OT head office in Belgrade on April 17, 1944. Source: Gefallene Soldaten, Rolle 49306_6910_0479, Johann Sojak, OT Belgrad. BArch.

an understanding predominated at the time that led to a greater concentration on documenting larger sites of exploitation and war crimes. This meant that smaller sites, where laborers were only temporarily deployed, were not paid any attention. It is therefore no oversight that this chapter cites the report on Beli Potok alongside the documentation on the Bor mines: This reflects a postwar documentation strategy that consciously highlighted larger and more obvious cases of forced labor and war crimes over smaller, but no less significant cases of exploitation.

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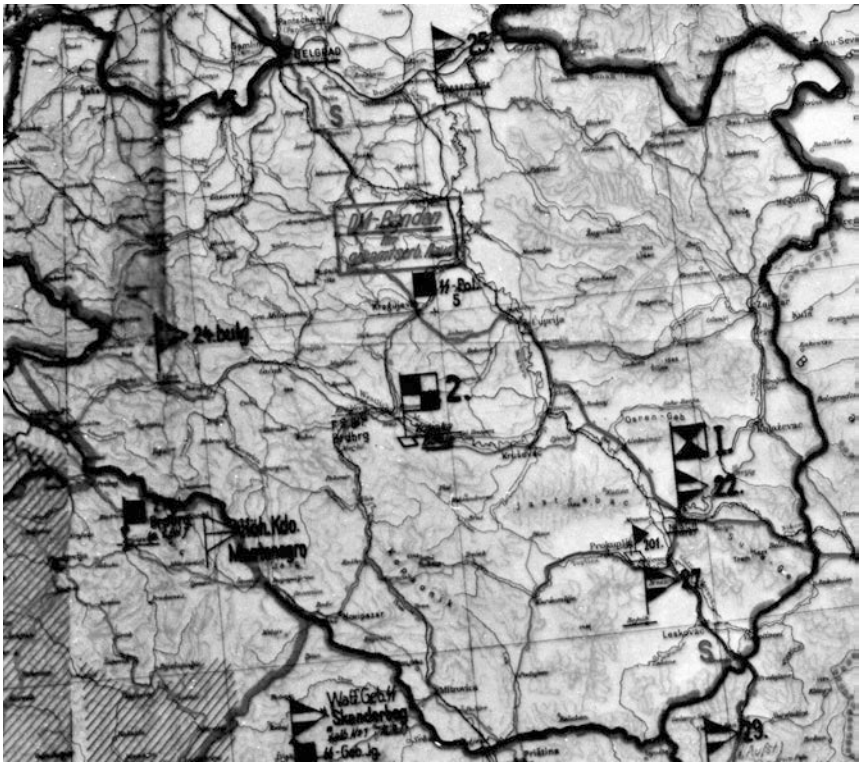

Figure 7: Detail of a German military map from July 24, 1944 depicting the territory of occupied Serbia south of Belgrade. The planned Balkan transit route from Belgrade (at the top) to Kragujevac and on to Jagodina (in the middle) and Niš (bottom right) is marked in dark red. From Niš onward, the route divides into two directions: to Skopje and Sofia. Source: available via the Internet Archive, URL: https://web.archive.org/web/20110629041728/.

2.1.2 The Bridges over the River Sava in Belgrade

The construction of two bridges over the River Sava in Belgrade in 1942 and 1943 reveals a certain discrepancy between the general provisions documented in the company's files and what was in fact possible with regard to both the work and the type and scale of workforce required. Since OT was implementing significant infrastructural projects in occupied Belgrade, including the above-cited bridges, it had to commission companies such as *Allbau* to carry out the work. The latter company's records reveal that it was involved in both railroad bridge construction projects over the River Sava in Belgrade during these years, although the details remain unknown.

The history of bridge construction over the River Sava goes some way to explaining why it is so difficult to precisely determine the work that *Allbau*

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conducted in Belgrade. Before World War Two, there were two main crossings over the Sava in Belgrade: a railroad bridge to the southwest of the city center and the King Alexander Bridge located more centrally, close to the confluence of the Sava and the Danube, which served general traffic. Both bridges constituted important links between Belgrade city center and the growing suburbs on the west bank of the Sava, which extended in the direction of Zemun (which was formerly an independent city) and further toward the west of the country. As the occupation of Yugoslavia was already anticipated in April 1941, local engineers destroyed both bridges over the Sava in order to obstruct the advance of troops.[42] The Wehrmacht required a railroad connection, however, which is why it had the railroad bridge hastily reconstructed between April 23 and May 29, 1941. The bridge was called General Will Bridge and was only intended to provide an interim solution. Yet as demand rose, a parallel railroad bridge was constructed 20 meters downstream, which was completed in 1944. Both bridges were significantly damaged in Allied air raids and were finally demolished during the retreat of the German army in October 1944. The original railroad bridge turned out to be irretrievably destroyed, while the second bridge, while partially damaged, could be restored. It continued to be used until 1971, when this wartime construction was replaced by the New Railroad Bridge (Novi železnički most), which was built 250 meters upstream.[43]

In 1942, the German occupiers built another bridge about 400 meters upstream from the demolished King Alexander Bridge and thus closer to Belgrade city center. The bridge was named in honor of Prince Eugene of Savoy to commemorate the conquest of Belgrade and its liberation from Ottoman control in the seventeenth century. It was later known as the Old Sava Bridge (Stari savski most) or the Old Tramway Bridge (Stari tramvajski most), which caused even more confusion in light of the altogether three construction projects.[44] Notably, the bridge, which constitutes the structural twin of the Ludendorff Bridge across the River Rhine in Remagen, was designed and built by the company *C. H. Jucho* from Dortmund.[45] Although it was originally intended for the River Tisa in Žabalj, the 430-meter bridge ultimately became a strategically important replacement for the King Alexander Bridge, connecting occupied Serbia with the Independent State of Croatia and the city of Belgrade with the city of Zemun. The bridge was also a large working site for forced laborers interned in the concen-

42 Ilijevski, Art of Engineering, 237.
43 Stipanić/Buđevac, Čelični mostovi, 323.
44 This was the only bridge in occupied Serbia that remained operational after the war, due to the efforts of the civilian Miladin Zarić, a teacher. During the liberation of Belgrade on October 20, 1944, he cut the activation cables and thereby prevented the demolition of the bridge. Бракочевић, Трамвајски мост.
45 Mučibabić, Stari savski most.

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tration camps at Staro Sajmište and Zemun as well as in the Ušće collection camp on the left bank of the Sava.

The participation of *Allbau* in the wartime construction of the bridge is evinced by an anticipated payment from OT amounting to 50,000 Reichsmark.[46] This relatively modest budget suggests that *Allbau* was not the sole contractor, but rather one of several companies working under the direction of OT. The timing of the anticipated project also indicates that *Allbau* was involved in the construction of the second railroad bridge, which was completed in 1944 and subsequently destroyed in Allied air raids.

The sources prove that Polish prisoners were deployed for the restoration of the first bridge in April and May 1941, but there is no precise information on the laborers deployed to build the second bridge or the bridge in the city center. Nevertheless, it bears emphasizing that such large-scale infrastructural projects fundamentally relied on the work of forced laborers from concentration camps. In Belgrade especially, OT played a key role in the establishment and operation of the three largest camps, namely the Staro Sajmište and Banjica camps and the Ušće collection camp administered directly by OT.[47]

The Ušće collection camp was originally planned as a reception camp for German refugees from Bessarabia and Bukovina, but in August 1942 it was repurposed for the internment of partisans from the nearby Zemun camp, which had originally been intended for Jewish inmates. The Ušće camp later served as a hub to dispatch inmates from camps in Belgrade and Zemun to labor camps in Banat or to other German camps in Europe, including as far afield as Norway.[48] Following the capitulation of Italy, the camp also served as a transit camp for Italian and Soviet prisoners of war, captured partisans, and crew members of downed Allied bombers. The inmates were regularly deployed for forced labor in the city, and it may be assumed that this included OT projects carried out by *Allbau*. The Ušće collection camp was destroyed during an air raid in April 1944, during which hundreds of inmates were killed. The survivors were relocated to the camp Dulag 172, which was also located in Belgrade.

2.1.3 The End of *Allbau* in the Balkans

In early 1944, *Allbau* received further contracts for large-scale road and railroad construction projects, including for ongoing reconstruction projects in Niš, Jagodina, and Užice and for expansive reconstruction works on the Sava bridge,

46 Allbau-Vorstandsbericht, January 1945, Bericht des Vorstands über das abgelaufene Geschäftsjahr 1944, 2. PA, Bestand Allbau Vorstandsberichte und Hauptversammlungsprotokolle, Mappe 67.

47 Koljanin, Nemački logor.

48 Koljanin, Camps, 49.

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with a budget of 50,000 Reichsmark. An additional project titled OT Dorf (OT Village), with a planned budget of 70,000 Reichsmark, contributed to a total order value of 2,870,000 Reichsmark.[49] However, the Wehrmacht's retreat from the Balkans in the summer of 1944 forced *Allbau* to give up its projects in Serbia, which led to a massive diminishment of its area of operation and hence also to significant losses. According to one report, from the fall of 1944 onward *Allbau* deployed its workforce from OT Südost, who had previously been working in Serbia, for a new contract in Hungary. This relocation led to a reduced workforce operating in Hungary with only 430 laborers, little more than half of the workforce that had been deployed in Serbia in the previous year.[50]

In Hungary, the activities of *Allbau* were limited to maintaining roads and railroads. This resulted in a relatively limited revenue, with profits amounting to a meager 50,000 Reichsmark. The company's retreat from its Serbian construction sites also meant that only a part of its equipment could be saved. The company subsequently reported significant losses amounting to 147,000 Reichsmark – a sum that was based on the replacement value of the equipment that had been left behind. The cost of repairing the retrieved equipment was estimated at around 50,000 Reichsmark. Reacting to these losses as well as to operational changes, the management of *Allbau* undertook further steps to collaborate with OT in order to minimize these negative financial effects.[51]

2.2 *PORR AG* and Railroad Construction at the Bor Mines

Due to the British naval blockade and the disruption this caused to metal imports, Germany already recognized at an early stage the strategic importance of the copper reserves in Bor.[52] Hence, it began pursuing a two-pronged strategy as early as 1939 in order to secure this important resource. On the one hand, it pressured the Yugoslav government to nationalize the Bor mines, which constituted French property at the time. Once the French involvement had been eliminated, this allowed Germany to access the copper directly. On the other hand, Germany offered Yugoslavia modern weaponry in exchange for a steady supply of copper and other important raw materials. The deliveries to Germany ranged between 1,500 and 2,000 tons of copper per month.[53] This agreement,

49 Allbau-Vorstandsbericht, January 1945, Bericht des Vorstands über das abgelaufene Geschäftsjahr 1944, 1. PA, Bestand Allbau Vorstandsberichte und Hauptversammlungsprotokolle, Mappe 67.
50 Ibid., 2.
51 Ibid., 1.
52 Pajić, Prinudni rad, 20–21.
53 Rutar, Arbeit.

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which was stipulated in a secret document dated July 5, 1939, marked a significant shift in the dynamics of the region. Once France had been occupied, the agreement could be implemented without resistance from the former French owner. As early as September 1940, the mines were delivering significant amounts of copper to Germany, this supply chain being secured by the efforts of the Yugoslav government to ensure a stable workforce following the nationalization of the mines.[54]

The German invasion of Yugoslavia cemented the former country's economic control over the Bor mines and over the region more broadly. Despite well-prepared counterstrategies, operations conducted by the Yugoslav resistance on 9 and 10 April 1941 caused significant damage to the mines, as a result of which the mining operations had to be discontinued until the end of October of that year. This interruption led to production lapses, the number of deliveries expected in Germany could not be met, and the need for laborers rose. In order to increase production and maximize profits, the German authorities exploited Serbia's status as an occupied country to acquire the mining enterprise on the cheap and to counter the labor shortage through the deployment of forced and compulsory labor. Thereby, the Bor mines became an economic colony within occupied Serbia, with the German administration subordinated to the Plenipotentiary for the Serbian economy. The mines were not operated by the Serbian collaboration regime, but exclusively by the OT administration. The primary goal of this new, military-led structure was to raise production back to its pre-occupation levels and to develop the necessary infrastructure to efficiently export ore to the German market. The management of *PORR AG* recognized the lucrative potential in this enterprise and immediately tried to profit from this new situation. For example, a business report from 1941, which referred to a meeting held in Vienna with Dr. Jannsen (no given name cited) from OT, evinced that the company expected to become more active in Serbia, Bulgaria, and France on account of the territorial reorganization of these regions.[55]

Under German administration, the mining operations in Bor were comprehensively reorganized in order to stimulate production and increase efficiency. The restructuring measures included an extensive general overhaul of the mining infrastructure, including several shafts, large smelters, facilities to process copper ore, and a sulfuric acid plant. Following the occupation of France, the minority holding of the mining enterprise was transferred from Paris to Strasbourg and the company was renamed *Kupferbergwerke und Hütten AG, Bor*. In the course of these changes, a consortium was established under the direction of

54 Pajić, Prinudni rad, 19.
55 PORR-Allbau-UBM, Geschäftsberichte, Bilanzwerk PORR-Konzern, December 31, 1941, 2. BArch, R 8136-3644.

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Franz Neuhausen, who took over the management of the company as head of the executive board and as Plenipotentiary for the Serbian Economy. He introduced a two-pronged operation that aimed, first, to raise production back to its prewar levels and, second, to expand production in order to achieve an annual production of 40,000 tons of copper in the long term. Significant German companies were involved in this ambitious restructuring program, including *PREUSSAG* (*Preussische Bergwerks- und Hütten-Aktiengesellschaft*) and *Mansfeld AG* (*Mansfeld Aktiengesellschaft für Bergbau und Hüttenbetriebe*), who aimed strategically to improve efficiency by lowering costs and to generate future profits by investing in undervalued shares on a large scale.

A crucial element of this strategy was the creation of a new transportation network, including a narrow-gauge railroad leading from Bor to Kostolac (see Figure 4). The German administration forced the Serbian state to cover the entire costs for the restoration of infrastructure that had been damaged in the war and for the construction of this new network, as well as other operational costs. During a reevaluation of the project in 1943, the idea was moreover tabled to prioritize the expansion of the Danube port in Prahovo. Logistical challenges and the necessity of bypassing the Đerdap Pass rendered the railroad project a protracted affair, with works continuing until the end of the German occupation in September 1944.[56]

The project to expand the Bor mines took on a colossal scale, with a total of 68 large-scale plants constructed in the years 1942 and 1943 alone. This achievement required significant technical expertise, with about a dozen companies involved in various projects. *PORR AG* was entrusted with a particularly demanding task, namely to construct a 42-kilometer narrow-gauge railroad connecting Bor with Žagubica via a mountain route. Although *PORR AG* entered the Serbian market only shortly after *Allbau*, the company's participation in the development of the Bor mines became a significant factor in its economic success and generated huge profits. Under the direction of the company engineer Wilhelm Fessler, who was redeployed to Serbia in April 1943, the company began constructing the single-track narrow-gauge railroad with a width of 760 millimeters, including two tunnels with a length of 100 and 400 meters, respectively.[57] This railroad section, which is known for its difficult mountain terrain, underscores the complexity of the project and the significant logistical challenges it entailed. However, despite claims to the contrary in the company's reports, the

56 Pajić, Prinudni rad, 306–307, here citing Generalni građevinski nalog za izgradnju Rudnika bakra i Topionice Bor A. D. BAK (RMRK) R 3/1807, Generalni opunomoćanik za privredu u Srbiji Organizaciji Tot. [General Construction Order for the Construction of the Bor Copper Mine and Smelter (…), Plenipotentiary for the Serbian Economy to Organisation Todt.]

57 Baustellenübersicht. PA, Entschädigung von Zwangsarbeitern 1998–2001, Mappe 35, Jugoslawien, Schmalspurbahn Bor, 1942–44.

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Bor railroad network remained uncompleted even after the end of the German occupation period.

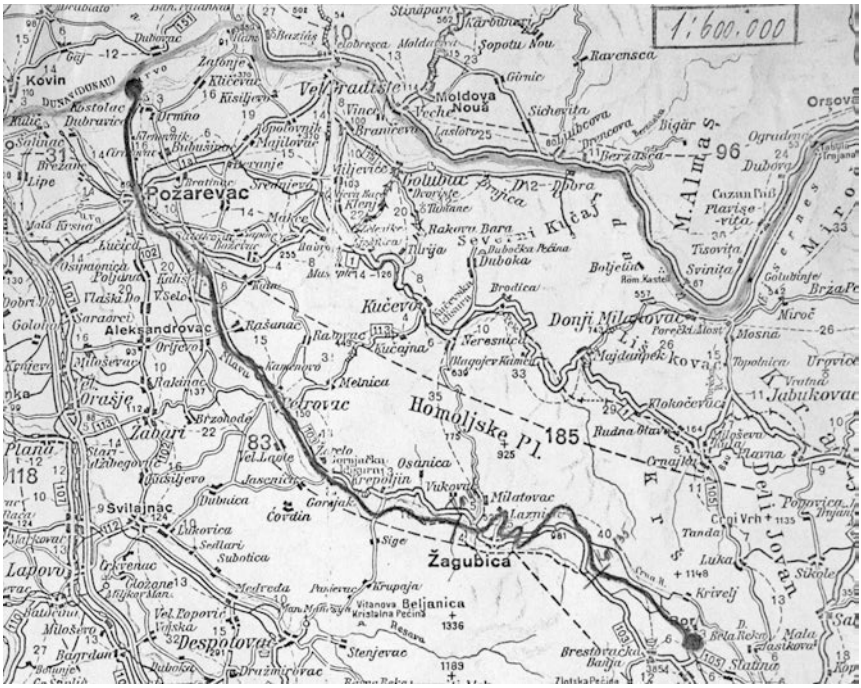

Figure 8: Sketch depicting the route of the railroad line from Bor via Žagubica and Požarevac to Kostolac. Sources: Privatarchiv Wilhelm Fessler; PA.

In order to cover the growing demand for labor, the Bor mining complex was transformed into a system of camps in which up to 40,000 individuals were forced to perform labor.[58] At the same time, the composition of the workforce changed: The proportion of paid laborers decreased in favor of local compulsory laborers and of prisoners of war from various countries. The forced laborers were indispensable, especially for important construction projects such as the railroad linking Bor to Žagubica, with which *PORR AG* had been entrusted. A network of 33 camps emerged in the vicinity of Bor and Kostolac and along the railroad lines to Žagubica, Petrovac, and Požarevac (see Figure 8). While these were originally intended for forced laborers and compulsory laborers, other groups of laborers were later housed in these camps, including Hungarian Jews, political prisoners, and other forced laborers.[59] The camps were named after cities and regions in

58 Pajić, Prinudni rad, 16.

59 Рад и ескплатација наших рудника од стране организације Тот [The Operation and Exploitation of our Mines by Organisation Todt], June 6, 1945. AJ 110/598-45.

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Nazi Germany. The central camp called Berlin, which lay about two kilometers from the center of Bor, was specifically established to house 3,000 forced laborers. The forced labor camp Brünn was located about two kilometers outside of town while the penal camp Dresden was located within Bor itself. The Dresden camp was notorious for the mistreatment of inmates that took place there. Subcamps were also established northwest of Bor, in a circumference of 50 kilometers around the town of Žagubica. They were named Innsbruck, München, Vorarlberg, Bregenz, Rhön, Heidenau, and Westfalen.[60] The logistical center of the Germany military, named Sachsen, was located near Žagubica, in the Homolje Mountains. The Krepoljin supply camp and the Gornjak camp, which was exclusively reserved for OT members, were located further east.

2.2.1 Origins and Acquisition of Forced Laborers for the Bor Mines

During the occupation period, the workforce at the Bor mines was extremely diverse. It ranged from 30,000 to 40,000 laborers, who were acquired through various channels. They included local Serbian laborers as well as other Yugoslavs, prisoners from occupied countries as well as Allied prisoners (Greeks, Italians, Soviets, and others), and a special group of Hungarian laborers consisting above all of Jews but also members of other – religious – minorities.[61] The professional mining enterprise usually relied on regulated work on a voluntary basis and often also offered state positions, but during the course of the war the number of original laborers began to sink drastically. The local population and the prisoners were subjected to compulsory labor or simply forced to work, with individuals potentially being shunted from one category to the other on the basis of their behavior or following attempts to avoid work. As the war progressed, ever more non-Serbian prisoners, but also Serbian political prisoners and partisans, were integrated into the workforce. At first, the bulk of the Serbian workforce was recruited in the framework of a compulsory labor program, yet the bad working conditions in the camps led to resistance, a large number of labor deserters, and consequently to a labor shortage. In order to counteract this development, the Nedić government operating with Germany's support introduced stricter requirements for individuals subjected to compulsory labor service. As a result, their working conditions began to practically resemble those suffered by the prisoners of war and the forced laborers.[62]

The reports submitted to the Nedić government by various departments of the Ministry of Labor contain contradictory estimates of the total number of la-

60 Csapody, Bori munkaszolgálatosok, 14.
61 Rutar, Arbeit, 119.
62 Janjetović, Arbeitskräfterekrutierung, 381.

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Figure 9: OT poster calling upon the local population to volunteer for the compulsory labor program. The text states: "Serbs, put yourself at the service of rebuilding your homeland. Register as a laborer with Organisation Todt! Application forms and further information can be found in the nearest employment office." Source: Poster Organizacija Tot [Organisation Todt poster]. Historical Archives in Belgrade, Bestand 1919: Plakatsammlung, Mappe V, Dokument 069, 1942–1943.

borers deployed. For example, the "Confidential Report of the head of Niš District, Engineer Mihajlo Petrović" mentions around 25,000 individuals (10,000 in the mines and 15,000 on OT construction sites).[63] Another document entitled "Exposé on Compulsory Labor" includes a somewhat different breakdown, citing 24,000 compulsory laborers and 16,000 forced laborers. The document moreover states that an additional 1,000 forced laborers were convicted for attempting to

63 Поверљив извештај челника жупе нишке Инж. Михајла Петровића Старешинству Српске заједнице рада [Confidential Report of the head of Niš District, Engineer Mihajlo Petrović, to the Staff of the Serbian Working Committee], undated [the most recent date cited in the document is December 15, 1942], 1. Vojni Arhiv [Military Archive], Bestand Nedićeva Arhiva [Nedić Archive], Mappe 34A, Fasz. 7, Dokument 38/7-3.

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flee and other infractions.[64] It also speaks of 25,000 to 30,000 individuals present every day in the greater vicinity of Bor and mentions that OT laborers were active in mining, deforestation, lumber transports, and the construction and maintenance of canals, dams, and roads.[65] Further references clearly specify that the municipal administration was not involved on site in these projects and that all communications ran via the German Field Command 599 in Belgrade.

In light of ongoing recruitment problems and under pressure from the Plenipotentiary for the Serbian Economy, the Nedić government felt compelled to take further action. During this time, mobilization slowed and the influx of laborers did not meet the government's expectations. As reports about the working conditions began to spread, the acquisition of laborers from the territory of Serbia became ever more difficult. The Ministry of Labor established a commission to inspect and evaluate the actual conditions reigning at important sites of labor such as in Bor and Kostolac. This commission inspected the working conditions in Bor in 1943.

Although both reports – the "Confidential Report of the head of Niš District, Engineer Mihajlo Petrović" and the "Exposé on Compulsory Labor" – spoke of similar working conditions, their authors were clearly more concerned about the lack of enthusiasm and zeal on behalf of the forced laborers by comparison to those performing compulsory labor. In the event that laborers were found guilty of insufficient dedication, they were moved from one category to the other. The Serbian historian Zoran Janjetović demonstrated how the different forms of labor were interconnected. Recruits who did not fulfil their quotas or who were accused of sabotage by OT supervisors were sent to penal camps, where they were mistreated.[66] Another example from Belgrade evinces that compulsory laborers regarded their activities more as forced labor than as voluntary labor. In 1945, for example, while filling out forms intended for registering wartime damages, Todor K., a tobacco salesman from Belgrade, cited the work he performed at the Bor mines.[67] In support of his application for compensation, he attached his summons for compulsory labor dated August 13, 1943 along with his discharge notice from OT in Bor dated December 24, 1943.[68] These documents were complemented by a similar form submitted by Todor's wife Sara. She attached medical certificates testifying, among other things, to her hospital stays due to nervous

64 Експозе по питању обавезне службе рада [Exposé on Compulsory Labor], undated [the most recent date cited in the document is May 28, 1943], 1. Ibid., Dokument 43/7-1.

65 Ibid., 2.

66 Janjetović, Arbeitskräfterekrutierung, 381.

67 Historical Archives of Belgrade, Bestand 44: Volkskomitee des III. Bezirks der Stadt Belgrad, Belgrad, Mappe 18, Fasz. 1232.

68 Rešenje o obaveznom radu [Resolution Concerning Forced Labor] u. Otpusnica [Discharge]. Ibid.

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disorders.[69] While the narrative part of the application is missing, it seems possible that Todor registered his work as involuntary in the context of postwar documentation efforts, with his wife's condition having served at the time as a justification to delay the commencement of his compulsory service.

The increasing shift from compulsory to forced labor in the company's operations in Bor is clearly documented in the reports of *PORR AG*. These moreover emphasize an ongoing shortage of between 2,000 and 3,000 laborers. In order to counteract this labor shortage, the company aimed to recruit, above all, among the local Serbian population through the compulsory labor program run by OT. In April 1943, the labor shortage increased even further, and the company was only able to acquire around half of the 25,000 laborers it required for its extensive mining and construction operations in eastern Serbia. The documentation shows that numerous local laborers resisted the forced labor measures either passively, by fleeing, or by joining partisan units.[70] These kinds of resistance led to a shortage of about 12,000 to 13,000 laborers.[71]

As *PORR AG* specialized rather in construction than in mining, the company presumably acquired the bulk of its local workforce from the OT system rather than employing regular laborers. As *PORR AG* began its operations in 1943, this means that the company primarily deployed prisoners of war and Serbian forced laborers, and to a lesser extent compulsory laborers. This exploitation of forced laborers is also reflected in the documentation held in the Historical Archive of Negotin (Bor branch), including for example a report from the Ministry of the Interior from 1943, which offered an overview of the distribution of laborers administered by OT in the Bor region. This report mentions that *PORR AG* deployed 1,870 individuals at the time. A later report from 1944 summarizes the composition of the workforce in even more detail: Among the 1,799 deployed laborers there were 1,777 Italian military internees and 22 Serbs.[72]

69 Ibid.

70 Pajić, Prinudni rad, 334; here citing Pismo Ministra unutrašnjih poslova Srbije Generalnom opunomoćeniku za privredu u Srbiji o uzrocima bežanja radnika sa obaveznog rada i merama koje treba preduzeti da se to onemogući [Letter from the Serbian Minister of the Interior to the Plenipotentiary of the Serbian Economy concerning the causes of laborers fleeing from forced labor and the measures that need to be taken to prevent this], AVII REG. Br. 25/12, k. 107, f. 4; Bosiljčić, Hronologija, 31–32.

71 Pajić, Prinudni rad, 322; here citing Pismo organizacije tot nemackom Ministarstvu inostranih poslova o potrebi angažovanja 10 000 mađarskih jevreja za radove u istocnoj Srbiji, Politički arhiv nemačkog Ministarstva inostranih poslova u Bonu (dok. Judenverfolgung in Ungarn), str. 132 [Letter from Organisation Todt to the German Ministry of the Exterior concerning the necessity of deploying 10,000 Hungarian Jews for labor in eastern Serbia, Politisches Archiv des deutschen Ministeriums für auswärtige Angelegenheiten in Bonn (Dok. Judenverfolgung in Ungarn), 132].

72 Pajić, Prinudni rad, 368.

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The reports of *PORR AG* from the fall of 1943 evinced the company's ongoing struggle with the labor shortage. A report from September 1943 optimistically stated that despite the challenges this shortage posed, progress was being made in the implementation of works. Such statements show clearly the company's adaptive strategies in light of the fluctuating availability of laborers and the general political and social unrest of the time:

> "Serbia: The project is proceeding well despite the labor shortage and is very satisfactory for OT. We have complained about the lack of support from OT, especially as regards the provision of laborers, fuels, and trucks. With the currently available workforce of around 1,200 men, we would only be able complete these works by mid-1945. Yet we hope that with our constant petitions in this matter, we will soon be assigned more laborers by OT, as in order to achieve genuinely fruitful work with shorter deadlines, we will have to raise the workforce to 2,000 men. While in France we work for fixed prices, in Serbia we are provisionally working under a system of self-responsibility in return for compensation, though we aim within this year to submit uniform prices to OT for processing on the basis of the experience we have gained thus far."[73]

A report from November 1943 highlighted even more clearly the ongoing labor shortage (but also its temporary alleviation):

> "In Point 1 on the agenda, Mr. Tazoll gave a comprehensive overview of the current state of the workforce. He explained that since the last report dated September 30, 1943, a particularly acute labor shortage has set in, which has nevertheless been remedied in the meantime. A strong increase in the workforce has since begun on the construction sites in Serbia."[74]

Due to the labor shortage, the Highest Office for Construction in Bor turned to the responsible offices of the Military Command in Serbia and requested permission to deploy a large number of Italian prisoners, who had been earmarked primarily for construction work. The roughly 6,000 Italian military internees who ended up working there following Italy's exit from the war in September 1943 were known (by reference to the Italian Prime Minister Pietro Badoglio) as "Badoglios." In late October 1943, several transports carrying Italian prisoners arrived in Bor. Both in the camps and on the work sites, the German guards and supervisors treated them with particular brutality, in a manner comparable to their treatment of Soviet prisoners.[75] In all likelihood, *PORR AG* was also assigned laborers from this group.

73 Bericht des Vorstands über die Geschäftslage zum 30. 9. 1943. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3, Berichte an den Aufsichtsrat, 1939–1944.

74 Aufsichtsratsprotokoll, November 19, 1943. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 2, Aufsichtsratsprotokolle 1939–1944. For more information on Max Tazoll, see Christian Rabl's contribution to this volume (Chapter 2).

75 Рад и експлоатација наших рудника од стране организације Тот [The Operation and Exploitation of our Mines by Organisation Todt], June 6, 1945. AJ 110/598-42.

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It may moreover be assumed that before the arrival of Italian military internees, *PORR AG* depended on the laborers provided by OT, including locals subjected to compulsory labor, Greek and Hungarian Jewish forced laborers, and individuals who had not fulfilled their work quotas and were therefore incarcerated. A report by Milan P., who was imprisoned in the Bor camp between 1942 and 1944 due to his participation in communist activities, supports this assumption. Milan described the difficult conditions in the camps, including torture, mistreatment, and executions.[76] Born in Gornji Milanovac, Milan had worked as a tailor before the outbreak of war in 1941. He subsequently joined the partisans before being arrested by the German occupiers in August 1941 and interned in the Banjica and Bor camps from 1941 to 1942 and 1942 to 1944, respectively. In his report, he described the structure, working demands, and hierarchy of the camps, as well as the brutal treatment of prisoners through the use of psychological pressure and torture. He remarked that the Austrians amongst the guards were less brutal than many Germans, some of them on occasion even offering to help the inmates. During his activities for *PORR AG*, his foreman – in order to protect him from the difficult working conditions – repeatedly ensured that he was brought from the construction site to the camp. Milan recalled the arrival of the Italian military internees in 1943, who constituted a new element in the camp. He remained in Bor until his liberation in July 1944, after which he joined the partisans until the end of the war.[77]

Despite the grueling working hours and the meager wages, the compulsory laborer Dušan Krivokapić found comfort in his role working as a clerk and interpreter for *PORR AG*, where he worked under the supervision of the rather understanding superiors Werner Springer and Heinrich Kalab. Nevertheless, the monotone and cerebral office work led him to apply for redeployment for practical work on the "Baulos 2" construction site, where he was put in charge of administering the materials and supervising the consumption of oil – a task that gave him greater satisfaction and offered him more opportunity for personal pursuits like reading and enjoying the surrounding countryside. However, with the approach of winter, the work stagnated repeatedly due to the bad weather, leading to a decline both in productivity and workplace morale. When "Baulos 2" was shut down in October 1943 due to bad weather conditions and his four-month service period neared its end, Krivokapić was not discharged but rather transferred to another camp in Laznica, where he had to remain under significantly worse conditions until January 1944.

76 Interview za358, March 24, 2005. Interview Archive "Zwangsarbeit 1939–1945," URL: https://archiv.zwangsarbeitarchiv.de/de/interviews/za358 (accessed January 9, 2024).
77 Ibid.

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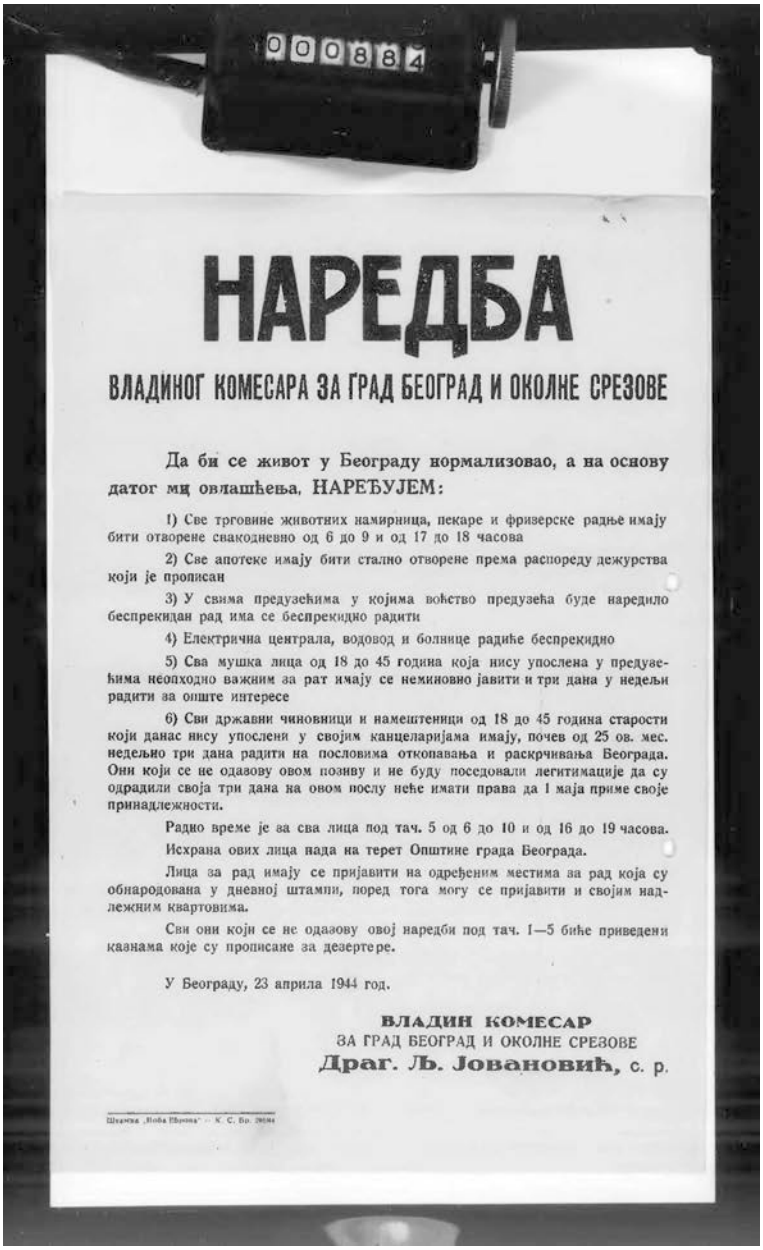

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НАРЕДБА

ВЛАДИНОГ КОМЕСАРА ЗА ГРАД БЕОГРАД И ОКОЛНЕ СРЕЗОВЕ

Да би се живот у Београду нормализовао, а на основу датог ми овлашћења, НАРЕЂУЈЕМ:

1) Све трговине животних намирница, пекаре и фризерске радње имају бити отворене свакодневно од 6 до 9 и од 17 до 18 часова

2) Све апотеке имају бити стално отворене према распореду дежурства који је прописан

3) У свима предузећима у којима вођство предузећа буде наредило беспрекидан рад има се беспрекидно радити

4) Електрична централа, водовод и болнице радиће беспрекидно

5) Сва мушка лица од 18 до 45 година која нису упослена у предузећима неопходно важним за рат имају се неминовно јавити и три дана у недељи радити за опште интересе

6) Сви државни чиновници и намештеници од 18 до 45 година старости који данас нису упослени у својим канцеларијама имају, почев од 25 ов. мес. недељно три дана радити на пословима откопавања и раскрчивања Београда. Они који се не одазову овом позиву и не буду поседовали легитимације да су одрадили своја три дана на овом послу неће имати права да 1 маја приме своје принадлежности.

Радно време је за сва лица под тач. 5 од 6 до 10 и од 16 до 19 часова.

Исхрана ових лица пада на терет Општине града Београда.

Лица за рад имају се пријавити на одређеним местима за рад која су обнародована у дневној штампи, поред тога могу се пријавити и својим надлежним квартовима.

Сви они који се не одазову овој наредби под тач. 1—5 биће приведени казнама које су прописане за дезертере.

У Београду, 23 априла 1944 год.

ВЛАДИН КОМЕСАР
ЗА ГРАД БЕОГРАД И ОКОЛНЕ СРЕЗОВЕ
Драг. Љ. Јовановић, с. р.

Штампа „Нова Европа" — К. С. Бр. 26044

Figure 10: Order for forced labor – Serbian-language poster. Source: NARA RG 242 T75-0070-000884, public domain.

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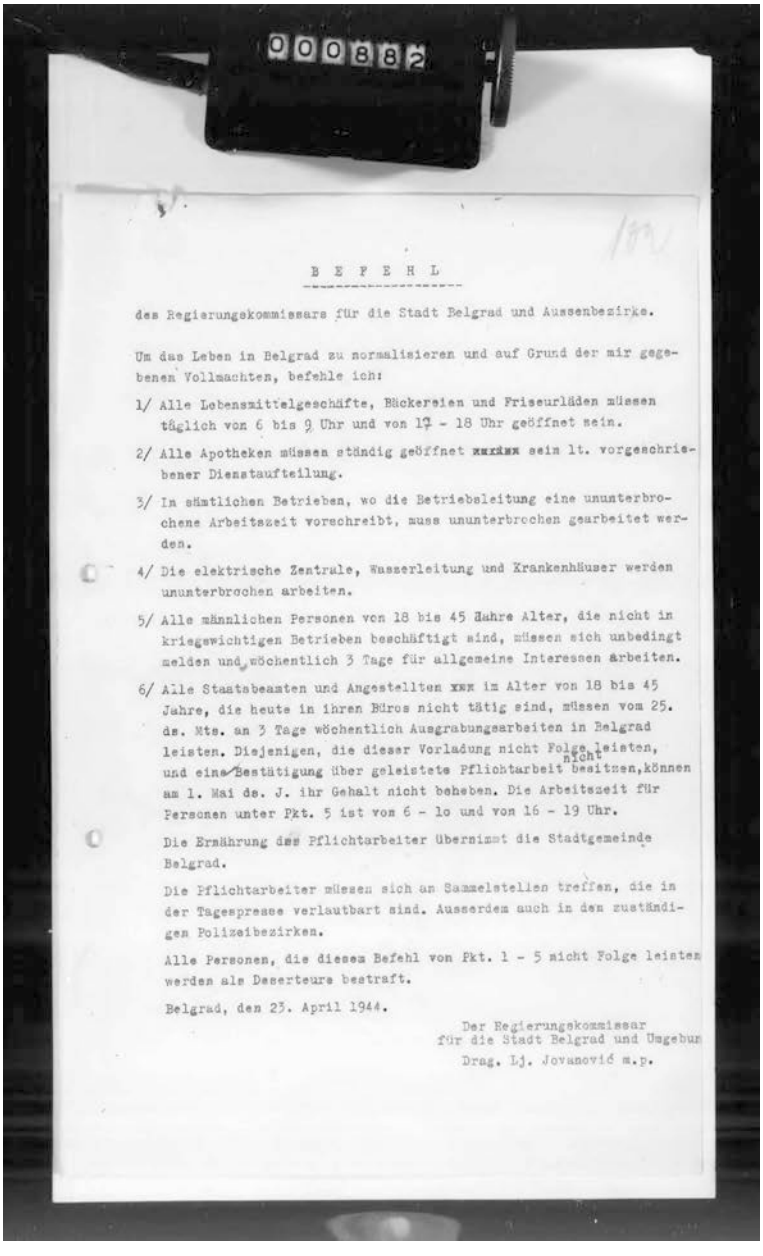

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B E F E H L

des Regierungskommissars für die Stadt Belgrad und Aussenbezirke.

Um das Leben in Belgrad zu normalisieren und auf Grund der mir gegebenen Vollmachten, befehle ich:

1/ Alle Lebensmittelgeschäfte, Bäckereien und Friseurläden müssen täglich von 6 bis 9 Uhr und von 17 - 18 Uhr geöffnet sein.

2/ Alle Apotheken müssen ständig geöffnet xxxxxx sein lt. vorgeschriebener Dienstaufteilung.

3/ In sämtlichen Betrieben, wo die Betriebsleitung eine ununterbrochene Arbeitszeit vorschreibt, muss ununterbrochen gearbeitet werden.

4/ Die elektrische Zentrale, Wasserleitung und Krankenhäuser werden ununterbrochen arbeiten.

5/ Alle männlichen Personen von 18 bis 45 Jahre Alter, die nicht in kriegswichtigen Betrieben beschäftigt sind, müssen sich unbedingt melden und wöchentlich 3 Tage für allgemeine Interessen arbeiten.

6/ Alle Staatsbeamten und Angestellten xxx im Alter von 18 bis 45 Jahre, die heute in ihren Büros nicht tätig sind, müssen vom 25. ds. Mts. an 3 Tage wöchentlich Ausgrabungsarbeiten in Belgrad leisten. Diejenigen, die dieser Vorladung nicht Folge leisten, und eine Bestätigung über geleistete Pflichtarbeit nicht besitzen, können am 1. Mai ds. J. ihr Gehalt nicht behehen. Die Arbeitszeit für Personen unter Pkt. 5 ist von 6 - 1o und von 16 - 19 Uhr.

Die Ernährung der Pflichtarbeiter übernimmt die Stadtgemeinde Belgrad.

Die Pflichtarbeiter müssen sich an Sammelstellen treffen, die in der Tagespresse verlautbart sind. Ausserdem auch in den zuständigen Polizeibezirken.

Alle Personen, die diesem Befehl von Pkt. 1 - 5 nicht Folge leisten werden als Deserteure bestraft.

Belgrad, den 23. April 1944.

Der Regierungskommissar
für die Stadt Belgrad und Umgebun
Drag. Lj. Jovanović m.p.

Figure 11: Order for forced labor – translation for German bureaucrats. Source: NARA RG 242 T75-0070-000884, public domain.

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СВЕ ЗА СРБИЈУ!

Свако ко је мало боље пратио развој прилика код нас после нашег слома, морао је да дође до закључка, да би Србија још дуго храмала, да није било помоћи, коју је Немачка свесрдно пружила побеђеној земљи.

Немачка то чини и данас помоћу Организације Тот, која, нарочито у последње време, развија живу делатност на побољшању привредних прилика у Србији – на изградњи мостова, путева, железница, постројења и др.

О. Т. није капиталистичка установа, која ради за свој профит. То је установа која ради за добро свих народа, чија су преимућства могли да осете сви они, који су већ једном радили у њој, како у погледу рада тако и у погледу исхране и становања.

О.Т. је установа, која узима удела свуда, где је потребна људска помоћ. Она подиже и гради истовремено по целој Европи. По њој се рад попео до свог највишег изражаја и постао тековина целог човечанства.

О. Т. је установа светског гласа и значаја, у којој узимају учешћа сви народи Европе чије су земље услед ратног вихора пролазно настрадале.

Српски народ може ова настојања, која **О. Т.** спроводи у нашој земљи само да поздрави. Јер, ће тековине овога рада остати ипак у Србији као светао пример духа заједничке сарадње и као доказ широкогрудости Немачке према српскоме народу, из кога ће тек каснија поколења моћи право да схвате сву величину идејних прегнућа и жртава које Немачка доприноси за општу ствар.

Зато, сваки прави и честити радник и Србин

ради на изградњи Нове Србије.

САМО РАДОМ СРБИЈА МОЖЕ ОПЕТ ДА СЕ ОБНОВИ И ПОВРАТИ СВОЈЕ ИЗГУБЉЕНО МЕСТО У ЕВРОПСКОЈ ЗАЈЕДНИЦИ.

Време ће једном да избрише трагове рата, **али трагове цивилизаторског рада ове установе на обнови Србије – никада неће.**

Figure 12: Invitation to join OT, "Everyone for Serbia." Source: Historical Archives in Belgrade, IAB-1919-V-068.

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The above-cited sources reveal that *PORR AG* employed various strategies to recruit laborers. As the number of available laborers declined, the company – like other companies – began to deploy prisoners of war and Hungarian Jewish laborers. In contrast to *Allbau*, which probably deployed various types of laborers assigned to the company – often just for a very brief period – by OT, the laborers assigned to *PORR AG* remained in one location for longer periods. The laborers could not choose where they were based, yet those who were assigned to *PORR AG* did sometimes report of good treatment and better conditions thanks to the efforts of the company's staff. However, these individual cases should not distract from the overall goals of the company, which continued to focus on profit and resulted in the strategic deployment of OT laborers regardless of their place of origin. The two following sections will focus on the living conditions of the forced laborers and the particularly brutal treatment of Hungarian forced laborers, thereby demonstrating the serious consequences of the company's involvement in these practices.

2.2.2 The Living and Working Conditions of the Forced Laborers in Bor

While the forced laborers in Bor were initially assured the most essential daily provisions, they were soon confronted with a rapid deterioration in their living conditions. Contemporary witnesses like Milan P. and Dušan Krivokapić experienced and documented this harsh everyday reality and discussed the difficult living conditions, insufficient provisions, and the omnipresent dangers of the penal camp. Milan P. vividly described the accommodation of the workforce in overcrowded barracks, in which the space had been planned so tightly that the inmates could only sit, but not lie on the floors. The sanitary conditions in the barracks were dreadful. A single wooden container served as a toilet. Milan described the labor as physically exhausting, and ascribed his survival to the fact that he was assigned to less demanding work on the camp site. The working day began at seven in the morning, lasted until the afternoon, and was interrupted by only one meal break, in which the workers were offered only sparse and insufficient nourishment (usually potatoes, cabbages, or turnips). Milan also mentioned a massive plague of lice and the sheer impossibility of maintaining any kind of personal hygiene. He especially emphasized the brutal treatment of those laborers who tried to evade their duties. Compulsory laborers were paid a minimal wage, which only sufficed for the most basic necessities (like soap). Milan moreover mentioned the existence of a black market as well as a store in a nearby village where laborers could purchase goods.[78] From October 1943 to

78 Interview za358, March 24, 2005. Interview Archive "Zwangsarbeit 1939–1945," URL: https://archiv.zwangsarbeitarchiv.de/de/interviews/za358 (accessed January 9, 2024).

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September 1944, the working conditions deteriorated markedly due to the changing nature of the work and the demographic development of the workforce, specifically the increasing deployment of older laborers.[79]

In order to force the laborers to fulfil their quotas and to prevent further attempts to flee, the supervisors used the nearby Dresden penal camp and threatened to send individuals there as a means to maintain discipline. Survivors described the brutal conditions reigning in this camp, where they were faced with extreme physical labor and torture. A detailed account was recorded by Živorad J., who was recruited by the National Service[80] in March 1943. At first, he ignored the call to voluntarily register, which eventually led to his arrest for noncompliance. He was subsequently labeled an anarchist and sent to Bor.[81] There, he was interned in the Bregenz sub-camp and deployed to work on the Požarevac–Žagubica–Bor railroad, which involved extreme working hours and grinding marches to and from the construction site. Živorad described how every labor detail was supervised by an OT officer, with larger groups additionally being managed by a group leader and a civilian foreman from the contracted company, in his case an employee from the company *Weinberger*.[82] During his four-month service, he never received the plentiful provisions he was originally promised. He recalled only receiving substandard provisions. The laborers suffered from the miserable living conditions, sleeping on straw or bare boards. He moreover recalled the punishments that were meted out for even small infractions, which consisted of beatings and confinement in a bunker, with prisoners having to endure overnight on the bare concrete floor without blankets. As Živorad had not fulfilled his performance quota by the end of his four-month imprisonment, he was transferred to the Dresden penal camp, where he was tortured and mistreated for a further month.[83]

Further victims, including Miodrag J., Aleksandar N., and Petar Z., gave similar testimonies.[84] They were recruited for railroad projects and brought to various sub-camps of Bor, where they had difficulties fulfilling their daily quotas. They were consequently sent to the penal camp, where they were brutally tortured. Notably, all the witnesses reported in detail about their OT group leaders and the torture that the latter inflicted upon the witnesses, but none of them

79 Rutar, Arbeit, 128–130.

80 The National Labor Service was an agency of the Serbian collaboration regime responsible for the recruitment and delivery of laborers to Organisation Todt, while the National Service for the Reconstruction of Serbia was responsible for the recruitment and coordination of youths for "socially useful" projects, which sometimes overlapped with projects coordination by Organisation Todt.

81 Zapisnik [Protocol], June 6, 1945. AJ 110/598-52.

82 Ibid.

83 Ibid.

84 Ibid.

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named the specific companies for whom they were deployed. This evinced that employees of the contracted companies treated the forced laborers differently than the guards and group leaders of OT.

Postwar reports reveal the conditions and dynamics that reigned in Bor and the area around Kostolac, with a particular emphasis on the conditions in the sub-camps located in the mountains. A particularly noteworthy report was prepared by the Commission for the Investigation of Forced Labor in the Bor Mines in 1945, which comprised reports by victims and companies as well as observations by the envoy Miloje Koče. It paints a devastating picture.[85] The Bregenz sub-camp at the foot of the mountain Crni Vrh housed the laborers deployed for the difficult task of constructing a new railroad through the Homolje Mountains. Greek, Italian, and later also Hungarian Jewish forced laborers had to work in this difficult terrain, which is characterized by thick forests and deep gorges. The Italian inmates occupied the worst position here, being particularly endangered and suffering most from the extreme hardships. They would often exchange their possessions for food and consequently worked barefoot and in ragged clothing. The work consisted primarily of transporting explosives, tools, and heavy stones intended for dam construction works. Every day, the laborers had to load ten to twelve cars with stones weighing up to 15 kilograms – a dangerous and physically exhausting job.[86] The work was made all the more difficult by the guards, who beat the prisoners to maximize their performance. Upon arrival, the laborers were given entirely inappropriate footwear (wooden shoes), which further complicated their work in this rocky terrain. Following their return from the construction site, they would be exhausted, but would be subjected to further beatings and mistreatment by the camp guards. The reports moreover state that food supplies in the camps were sparse and insufficient for the draining labor that had to be performed. Breakfast consisted of a weak coffee substitute while lunch and dinner mostly just consisted of barley porridge, occasionally augmented with cooked cabbage, peas, beans, or macaroni. On Sundays, the laborers would receive a meal that the guards ironically labeled "feast day goulash," which consisted of spoiled potatoes and meat scraps served with a hard and often moldy black bread, which was rationed to half a kilogram for two days.[87]

85 Ibid.; Izveštaj Anketne komisije o prinudnom radu u Borskom rudniku od 6. Aprila 1941. g. do 3. Oktobra 1944. g. [Report from the Commission for the Investigation of Forced Labor in the Bor Mines from April 6, 1941 to October 3, 1944]. AJ 110/598-4.

86 Рад и ескплатација наших рудника од стране организације Тот [The Operation and Exploitation of our Mines by Organisation Todt], June 6, 1945. AJ 110/598-42.

87 Ibid.

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2.2.3 Hungarian Jewish Inmates

In early 1943, when it transpired that the demand for laborers could no longer be sufficiently met with the available workforce, the focus of OT and the Serbian government shifted to Hungarian Jews as a source of forced labor. Albert Speer, the Minister of Armaments and War Production, petitioned the Hungarian government to send 10,000 Hungarian Jews to be deployed on the OT construction sites in eastern Serbia. This move clearly underlines the strategic significance of the copper mines in Bor, which supplied half of the German copper requirements for armaments. Altogether about 6,200 forced laborers were brought to Bor during the war. The overwhelming majority of these laborers were categorized as Jews according to the racist Nuremberg laws, while about 200 individuals belonged to other religious minorities, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Adventists, and Nazarenes, or had been convicted for refusing military service. In accordance with an agreement between Hungary and Germany, these individuals were divided into two main groups. The first consisted of 3,000 forced laborers, who were deported in 1943, housed in the main Berlin camp, and deployed in the mines. The second group, which was significant for *PORR AG*, arrived in 1944 and consisted of young Jewish men from Budapest, Jászberény, and Vác. It included renowned individuals such as Pál Justus (Social Democratic Party of Hungary), the writer György G. Kardos, and the poet Miklós Radnóti.[88]

When the tide of war turned in favor of the Allies in 1943 and 1944, conditions deteriorated for this group of laborers assigned to *PORR AG*. Endre Schwartz, who would later sue *PORR AG* and *Rella & Co.*, highlighted the exploitation of the laborers as well as their harsh treatment during this period. Survivors like Jenö Tischler, Sandor Rosenfeld, and Peter Sös testified in horrifying accounts about their experiences in the Innsbruck, Bregenz, and Heidenau sub-camps, describing the mistreatment and systematic humiliation that took place there.

Jenö Tischler's witness testimony in the trial of Schwartz against *Rella* and *PORR* offers a tortuous insight into the brutal conditions that the forced laborers were subjected to.[89] Tischler was deported to Bor from the Hungarian town of Zala in November 1942 and was housed there in the Innsbruck camp, among other places, which was located about two kilometers outside of town.[90] The entire camp was fenced in and guarded by armed personnel, with each barracks building additionally being watched under armed guard. For easy identification

88 Tamás Csapody's work includes a comprehensive list of these inmates. Csapody, Bori munkaszolgálatosok, 601–647; Csapody, Bortól Szombathelyig, 25–177.

89 *Rella & Co.* was a significant Austrian construction firm during World War Two, involved in the construction of tunnels and other infrastructure used by the Nazi regime.

90 Jenö Tischler, eidesstattliche Erklärung, Haifa, May 17, 1963, 1. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 4, Schwartz-Rella/PORR-Prozess 1964–1971.

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and supervision, the inmates were marked with large yellow stars and kept isolated from the outside world. The living conditions were dreadful: Between 60 and 70 individuals slept in each overcrowded barracks on bare wooden boards and searched in hunger and despair for warmth.[91] Although there was an infirmary located in the nearby Berlin camp, many inmates did not seek help despite their illnesses, as sick inmates often did not return from the infirmary.[92]

Sandor Rosenfeld also attested to these conditions in the Innsbruck camp, while Peter Sös described his forced relocation to camps like Bregenz in accordance with the requirements for labor deployment.[93] Sös stated that he was sent to the Bregenz camp in the vicinity of the town of Bor in late May or early June 1944, and that he remained there until September 1944.[94] He was deployed for various kind of earth and concrete works on the railroad construction site.[95] The inmates in his barracks worked from 12 to 14 hours per day and were not paid. The forced laborers were supervised by OT employees and various civilians whose status was unknown to him and the other inmates. The civilian employees only guarded the laborers on the construction sites and only supervised them with regard to the work at hand.[96] As the construction sites were located far from the camp, the laborers had to complete a one-and-a-half hour march on foot in wooden shoes to get there. Upon arrival in Bor, the Hungarian Jewish forced laborers were robbed of all their possessions, including their clothes, and were forced to wear inmate uniforms with yellow stars.[97]

Miklós Radnóti's story offers a deeply moving insight into the experiences of the Jewish inmates, highlighting the miserable conditions in the Heidenau camp in particular. Radnóti, a renowned Hungarian poet and literary scholar, was recruited to a Hungarian labor battalion in September 1940 that had been set up by the regime as a punishment for so-called unreliable persons, including leftists, opposition members, and Jews. In May 1944, Radnóti was deployed for the third time to Serbia for forced labor, working above all in the Heidenau camp on projects near the construction site of the Žagubica–Crni Vrh railroad. Despite the harsh living conditions in the camp, Radnóti continued his literary work, penning poems in a notebook that was only discovered after his death – he died in November 1944.[98] The notebook includes ten poems that emphatically recount

91 Ibid.
92 Ibid., 2.
93 Rosenfeld Sandor, Jerusalem, November 19, 1958 (Abschrift). PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 4, Schwartz-Rella/PORR-Prozess 1964–1971; Peter Sös, Protokoll der Zeugenvernehmung in Budapest, March 4, 1970. Ibid.
94 Ibid., 2.
95 Ibid.
96 Ibid., 3.
97 Ibid., 4.
98 Radnóti, Bori notesz.

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his experiences in the camp and of the subsequent forced march when the camp was liquidated, during which the inmates were driven across Hungary in the direction of the Austrian border.[99]

The Heidenau camp consisted of six large wooden barracks and was surrounded by barbed wire and fences.[100] The day began at six in the morning, when the inmates had to wash, eat breakfast, and convene, at which point they would be marched to their labor duties under the supervision of Hungarian guards. The work, which was supervised by OT employees, included deforestation and earthworks for the narrow-gauge railroad, and would last until the late afternoon. The heavy physical labor, which was made all the more difficult by the harsh climate, put the inmates to a difficult test physically, as well as psychologically. The workload was determined with quotas, which were measured by the number of car loads of earth transported. The behavior of the guards also influenced the general resilience of the inmates, who had to endure conditions ranging from more or less humane to brutal.[101]

The forced march, which began on September 17, 1944, represents a profoundly harrowing episode in the history of forced labor in Bor during World War Two. As the Allied forces advanced, thousands of Hungarian forced laborers, including Radnóti, were ordered to evacuate on foot. The exhausted laborers suffered from disease and deliberate brutality and most of them did not survive the march from Bor through the Homolje Mountains, across Vojvodina, and into Hungary. Despite his deteriorating condition, Radnóti's spirit remained unbroken, and he continued writing until his final days. His last poem was written in the Hungarian village of Szentkirályszabadja on October 31, 1944.[102] The march ended in November with the execution of 21 exhausted prisoners, including Radnóti, which was carried out by Hungarian army guards. The bodies were buried in a mass grave in the vicinity of Abda in Hungary.[103] Discovered on June 19, 1946, it was found to contain personal objects, letters, and photographs that shed a moving light on the life and final moments of the victims. Radnóti's mortal remains were subsequently reburied in the Jewish cemetery in Győr, before being transferred to Budapest.

99 The poems were translated into Serbo-Croatian by Danilo Kiš and published in 1979: Рандоти, Борска бележница. A new edition entitled Bor Notebooks was published together with a graphic novel by Aleksandar Zograf, which visually depicts the fate of Radnóti and other inmates in the camp. Zograf/Radnóti/Paunović, Borske beležnice.

100 Tolnai, Zadnja deonica "Strme staze," 16–17.

101 Gábor Tolnai's book, which in English translation is entitled The Steep Path, focuses on Miklós Radnóti's life and work as well as the living conditions of the Jewish inmates of this camp, which was located 30 kilometers from Bor. Ibid., 17.

102 Рандоти, Борска бележница, 49.

103 Paunović, Borske beležnica, 41.

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Some of the prisoners had already previously fled into the Serbian hills, while those who were too emaciated to keep moving were ultimately executed and buried in further mass graves. The extent of these atrocities is demonstrated in the number of victims who fell in various locations along the way: 133 in Banatska Debeljača, between 800 and 1,000 in the vicinity of Bačka Crvenka, and about 400 along the route from Crvenka to Sombor.[104] Jenö Tischler, who testified as a witness in the trial of Schwartz against *Rella* and *PORR*, harrowingly reported on the forced march, emphasizing the enormous physical and psychological suffering it entailed.[105] The prisoners, who were at the total mercy of the sadistic guards, were not only confronted with the physical challenges of the long march, but also with the constant threat of violence and death. The situation escalated in the Serbian town of Crvenka, which became the site of brutal mass executions. Prisoners were led in groups of between 10 and 20 people into a courtyard where they were murdered with machine gun fire.[106] This brutal treatment meant that of the originally 3,000 man-strong group, only 600 remained.

2.2.4 The End of *PORR AG* in Serbia

The abrupt end of the participation of *PORR AG* in the Serbian railroad project in September 1944 incurred significant losses. The company's staff fled, leading to the loss of the bulk of the equipment and resulting in financial losses for the company totaling 810,000 Reichsmark. Additionally, the loss of the staff 's private property amounted to about 26,000 Reichsmark, which the company had to reimburse.[107] Despite these setbacks, which were highlighted in the reports of the company's board of directors, *PORR* had previously accrued significant profits, totaling 4,690,000 Reichsmark in 1944.[108] Toward the end of that year, OT took over control of the company staff and ended the involvement of *PORR AG* by transferring the laborers to the framework of the so-called Front-OT: The former head engineer of *PORR* in the Balkans, Wilhelm Fessler, began establishing and managing an OT work detail in Bruck an der Mur.[109] Comprising around 400 individuals, this detail was intended to be deployed as a technical support group on critical sections of the front when the need arose. Years later, Fessler was still pursuing a successful career at *PORR*, being appointed as a director in 1954 and

104 Csapody, Bortól Szombathelyig, 43–44.
105 Jenö Tischler, eidesstattliche Erklärung, Haifa, May 17, 1963, 3. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 4, Schwartz-Rella/PORR-Prozess 1964–1971.
106 Ibid.
107 Bericht des Vorstands über das abgelaufene Geschäftsjahr 1944, 1. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3, Berichte an den Aufsichtsrat, 1939–1944.
108 Ibid., 7.
109 Ibid., 1.

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finally as director of the executive board in 1958, a position he would hold until 1971. In 1959, he was awarded the Golden Decoration of Honor for Services to the Republic of Austria.[110]

3 Conclusion on the Construction Projects of *Allbau* and *PORR AG* in Serbia

This analysis offered new insights into the mechanisms of forced labor in Nazi-occupied Yugoslavia, especially relating to the Serbian context. It explored not only the economic and logistical foundations of the Nazi occupation, but also the complicity of private companies in the war effort and the terrible impact this had on the local population, including minorities. This study clearly highlighted the interrelatedness of military and economic exploitation, as well as the crimes committed during the war, and underscored the long-term regional effects these had. It moreover emphasized how important the use of manifold source materials is, in order to meet the challenges of comprehensive documentation and interpretation. As such, the study dealt not only with the problem of fragmentary documentation, but also the politically complex situation of forced labor and the existing limitations in the archives, owing to postwar circumstances.

The analysis of the exploitation of laborers in occupied Serbia and Yugoslavia painted a particularly dire picture of the use of force by the Nazi regime. The strategy of OT of frequently outsourcing projects to private companies like *PORR AG* and *Allbau,* and subsequently providing these with forced laborers, exemplifies the complex manner in which private companies were also involved in exploitation practices during the war. The Bor mines, which played a decisive role in the question of compensation payments to the victims of forced labor and/or state reparation demands, constituted the largest site of forced labor in eastern Yugoslavia. However, by focusing their attention specifically on this site, the State Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators (1943–1948), as well as later Yugoslav historiography, eclipsed other sites and forms of forced labor. Regardless of whether they received nominal compensation or not, the systematic force inflicted on all the laborers deployed by the occupation regime is obvious. This includes projects to

110 See the personal entry on Wilhelm Fessler on the intranet of the TU Graz (https://history-tugraz.at/person.php?id=1326), cached URL available under: https://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache%3Ahttps%3A%2F%2Fhistory-tugraz.at%2Fperson.php%3Fid%3D1326&rlz=1C1GCEA_enAT1004AT1004&oq=cache%3Ahttps%3A%2F%2Fhistory-tugraz.at%2Fperson.php%3Fid%3D1326&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHJvbWUyBggAEEUYOTIGCAEQRRg-60gEIMjk0MmowajeoAgCwAgA&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8 (accessed December 11, 2023).

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restore infrastructure damaged in Allied air raids. Both OT and the Plenipotentiary for the Serbian economy participated in this systematic exploitation, employing forced labor, compulsory labor, and misrepresented forms of labor migration targeting ethnic minorities, prisoners of war, and the Serbian population. Propaganda and oppression, especially through labor migration and the *kuluk* system, blurred the boundaries between "voluntary" and forced labor, thus demonstrating the manipulative force underlying the Nazi war effort. These boundaries were further blurred by agencies such as the National Service for the Reconstruction of Serbia. This convoluted network of complicity also included private companies.

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Pavel Szobi

PORR AG in Slovakia

In the interwar period, *PORR* was involved in various projects abroad. The company's activities in the newly established state of Czechoslovakia in the 1920s were not particularly profitable, and its Czechoslovak branch based in Teplice became entirely inactive following the onset of the world economic crisis.[1] The situation changed on account of Nazi Germany's economic and political goals during the Czechoslovak crisis from 1938 to 1939, which resulted in the establishment of an independent Slovak satellite state. Before then, Slovakia had represented an economically underdeveloped region of Czechoslovakia. Due to closer cooperation with German industrial enterprises, contracts were subsequently granted to modernize the Slovak steel, chemical, glass, textile, and paper industries. Plans were also drawn up to expand the road network as part of a larger developmental program aiming to connect the Slovak road network with the Moravian and Polish networks. Some of these contracts were granted to Austrian companies, including *PORR*, which applied for a range of projects such as the construction of a building for the company *Generali* in Bratislava, of an office building for the chemical company *Dr. Blasberg & Co.*, and for the expansion of a smelter in Podbrezová. *PORR* was granted the contract for the latter of these projects.[2] Its Slovak projects became an important part of the company's activities during the war. In 1943, the activities of its Slovak branch even totaled 13.6% of the entire activities of *PORR*.[3]

1 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 309–311.
2 Dreivierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, September 1941, 8–9. PORR-Archive (PA).
3 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 426.

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1 Slovakia

1.1 Slovakia as Part of the Czechoslovak State after 1918

The level of economic development in interwar Czechoslovakia determined the starting position of the later Slovak state. When viewing the Czechoslovak state as a whole, economic historians have traditionally referred to Slovakia as a "less developed region." To be sure, parts of Czechoslovakia really were characterized by a lower standard of economic development in relation to the country's general level of development, a circumstance that significantly influenced attempts to overcome these existing deficiencies.

The economic development of the territory of Slovakia before 1918 can be studied and assessed by comparison either to the economic development of other parts of Hungary – to which Slovakia belonged at the time – or to the economic development of the Bohemian lands during the same time period. The former approach evinces that Slovakia did not fall behind the economic development of the rest of Hungary.[4] On the contrary: Before 1918, Slovakia, along with Transylvania and the area around Budapest, was one of the most developed parts of the Kingdom of Hungary. Nevertheless, various circumstances, especially the relocation of political and economic activities further south, meant that Slovakia's significance began diminishing over time. With regard to the second comparison, the Bohemian lands clearly became increasingly significant as a site of industrial enterprise from as early as the beginning of the nineteenth century onward, due to their wealth of natural resources coupled with a plentiful supply of laborers and significant capital. In the period up until World War One, the region consequently developed a modern and strongly capitalized industry. In 1918, Slovakia joined the Czechoslovak Republic – with an economic structure that was characteristic of an economically underdeveloped country: The territory had a high proportion of rather ineffective primary production, with almost 62% of the people living in Slovakia when the census of 1910 was conducted (1,799,600 individuals) working in agriculture and only 18% (519,400 individuals) working in industry. In the Bohemian lands, by contrast, 39.9% of the population worked in industry and only 34.4% in agriculture.[5]

The end of World War One and the new political developments in Europe constituted a turning point in Central Europe, owing especially to the peace program of US-President Woodrow Wilson for the oppressed nations of the monarchy, the liberation struggle of Czechoslovaks in exile, and the political activities of American Slovaks. The idea of coexistence with the Czech nation in a

4 Fabricius, Formation.
5 Faltus/Průcha, Prehľad, 277–278.

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new state crystallized alongside the idea of abolishing the old Hungarian state. The Czech political and economic representatives accorded their Slovak colleagues a certain degree of power-sharing in the new mutual state, which was more or less beneficial to both sides. However, the state apparatus was entirely dominated by the Czech side, although the Slovak elite tried to push through their demands using all the available possibilities of the newly emerging political system. Although the new state managed to some degree to raise the level of economic development in Slovakia before 1938 – by which time the proportion of the population employed in industry rose to 21%[6] – the Czech population perceived Slovakia more like a colony than as an equal part of the country and understood the Slovak territory as a mere expansion of the medieval Czech state. This had a negative influence on Slovak patriots from the outset and encouraged nationalist tendencies. The end result was that Slovakia first became autonomous in 1938 and finally declared independence under the "protection" of Nazi Germany.[7]

1.2 "Independent" Slovakia, 1939–1945

Many of those who defended the "Slovak State" – as this first experiment in establishing an independent Slovakia was called – referred to the economy of the time, which by comparison to neighboring countries was relatively healthy. The Slovak population was overall satisfied with the country's economic situation. Despite predictions that the country would not be able to financially secure its independence and its separation from the Czech territories, the opposite proved to be true. Despite the ongoing war, the economy remained stable, above all due to its connections with Nazi Germany. Many new possibilities presented themselves to Slovak industry and agriculture following their entanglement with the German economy in the opening phase of World War Two. The rise in revenues instigated by the military upsurge led to a growth in the Slovak economy. This development was bolstered by the fact that Nazi Germany had a vested interest in painting a positive picture of the Slovak economy, as Slovakia was to be a model for relations between Germany and smaller nations. The Nazis were able to show that under their ideological leadership, the states of Central Europe were in a position to secure their existence and a relatively high economic standard for the citizens.

In the first years of the republic's existence, the population was confronted neither with economic problems nor with daily struggles to provide for exis-

6 Hallon, Slowakei und NS-Deutschland, 45.
7 For more detail on Czechoslovak relations in the interview period, see Rychlík, Češi a Slováci.

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tential necessities, which determined its disposition toward the regime. The "Aryanizations" also contributed to bolstering loyalty toward the regime among many Slovaks. These massive interventions in the private property of Jewish citizens led to a redistribution in favor of the rest of the population, for whom this represented a big opportunity. They consequently profited from the suffering of the Jewish population.[8] In many cases, belonging to the regime, nepotism, and corruption became the most important criteria in appointing commissioners for "Aryanizations," with industry and commerce naturally suffering as a result. The speed at which "Aryanizations" were carried out and the nepotism they entailed were criticized by many politicians, but without success. On the other hand, "Aryanizations" created a large class of citizens whose property had been confiscated and whom the state wanted to get rid of. Slovak nationalism gave new impetus to a deeply rooted and religiously motivated antisemitism. The idea of deporting Jews, which remains a huge trauma and a dark stain on the existence of the Slovak state, was opportune in this context. While deportations of Slovak Jews were only carried out between March and late October 1942, this sufficed to transport 57,628 individuals from Slovakia. The antisemitic laws and decrees remained in force thereafter.[9]

The expansion of infrastructure and the electrification of Slovakia proceeded smoothly and the relative availability of daily supplies was regarded positively by the population. However, due to the exploitation of the country by German companies as well as the rising demands of the German war economy and other measures, inflation began to increase in Slovakia in the latter years of the war. The tax burden also grew and the state began collecting a so-called war tax as well as other occasional types of tax. In the final phase of the regime especially, which coincided with Germany's defeat, inflation grew enormously. In 1944, Slovakia became a theater of war. Following the initial euphoria about national independence and the young state's economic successes, support for the regime among the Slovak population began to subside significantly.

2 Nazi Germany's Economic Influence on Slovakia

On March 23, 1939, Nazi Germany and Slovakia signed a secret agreement regarding economic and financial cooperation, which sealed the character of German-Slovak relations and Slovakia's subordinated position toward Germany. According to this agreement, Germany was granted access to Slovakia's natural

8 According to the last census, which took place in 1930, there were 136,737 Jews living in Slovakia, who made up 4.11% of the total population. Hradská, Lage der Juden, 155–156.
9 Verfolgung und Ermordung, Vol. 13, 17 and 34.

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resources, control over the country's industrial production as well as its forestry and lumber industry, and permission to use its transport infrastructure to Germany's advantage. Consequently, Germany soon became the most important market for Slovak products. Slovakia was only allowed to trade with other countries with Germany's approval. The newly established Slovak National Bank was immediately assigned an advisor in the person of Richard Buzzi from Vienna, with further advisors assigned to other newly established government institutions.[10] The "Third Reich" planned economic programs in Slovakia intended to stimulate the development of specific sectors of Slovak industry. This support consisted of providing access to German expertise and new technologies. It was not in Germany's interest to support the production of goods that could be imported from Germany. Rather, it was crucial to modernize Slovak infrastructure in those spheres that were necessary and important for the realization of Germany's future plans. Finally, all of these economic programs had to be made attractive for other countries in southeastern Europe.[11]

Slovak laborers were an issue of particular interest to the German economy. Negotiations took place as early as mid-January 1939 between the German and Czechoslovak government during which Germany was promised about 16,000 Slovak laborers. Following the developments in March, when an independent Slovak state was proclaimed, the German demands rose. Over the course of 1939, about 70,000 citizens left Slovakia for Nazi Germany, 12,000 of them emigrating illegally.[12] The labor deployment of Slovaks was partly voluntary, as the laborers in question were strongly motivated by the hope of receiving higher wages than they could earn at home. Emigration abroad of a part of the Slovak population on the one hand served to curb the problem of unemployment, but on the other hand exerted economic pressure on the Slovak state. The expansion of German influence on the Slovak economy was also facilitated among other things by the country's incomplete industrialization, its strong reliance on raw materials, and its overwhelmingly agrarian character. The deep entanglement of the Slovak economy with that of the Bohemian lands constituted another reason for Slovakia's increased dependence on Germany, which supplied the county with the raw materials necessary for its manufacturing industry while also constituting a destination country for Slovak products.

While Slovakia did not have reserves of raw materials comparable to Romania, Yugoslavia, and Hungary, the Slovak territory did yield a range of important mineral resources for the German economy. Manganese was especially valuable in this context, as it served armaments production, with antimony, mercury, and

10 Hallon, Slovensko, 42.
11 Ibid.
12 Konečný/Mainušý, Slováci na pracích, 568.

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copper also playing an important role for Germany. Slovakia was a global leader in the market for antimony, as this metalloid was otherwise only mined in China. The Slovak antimony deposits were able to cover a third of the demand of the German war economy. This drew the attention of German companies – on the one hand the *Kärntner Bergwerksgesellschaft* and on the other *Preussische Bergwerks- und Hütten-Aktiengesellschaft* (*PREUSSAG*). While the Slovak petroleum fields were rather modest, they were nevertheless very welcome to Germany's industry and military. The potential for raw material exploitation in Slovakia had already been explored by the German Office for Soil Research in 1939/1940.[13] In March 1940, the state-run petroleum pits in Gbely were leased to the Berlin-based company *Deutsche Erdöl AG* for ten years. By 1942, Germany already owned 100% of the oil production facilities and 99.6% of the mining facilities in Slovakia.[14]

Within the short timeframe from 1938 to 1942, the proportion of German capital in the corporate sector in Slovakia rose from 4% to 51.6%.[15]

3 *PORR's* Construction Projects in Slovakia

The activities of *PORR* and its subsidiary *Allgemeine Strassenbau AG* were directly linked to the economic infiltration of Slovakia by Nazi Germany. The company's activities in Slovakia were its most extensive outside of the borders of Nazi Germany, with the exception of Serbia. In its annual report in 1939, the company already mentioned its efforts to gain a greater foothold in Slovakia.[16] In order to administer its extensive construction projects, *PORR* established a separate branch office in Bratislava in 1941. The following section briefly presents individual construction projects, a range of which were implemented directly in the Slovak capital.

The Bratislava-based factory of *Dynamit Nobel AG* was of particular importance to the German war effort and for *IG Farben*, the largest chemical enterprise in the world at the time. Originally a Czech company, *Dynamit Nobel AG* itself held shares in eight chemical enterprises in Austria, Romania, Yugoslavia, Hungary, and former Czechoslovakia.[17] Following the entrance of *IG Farben*, plans to modernize the factory in Bratislava were announced, in the framework of which the Viennese company *Allgemeine Baugesellschaft – A. PORR AG* was tasked with building a residential building, the so-called Oleum II–III, with a

13 Eichholtz/Kockel, Ölpolitik, 299–300; Dress, Slowakei, 92.
14 Tönsmeyer, Das Dritte Reich, 195.
15 Hallon/Sabol/Falisová, Vojnové škody, 10.
16 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, 1939, 8–9. PA.
17 Tönsmeyer, Das Dritte Reich, 195.

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contract amounting to 139,554 Slovak Crowns. Apparently, *PORR* was not contracted directly, but subcontracted by the company *Pittel & Brauswetter Pressburg – Beton und Eisenbetonunternehmung.*[18] *PORR* was also involved in smaller construction projects in Bratislava, for example on behalf of the company *Erich Grossmann* (an iron and metalworking enterprise)[19] and the construction of repair workshops and garages for the company *Ford-Henschel/Hans Schneider*, though the latter project remained on the drawing board until the end of the war.[20] The construction of mast foundations on behalf of the company *Alpen-Elektro-Werke AG* also did not proceed beyond the planning stage.[21] Another noteworthy project was the construction of a warehouse for the company *Georg Schicht AG*, which was still in progress in early 1945.[22]

3.1 *PORR's* Involvement in Construction Works for Heavy Industry

Metal production in Slovakia was monopolized by *Reichswerke AG für Erzbergbau und Eisenhütten "Hermann Göring,"* known as *Reichswerke Hermann Göring* for short. This company appropriated the engineering plants and smelters in the Bohemian lands, automatically including factories in Slovakia. This comprised, among other enterprises, the Brno-based armaments manufacturer *Zbrojovka Brno*, including a factory in Považská Bystrica, another armaments manufacturer in Dolné Hámre, and the company *Škodovka* with a factory in Dubnica nad Váhom. One of the most important companies in the metal industry was an ironworks in Podbrezová, which was acquired by the German company *Reichswerke Hermann Göring* following lengthy negotiations. Aside from the ironworks, the company also acquired factories, properties, and mines, for example in Krompachy, Lubeník, and Štítnik. The company paid a lump sum of 70 million Crowns for these factories and properties, which certainly did not correspond to their actual value. Moreover, the company named after Göring was to be awarded compensation from the net income for all the losses accrued in the period in which it had not yet taken possession of the manufacturing plants and smelters. Additionally, the Slovak State agreed to grant the company a ten-year tax break amounting to 15 million Crowns beginning January 1, 1940. Nazi Germany en-

18 Anstellung zur Rechnung, October 15, 1942, šk. 13. Štátny archív [State Archive] Bratislava (SA BA), Dynamit-Nobel. Istrochen-DNB, r. 40–42.
19 Ibid.
20 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für das Jahr 1944, January 1945, 6. PA; Dreivierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, Oktober 1943, 8.
21 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, July 26, 1944, 8. PA; Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für das Jahr 1944, January 1945, 6. PA.
22 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 2, 427.

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forced this agreement with the argument that the ironworks in Podbrezová was outdated and required investments.[23] Plans were consequently drawn up for the construction of a steelworks and fortifications in Podbrezová, which were carried out by *PORR* in the years 1942 through 1944.[24] The company also engaged in other construction projects, for example erecting hydroelectric power stations. However, in 1942, the management of *PORR* already began fearing possible labor shortages for new projects due to the ongoing war.[25] Following the occupation of the steelworks by partisans in the late summer of 1944, *PORR* no longer saw itself in a position to complete its construction project. The construction site was abandoned in late October 1944 following the defeat of the Slovak National Uprising.[26] The ironworks in Podbrezová was significantly damaged by the end of the war: It was cited at the very top of a report compiled in late 1945 on losses in the industrial sector. It had been deliberately damaged and suffered widespread losses in production, from uncovered costs incurred as a result of increased production during the Slovak National Uprising, and from unpaid clearance demands (demands made by *PORR* after it had evacuated the facilities). To this were added further losses, for example due to the costs arising from the absence of the German workforce originally deployed there but later expelled. The greatest damage sustained by the ironworks occurred due to the destruction or disassembly of machinery by the retreating Wehrmacht.[27]

3.2 Construction Works for the Glass Industry in Lednické Rovné

The interests of the Slovak glass industry in trade with Nazi Germany were represented by the association *Slowakische Glasvertrauensgesellschaft*. Government committees negotiated cartel agreements that assured the Slovak glassworks an annual contingent of hollow glass exports with a value of around 33 to 35 million Crowns. In the framework of its development programs, Slovakia was in particular need of new capacities for the production of technical glass and bottles. The glassworks in Lednické Rovné, a Jewish-owned enterprise that had been taken over by a German company and extensively modernized, fulfilled this function.[28] In late 1942, the Slovak glassworks were tied even closer to the cartel associations in Germany through a contract signed with the Berlin-based company *Gemeinschaft Hohlglas*. The representatives of the glassworks also signed

23 Lipták, Ovládnutie, 59–64.
24 Stahlwerk Podbrezová, 1942–1944. PA, PORR-Projektdatenbank.
25 Bericht des Vorstands anlässlich der Aufsichtsratssitzung, June 9, 1942, 5. PA.
26 Bericht des Vorstands über die Geschäftsführung im Jahre 1944, 2. Ibid.
27 Hallon/Sabol/Falisová, Vojnové škody, 28 and 66.
28 Fabrik Lednicke-Rovne, 1941–1944. PA, PORR-Projektdatenbank.

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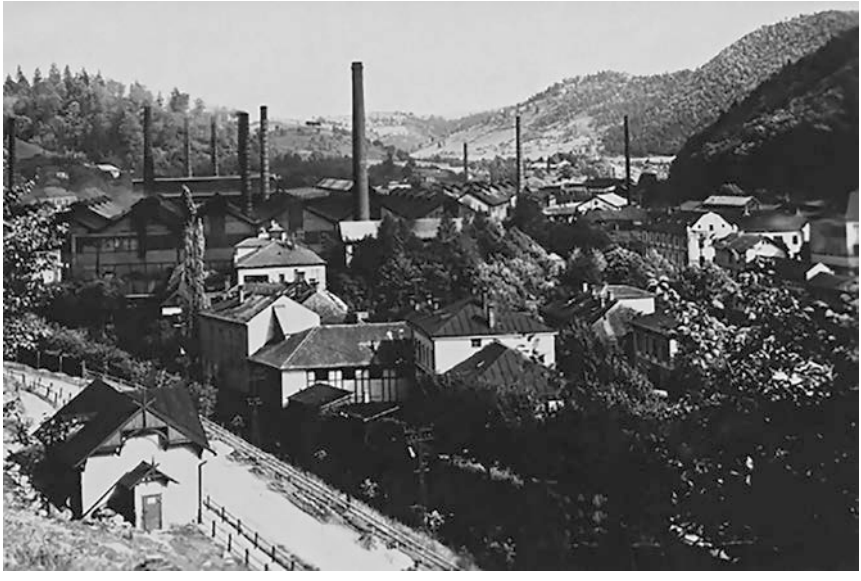

Figure 2: The steelworks in Podbrezová in 1943. Source: Betriebsarchiv Stahlwerk Podbrezová.

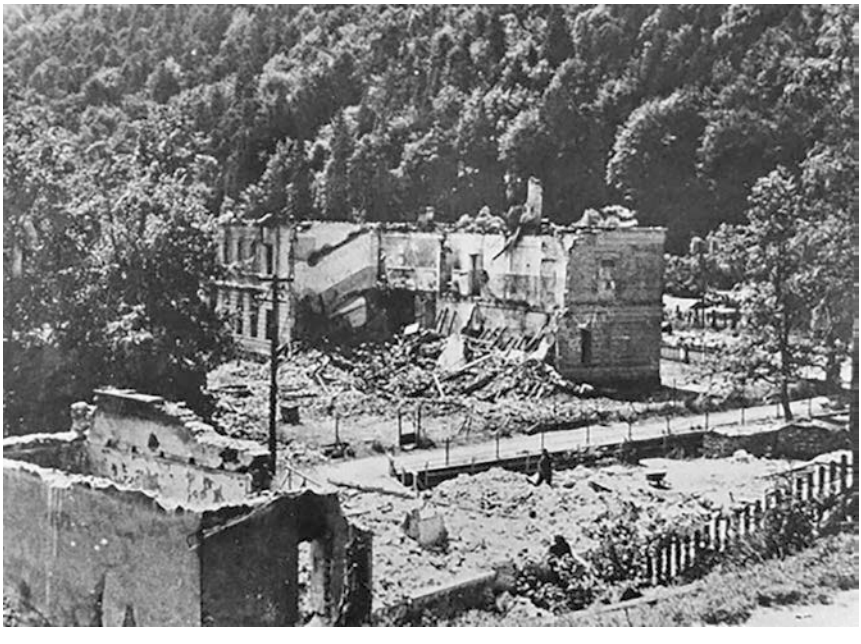

Figure 1: The steelworks in Podbrezová damaged during the war. Source: Betriebsarchiv Stahlwerk Podbrezová.

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contracts with two other German companies and deployed officials to the offices of the German glassworks in Bratislava. The German companies were represented by Dr. C. M. Griser. Over the course of 1944, both sides expended significant efforts to further incorporate the Slovak glass industry into the production of technical glass and bottles via the Berlin-based association *Verkaufsgemeinschaft Deutscher Flaschenhütten*. However, at this time the project was only in its planning stage.[29] *PORR* began with the new construction of a kiln hall and factories in Lednické Rovné in 1941 and 1942.[30] The planned expansion of the glassworks in Lednické Rovné was almost realized in mid-1944, but had to be suspended due to the financial problems faced by the contracting party, *Stölzle AG*.[31] Construction works were not resumed following the national uprising in August 1944.[32]

3.3 Construction Projects for the Paper Factory and Textile Mill in Ružomberok

The Mautner textile mill in Ružomberok, the largest textile enterprise in Slovakia, constituted an exceptional case in the country's modernization efforts. It was reoriented toward wartime production from the late 1930s onward, with plans to construct a new power station and other modern production units. In the end, a textile factory, a dyeworks, and a boiler house were constructed between 1941 and 1944, as well as a digester building at the local paper factory.[33] In 1941, *PORR* was commissioned to build a new refinement facility at the textile factory in the Rybárpole neighborhood, with an order volume of 6 million Crowns.[34] Jaroslav Bursík, a local contractor, was also involved in the project, for which laborers were acquired through the local employment agency.[35]

In 1942, *PORR* also received a construction contract at the *Slowakische Papierfabrik* in Ružomberok and began the construction of a digester building. This was followed by a contract to erect a storage building in 1943.[36] There are no specific details concerning the progress on this construction project at the time of the national uprising: The buildings and warehouses of the paper factory were hit

29 Hallon, Úloha, 284.
30 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für 1941, 6. PA.
31 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands anlässlich der Aufsichtsratssitzung, July 26, 1944, 3–4. PA.
32 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für das Jahr 1944, January 1945, 6. PA.
33 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 2, 428.
34 Ružomberok-textilné závody-továrenská budova, inv. č. 11.703/1941 adm., šk. 204. Štátny archív [State Archive] Žilina, pracovisko Liptovský Mikuláš (SAZA LM), Okresný úrad v Ružomberku (1923–1945).
35 Textilné závody-priadiareň a sklad, inv. č. 5.414/1941, šk. 201. Ibid.
36 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, April 1943, 8. PA.

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numerous times by artillery fire during fighting in the vicinity of Ružomberok.[37] The facility had to be restored after the war.

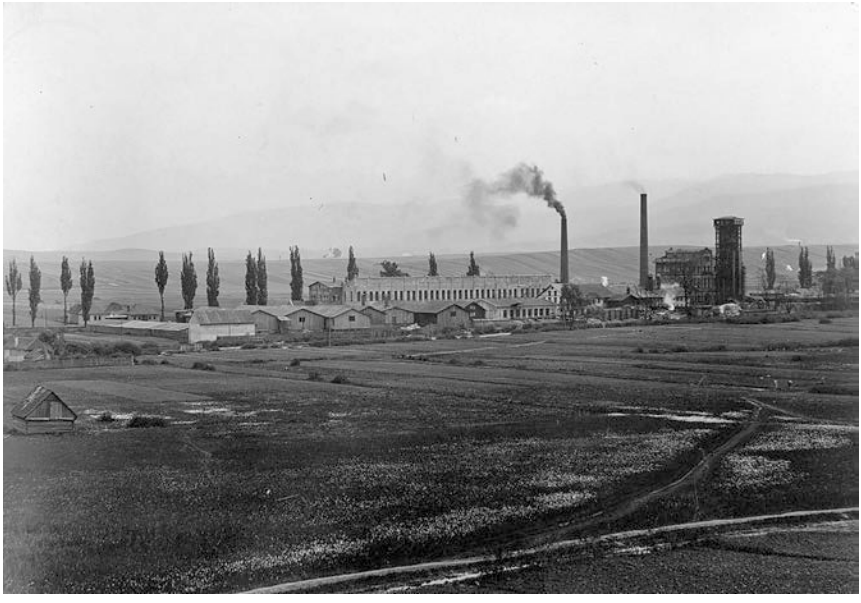

Figure 3: Paper factory in Ružomberok, undated, first half of the twentieth century. Source: Liptauer Museum, Fond Originalbilder.

Concerning the boiler house and power station at the textile factory, only the blueprints of the architect have been preserved, not the project of the actual contractor.[38] *PORR* company records indicate that the works were already at an advanced stage, but that this project, like in the case of the Podbrezová steelworks, had to be discontinued in the summer of 1944. Following the reconquest of the region by the Wehrmacht, the construction site was evacuated.[39] The main reason for this decision was the damage sustained during the Slovak National Uprising. The textile factories in Ružomberok were heavily damaged and large portions of the inventory were destroyed during fighting on September 6 and 7, 1944. At the same time, the factory kitchen, fuels, all available motor vehicles, tractors, and other equipment were confiscated – first by the rebel army and then by German military units. Even after the rebel army had been driven out of the town, artillery bombardment continued from a long distance away. The factory

37 Hallon/Sabol/Falisová, Vojnové škody, 30.
38 Silocentrála textilných závodov v Ružomberku, inv. č. 88/1942 adm., šk. 209. SAZA LM, Okresný úrad v Ružomberku (1923–1945).
39 Bericht des Vorstands über die Geschäftsführung im Jahre 1944, 2. PA.

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management was therefore forced to frequently interrupt production. The operating rate sank to 50%, with the value of the sustained damage already reaching 1.5 million Crowns by mid-September 1944.[40] As was typical for the period beginning in November 1944, the final phase of the war, the technical equipment (along with the documentation) was disassembled and transported to Germany. According to an inspection report, most of the facilities had already been disassembled by September 1944, meaning that only three of the many factories in Ružomberok remained, with the number of laborers having sunk from about 1,500 to 300.[41]

3.4 *PORR* and the Expansion of the Slovak Road Network

The Slovak roads were not prepared for the rise of motorization, nor were they suitable for the needs of intensive cargo transportation. The roads consisted predominantly of gravel covered in sand, meaning that they transformed into mud tracks with furrowed lanes during rainy periods, while in dry periods the clouds of dust rising behind driving vehicles were a nuisance for other drivers and pedestrians alike. As early as the interwar period, the term "Balkan roads" was used to describe unpaved roads with deep potholes. The expression "primitive Balkan technique" was also applied to badly constructed asphalt roads.[42] In the framework of the larger regional economic program, the development of a modern road network in Slovakia therefore became a strategic plan. To this end, Organisation Todt and the office of the Inspector General for German Roadways established a separate Main Construction Administration in Bratislava. The German Industrial Commission was also responsible for the organization of road development. In 1941, the government committees passed an agreement to collaborate in these road constructions with investments totaling around 300 million Crowns. The construction program was codenamed "Otto" and applied retroactively for the years 1940 and 1941. The name referred to General Paul Otto, a military attaché and head of the German military mission in Slovakia, who supported the construction program with the aim of creating infrastructure for the German war effort. This led to an acceleration of road construction, particularly in eastern Slovakia.

Beginning in the spring of 1942, a program to systematically motorize Slovakia was also initiated. Its implementation was supervised by the office of the Inspector General. In 1942 and 1943, German companies imported 420 trucks,

40 Hallon/Sabol/Falisová, Vojnové škody, 28.
41 Ibid.
42 Sabol, Počiatky mototuristiky, 136.

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including 145 military and 275 civilian vehicles, 50 passenger cars, 120 motorbikes, 100 trailers, and 5,000 bicycles into Slovakia. However, the demands of the Slovak government were significantly higher. A portion of the imported vehicles – particularly the passenger cars – served the needs of the German construction companies, who took their equipment back to Germany after the completion of their projects.[43] The program was intended to cover the entire state of motorization. It was to serve as a basis for determining priorities in the future development of motorized road traffic and in meeting demand for tires and other rubber products. The rubber supply was primarily assured by the Austrian company *Gummiwerke Semperit*, who also controlled the company *Matador* in Petržalka. The plan was to establish a central warehouse for tires in Bratislava to serve both the civilian and the military sectors.[44]

Archival sources reveal that a range of German road construction companies established branch offices in Slovakia. For example, *PORR AG* opened an office in Bratislava[45] while its subsidiary *Allgemeine Strassenbau AG* established branches in Trenčín and Banská Bystrica. Between 1939 and 1941, it built or modernized 70 kilometers of road sections in various regions, specifically on the routes Kostolné–Starý Hrozenkov, Trenčín–Vlárský priesmyk, and Banská Bystrica–Brezno.[46] Almost 950 laborers worked on these construction sites, using 21 heavy steamrollers, numerous trucks, asphalt melting appliances, and other equipment.[47] The completion of these construction projects was taken very seriously. For example, when the construction of a 15-kilometer road in the vicinity of Valaská between Banská Bystrica and Brezno was completed following works that lasted from August 1940 to October 1941, the stretch of road was ceremonially signed over on October 16, 1941 in Valaská to a representative of the Inspector General for German Roadways based in Bratislava. *Allgemeine Strassenbau AG* was also treated to a ceremonial reception at the restaurant Národný dom in Banská Bystrica on October 13, 1941.[48]

Allgemeine Strassenbau AG did not, however, play the largest role in the development of Slovakia's road network. Among all the German road construction companies that were active in Slovakia, *Vianova – Bauaktiengesellschaft Wien*, a subsidiary of the large German construction company *STRABAG*,[49] which was especially active in highway construction in Austria,

43 Hallon, Slowakei und NS-Deutschland, 162.
44 Hallon, Úloha, 283.
45 Bericht des Vorstands über das Jahr 1941, 15. PA.
46 See Matis/ Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 2, 427–428.
47 Sabol/Ďurčo/Hallon, Automobilizmus, 99.
48 Stavba štátnej cesty Hriňová-Brezno, rok 1941, inv. č. 376, kr. 773. Štátny archív [State Archive] Banská Bystrica (SAZA BB), Pohronská župa II /1925/ 1940–1045.
49 For more detail on the history of Vianova, see Pohl, STRABAG, 195–220.

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played the most important role in Slovakia: From 1939 to 1941, it built and reinforced 115 kilometers of roads on the routes Považská Bystrica–Žilina–Vrútky, Spišský Štvrtok–Levoča–Prešov, and Rybník–Šalmoš (Nová Dedina–a part of Gondovo)–Ladzany.[50] Among the Viennese companies active here, the company *Ing. Josef Hrachowina – Hoch-Tief-Eisenbetonbau Wien* is noteworthy,[51] as it ran a project to construct a new bridge of the River Poprad.[52]

Between 1939 and 1943, altogether 280 kilometers of state roads were constructed in Slovakia. During this period, the proportion of paved roads in the entire road network rose from 13% to 28%. The deployment of laborers played an important role in the construction of highways: Between 1939 and 1943, on average 5,500 to 8,300 laborers were deployed at the construction sites each year.[53]

3.5 Military Construction Projects Implemented by *PORR* in Cooperation with Organisation Todt

PORR company documents from January 1945 indicated that only one construction site remained to be completed in Slovakia at the time, namely at the "Schicht" factories in Bratislava. Otherwise, *PORR* had been commissioned by Organisation Todt to work on "rampart and fortification structures."[54] This primarily entailed the fortification of a military airfield in Prešov in eastern Slovakia as well as rampart and fortification works around Bratislava. This is where the northern section of the "South-East Wall" was to be built to defend against the approaching Red Army. On October 9, 1944, a German-Slovak agreement was signed in Bratislava concerning the provision of the German military on the territory of Slovakia, with the Slovak government declaring its willingness to contribute to the construction of fortifications.[55] *PORR AG* took on the construction works in the vicinity of Považská Bystrica.[56] The company's accounts from January 1, 1946 evinced the construction of a bunker by *PORR*. This bunker measured 18 by 6.9 by 4 meters and had an area of 55.2 square meters.[57]

50 Sabol/Ďurčo/Hallon, Automobilizmus, 99.
51 Josef Hrachowina was an engineer, architect, municipal architect, real estate agent, and property manager; Wer ist wer, 79.
52 Sabol/Ďurčo/Hallon, Automobilizmus, 100.
53 Sabol, Limity, 476.
54 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für das Jahr 1944, January 1945, 2. PA.
55 Hallon/Sabol/Falisová, Vojnové škody, 40.
56 Bericht des Vorstands über die Geschäftsführung im Jahre 1944, 2. PA.
57 Anstellung zur Rechnung, October 15, 1942, šk. 13. SA BA, Dynamit-Nobel. Istrochen-DNB, r. 40–42.

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Figure 4: Bunker Dynamit Nobel Festung Bratislava: a preserved bunker in the vicinity of the former grounds of the company Dynamit Nobel in Bratislava. Source: Mestský ústav ochrany pamiatok v Bratislave, Evidenčný list pamätihodností mesta Bratislavy BA – VI. – C.20, Photograph: Peter Horanský.

Figure 5: Trojdomy: one of the buildings on the former grounds of the company Dynamit Nobel in Bratislava that were built by *PORR/Pittel & Brausewetter*. Source: Mestský ústav ochrany pamiatok v Bratislave, Evidenčný list pamätihodností mesta Bratislavy BA – V. – A. 22.

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However, the Wehrmacht lacked a lot of the supplies necessary to build and maintain a modern fortification line, such as concrete, construction tools, tractor fuel, and above all artillery for the new bunkers. The works consequently could not be advanced at the desired scale and – on the eve of the Soviet offensive – they remained uncompleted.[58] Thousands of laborers were forcibly deployed for the fortification works in Bratislava, including inmates of the Engerau concentration camp, which had been established within the Bratislava city limits in late November 1944.[59]

Many of the construction projects in Slovakia in which *PORR AG* was involved formed part of the strategic development of the Slovak economy, which was designed more broadly to contribute to the creation of a large-scale German economic space. Aside from the large road construction project that the company was involved in as one of several German construction companies, and which is partially preserved, *PORR* also participated in the construction of facilities for the largest Slovak textile factory in Ružomberok and for *Dynamit-Nobel* in Bratislava. Both of these complexes were almost completely destroyed at the end of the war. The company's construction projects in Slovakia made up about 15% of its total revenue in 1943.[60] After the war, the company was owed money by its smaller contracting partners. *PORR* was hardly able to claim these sums from the newly established Czechoslovak state.[61]

58 Citino, Wehrmacht's Last Stand, 429.

59 Erker, Zulieferer, 771. For more detail on the construction of the "South-East Wall," see for example Baka, Nasadenie civilného.

60 Bericht des Vorstands über die Geschäftslage mit Stand vom 30. 9. 1943, 5. PA.

61 Firma Ford – Ján Schneider, Bratislava, Mlynské nivy 15 – konfiškát, UNION-BANK, Bratislava, September 28, 1948, šk. 1. SA BA, Ford (JWG-RACHEL) BA, r. 45–48.

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Christian Rabl

PORR AG and its Forced Laborers 1938–1945

Immediately following the "Anschluss" in March 1938, the administrative board of *PORR* was completely "Aryanized" and politically "cleansed," with "non-Aryan" staff members being removed from the company. On May 2, 1938, director Alfred Schuppler (who later also became a member of the executive board) notified the Administrative Board that due to the acquisition of new contracts, the workforce would rise from 900 to 1,200 laborers while eight "non-Aryan" laborers had concurrently been dismissed.[1] The number of staff members employed by *PORR AG* also rose steeply in this period.[2] Numbering only 126 individuals at the time of the "Anschluss," by late November 1939 altogether 274 individuals were employed by the company, this figure continuing to rise over the following years to reach a peak of 369 individuals in July 1944. Of these 369 employees, 261 were from Nazi Germany (including the "Ostmark") and 108 came from abroad.[3] Proportionally, the workforce of *Allbau* rose even more drastically during this time, albeit on a quantitatively lower level: While just eight laborers were active at *Allbau* before the "Anschluss," the workforce rose by more than a hundred-fold to reach 911 by late November 1939, mostly due to the acquisition of large-scale state road construction contracts.[4] The number of

1 Protokoll des Verwaltungsrats, May 2, 1938. PORR-Archive (PA), Mappe Firmengeschichte, Protokolle des Verwaltungsrats der Allgemeinen Baugesellschaft – A. PORR AG, 7. Teil, 1928–1939.

2 The 1940 annual report of the executive board includes detailed information on the employees and their specific responsibilities: The 313 staff members that were employed by *PORR AG* as of October 31, 1940 included 34 engineers, 21 architects, 12 draftsmen, 26 technicians, and 54 foremen, as well as 33 employees in material management, altogether 72 employees in payroll accounting and administration, altogether 8 interpreters, warehouse managers, and canteen operators, and altogether 25 secretaries and clerks. Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für 1940, November 8, 1940, 18. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3 (all *PORR* executive board reports are contained in this folder, which will therefore not be cited separately in the following).

3 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands für Aufsichtsratssitzung, July 26, 1944, 1–2. Ibid.

4 Tabelle über die Reichsautobahnen, May 13, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Bd. 1.

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employees (engineers, architects, technicians, foremen, and salesmen) also rose from 24 to 60.[5]

1 Foreign Laborers: Their Recruitment and Proportion of the Total Workforce

Immediately following the "Anschluss" of Austria to Nazi Germany, the labor shortage in the construction sector became a major issue, particularly in the context of the expansive construction projects planned by the Nazi regime. Max Tazoll, a member of the executive board of *PORR* and head of the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry, Ostmark District Group, blamed the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime for the labor shortage, which he claimed had led to the emigration of a large number of Austrian laborers to Germany. One of the Austrian construction sector's main demands was therefore the return home of Austrian laborers, engineers, and technicians.[6] In order to also further qualify laborers who had remained with Austrian construction companies, the Ostmark District Group initiated a training campaign "to acquire skilled laborers" through which eligible laborers at Austrian construction companies would be enabled to learn new skills at various construction sites in Germany proper during the winter of 1938/1939.[7]

At the beginning of World War Two, the question of deploying foreign laborers became ever more central and the relationship between domestic German and foreign laborers began to gradually shift. This development was spurred on the one hand by the increased enlistment of laborers and employees from Nazi Germany for military service – and later also on behalf of Organisation Todt (OT) – and on the other hand by the enormous rise in demand for laborers in the construction of armaments factories and in armaments production, which could not be met with laborers from Nazi Germany alone. Immediately following Nazi Germany's invasion of Poland and the beginning of World War Two, *PORR* tried to have parts of its core workforce classified as indispensable,[8] yet this strategy became ever less successful in the following years.

5 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 3, 1939, 17–18. PA.

6 Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie, Bezirksgruppe Ostmark an Baukommissar beim Reichskommissar Gauleiter Bürckel, Oberregierungsrat Dr. Kratz, gezeichnet Max Tazoll, August 8, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Bd. 1.

7 Rundschreiben der Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie, Bezirksgruppe Ostmark, September 19, 1938. Ibid.

8 In late 1939, *PORR* submitted 238 applications for skilled laborers to be classified as indispensable and another 151 such applications for employees. Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 3, 1939, 19. PA.

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PORR therefore tried to proactively recruit laborers for its construction sites, which nevertheless proved to be a difficult endeavor, as a survey conducted by the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry, Ostmark District Group showed with specific regard to the Reichsautobahn construction site in Kasern, Salzburg. At this site, *PORR* encountered the problem that local employment agencies would not send free laborers to other employment agency districts and hence no domestic laborers were available. The company subsequently tried to recruit Italian laborers, but their transfer was not approved. The deployment of laborers from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was also prohibited, as was the recruitment of free laborers from Slovakia, with those Slovaks who came to Nazi Germany voluntarily having to wait for weeks on end for their deployment permits. The company also noted that it was difficult to keep Slovak laborers from leaving their places of work since the transfer of wages back to Slovakia was limited to 40 Reichsmark per month and payment to their families in Slovakia often took many weeks.[9] Since *PORR* had good connections in Bulgaria, the company managed repeatedly to recruit laborers there from 1939 onward.[10] Over the following years, they would be deployed at dozens of *PORR* construction sites in the territory of the "Ostmark."

In his capacity as head of the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry, Ostmark District Group, the *PORR* executive board member Max Tazoll already warned in July 1939 that "the increased performance and rationalization demanded from the highest levels" would be "extremely" threatened if the labor shortage problem was not quickly resolved.[11] He therefore explicitly demanded that additional laborers be deployed in the territory of the "Ostmark" since "the volume of construction in the Ostmark is currently greater than in other areas" of Nazi Germany.[12]

Following the beginning and over the course of World War Two, the Nazi regime's recruitment practices became increasingly brutal and, particularly in the occupied territories, entailed severe repression and violence. Foreign laborers moreover became increasingly less willing to go to Nazi Germany voluntarily.

9 Antworten auf Rundfrage der Bezirksgruppe Ostmark, über Mängel beim Arbeitseinsatz, June 1939, 10. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Bd. 2.

10 In November 1943, for example, Max Tazoll reported at a meeting of the Administrative Board that more laborers were being lost, which is why the company was trying to recruit new laborers from a Lithuanian company. Aufsichtsratsprotokoll, November 19, 1943. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 2, Aufsichtsratsprotokolle 1939–1944.

11 Max Tazoll, Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie, Bezirksgruppe Ostmark, an Reichsarbeitsministerium, Zweigstelle Österreich, July 8, 1939. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Bd. 2.

12 Ibid.

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A perusal of the figures cited by the executive board of *PORR* reveals the extent to which the company profited from the increasingly restrictive measures, including force, that the Nazi regime enacted in its labor policies, as well as the extent to which the company relied on these measures in order to implement its innumerable construction projects. Further insights are offered in the analysis of data concerning the foreign laborers deployed by *PORR AG* in the "Ostmark," of whom around 3,200 were identified by name in the course of this project. Alongside thousands of foreign civilian laborers from almost 20 countries, from 1940 onward, *PORR* was also repeatedly assigned large contingents of prisoners of war, to be deployed among other things for highway construction in Heiligenkreuz and the Malta Valley or for industrial construction projects in Kapfenberg and St. Marein. Their numbers peaked in May 1944 at more than 2,500, with the majority of these men at this point being deployed in Serbia in the framework of the OT railroad construction project between Bor and Žagubica.

The preserved documentation shows that both the executive board of *PORR* and the respective project managers working at the construction sites actively and repeatedly tried to intervene in order to get additional foreign laborers assigned.[13] The sources do not suggest that these demands entailed any ethical or moral considerations regarding the origin and recruitment process of these laborers. The company's construction project on behalf of *Böhlerwerke* in Kapfenberg shows paradigmatically that the Central Administration of *Böhlerwerke* assigned laborers for individual construction projects or construction segments – in this case for construction on behalf of the Luftwaffe – to the contracted companies, such as *PORR AG*.[14]

The executive board of *PORR* repeatedly criticized what it regarded as the poor performance of the foreign (forced) laborers it was assigned. As early as 1941, for example, the executive board reported: "The quality of the assigned foreign laborers in particular leaves a lot to be desired. Presumably, the ongoing recruitment measures of the Ministry of Labor abroad no longer allow for an adequate selection process."[15] By contrast, the performance of the German core staff was repeatedly presented in an especially positive light: "The staff members deployed on the individual construction sites, especially in the occupied territories, deserve all recognition for their achievements while working with so many unwilling and unskilled laborers."[16]

13 For example, when *PORR AG* complained about a lack of laborers, Böhler intervened at a higher level and subsequently received 350 additional laborers for construction works in Kapfenberg. Aktennotiz, Baudirektor Haiderer, May 18, 1943. Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (StLA), Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 247/1.

14 Gefolgschaftsabteilung Böhler an Zentraldirektion, October 3, 1941. Ibid.

15 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, July 1941, 11. PA.

16 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für das Jahr 1943, January 20, 1944, 2. Ibid.

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The following finding of the historian Ulrich Herbert regarding the deployment of laborers by companies during the Nazi era therefore presumably also applies to *PORR AG:* "When German laborers could no longer be recruited, foreign civilian laborers and prisoners of war were used instead, followed by concentration camp inmates and finally also Jews, even though companies were typically reluctant to do so due to the additional security requirements and their low level of productivity."[17]

The quantitative development of the *PORR* workforce from 1938 to 1945 demonstrates very clearly that the company's successful maintenance of dozens of construction sites – both in the "Ostmark" and in the occupied territories and Slovakia – from one war year to the next relied to an ever-increasing extent on the deployment of foreign civilian (forced) laborers as well as prisoners of war: In late 1939, the executive board reported that the company's workforce had increased significantly since the Nazi takeover. Before the "Anschluss" in March 1938, *PORR* only had 600 laborers on its payroll (of whom 200 were skilled and 400 were unskilled). By late November 1939, this number had increased fivefold to 3,200 laborers (of whom 1,305 were skilled and 1,895 were unskilled).[18] This trend continued into mid-1940 despite the shutdown of numerous construction projects that were deemed non-essential for the war effort,[19] with the executive board at one point even reporting 5,000 laborers working for the company as of July 5, 1940.[20] Correlating to the total number of laborers, the proportion of foreign laborers also rose steadily up to late 1943, with almost 90% of the 6,519 laborers working for *PORR* in the last quarter of 1943 coming from abroad, who numbered altogether 5,758 individuals (including both foreign civilian laborers and prisoners of war).[21] The company's increasing dependence on foreign laborers corresponds overall to the general situation of the construction sector in Nazi Germany.[22] Graph 1 depicts the general numeric development of the company's workforce (excluding the core laborers who were enlisted by the Wehrmacht), without distinguishing between German and foreign laborers on the one hand and prisoners of war on the other hand.

17 Herbert, Zwangsarbeit, 12.

18 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 3, 1939, 17–19. PA.

19 It must also be taken into account that the deployment of laborers in the construction sector fluctuated significantly, due not only to fluctuations within the workforce but also to the respective order volume, shortages of materials and natural resources, and weather conditions.

20 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, July 1940, 2. PA.

21 According to the figures cited by the executive board of *PORR* in October 1943, there were 6,519 laborers working for the company at this point in time, of whom 3,911 were civilian foreign laborers, 1,847 were prisoners of war, and only 761 were from Nazi Germany.

22 See Bertrand Perz's contribution to this volume.

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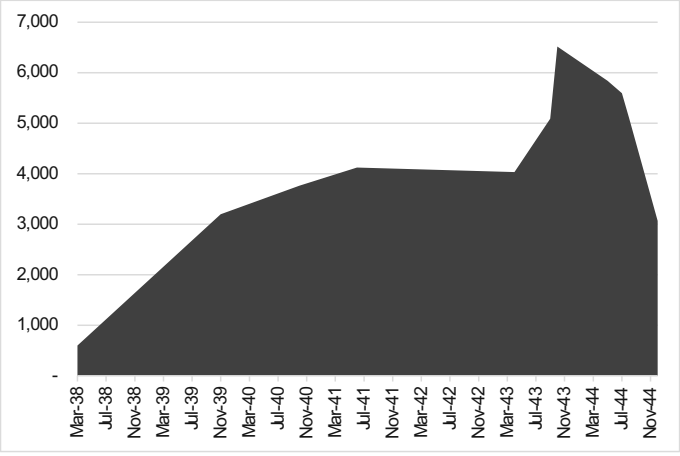

Graph 1: *PORR AG's* active workforce over time. Sources: Protokoll des Verwaltungsrats, May 2, 1938. PA, Mappe Firmengeschichte, Protokolle des Verwaltungsrats der Allgemeinen Baugesellschaft – A. PORR AG, 7. Teil, 1928–1939; Berichte des Vorstands 1939 bis 1945. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3; author's calculations.

In October 1943, the company's workforce reached its numeric peak with over 6,500 active laborers. This gradual rise was only made possible by the systematic forced recruitment of foreign laborers and the assignment of prisoners of war, since the proportion of laborers from Nazi Germany (including the "Ostmark") continued to sink until mid-1943 – mainly due to enlistment in the Wehrmacht alongside other forms of deployment for duty – and then stagnated until the end of the war at around 700 to 800 laborers.[23]

The earliest reference to the number of foreign laborers deployed by *PORR* dates from October 31, 1940. At this point, *PORR* was deploying altogether 4,025 laborers, of whom 2,583 came from Nazi Germany (although 263 had been conscripted), 932 were foreign civilian laborers, and 247 were prisoners of war.[24] This meant that almost a third[25] of the company's active workforce was already from abroad at this point.[26] About 900 of the foreign civilian laborers were from

23 At the end of the first quarter of 1943, the executive board of *PORR* reported that altogether 859 staff members from Nazi Germany had been enlisted or otherwise deployed. Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, April 1943, 1. PA.

24 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für 1940, November 8, 1940, 19. Ibid.

25 According to an executive board report, this comprised altogether 4,025 laborers, minus 263 who had been enlisted, meaning that there were altogether 3,762 active laborers, including 932 civilian foreign laborers and 246 prisoners of war.

26 By comparison, at the largest construction company in Germany proper during the Nazi era, Philipp Holzmann AG, about 30% of the workforce (some 7,200 individuals) consisted of foreign laborers as of October 15, 1940. Pohl, Philipp Holzmann, 263.

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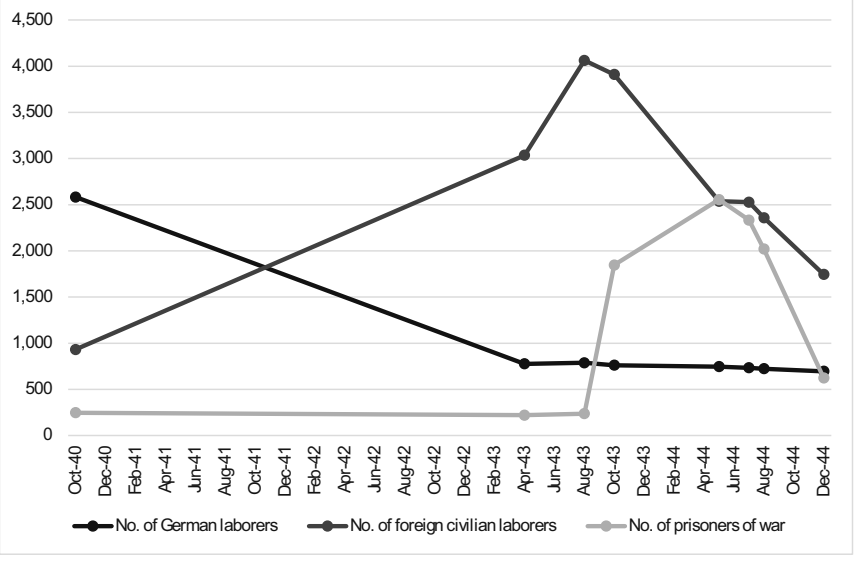
Bulgaria and had been recruited directly by *PORR* in the first half of 1940.[27] By the spring of 1943, the proportion of laborers from Nazi Germany had fallen to below 800, while the number of foreign laborers and prisoners of war steadily increased. According to an executive board report from calendar week 44 in 1943, this number reached its peak with a total of 3,911 civilian laborers and 1,847 prisoners of war – making up 5,758 individuals altogether – deployed by the company alongside just 761 laborers from Nazi Germany (see Graph 2).



Graph 2: *PORR AG's* workforce according to type over time. Sources: Berichte des Vorstands 1944 bis 1945. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3; author's calculations.

By late 1943, the executive board was regularly informing the administrative board members about the total number of domestic and foreign laborers as well as the number of prisoners of war being deployed by *PORR*. However, these reports did not include any information allowing for the sites at which these laborers were being deployed to be identified. Such information is only available for the period from May to December 1944, by which time many construction projects had already been discontinued due to the development of the war, while others were severely impacted by combat. Table 1 shows the distribution of the foreign laborers deployed by *PORR* on construction sites in the territory of Nazi Germany, in Slovakia, and on OT construction projects in Serbia and Italy.

27 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, July 1940, 1–2. PA.

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Table 1: Distribution of foreign laborers deployed by *PORR*.

Deployment	Foreign Laborers				Prisoners of War	
	in Nazi Germany	in Italy	in Serbia	in Slovakia	in Nazi Germany	in Serbia
May 1944	1,122	604	117	694	604	1,951
July 1944	1,084	557	100	787	572	1,761
Aug. 1944	935	528	78	817	724	1,296
Dec. 1944	661	528	no data	401	623	-

Source: Berichte des Vorstands 1944 bis 1945. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3; author's calculations

The figures show that the number of foreign civilian laborers deployed in the "Ostmark" continually decreased, while the number of prisoners of war assigned to *PORR* remained relatively stable until the end of 1944. Altogether, the proportion of foreign civilian laborers and prisoners of war alike changed significantly from the fall of 1943. On September 30, 1943, only 237 prisoners of war were deployed by *PORR* in the "Ostmark." Yet in the late fall of 1943, around 500 British prisoners of war were newly deployed at the large-scale construction sites in St. Marein. By May 1944, the number of prisoners of war deployed in the company's sphere of influence had increased tenfold to more than 2,500 individuals, of whom – as the table shows – almost 2,000 were deployed in Serbia (these consisted of "Italian military internees").

2 Foreign Civilian Laborers – A Quantitative Overview

Over the past 25 years, numerous studies have been dedicated to the history of the mass-deployment of foreign civilian laborers, prisoners of war, concentration camp inmates, and Jews by the Nazi regime, which also raised the question of the incremental level of force employed on the basis of Nazi racist ideology.[28] This chapter consequently foregoes a comprehensive discussion of this topic and instead focuses in appropriate brevity on those aspects that appear relevant to the following analysis of foreign laborers deployed by *PORR AG*. Nazi Germany's labor policies following the "Anschluss" of Austria in March 1938 essentially unfolded in three stages. The first phase lasted from the "Anschluss" to the beginning of the war in September 1939 and was characterized by the commencement of military buildup, which went hand in hand with the elimination of unemployment. As already demonstrated above, *PORR AG* also expanded its

28 See the following paradigmatic studies: Herbert, Fremdarbeiter; Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit; Freund/Perz, Zahlenentwicklung; Pohl/Sebta (eds.), Zwangsarbeit.

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workforce more than fivefold in this period, peaking at 3,200 laborers. The second phase, which lasted until the failure of the Nazi regime's Blitzkrieg strategy in the winter of 1941/1942, witnessed the increasing deployment of prisoners of war, including by *PORR*, especially in the framework of construction on behalf of the Reichsautobahn. Parallel to this development, the Nazi regime also doubled down on its efforts to recruit civilian laborers from abroad. This second phase marked the beginning of the systematic "deployment of foreigners," which – depending on the origins of the recruited groups – already entailed repressive measures as well as initial discriminatory regulations. In the final phase, which lasted from 1942 to the end of the war, these regulations were gradually exacerbated on a group by group basis and also extended to other national groups. At the latest by 1942, the Nazi regime began the mass (forced) deployment of foreign laborers in the occupied territories (which had already begun much earlier in Poland), for example in the form of arbitrary deportations or the conscription of entire age groups. In this phase, the Nazi regime also began increasingly deploying concentration camp inmates as well as Jews in service of the wartime economy.[29] These developments were also evident with regard to the foreign workforce deployed by *PORR AG* between 1938 and 1945, as all the above-cited groups were represented among the company's workforce during this period.

2.1 The Question of Force in Labor Deployment

The question of force in labor deployment is multifaceted and deeply complex, as *PORR AG* deployed laborers from at least 18 different countries on its construction sites in the territory of the "Ostmark" and in occupied territories between 1939 and 1945, who were subject to different legal frameworks. Force was clearly employed with regard to the deployment of Jews, concentration camp inmates, "eastern workers," and laborers from Poland. The forced deployment of prisoners of war represents a special case, as this was actually regulated by the Geneva Convention, although the Nazi regime contravened many of the stipulations of the convention and/or simply ignored them in its treatment of specific groups, such as Soviet prisoners of war and later also "Italian military internees." Regarding foreign civilian laborers, the issue was more complicated as the nature of the force employed varied extremely and changed through the course of the war.[30] In the framework of a study on the numeric development of foreign civilian forced laborers deployed in the territory of the "Ostmark," the Austrian histo-

29 Freund/Perz, Zahlenentwicklung, 13.
30 Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 10–20.

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rians Florian Freund and Bertrand Perz proffered the following definition for the term "forced labor":

> "One can speak of forced labor during National Socialism in such instances when external economic force was the decisive factor in an individual's deployment, depending not only on their profession or ability, but solely on their origin (national, ethnic, or religious). One can also speak of forced labor when special discriminatory labor conditions were created obligating a defined group of individuals to perform labor as punishment."[31]

In other words, the Nazi regime implemented a racist hierarchy of different groups of people and categorized them according to their origins as "Germanic" or "non-Germanic" and/or "members of an alien people." Foreign laborers deployed in Nazi Germany were subject to different policing, social welfare, and labor law policies depending on their categorization within this hierarchy, which in turn determined their everyday living and working conditions.[32]

The categorization of the deployed groups was moreover dependent on whether their countries of origin were allied with the Nazi regime (including – in some cases only in the early phase of the war – Italy, Slovakia, Croatia, Hungary, and Bulgaria). This is relevant to the present analysis as a large number of foreign laborers (initially) came to *PORR* from countries allied with Nazi Germany like Bulgaria, Slovakia, and Italy. These groups were by and large subject to the same labor conditions as German citizens. However, the changing geopolitical conditions over the course of the war meant that some of these groups underwent an abrupt change in status, which led to a significant deterioration in the situation of the individual laborers. This is especially clear in the case of Italian laborers, who were abruptly barred from returning home after the fall of Mussolini in July 1943.[33]

The Nazi regime's racist hierarchy also had a significant impact on the laborers' living and working conditions, beginning on the formal level with the formulation and implementation of legal regulations of varying degrees of repressiveness.[34] Among other things, these affected the laborers' freedom of movement at their work stations and/or in the residential camps, which could either be open or sealed. They also affected the distribution of provisions and/or everyday items and the level of contact permitted with the civilian population, which in some cases was forbidden entirely. On the other hand, the racist hierarchy enforced by the regime, which pervaded large segments of German society

31 Freund/Perz, Zahlenentwicklung, 15–16.
32 Ibid., 16.
33 Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 82; and Jabloner/Bailer-Galanda/Blimlinger/Graf/Knight/Mikoletzky/Perz/Sandgruber/Stuhlpfarrer/Teichova, Schlussbericht, 192.
34 Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit.

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due to intense Nazi propaganda efforts, also had direct effects on daily working procedures. This was evident for example in the attitude and behavior of the (German) core workforce toward allegedly "inferior" foreign laborers. When the Nazi authorities' expectations regarding the number of recruited foreign laborers were disappointed in just about every country, they resorted to increasingly repressive measures.[35]

In order to make the complex question concerning the degree of force more analytically tangible, the German historian Mark Spoerer defined four "ideal types" of labor recruitment: pure recruitment of laborers; recruitment in conjunction with a significant influence on living conditions; conscription of entire age groups with the help of local administrative bodies; and deportation accompanied by the use of arbitrary violence.[36] According to Mark Spoerer and the economist Jochen Fleischhacker,[37] the use of force at the workplace can be assessed according to two categories of distinction: "exit" and "voice." In the first instance, the degree of force can be assessed according to an individual laborer's ability to "exit" a working station in Nazi Germany unimpeded following the end of their contract or before the end of their contract, for example by resigning. In the second instance, the degree of force can be assessed according to an individual laborer's ability to "voice" criticism against the reigning working conditions and/or to take action against and improve potential deficits at the workplace. This catalogue of criteria has since been defined even more precisely, in order especially to better assess the significant differences regarding mortality rates between different groups. For example, the Austrian historian Oliver Rathkolb added the criterion of "ethnic stigmatization." This was applied to laborers of Slavic origin, among others, and had a significant impact on their living and working conditions.[38] Meanwhile, the German historian Marc Buggeln argued in favor of a slight adjustment of the terminology applied to the four aforementioned categories: "free/compulsory labor"[39] (in place of exit and voice), "forced labor" (in place of no exit, but voice), "slave labor" (in place of no

35 Ibid., 39.
36 Ibid., 37.
37 Spoerer/Fleischhacker, Forced Laborers, Table 8.
38 Rathkolb, NS-Zwangsarbeit in der Industrie, 74–75.
39 According to Buggeln's definition, the category "free" includes among others Western European civilian laborers who were essentially subject to the same legal policies as German laborers. He specifically mentioned "free laborers working under the conditions of the wartime economy." With regard to "compulsory labor," Buggeln defined this as encompassing on the one hand the Reich Labor Service and the compulsory year of labor for girls and on the other hand labor performed by prisoners of war who were treated in accordance with the Geneva Convention. Buggeln, Zwangsarbeit, 9–10.

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exit, no voice), and "slave labor with a high mortality rate" (no exit, no voice, and high mortality).[40]

With these criteria in mind, the following analysis will address the question of the extent to which *PORR AG* profited from forced labor during the Nazi era. Of course, this framework has its limitations and cannot shed light on the fate of each individual deployed for labor. Freund and Perz worked on the assumption that "all in all, the vast majority of the foreign civilian laborers deployed for labor in Germany did not come voluntarily."[41] In order to do justice to this complex situation, the following analysis will augment the quantitative data – insofar as the sources allow – with specific examples of individual laborers of various national backgrounds in order to sketch their individual situations.

2.2 Methodological Remarks on the Compiled Data

In the framework of this research project, extensive efforts were made to assess the total scale of foreign (forced) laborers deployed by *PORR AG*, in order to arrive at the most comprehensive picture possible. However, since the archives of *PORR AG* at Absberggasse in Vienna's tenth district hardly contained any preserved documents on the deployment of foreign laborers between 1938 and 1945, the research in this context necessarily focused on numerous scattered source corpuses in different regions pertaining to various authorities. These offered detailed insights into the composition of the foreign (forced) laborers working on the company's construction projects. Altogether over 3,100 names of foreign laborers were recorded on a database in the course of this research.[42] In every instance, it was verified that the individual in question was deployed by *PORR AG* for various construction projects in the territory of the "Ostmark." The question of force could not always be definitively answered, however, yet an attempt was made nonetheless to assess the use of force with regard to particular national groups. The data compiled in this process essentially consisted of registration documents from former local health insurance providers in Vienna and Upper Austria,[43] registration index cards from the large-scale armaments construction

40 Ibid., 9, Table 13.

41 Freund/Perz, Zahlenentwicklung, 18.

42 There is data concerning more than 80 men categorized as Jews, who were deployed for compulsory labor in Vienna from 1940 to 1942 but whose nationality is partly unclear.

43 These are the only two regions in which the registration records are sorted by employer. In all other regions, the registration data was stored exclusively by surname of the laborer, meaning that the employer could not be identified. We are especially grateful to the employees of the health insurance provider Österreichische Gesundheitskasse (ÖGK), who were extremely generous and competent in assisting us with our research.

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project in Kapfenberg, St. Marein, and Rottenmann, from smaller collections held in the Lower Austrian Regional Archive (Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv, NÖLA),[44] and records from various civil registry offices in the towns where the company's larger construction projects were situated (primarily the death registers kept there).[45] The available information regarding specific individuals differs significantly between these sources, with the amount of detail also varying extremely. Some sources merely cite names, countries of origin, dates of birth, and sites of deployment along with the type of labor deployment. The records of the health insurance providers also cite the date of the laborers' first registration and include information on quitting service and periods of incapacitation. These details also allow for changes in the location of labor deployment to be determined in the event that individuals continued working for *PORR AG*. The registration index cards mostly contain information concerning the date that individual laborers were registered at their place of residence (which was almost always reported collectively by the employer), potential changes in address (including relocation from one camp to another as well as deregistration to other sites of labor deployment), and the name of their employer.

Due to the precarious availability of data and sources, it should be explicitly noted that the following analysis does not constitute a comprehensive overview of all (foreign) laborers deployed by *PORR AG* between 1938 and 1945. While, for example, the source base regarding *PORR AG* construction sites in the territory of "Greater Vienna," "Oberdonau," and Styria is comparatively good, this is unfortunately not the case with regard to the company's construction sites in the territory of "Niederdonau" and Carinthia. There is no individual data on the laborers deployed by *PORR AG* in the occupied territories, only the above-cited statistics. Despite the figures cited by the company's executive board concerning the size of its workforce on certain key dates, it remains difficult to place the researched data in relation to the total number of foreign laborers deployed by *PORR*, as wholesale numerical data does not allow for verifiable statements concerning potential fluctuations between key dates. This means that there is no precise data concerning the total number of foreign laborers deployed by *PORR AG* between 1939 and 1945. The construction sites for which there is comprehensive data regarding the laborers registered there generally reveal a high fluctuation: A significant number of laborers were only registered for a few days or weeks, often with no indication where the laborers moved on to after they were deregistered. It is unclear whether these individuals were potentially relocated to

44 I thank Stefan Eminger from NÖLA for granting me access to an extract from a database of forced laborers.

45 I thank the employees at the civil registry offices in Kapfenberg, Leoben, Rottenmann, St. Marein im Mürztal, St. Lorenzen im Mürztal (all of which are in Styria), and *Böhlerwerk* (in Lower Austria).

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other *PORR* construction sites or whether they switched employers altogether. A significant factor influencing the duration of service was the question of weather conditions on the construction sites. Depending on the geographic situation of the construction project, construction seasons varied in duration. Moreover, depending on their national background, many laborers received one-year contracts or quit their contracts early for other reasons (if they were even allowed to do so).

2.3 Countries of Origin

The national background of the individual laborers is not always precisely determinable from the sources, as the data sometimes contradicts itself. For example, the registration index cards from Kapfenberg sometimes include two entries for one individual, such as "Yugoslavia (Croatia)." In those cases, the individuals in question were assigned to the respective federated state for the purposes of the analysis below. However, the entry "German (Yugoslavia)" indicates that the individual in question belonged to a German minority in Southeastern or Eastern Europe, who were known colloquially as "Volksdeutsche" (ethnic Germans). Altogether 3,117 individuals who worked on one or more *PORR AG* construction sites between 1939 and 1945 were recorded by name in the database, of whom 2,944 had an unambiguous country of origin. The sources indicate a total of 18 different countries of origin. The largest national groups among the laborers identified were Bulgarian (778), following by Czech (608), Slovak (313), French (245), and Italian (244) laborers (see Graph 3).

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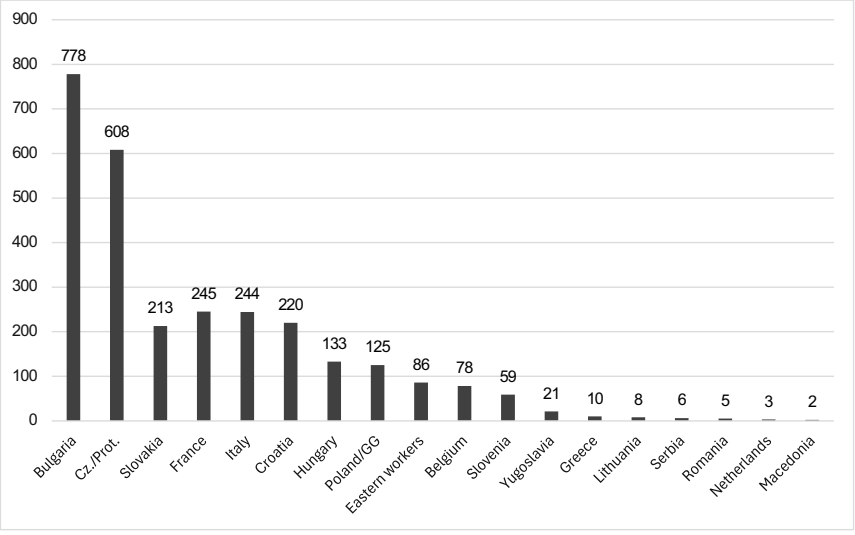

Graph 3: Origins of the foreign laborers. Source: Author's calculations based on the PORR database.

2.4 Gender

More than 98% of the individuals recorded in the database were male. Nevertheless, *PORR AG* demonstrably also deployed women as forced laborers on at least some of its construction sites. In the course of this research, 33 women were identified by name, 23 of whom were from the metropolitan area of Rostov in the former Soviet Union and were deployed as unskilled laborers on the construction site in Kapfenberg,[46] with two more female "eastern workers" being deployed on the *PORR* construction site at *Stickstoffwerke* (*IG Farben*) in Linz. Research also showed that a few female Polish forced laborers (altogether five) were deployed on the construction site of *Lenzing AG*. They were deployed – presumably in the company's residential camp located near the factory – as "attendants," "washers," and "clean-up workers."

46 For more detail, see my contribution on Kapfenberg in this volume (Chapter 7).

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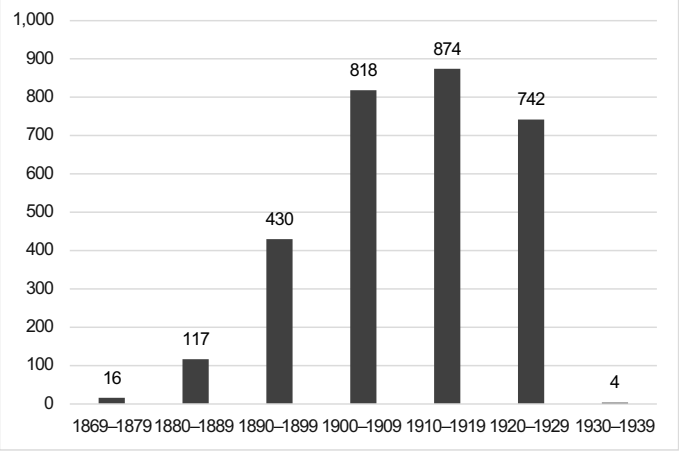
2.5 Age

Almost all the analyzed sources also include information on the laborers' ages. Graph 4 depicts the age structure of 3,001 identified foreign laborers by year of birth.



Graph 4: Distribution of foreign laborers by year of birth. Source: Author's calculations based on the PORR database.

A closer look at the age distribution in relation to countries of origin reveals some notable differences. More than half of the female "eastern workers" were born between 1920 and 1929 and were thus still underage when they were forcibly deployed by *PORR*. For example, Valentine J.,[47] who was born on November 29, 1928, was not even 14 years old when she was taken along with an entire group of female forced laborers from the vicinity of Rostov and brought to Kapfenberg on October 12, 1942, where she was registered in the Deuchendorf camp and deployed as an unskilled laborer. There is no information concerning her subsequent fate.[48]

By contrast, the years of birth of the French and Czech laborers deployed by *PORR* reflect the recruitment policies of Nazi Germany: In both countries, by order of the General Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment Fritz Sauckel, entire cohorts of men were recruited successively on the basis of their year of birth and deployed for forced labor in Nazi Germany. Thus, no less than 199 of the

47 In the following, the surnames of all those persons who were born less than 100 years ago have been omitted for data protection reasons. This excludes individuals whose complete names have already appeared in other publications.

48 Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten Jar – Bpuckh, Valentine J. Stadt Kapfenberg, Meldeamt.

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245 French forced laborers who demonstrably worked for *PORR* were born between 1920 and 1924. The age structure of the Czech laborers was similar, though a little more spread out. While in the early phase of the war, many Czechs went to Germany voluntarily to work (and thus came from different age groups), the Nazi regime also began systematically recruiting laborers from this group in 1942 based on year of birth. More than a third of the Czechs working for *PORR AG* – who were born between 1919 and 1923 – belonged to this category of forcibly deployed laborers.

2.6 Sites of Deployment/Construction Sites

The question of which *PORR* construction sites foreign laborers were deployed to in the territory of the "Ostmark" cannot be comprehensively answered due to the incomplete nature of the sources. The presence of foreign civilian laborers can be demonstrated on at least 40% to 60% of the company's construction sites – in "Oberdonau," "Niederdonau," Styria, and "Greater Vienna" – with their numbers fluctuating in relation to the size of the construction project, from a few individuals deployed for a brief period of time to hundreds being deployed for several years. Unsurprisingly, most foreign laborers were deployed on those construction sites that entailed the largest construction volumes. In "Oberdonau," for example, this included construction works for *Stickstoffwerke* (*IG Farben*) in Linz, where *PORR* deployed almost 600 foreign laborers between 1940 and 1945, including 14 "eastern workers" in addition to foreign forced laborers from Poland (2), Belgium (75), France (20), the Netherlands (2), and the territory of the present-day Czech Republic (113). Another 330 men – primarily from the Czech territories (175) – were deployed at *Flugzeug- und Metallbauwerke Wels* between 1939 and 1942. Almost 200 laborers were deployed by *PORR* on construction works for each of the companies *Lenzing AG* and *Österreichischen Kraftwerke AG* in Timelkam, including 89 Polish forced laborers, among others, in the case of Lenzing. While there is no consistent data regarding the company's numerous construction sites in Styria, it is evident that *PORR* deployed at least 1,300 foreign laborers for its enormous construction projects on behalf of the company's largest client, *Gebrüder Böhler* in Kapfenberg and St. Marein, with another 140 foreign laborers being deployed in Rottenmann to carry out construction on behalf of *Palten-Stahlindustrie*.

The company's construction sites in "Greater Vienna" were much smaller in terms of construction volume. Although *PORR* intermittently deployed foreign laborers at 20 construction sites in this area, these were all just smaller groups of at most 30 individuals who were only deployed for a few weeks at a time. An exception to this was a group of "labor Jews" who were deployed at the company's

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stockyard and on *Allbau* constructions sites in Vienna between 1940 and 1942. In each case, they numbered well over 40 individuals. The majority of the laborers deployed in "Greater Vienna" were from Bulgaria (102), the territory of the present-day Czech Republic (98), and Italy (97). An additional 26 "eastern workers" were deployed to construct a transformer building for a municipal electrical plant in Liesing.

2.7 Spheres of Activity on the Construction Sites

Structural and civil engineering is a very physically taxing job and entails significant dangers, even under normal circumstances. This was all the more true under the conditions of forced labor, as is proven by various accidents that occurred on *PORR* construction sites. The work moreover took place out in the open, during which the laborers were directly exposed to various weather conditions. Beginning in 1943, they were moreover increasingly exposed to the threat of Allied air raids, not least of all because – by contrast to Nazi German laborers – the forced laborers often did not have the option of seeking refuge in shelters in the event of an air raid. In over 2,750 documented cases of foreign laborers deployed by *PORR AG*, the sources also include references to the type of work they performed. This data reveals that the forced laborers were predominantly deployed in three large spheres of activity: More than 2,000 of the documented laborers were deployed by *PORR* as unskilled laborers and unskilled construction workers, around 250 as carpenters, and 240 as masons. A few individuals were moreover deployed as scaffolders, ironworkers, turners, fitters, painters, and operators, among other things. The documentation shows that across almost all nationalities, the majority of laborers were deployed as unskilled laborers and unskilled construction workers. Nevertheless, there were differences: While over 90% of documented "eastern workers" as well as French and Croatian laborers and over 80% of Hungarian, Bulgarian, and Czech laborers were deployed as unskilled laborers, only 68% of Slovak laborers were deployed for unskilled labor, this figure comprising only 55% of Italian laborers. Notably, only around 20% of Belgians (17 individuals) were deployed as unskilled laborers, with more than twice as many (36) being deployed as carpenters and another 22 as masons. This was presumably due to the corresponding professional qualifications held by the Belgian laborers.

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2.8 Escapes, Arrests, and Labor Training Camps

A portion of the collected sources, specifically the registration index cards from Kapfenberg and Rottenmann, also included references to unauthorized absences from the workplace and arrests conducted by the Gestapo or the gendarmerie, which often resulted in referral to labor training camps. In at least 78 cases, *PORR* laborers left their workplaces in Kapfenberg or Rottenmann without permission. This is evident from entries on registration index cards such as "shirking labor," "escaped," "fled," or "did not return from vacation." Such entries can be found in reference to laborers from many different countries, including individuals forcibly relocated to Nazi Germany, for example from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia (29 individuals), France (6), Poland (1), and Lithuania (2), and laborers from countries allied with Nazi Germany, such as Italy (2), Slovakia (1), and Hungary (6). The registration index cards also include occasional references to imprisonment by the gendarmerie or the Gestapo. Ten such cases are cited in the records from Kapfenberg and two from Rottenmann. The arrested laborers were from Bulgaria, Slovakia, the Protectorate, Lower Styria, and France. In Rottenmann, for example, two French forced laborers were arrested. Albert Gommerd from Breuville and Albert L'Hopital, who was born in Lyon, were both registered in Rottenmann on the same day, March 22, 1943. Gommerd was taken away by the gendarmerie on August 25, 1944 and returned to Rottenmann about two months later, on October 27, 1944.[49] One year previously – on August 24, 1943 – his compatriot Albert L'Hopital had been arrested by the Gestapo and was subsequently also gone for almost three months before returning to Rottenmann on November 11, 1943.[50] The preserved sources do not indicate why the two Frenchmen were arrested. Following his arrest by the Gestapo, L'Hospital was presumably referred to the Dionysen labor training camp, where the inmates were deployed for construction work on the Mur power station.[51] This is suggested by at least one other reference in his registration index card, which states that he was located in Niklasdorf before his return to Rottenmann, a name under which the Dionysen labor training camp also operating during the Nazi era.[52] In the course of his research, based on applications submitted to the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, the historian Hermann Rafetseder explicitly referred to the "concentration camp-like"[53] character of the labor training camps, as had also been demonstrated previously by the historian Gabriele Lofti in her

49 Meldekartei, Albert Gommerd. Stadt Rottenmann, Meldeamt.
50 Meldekartei, Albert L'Hopital. Ibid.
51 Karner, Im Strom der Zeit, esp. 70–81.
52 See Rafetseder, NS-Zwangsarbeits-Schicksale, 485–501.
53 On the labor training camps, see ibid., 487.

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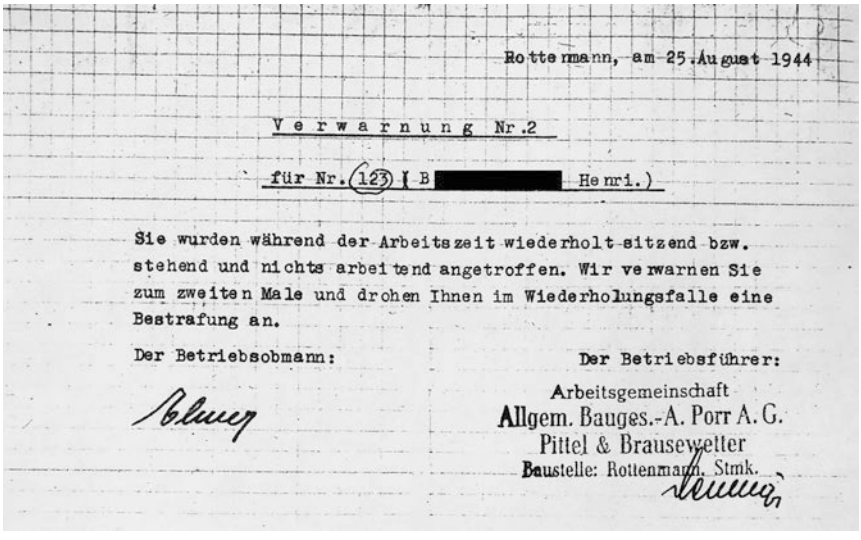
dissertation on the Gestapo's concentration camps.[54] Rafetseder's work shows clearly how even minor infractions could result in transferals to labor training camps, for example falling asleep at the workplace during night shifts.[55] Three other registration index cards from Kapfenberg evinced that three Bulgarian *PORR* laborers – all three of whom came from the vicinity of the northwest Bulgarian town of Lom – were sent to labor training camps (cited as "penal camps" in the sources) for unknown reasons in 1944. Stankov P., who was only 16 at the time, was deployed in Kapfenberg as an unskilled laborer in November 1943, where he was first registered in the Deuchendorf camp and later in the RAB (Hafendorf) camp, before being deregistered on April 20, 1944 to an "unknown" location. A later entry from April 20, 1945 notes that P. had returned to Kapfenberg "from the Eisenerz penal camp."[56] Meanwhile, P.'s compatriots Simeonov M.[57] and Todor Todorov Simonov[58] were sent to the Dionysen penal camp. M. was imprisoned there from June 24 to August 24, 1944. In none of these cases do the registration index cards indicate the reason for their punishment.



Rottenmann, am 25.August 1944

Verwarnung Nr.2

für Nr. 123 I B [redacted] Henri.)

Sie wurden während der Arbeitszeit wiederholt sitzend bzw. stehend und nichts arbeitend angetroffen. Wir verwarnen Sie zum zweiten Male und drohen Ihnen im Wiederholungsfalle eine Bestrafung an.

Der Betriebsobmann:

Der Betriebsführer:

Arbeitsgemeinschaft
Allgem. Bauges.-A. Porr A. G.
Pittel & Brausewetter
Baustelle: Rottenmann, Stmk.

Figure 1: Reprimand of the French *PORR* forced laborer Henri B. in Rottenmann. Source: ÖStA/AdR, Österreichischer Versöhnungsfonds (ÖVF), 27.088.

54 Lofti, KZ der Gestapo.
55 Rafetseder, NS-Zwangsarbeits-Schicksale, 491.
56 Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten BPin – Bprüz, Stankov P. Stadt Kapfenberg, Meldeamt.
57 Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten Modt – Muz, Simeonov M. Ibid.
58 Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten Sehab – Schnür, Todor Todorov Simonov. Ibid.

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2.9 Accidents and Deaths

Serious accidents occurred repeatedly on various construction sites in the course of construction works, some of which ended fatally. In addition, laborers suffered illness-related deaths. Altogether, eight deaths of foreign laborers deployed by *PORR AG* were identified in the documents researched for this project, which predominantly resulted from fatal accidents at work. Two of the deceased laborers were from the Protectorate and one each from Italy, Yugoslavia, France, Croatia, Hungary, and Bulgaria. The Yugoslav laborer, Karol Janza Rus, for example, died in Rottenmann as a result of an accident. Rus, who was born in Golobinjek in the southeast of Slovenia in September 1919, was deployed by *PORR* as a miner in Leoben-Donawitz and was registered in the on-site company barracks. According to the death register in the local registry office in Leoben, Rus died following an accident on November 4, 1941, though the records contain no further details.[59] By contrast, the Italian civilian laborer Albino Veronese from Belfiore all'Adige died in the Rottenmann hospital on November 3, 1941 from a serious illness. He had been living in the *PORR* barracks in Liezen.[60]

3 Foreign Civilian Laborers by Country of Origin

As already demonstrated, the laborers deployed by *PORR* in the territory of the "Ostmark" – at least insofar as could be determined from the preserved sources – came from 18 different countries. The following section will focus in more detail on each of these national groups.

3.1 Laborers with an "Exit" and a "Voice"

3.1.1 Bulgaria

In late 1939, *PORR AG* first deployed 16 Bulgarian laborers in the "Ostmark," specifically at the construction site for *Flugzeugwerke Wels*, and in subsequent years continued canvassing for labor contingents from Bulgaria, as evident from various reports of the executive board and board of directors. Nazi Germany had signed a state treaty with the Kingdom of Bulgaria, as a result of which the Reich Ministry of Labor established an office for labor recruitment in Sofia. However, the number of Bulgarian laborers deployed in Nazi Germany remained com-

59 Meldekartei, Karol Janza Rus. Stadt Rottenmann, Meldeamt; bzw. Sterbebuch 1941, Bd. 2, Eintrag Nr. 469. Standesamt Leoben.

60 Sterbebuch 1941, Eintrag Nr. 128, November 17, 1941. Stadt Rottenmann, Standesamt.

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paratively low, probably comprising around 30,000 individuals.[61] Bulgaria nevertheless constituted an important recruitment site for *PORR*:[62] In June 1940, the company's executive board reported that "the relevant authorities in Bulgaria"[63] had approved the deployment of another 900 Bulgarian laborers by *PORR AG* in the "Ostmark." This large number of Bulgarian laborers working for *PORR* was also reflected in the personal data researched for this project. Altogether 778 Bulgarian laborers were identified working for the company – who subsequently constitute the largest national group in the database. The sources show that Bulgarian laborers were deployed at over 20 *PORR AG* construction sites in the "Ostmark" between 1939 and 1945. Aside from Wels, there were already 200 Bulgarians deployed by *PORR* in Kapfenberg-Hafendorf in the fall of 1939.[64] From 1940 onward, the number of Bulgarian laborers deployed in Wels rose to 137, with more deployed at the power plant construction site in Timelkam (110) and at the nitrogen plant construction site on behalf of *IG Farben* in Linz (134). From the summer of 1940, the number of Bulgarians deployed at the *PORR* constructions sites in Kapfenberg (*Gebrüder Böhler & Co.*) also rose to at least 285. At least 40 of these laborers had previously been registered in Kottingbrunn, which suggests they had been deployed in the framework of the *PORR* construction site on behalf of *Donau Chemie AG* in Moosbierbaum.

The living and working conditions under which these Bulgarians were deployed as foreign laborers in Nazi Germany have hardly been examined in the relevant research literature to date. As Bulgaria, which had an authoritarian government, initially remained neutral before joining the war on the side of the Axis powers in March 1941,[65] Bulgarian laborers were presumably not subject to systematic repressive measures and had the possibility of freely quitting their employment contracts and/or returning to Bulgaria unimpeded after the end of their employment contracts. Bulgarian laborers were at first demonstrably treated largely equally to their German peers with regard to stipulations in their employment contracts concerning working hours, wages, and social welfare. For example, the employment contract of one Bulgarian *PORR* laborer from 1941

61 Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 87.

62 Aside from *PORR*, the Wehrmacht also tried to recruit Bulgarian laborers for its armaments factories. For example, the armaments inspection in Military District XVII reported in January 1942 that over 100 Bulgarian skilled laborers had been successfully acquired in the framework of the Central European Economic Conference (Mitteleuropäischer Wirtschaftstag), who were to be trained in the territory of the Military District. Bericht vom 14. 1. 1942, 118. BArch/Abt. Militärarchiv (BArch/MA), RW 20-17/15, Lagerichte der Rüstungsinspektion XVII, 15. 9. 1941 bis 15. 2. 1942.

63 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, June 30, 1940, 2. PA.

64 Kriegstagebuch des Rüstungskommandos Graz, 24. 8. 1939 bis 31. 12. 1939, Eintrag 7. 10. 1939, 87. BArch/MA, RW 21-24/1.

65 Luleva, Forced Labour, 188.

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states: "With regard to labor protection and social security, the laborer is essentially to be treated on a par with German laborers."[66] Another example from October 1939 moreover suggests that Bulgarian laborers had the possibility of demanding that prior agreements regarding their employment be implemented. In this case, 200 Bulgarian *PORR* laborers, who were deployed at the Kapfenberg-Hafendorf construction site, complained that they were not receiving the kilogram of bread per person per day promised to them in their contracts. According to the Armaments Command Center, this was because a wartime decree had limited bread rations to merely 400 grams per person per day. The Armaments Command Center in Graz moreover reported that the Bulgarian laborers subsequently demanded an increase to at least 600 grams per day and referred to them as "bread eaters."[67]

A report from the Armaments Command Center in Linz[68] concerning labor deployment in the second quarter of 1940 includes the following racist assessment based on the "experience" with Bulgarian laborers deployed at *Reichswerke Hermann Göring* in Linz: "The Bulgarian laborer of the Christian faith is diligent, modest, and persevering, but the Bulgarian Mohammedan is lazy, unclean, and unreliable. We only have very few of the latter."[69] A later passage adds that the Bulgarian laborers evinced "downright enthusiasm about the successes of the German Wehrmacht, as reflected in numerous cases of voluntary enlistment for the front line."[70]

Despite these circumstances – as already demonstrated above – Bulgarian laborers were also subject to thoroughly repressive punishments by the Nazi regime in response to (alleged) infractions at the workplace, including referral to labor training camps. The following case shows that the Nazi authorities were not entirely in agreement concerning the status of the Bulgarian laborers: In January 1942, a group of Bulgarian laborers, who were deployed by *PORR AG* on its construction project on behalf of *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.* in Böhlerwerk near Waidhofen an der Ybbs, refused to continue working despite repeated instructions by the employment agency in Amstetten. One of the laborers, the mason Anatschkoff Todor Zwetkoff, was arrested on January 5, 1942 along with 14 other Bulgarians and brought before the district court in Waidhofen an der Ybbs. The

66 3 St 58/42, Strafverfahren gegen Anatschoff Todor Zwetkoff et al. wegen Arbeitsverweigerung, Arbeitsvertrag, May 16, 1941. Staatsanwaltschaft (StA) St. Pölten beim Landesgericht (LG) St. Pölten.

67 Kriegstagebuch des Rüstungskommandos Graz, 24. 8. 1939 bis 31. 12. 1939, Eintrag 7. 10. 1939, 87. BArch/MA, RW 21-24/1.

68 Kriegstagebuch Nr. 3 des Kommandos des Rüstungsbereichs Linz der Rüstungsinspektion des Wehrkreises XVII, 2. Quartal 1940, Rückblick über die rüstungswirtschaftliche Entwicklung für die Zeit vom 1. 4.–30. 6. 1940, Anlage 1. Ibid., RW 21-38/3.

69 Anlage 1, 3. Ibid.

70 Anlage 9, 1. Ibid.

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head of the Amstetten employment agency charged them as a fiduciary of the state with allegedly refusing to work and submitted a complaint against Zwetkoff and his 14 comrades to the public prosecution office in St. Pölten. However, the charges were dropped and the case was closed since all the accused had employment contracts that only related to the construction season in 1941.[71]

The situation for Bulgarian laborers changed in 1944 as a result of the developing political circumstances. As Bulgaria distanced itself from the Nazi regime, this had a negative impact on the Bulgarian laborers deployed in Nazi Germany, regarding living and working conditions and their freedom of movement. For example, in September 1944, the General Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment decreed that Bulgarian laborers who were conscripted to the Bulgarian army were "not to be released but should be kept at their workplaces."[72]

3.1.2 Romania

The deployment of Romanian laborers followed a similar pattern as that of Bulgarian laborers. Recruitment took place on a voluntary basis, yet presumably the number of Romanian laborers who ended up being deployed in Nazi Germany did not much exceed 10,000.[73] There were also hardly any Romanian laborers working for *PORR AG*, with only five having been identified in the database. Four of them were deployed in Kapfenberg, St. Marein, and Zwentendorf between 1939 and 1941 (partly in succession to one another), the fifth was deployed in Vienna for "clean-up operations" from September 1944 onward. The sources suggest that at least two of the five Romanians belonged to the group of "ethnic Germans." In Nazi discourse, this applied to all those individuals who were not German citizens, but "members of the German people through language and culture."[74]

71 3 St 58/42, Strafverfahren gegen Anatschoff Todor Zwetkoff wegen Arbeitsverweigerung, Arbeitsamt Amstetten an StA beim LG St. Pölten, January 13, 1942. StA St. Pölten beim LG St. Pölten.

72 Kriegstagebuch des Rüstungskommandos Graz, 3. Quartal 1944, Eintrag 8.9.1944, 161. BArch/MA, RW 21-24/22; and Kriegstagebuch des Rüstungskommandos Mödling, Nr. 20, 3. Quartal 1944, Anlage 32, September 11, 1944. Ibid., RW 21-46/14.

73 Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 87.

74 Herzog, Die Volksdeutschen, 2.

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3.1.3 Slovakia

Slovakia, headed by Jozef Tiso and his paramilitary Hlinka Guard, became both an ally and a vassal of Nazi Germany in October 1939, and as such had also committed itself to providing laborers to Nazi Germany.[75] Previous estimates cited a figure of around 100,000 Slovaks deployed in the industrial, agricultural, and construction sectors in Nazi Germany and the occupied territories during World War Two, of whom over 44% were female. Until 1940, high levels of unemployment in Slovakia meant that the Slovak regime found it relatively easy to recruit the number of Slovak laborers demanded by the Nazi regime. To this end, the Tiso regime also cut off unemployment benefits for men of certain age cohorts who refused to go to Nazi Germany, thereby forcing them to emigrate.[76] In any case, the Command Center in Linz of the armaments inspection of Military District XVII in 1940 expressed great satisfaction with the operational readiness and attitude of the Slovak laborers:

> "The Slovaks are mostly diligent and honest workers (with the exception of those from Bratislava), they are frugal and feel at ease here. A small portion is organized in the Hlinka Guard, yet it would be amiss to claim that only the Hlinka Guard has a positive attitude toward Germany. The majority of the Slovaks would very much like to help bear the burden of war, as they consider this to be not just about Germany, but about the fate of all working mankind. Attempts to escape the camps are rare among the Slovaks."[77]

As Slovakia was formally allied with Nazi Germany, the Nazi regime did not apply repressive methods in its recruitment of laborers in Slovakia, as it did in the occupied territories. The employment contracts, which mostly lasted for one construction season, were drawn up in the framework of diplomatic negotiations.[78] In the second half of the war, however, Slovakia was no longer able to entirely meet the demand for laborers from the Nazi regime, for example only being able to supply 34,000 instead of the demanded 50,000 laborers in 1943. The Nazi regime consequently extended the one-year contracts indefinitely in 1944 (which effectively lasted until the end of the war) and in late 1944 – following the Slovak uprising against the Tiso regime and the Hlinka Guard – Sauckel decreed a general ban on Slovak laborers returning home.[79]

PORR AG deployed a large number of Slovak laborers, more than 300 of whom could be identified by name. The majority of these men were deployed in

75 Jakschová, Slovak Republic, 59.
76 Ibid., 61.
77 Kriegstagebuch Nr. 3 des Kommandos des Rüstungsbereichs Linz der Rüstungsinspektion des Wehrkreises XVII, 2. Quartal 1940, Rückblick über die rüstungswirtschaftliche Entwicklung für die Zeit vom 1.4.–30.6.1940, Anlage 1, 3. BArch/MA, RW 21-38/3.
78 Jakschová, Slovak Republic, 62.
79 Ibid., 61.

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Kapfenberg (98), at *Stickstoffwerke Linz* (85), at *Lenzing AG* (72) and in Timelkam (69). A glance at the registration data of the individual local health insurance providers in "Oberdonau" reveals that a large number of Slovak laborers moved back and forth between construction sites, for example being temporarily deployed in Timelkam and/or Lenzing. Some of the Slovaks worked for *PORR* for several years, such as Justin Olejko. Born in 1902, he worked for *PORR* non-stop from June 1940 to January 1944, deployed as an unskilled laborer on the Timelkam power plant construction site. A glance at the laborers' towns of origin revealed that large groups of Slovak laborers came from the same towns or regions. For example, on April 13, 1940 alone, over 60 Slovaks from the Hlohovec region arrived in Kapfenberg and were assigned to *PORR*. The sources document one example of a Slovak laborer, namely Johann Dlhy (born in Bojnicky in 1922), who, for unnamed reasons, was arrested at the Kapfenberg construction site and sent to a labor training camp for two months before returning to Kapfenberg.[80] Altogether seven Slovak laborers deployed by *PORR* in Kapfenberg and St. Marein were identified, who left their workplaces without permission ("fled" or "escaped") or did not return from a home visit.

3.1.4 Italy

The status and thus also the living conditions of Italian laborers in Nazi Germany changed more or less overnight following the announcement of the Armistice of Cassibile on September 8, 1943, which had already been signed on September 3. While Italian civilian laborers had up to then been treated equally to German civilian laborers, even enjoying a certain special status due to their origins from a fascist state,[81] they were henceforth treated with a strong degree of suspicion on account of Italy's switch from the Axis to the Allied side. This situation was exacerbated by the fact that Italian soldiers captured after September 8, 1943 were not treated as prisoners of war, but from September 9, 1943 were given the status of "military internees" in order to deny them the protections offered by the Geneva Convention and/or support from the Red Cross. More than half a million of these "military internees" were subsequently deported to perform forced labor in Nazi Germany and the occupied territories.[82] In 1942, altogether around 200,000 Italian civilian laborers were located in Nazi Germany,[83] their numbers

80 Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten DTafvw – Dtüz, Johann Dlhy. Stadt Kapfenberg, Meldeamt.
81 Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 81.
82 Karner/Ruggenthaler, Zwangsarbeit, 215–221.
83 Ibid., 216.

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during the entirety of World War Two totaling 1.45 million, of whom 8% were female and half a million were "military internees."[84]

PORR AG also deployed a large number of Italian civilian laborers in the "Ostmark" between 1940 and 1943, of whom altogether 244 could be identified by name. The Italian men were scattered across smaller construction sites in Vienna, for example for bunker construction works at the Westbahnhof train station and on Wällischgasse in the third district. Several small groups of around a dozen men each were deployed for pier construction at the Danube harbor in Linz (twelve men) and construction works for the steel industry on behalf of *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.* in Kapfenberg (13 men). However, the majority of the Italians were deployed at *Linzer Stickstoffwerke*, with 88 Italians being registered there with *PORR* between 1941 and 1943. Over the course of 1943, the number of Italian laborers deployed by *PORR* in the "Ostmark" decreased across the board, except at *Stickstoffwerke Linz*, where 26 new Italian laborers were deployed as late as August and September 1944. At least in the case of these most recently registered men, it may be presumed that they were recruited by force, since at the time they were registered, Italians were effectively barred from returning home and a general labor duty had moreover been decreed.

Aside from the Italian laborers deployed by *PORR* on its construction sites in the "Ostmark," the company was also organizationally responsible for around 5,000 Italian laborers employed by 20 Italian companies for a few weeks in mid-1944 and working on construction sites in Italy.[85] These laborers were supervised by *PORR* employees on (unspecified) construction projects in central and northern Italy in the framework of a management agreement signed with OT.[86] However, this supervision contract proved not to be as lucrative for *PORR* as the company had hoped. As early as July 1944, the company's executive board reported that the number of Italian laborers it was tasked with supervising had decreased to just 600 due to "extensive labor shirking."[87] Instead of the envisioned 5 million Reichsmark, by late 1944 the project had therefore brought in only 2.8 million Reichsmark. Moreover, *PORR* had to write off significant losses of equipment due to combat operations (amounting to almost 60,000 Reichsmark) and lost one of its more "enthusiastic bureaucrats," who was shot dead by partisans.[88] Neither the exact location nor the type of project was discernible, as the references in the company's records to these events were extremely vague.

84 URL: https://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit-hintergrund/index.html (accessed November 19, 2023).
85 On Organisation Todt in Italy, see Lemmes, Zwangsarbeit.
86 Bericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, May 1944, 5. PA.
87 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, July 26, 1944, 2. Ibid.
88 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für 1944, January 1945, 1 and 7. Ibid.

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PORR AG finally also deployed up to 2,000 Italian prisoners of war ("military internees") in Bor, Serbia, for railroad construction in 1944.[89]

3.1.5 Hungary

Along with Croatia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia, Hungary was one of the states allied with Nazi Germany. Recruitment of laborers in Hungary was conducted on a voluntary basis, which meant that the number of Hungarian laborers deployed in Nazi Germany remained relatively low, amounting to about 45,000 to 50,000 individuals.[90] Hungarian laborers were nevertheless generally treated worse than Western European laborers.[91] In the course of this project, 133 Hungarian laborers were identified by name, 108 of whom were deployed by *PORR* in Kapfenberg on the industrial construction project for *Gebrüder Böhler & Co*. The collective data from the registration records in Kapfenberg reveals that over 60 of these Hungarian laborers were registered with two nationalities, namely Hungarian and Yugoslav. The places of birth of these men – primarily Prelog, Donji Vidovec, Sveti Marija, Čukovec, and Donji Mihaljevec – indicate that these were inhabitants of the Međimurje region between the rivers Drava and Mura. While this region had belonged to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia up to 1941, between 1941 and 1945 it was under Hungarian administration, before falling back under Croatian control after the end of the war. The registration records of these men moreover reveal that most of them (55 out of 62) were registered with the police in Kapfenberg on the same day, namely July 4, 1942. They were therefore presumably brought on a collective transport, though it remains unclear whether they came to Kapfenberg voluntarily or not. At least some of these laborers later left their workplaces without permission. The registration index cards note "escaped"[92] in four cases and "did not return from vacation"[93] in another two. The fact that a few cases also cite recruitment by the Wehrmacht may indicate that there were also some "ethnic Germans" among the Hungarian laborers deployed by *PORR*.[94]

It should be noted that *PORR* also deployed another 1,900 Hungarian laborers in the vicinity of Bor, Serbia, in 1944 in the framework of the railroad con-

89 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 423.
90 See also Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 84.
91 Jabloner/Bailer-Galanda/Blimlinger/Graf/Knight/Mikoletzky/Perz/Sandgruber/Stuhlpfarrer/Teichova, Schlussbericht, 192.
92 See for example: Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten Schar – Stüz, Blas Strbad. Stadt Kapfenberg, Meldeamt.
93 See for example: Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten FVWur – Hrü, Josef Horwath. Ibid.
94 See for example: Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten FVWab – FVWor, Paul Vukics. Ibid.

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struction project being conducted on behalf of Organisation Todt (Einsatzgruppe Südost). This group of laborers were categorized as Jewish.[95]

3.2 Laborers without an "Exit" but with a "Voice"

3.2.1 Bohemia and Moravia/Protectorate

Following Germany's annexation of the border regions of Bohemia and Moravia in the framework of the Munich Agreement in the fall of 1938, many unemployed Czechs initially voluntarily went to Germany to find work. In the first half of 1939, the Recruitment Commissions of the Ministry of Labor recruited about 52,000 Czechs for work in Germany.[96] The situation deteriorated markedly following the occupation of the rest of Bohemia and Moravia, which was renamed the Protectorate. While ethnic Germans were declared citizens of the Reich, the Nazi regime degraded the rest of the population to second-class citizens.[97] From the summer of 1939 onward, Czech men found it ever more difficult to refuse labor deployment to Nazi Germany, and for those already located in Germany, it was deliberately made more difficult to return home ("exit").[98] In the spring of 1942, the General Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment Fritz Sauckel and the Deputy Reich-Protector of Bohemia and Moravia Reinhard Heydrich finally agreed to deploy 100,000 Czech forced laborers in Nazi Germany. This resulted in the gradual conscription for labor of entire age cohorts, beginning in the spring of 1942 with individuals born in 1921 and 1922. Conscription was later expanded to those born between 1918 and 1924. The total number of Czech forced laborers deployed in Nazi Germany is estimated to have been between 400,000 and 450,000 individuals.[99] This recruitment practice by age cohort was also evident among the Czechs deployed by *PORR AG*.

After Bulgarians, laborers from the Czech part of former Czechoslovakia (the Protectorate) formed the second-largest group of *PORR* laborers that could be identified, numbering around 600 individuals. A significant portion of this group, more than a third (226 men) of the altogether 600 identified Czech laborers, was born between 1919 and 1923, which indicates that they were forcibly brought to Nazi Germany as a result of conscription from 1942 onward.

Due to their Slavic background, Czechs were also faced with ethnic stigmatization by the Nazi regime, which ultimately had a negative impact on their

95 See Mišo Kapetanović's contribution to this volume.
96 Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 41.
97 Ibid., 40.
98 Jarská, Czechs, 47.
99 Ibid., 48.

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living and working conditions. Nevertheless, they did enjoy certain advantages over "eastern workers" and Polish forced laborers and were mostly able to move around the camps with relative ease. Many profited from the fact that they were typically better educated and even partly spoke a little German.[100] In contrast to the forced laborers recruited from Western Europe, like the men from Belgium, France, and the Netherlands, Czechs were nevertheless disadvantaged. The Nazi regime treated them with denigration and suspicion, as the following quote from the armaments inspection of Military District XVII shows:

> "Regarding an assessment of performance, the Czech lags far behind his German comrade laborer since he only works in order to earn. He is not convinced of the unconditional coexistence with the German and complains a lot. One can generally say that the better laborers are those from the Moravian rural population. The worst laborers are from Prague, Pilsen, and Brünn. It has been discerned that a portion of the Czechs remain in the Protectorate of their own volition following family visits or vacations at home and do not return to the workplace. Escapes from the camp have been increasing, especially in recent times."[101]

Altogether 608 Czech laborers were identified in this project, with their designation in the sources varying between the abbreviation "Tsch." or the stamp "Č" (in the files of the "Oberdonau" health insurance company) and "Protektorat." The data shows that the Czech laborers working for *PORR* between 1939 and 1941 were primarily deployed on the larger construction projects in "Oberdonau," above all in Wels for the construction of halls on behalf of *Flugzeug- und Metallbauwerke*[102] (175 men), on construction projects for *Stickstoffwerke Linz* (113 men), and at the Danube harbor in Linz (34 men). Yet the single largest deployment of Czech laborers by *PORR* took place in Kapfenberg (195 men). At least half of this latter group were transferred in mid-1943 to work on the new construction site in St. Marein im Mürztal, which had been given top priority. But there were also around 50 Czechs deployed by *PORR* in "Greater Vienna" – at around a dozen different construction sites – some of whom were also deployed by *Allbau*. However, since the Viennese construction sites were often smaller and shorter-term projects, many of the Czech laborers switched construction sites repeatedly over the course of time. For example, Johann S. from Brno/Brünn began working for *PORR AG* as an unskilled laborer on June 6, 1941. He was initially deployed for bunker construction works at the Westbahnhof train station, was transferred to bunker construction works on Wällischgasse in mid-July

100 Ibid., 49.

101 Kriegstagebuch Nr. 3 des Kommandos des Rüstungsbereichs Linz der Rüstungsinspektion des Wehrkreises XVII, 2. Quartal 1940, Rückblick über die rüstungswirtschaftliche Entwicklung für die Zeit vom 1. 4.–30. 6. 1940, Anlage 1, 3–4. BArch/MA, RW 21-38/3.

102 On the history of Flugzeug- und Metallbauwerke in Wels during the Nazi era, see Kitzmantel/Neuwirth/Witibschlager, Flugzeug- und Metallbauwerke Wels.

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1941, and from late August 1941 was redeployed to Neu-Guntramsdorf near Wiener Neudorf to work on a construction project on behalf of *Flugmotorenwerke Ostmark*. In mid-May 1943, he was transferred yet again, this time to Liesing in Vienna, where he worked for *PORR AG* on a construction project on behalf of *Industriebahnbau-Gesellschaft*.[103]

Although sources relating to the "Niederdonau" region are relatively sparse, it may be presumed that numerous men of Czech origin were also deployed on the large-scale construction sites there by *PORR*. There are references to Czech laborers working on construction projects on behalf of *Donau Chemie AG* in Moosbierbaum, *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.* in Böhlerwerk near Waidhofen an der Ybbs, and *Schöller & Bleckmann* in Ternitz.

The difficult living and working conditions suffered by Czech laborers is evinced through the example of 15 Czech laborers working for *PORR* in Böhlerwerk. These men, most of whom came from the southern Moravian town of Sviny, evidently returned to their workplace at the *PORR* construction site two days late. As a punishment, they were "sentenced to three intensified weekend arrests," as the gendarmerie in Waidhofen an der Ybbs notified the Gestapo branch office in St. Pölten.[104] This case also reveals that Czech laborers were at least allowed to go home on vacation from time to time. This is also attested to by a vacation pass preserved in a reconciliation fund application submitted by the Czech forced laborer Rudolf H.[105] Yet the limitations on the movement of Czech laborers are evinced in yet another example, namely the case of Alois T., who "left his workplace at the Fa. Allg. Baugesellschaft A. PORR AG of his own volition in early August 1942 and only returned to work on November 24, 1942."[106] Alois T. was punished with a fine of 50 Reichsmark. The Czech laborers working for *PORR* were also the group most likely to use vacations at home in order to escape forced labor. This is evinced by the registration index cards of over 30 men in Kapfenberg and Rottenmann, which include notes such as "did not return from vacation," "fled," or "shirking labor."

103 Johann S. ÖGK Wien, Standesblätter "Ausländer," Film Nr. 3313.

104 Gendarmerie Waidhofen an der Ybbs an Gestapoaußenstelle St. Pölten, May 7, 1943. Niederösterreichisches Landesarchiv (NÖLA), BH Amstetten, Gr. XI, 1942/44, M. Pol. 31/1-1.

105 Urlaubsschein Rudolf H., March 3, 1944. Deutsch-Tschechischer Zukunftsfonds, Versöhnungsfondsakten, Akt Nr. 36963.

106 Ordnungsstrafbescheid des Beauftragten des Reichstreuhänders der Arbeit f. d. Wirtschaftsgebiet Steiermark-Kärnten, Alois T., December 7, 1942. Ibid., Akt Nr. 53513.

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3.2.2 France

Another large group of civilian laborers deployed by *PORR AG* consisted of French laborers. Like the Czech laborers, they partly came to work voluntarily in Nazi Germany up to the end of 1941. However, in 1942 the German authorities began to pressure French companies, for example shutting many down in order to coerce the laborers this freed up to go to Nazi Germany, sometimes even using force against them and their families.[107] From mid-1943, the successive conscription of entire age cohorts was also introduced in France. The driving force of this operation was the General Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment Fritz Sauckel as well as the Nazi-friendly Vichy regime.[108] In the framework of these conscription drives (the so-called "Sauckel Operations") – which were in France generally known as STO (Service du Travail Obligatoire) – around 730,000 French men were brought to Nazi Germany between June 1942 and late August 1944.[109] The total number of French laborers deployed in Nazi Germany between 1939 and 1945 was probably a little more than 1 million, in addition to 1.3 million forced laborers (some of whom were nevertheless granted the status of civilian laborers).[110]

During the research for this project, 245 forced laborers of French origin were identified by name who were deployed by *PORR AG* on various construction sites. Insofar as the available data allows for such conclusions to be drawn, the overwhelming majority of the identified men was brought to the "Ostmark" in the framework of the second, third, and fourth "Sauckel Operations." Almost 81% of these Frenchmen were born in 1920 (38 individuals), 1921 (36), and 1922 (123) and were deployed at altogether twelve different construction sites on behalf of *PORR*. Most of them worked in Styria at the *Böhler* construction sites in Kapfenberg and St. Marein and on the *Palten-Stahlindustrie* construction project in Rottenmann. Due to the priority granted to the construction project in St. Marein in the later course of the war, many of the forced laborers were transferred from the Kapfenberg to the St. Marein construction sites.

Deportations to the "Ostmark" usually followed the same pattern. The men were summoned – on the basis of their year of birth – to their local authorities in their hometowns and subsequently transported to Nazi Germany by train (often in cattle cars). They were first sent to various transit camps – in the case of

107 Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 63.
108 Karner/Ruggenthaler, Zwangsarbeit, 201–209.
109 Ibid., 208.
110 URL: https://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit-hintergrund/index.html (accessed November 19, 2023).

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Kapfenberg and Rottenmann via Graz or Bruck an der Mur – before being assigned workplaces by the employment agency in Bruck an der Mur.[111]

Many former forced laborers from France submitted applications for compensation to the Austrian Reconciliation Fund in the early 2000s. These applications include valuable information on the conditions under which they performed forced labor, their deportation, and their everyday lives. To cite from one application as a representative case, namely that of Rosé Simon B., who was born in the Alpes-Maritimes Department in 1922 and brought to St. Marein im Mürztal to perform forced labor in June 1943:

> "I was based in the compulsory labor camp for young people in the Foret du Dom, near Bormes-les-Mimosas (Var Department). Around late May 1943, when we arose one morning, our camp was surrounded. We were made to climb up on trucks and brought to Nîmes (Gard Department). There, we were loaded onto cattle cars that were fitted with padlocks. During the journey, we were threatened with weapons and did not know where we were being taken. 48 hours later, we alighted in Graz, from where I was brought to the St. Marein camp. For two years, I had to work there under threat of German arms, and I was made to work for the PORR company. We were guarded day and night and the camp was surrounded by barbed wire. We were only given enough provisions so as not to die of hunger or cold, and we were occasionally impelled with rubber truncheons. I was forced to work on the construction of a modern foundry, to dig trenches, and to perform other labor."[112]

3.2.3 Yugoslavia

An issue that is particularly difficult to assess is the status of those laborers who, according to the preserved sources, came from Yugoslavia and/or federated states of Yugoslavia such as Serbia and Croatia or territories like Lower Styria (which today forms part of Slovenia). Following the invasion of the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the spring of 1941, parts of the country were occupied by German troops, for example the territory of so-called Lower Styria, which was integrated into the Nazi administrative regions of Carinthia and Styria. Other territories – including large parts of Serbia – were ceded by the Nazi regime to its allies Hungary and Bulgaria, which had participated in the Balkan campaign. In Croatia, by contrast, Nazi Germany established a puppet regime.[113] As far as can be determined from the data cited in the sources concerning their origins, laborers from the territory of "Lower Styria," Croatia, and Serbia were deployed by *PORR AG*.

111 See for example: Arbeitsbuch, Rosé Simon B. ÖStA/AdR, Österreichischer Versöhnungsfonds (ÖVF), 83.940.

112 Ibid.

113 See Mišo Kapetanović's contribution to this volume.

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3.2.3.1 "Lower Styria"/Yugoslavia/Slovenia

The places of birth[114] and the origins cited in the analyzed sources allowed for the identification of a group of 60 to 70 men who all came from the territory of present-day Slovenia, most of whom were deployed by *PORR* as unskilled laborers in Kapfenberg or St. Marein.[115] Altogether 73 individuals were registered by the municipality of Kapfenberg whose origins were cited either as "Yugoslavia" or as "Lower Styria" (eleven of whom with the addition "German Reich" and 19 with the addition "Yugoslavia"). Some of the eleven who were cited as originating in the "German Reich" may have been members of the German-speaking minority from Southeastern or Eastern Europe.[116] The hypothesis that some of these men were of German-speaking origin is supported by the reasons cited for their later deregistration from Kapfenberg, with four of them for example being redeployed to the East and/or to the Wehrmacht. In other cases, the reasons cited for deregistration rather suggest a context of force: A few cases include formulations such as "imprisoned" (in one case), "fled" (in three cases), or "did not return from vacation" (in another three cases), which in any event indicate unauthorized absences from the workplace. Additionally, ten of the Lower Styrians left the Kapfenberg construction site as they were redeployed to work for OT. The identifiable laborers from the territory of present-day Slovenia were predominantly deployed in Kapfenberg in the second half of 1941, 46 of them alone in the last week of October.

3.2.3.2 Serbia

In sum, more than 200,000 Serbian civilian laborers and prisoners of war were deployed in Nazi Germany during World War Two.[117] While in the first years of the war, many Serbian laborers came more or less voluntarily, from 1943 onward thousands were deported as forced laborers.[118]

114 Regarding the places of birth cited for those *PORR* laborers who were identified as coming from "Yugoslavia" or "Lower Styria," the vast majority were cited as Maribor, Celje, Murska Sobotka, and Ptuj as well as various suburbs of these places.

115 Only four laborers of Yugoslav background could be identified who were deployed by *PORR* outside of Styria, namely three unskilled laborers who worked on the construction of the Danube harbor in Linz between July 23 and September 13, 1941, and another individual who was deployed as an unskilled laborer in Wels in the second half of 1940.

116 It is often difficult to ascertain on the basis of the available sources whether the identified *PORR* laborers constituted members of the German-speaking minority in Southeastern or Eastern Europe. At least in the case of 15 individuals it is highly probable that they belonged to this group, considering that the sources in all these cases additionally cite "German" as these individuals' nationality. In some cases, the sources also apply the term "Rückwanderer" (rémigré). Individuals who were deregistered to the Wehrmacht were also presumably classed as "ethnic Germans."

117 URL: https://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit-hintergrund/index.html (accessed November 19, 2023).

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However, only six laborers of Serbian background could be identified among the workforce deployed by *PORR AG*, four of whom were deployed for a few months in 1942 to work on construction projects on behalf of *Donau Chemie AG* in Linz and one of whom was deployed for a construction project on behalf of *Donau Chemie AG* in Moosbierbaum. Another Serbian forced laborer, Milan Pantović (born in Gornji Milanovac in 1921), was deployed by *PORR AG* in Bor, Serbia, in the framework of the above-mentioned construction project on behalf of Organisation Todt.[119] He would later recount in detail his experiences of this forced labor deployment in an eyewitness testimony.[120] It is highly probable that other Serbian civilian forced laborers were deployed by *PORR* on the OT construction sites in Serbia, alongside almost 2,000 Italian prisoners of war. As mentioned above, around 100 foreign laborers were deployed by *PORR* in Serbia between May and December 1944.

3.2.3.3 Croatia

In May 1941, the fascist Independent State of Croatia signed an agreement with Nazi Germany to "deliver" 54,500 laborers. These laborers were initially granted employment contracts lasting for a period of one year with the possibility of extension. At first, the Croatian laborers were basically treated as equal to German laborers from a legal perspective. However, this obviously directly contradicted the Nazi regime's racist ideology, as the Croats were of Slavic descent.[121] In 1941, altogether 9,922 Croatian laborers were granted employment contracts and deployed in the territory of Nazi Germany. Minorities living in Croatia (primarily Serbs) were subject to violent deportation until March 1943, after which this measure was also extended to Croats, for example if they refused military service, as will also be demonstrated below with regard to *PORR* laborers.[122] Around 100,000 Serbian laborers were deployed in the territory of Nazi Germany, of whom about 22% were female.[123]

PORR AG also deployed a large contingent of Croatian laborers, 220 of whom could be identified by name. They were predominantly deployed on the company's large-scale Styrian construction sites in Kapfenberg (126), St. Marein (15), and Rottenmann (22), with around 60 also deployed in "Greater Vienna" by *PORR*. The latter included Josip V. (born in Zagreb in 1923),[124] who was deployed

118 Karner/Ruggenthaler, Zwangsarbeit, 194.
119 See Mišo Kapetanović's contribution to this volume.
120 URL: https://archiv.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/de/interviews/za358 (accessed May 13, 2024).
121 Karner/Ruggenthaler, Zwangsarbeit, 190–193.
122 Ibid.
123 URL: https://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit-hintergrund/index.html (accessed November 19, 2023).
124 Josip V. ÖStA/AdR, ÖVF, 65.773.

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by *PORR* in Wiener Neudorf to work on a construction project on behalf of *Flugmotorenwerke Ostmark*. By his own account, Josip V. was conscripted for labor in Nazi Germany in 1941 because his older brother had refused military service and joined the partisans, leading to Josip V. also being classed as unreliable. He was assigned to *PORR* in Neu-Guntramsdorf together with a group of Croatian men, where he was forced to work under difficult conditions as an unskilled laborer. He later described the forced labor conditions as follows: "The working and living conditions were bad, the food in the canteen was bad, and life in the barracks was bad, with 20 individuals to a room."[125]

Because of these conditions, Josip V. tried to escape together with a comrade in the fall of 1942, but they were soon caught by the Gestapo and sent to the Lanzendorf labor training camp. There, he was beaten by the SS guards and within just a few days contracted an inflammation of the middle ear as well as typhus. Assigned to the infirmary, he was already near death, but was able to be transferred to a hospital on account of his father's German descent. Following his recovery, V. was again sent to Neu-Guntramsdorf, where he was no longer deployed by *PORR* once the construction project had been completed, but as a turner for the *Flugmotorenwerke* company itself. When the factory was bombed in 1944, he was sent to work on a subterranean tunnel project in Neckarelz (in Baden-Württemberg), before finally returning to Vienna in March 1945, where he was forced to dig antitank trenches under the supervision of the SS.[126] Another Croatian, Vinko V.,[127] was arrested by the Croatian police in August 1943 for refusing military service and sent to Sarajevo, where by his own account he was interrogated with the use of psychological and physical torture. When he continued to refuse military service, Vinko V. was sent to Nazi Germany to perform forced labor. He passed through various collection and transit camps in Sisak, Zagreb, and Maribor, before being brought to INHA camp no. 12 on Wagramerstrasse in Liesing, Vienna, in December 1943.[128] INHA, whose full name was *Industrie- und Handwerksförderungsgesellschaft m.b.H.*,[129] was a company that served to establish camps for forced laborers. This company assigned Vinko V. to *PORR AG*, for whom he subsequently had to perform forced labor.

125 Ibid.
126 Ibid.
127 Vinko V. ÖStA/AdR, ÖVF, 79.607.
128 URL: https://www.geschichtewiki.wien.gv.at/Zwangsarbeiterlager_Wagramer_Stra%C3%9Fe (accessed November 9, 2023).
129 URL: https://www.geschichtewiki.wien.gv.at/Industrie-_und_Handwerksf%C3%B6rderungsgesellschaft_m.b.H. (accessed November 9, 2023).

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3.2.4 Belgium and the Netherlands

The database includes the details of 79 men who could clearly be identified as Belgian according to the sources[130] as well as three others who were Dutch.[131] The overwhelming majority of the Belgians identified (altogether 75 men) as well as two of three Dutchmen identified[132] were deployed by *PORR AG* from 1942 onward to work on a construction site on behalf of *Stickstoffwerke* (*IG Farben*) in St. Peter (Linz).[133] About two thirds of the Belgians were first registered with the relevant local health insurance provider in Linz in the course of 1942, while the other third was registered during the course of 1943. The timing of the first registrations suggests that these laborers were not deployed voluntarily in Nazi Germany, as compulsory labor had been decreed for all Belgians in March 1942. Whosoever refused to go to Nazi Germany was branded "asocial" and sent to a Belgian labor camp. Beginning in September 1943, the successive conscription of men born between 1920 and 1924 was also introduced in Belgium,[134] which suggests that there were altogether around 440,000 Belgian civilian forced laborers (15% of whom consisted of unmarried women between the ages of 18 and 35, who were also subject to compulsory labor[135]).[136]

The timeframe during which Belgian laborers were deployed by *PORR AG* varied greatly, as the following numbers evince: 29 individuals were deployed for less than 60 days after their initial registration and up to their final deregistration, meaning not even two working months. Two Dutchmen were deployed for an even shorter period of time: Hendrik F. was only registered with *PORR* in Linz from October 26 to November 5, 1943, while his compatriot Theodor S. was only registered for one day, namely December 14, 1942.[137] A further 16 Belgians were registered for a duration of between two and four months, while eleven were deployed more than a year by *PORR AG* in Linz. The latter included Theophil N.,

130 Two men are cited in some sources as Belgian and in others as Italian and French, respectively. They have therefore been excluded from this analysis.

131 On the development of the forced labor deployment of Dutch nationals, see the extensive discussion in Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 58–60.

132 There were presumably around 475,000 Dutch forced laborers deployed in Nazi Germany. URL: https://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit-hintergrund/index.html (accessed November 19, 2023).

133 Another Dutchman was deployed by *PORR AG* in Kapfenberg between July and August 1942 and lived in the Deuchendorf camp before being deregistered on August 5, 1942 on account of "OT deployment." Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten DTafvw – DTüz, Cornellis T. Stadt Kapfenberg, Meldeamt.

134 Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 60–61.

135 Karner/Ruggenthaler, Zwangsarbeit, 210.

136 URL: https://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit-hintergrund/index.html (accessed November 19, 2023).

137 Theodor S. bzw. Hendrik F. ÖGK Linz, Mitglieder-Verzeichnis 1942/43 – allg. Ortskrankenkasse für Oberdonau Ortsstelle Linz – Baustelle Stickstoffwerke.

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who was deployed by *PORR* as a carpenter nonstop from August 20, 1942 to May 4, 1945. N. – along with seven of his compatriots – was thus among the Belgian laborers to be deployed for the longest period by *PORR*. They were only deregistered on May 4, 1945.[138]

A glance at the work that the Belgian laborers were forced to perform on behalf of *PORR* is also interesting, as the type of daily forced labor presumably had a considerable impact on their living conditions and it was generally advantageous to be deployed on the basis of a particular professional qualification. What is noteworthy in the case of the Belgians, by comparison to forced laborers from other countries, is that only 17 of them were deployed as "unskilled laborers," whereas 22 were deployed as masons and 36 as carpenters. Whether these activities corresponded to actual qualifications held by this man cannot be ascertained. Three other Belgians, who were deployed as early as the spring of 1941 on the *PORR* construction site in Kapfenberg-Deuchendorf on behalf of *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.*, were presumably also skilled laborers, since the preserved registration data indicates that the three men, who were housed in the camp known as Gemeinschaftslager Werk VI, were deployed as turners and fitters.

3.2.5 Greece

Comprising only ten individuals, Greeks made up a relatively small group among the forced laborers deployed by *PORR AG* on its construction sites.[139] All of them were deployed by *PORR* in the period from 1942 to 1944, though most of them were only deployed for a few weeks each. Two were deployed by *PORR AG* on its construction project on behalf of *Stickstoffwerke Linz* (*IG Farben*),[140] with one of these men only working for *PORR* for one month, while the other worked for the company for an entire year. Another seven Greeks were named in the registration lists of the local Viennese health insurance provider as working on the transformer building construction project in Liesing, Vienna on behalf of the city government, though four of them were already redeployed after about a month to work on a *PORR* construction site on behalf of the wire-processing company *Hutter & Schrantz*. There, too, the duration of deployment – with one exception – averaged only a few weeks, in many cases lasting just a few days.

There is somewhat more detailed information preserved on the living and working conditions experienced by one Greek forced laborer, who was deployed

138 Ibid.; and Theophil N. ÖGK Linz, Mitglieder-Verzeichnis 1944/45 – allg. Ortskrankenkasse für Oberdonau Ortsstelle Linz – Baustelle Stickstoffwerke.

139 On the recruitment of Greeks as forced laborers in Nazi Germany, see generally Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 69–70.

140 A large number of Greek forced laborers were deployed in Linz on behalf of Reichswerke Hermann Göring AG. Gonsa, Griechen.

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by *PORR* in Böhlerwerk near Waidhofen an der Ybbs. In his application to the Austrian Reconciliation Fund, Georg M. reported that he had been deported to the "Ostmark" from Athens by the Wehrmacht in March 1941, where he was interned in a labor camp near Amstetten. He was then deployed as a forced laborer for several years in the vicinity of Amstetten/Waidhofen. From the spring of 1943, he was deployed on behalf of *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.*, but for one month (in January 1944) he was also deployed for prospecting work on behalf of *PORR AG*, before being registered with *Böhlerwerke* again until the end of the war. Georg M. described the years of forced labor as follows:

> "Among other things, we were forced to toil in the factory or to excavate bunkers. We were under constant surveillance, without a dime, mistreated by the soldiers, and our rations consisted for three days just of black coffee and red cabbage. In the course of this work, my teeth were knocked out."[141]

After the end of the war, Georg M. met his future wife in a refugee camp in Salzburg and, by his own account, underwent an odyssey with her lasting almost two years and leading from one refugee camp to the next. In the end, M. settled permanently in Austria and established a family there. M. concluded his application as follows:

> "It exhausts me to constantly keep describing this suffering. I am 79 years old and hopefully I will live to receive this small compensation."[142]

3.2.6 Lithuania

The territory of the present-day Baltic states was also a sphere in which the Nazi regime recruited civilian laborers. The number of Baltic laborers forced to perform labor in Nazi Germany between 1939 and 1945 is estimated to be around 75,000, of whom over 36% were female.[143] Similarly to the "eastern workers" and Polish laborers, entire families were often deported to Nazi Germany, as is also attested to in the case of a family deployed by *PORR AG*. Of the eight people of Lithuanian descent identified in the course of this project, five were deployed on the *PORR* construction site on behalf of *Palten-Stahlindustrie* in Rottenmann, Styria, while the remaining three lived in a barracks in the *PORR* camp in Pischelsdorf in 1944, which housed *PORR* laborers deployed for construction works on behalf of *Donau Chemie AG* (*IG Farben*) in Moosbierbaum. The latter were the unskilled laborer Anna M. and her husband Alfons M., who was de-

141 Georg M. ÖStA/AdR, ÖVF, 518; according to a letter dated November 19, 2001, M. was finally awarded financial compensation by the Austrian Reconciliation Fund.

142 Ibid.

143 URL: https://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit-hintergrund/index.html (accessed November 19, 2023).

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ployed as a foreman by *PORR*, as well as their son Algirdas M. The sources do not indicate whether Algirdas, who was only eleven years old at the time, was also forced to perform labor. All that is known is that a fire broke out in the M. family's living space in the *PORR* camp on March 31, 1944. The fire destroyed large parts of the wooden building along with all the M. family's worldly belongings, the value of which was estimated to be 900 Reichsmark. The factory fire brigade in Moosbierbaum had to be called to fight the fire.[144]

3.3 Laborers without an "Exit" or a "Voice"

3.3.1 The Soviet Union ("Eastern Workers")

Following Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, the Nazi regime began systematically deporting Soviet women and men to its territory to perform forced labor. They were generally called "eastern workers" and had to wear a badge labeled "Ost" (East) on their clothing. Numbering over 4.7 million people, this was by far the largest group of foreign laborers to be exploited for forced labor on the territory of Nazi Germany.[145] Around 2.7 million were civilian laborers, while the remaining 2 million were prisoners of war. The treatment of this group – of whom almost 50% were female – in the course of their labor deployment was especially bad in every respect, whether regarding accommodations, provisions, or pay. In the Mauthausen-Gusen concentration camp complex alone, around 4,000 Soviet prisoners of war and around 2,700 Soviet civilian laborers were murdered. These were people who had allegedly misbehaved while performing forced labor and were therefore sent to a concentration camp, where they were further exploited in the context of "annihilation through labor" and finally murdered in thousands.[146]

Altogether 86 individuals in the *PORR* database (of whom 25 were female) could be identified as so-called Eastern Workers. Information on the origins of these individuals varies according to the source: Sometimes there is no nationality cited at all, with the laborers simply called "eastern worker" or their files simply marked with the stamp "Ost" (East). The registration index cards in Kapfenberg and Rottenmann, by contrast, mostly do not employ the term "eastern workers," yet the information cited on nationality (mostly "Ukraine" or

144 3 St 1490/44, Gendarmerie Zwentendorf an der Donau, April 4, 1944. StA St. Pölten beim LG St. Pölten.

145 URL: https://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit-hintergrund/index.html (accessed November 19, 2023).

146 See Kaltenbrunner, Flucht; and URL: https://www.gusen-memorial.org/de/Das-Konzentrationslager/Haeftlinge/Zivile-Sowjetische-Haeftlinge (accessed November 19, 2023).

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"Russia") allows the individuals in question to be clearly identified as "eastern workers." These 86 individuals were deployed on at least nine different construction sites to perform forced labor for *PORR AG*, around a third of them (29 men) in the city of Vienna.[147] With the exception of three men, this latter group were all deployed to construct a transformer building at Brunner Strasse 52 in the city's twenty-third district. *PORR* had been contracted to realize this project on behalf of the municipal electrical works in the fall of 1942. Most of the men were registered with the Viennese health insurance provider on August 1, 1942, and the structure was completed within just a few weeks. By the beginning of 1943, there were only a few tasks remaining to be completed, meaning that the last of the "eastern workers" were deregistered in January 1943. Most of the men were housed in the city's fifth district, in an "eastern worker" camp on Blechturmgasse, which is sometimes referred to as "Camp 5" in the sources. Nothing more is currently known about the living conditions in this camp on Blechturmgasse.[148] The murder of five foreign civilian laborers from this camp in April 1945 was later the focus of a case brought before the Regional Court in Vienna. On July 1, 1947, it resulted in guilty verdicts for the former head of the camp, Johann Urban, and a member of the Sicherheitsdienst (SD, the Security Service of the SS), Gustav Schanzer.[149]

Another 23 girls and women from Russia formed the second-largest group of "eastern workers" deployed for forced labor by *PORR AG*. All 23 of them were deployed by *PORR* at the steelworks of *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.* in Kapfenberg in the fall of 1942. As the registration index cards from the municipality of Kapfenberg evince, all of these women came from the vicinity of the Russian city of Rostov, they were all deployed as "unskilled laborers," and they all lived in the Kapfenberg-Deuchendorf "eastern worker" camp. As they were registered en masse in Kapfenberg on October 12, 1942, it seems that these women were all brought to the town together as part of a larger transport of forced laborers. Around half of the women were very young. Some were in fact still children: Eleven were not eighteen yet on the day they were registered in Kapfenberg, and three were born in 1928, meaning they were only 13 or 14 at the time. The living conditions in Kapfenberg were particularly bad for this group of "eastern workers," as an analysis of the death registers from the registry office in

147 A few of the laborers also switched between construction sites. For example, four of the "eastern workers" deployed by *PORR* in Vienna were also deployed at several other construction sites over the course of time.

148 URL: https://www.geschichtewiki.wien.gv.at/Zwangsarbeiterlager_Blechturmgasse_27 (accessed November 20, 2023).

149 URL: https://collections.ushmm.org/findingaids/RG-17.003M_01_fnd_de.pdf (accessed November 20, 2023); and V19/1-28, FStN-Mikrofilm Nr. 1007, LG Wien 27e Vr 207/67. Dokumentationsarchiv des österreichischen Widerstandes (DÖW).

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Kapfenberg reveals. It lists several dozen deaths from among this group as well as around 20 deceased infants, toddlers, and children belonging to the "eastern workers." The most common cause of death consisted of various types of lung disease, which indicated how bad the living conditions were in the camp barracks.[150]

Another 15 (male) "eastern workers" were deployed by *PORR AG* in Rottenmann to work on a factory construction project on behalf of *Palten-Stahlindustrie*. The youngest of the "eastern workers" deployed there by *PORR* was Leonid K., who was born in Kyiv on February 27, 1929. At the time he was registered in Rottenmann on December 8, 1942, he was therefore just 13 years old.[151]

Another 14 "eastern workers" (also exclusively male) were deployed by *PORR* at its construction site on behalf of *IG Farben* in Linz. The majority of this group were registered there in the fall of 1943, with their deregistration taking place at various points in time. The last six of these workers were deregistered in the first half of 1945. Finally, two "eastern workers" were deployed for a few weeks from late November 1940 at the *PORR* construction site on behalf of *Flugzeug- und Metallbauwerke* in Wels and another three on construction works on behalf of a paper factory in Lenzing.

3.3.2 Poland

Around 1.6 million Polish forced laborers along with 300,000 prisoners of war were deployed for forced labor in Nazi Germany, where they were one of the worst-treated groups.[152] They were faced with ethnic stigmatization and were able neither to return home nor to make their voices heard in the workplace. Poles had already been faced with a series of restrictive measures imposed on them in the immediate aftermath of the invasion of their country by the Wehrmacht. These included forced and often also violent recruitment for labor service in Nazi Germany.[153] In June 1940, the Armaments Command Center in Linz reported that the Polish laborers deployed in the territory of "Oberdonau" were "currently behaving very quietly, they do not interact with other nationalities, and are willing to work. Nevertheless, increased supervision is necessary here."[154] The

150 See my contribution on Kapfenberg in this volume (Chapter 7).
151 Meldekartei, Leonid K. Stadt Rottenmann, Meldeamt.
152 URL: https://www.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit/zwangsarbeit-hintergrund/index.html (accessed November 19, 2023).
153 Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 44–56.
154 Kriegstagebuch Nr. 3 des Kommandos des Rüstungsbereichs Linz der Rüstungsinspektion des Wehrkreises XVII, 2. Quartal 1940, Rückblick über die rüstungswirtschaftliche Entwicklung für die Zeit vom 1.4.–30.6.1940, Anlage 1, 3. BArch/MA, RW 21-38/3.

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Polish civilian laborers in Nazi Germany were systematically restricted in their ability to move and subjected to discriminatory special regulations.[155]

Altogether 125 forced laborers from Poland deployed by *PORR* (eleven of whom were from the General Government) could be identified by name in the course of this project. The majority (89 individuals) were deployed – most as early as 1940/1941 – on the *PORR* construction site on behalf of the *Lenzing AG* factory. Notably, a large number of these laborers worked for *PORR AG* over a long period of time, practically nonstop for up to five years. In the summer of 1944, about a third of the Polish laborers (27 men to be precise) – all of whom had already been working for *PORR* since 1940/1941 – were transferred from the Lenzing construction site to a secret subterranean tunnel project codenamed "Bergkristall" in St. Georgen an der Gusen on behalf of the company *Messerschmitt*, where almost all of them remained registered until the camp was liberated in May 1945. The Polish laborers deployed in Lenzing included four women, who mainly performed laundry and cleaning duties.

As the Lenzing case shows, entire Polish families would often be deported together to perform forced labor in Nazi Germany, some of whom were also deployed by *PORR*. This includes the B. family from Łódź: Zygmund B. (born 1909) was initially deployed as a mason on behalf of *Lenzing AG* in June 1940, before switching to *PORR AG* in March 1941. He was registered at the Lenzing construction site through to August 1944, when he was transferred by *PORR* to the "Begkristall" works in St. Georgen an der Gusen. As early as July 1942, his wife Helena B. (born 1907) and their son Zenon (born 1932) joined him in Lenzing. Helena B. subsequently also worked for *PORR AG*, though it remains unknown what activities she was deployed for. Their ten-year-old son Zenon was deployed as a cleaner in the *PORR* barracks camp – for seven days a week and six hours per day.[156] Zygmund B. and his family were not an exceptional case. For example, Ksawery K. (born 1926 and also from Łódź), was deported along with his parents and two brothers to perform forced labor in "Oberdonau." Ksawery K. was registered by *PORR AG* as an unskilled laborer in September 1941, his father having already been registered as such in February 1941. No information has to date been found concerning the activities his mother and his two brothers were forced to perform. In an application for compensation, Ksawery K. later reported that he had been active in Lenzing as part of a large group of Polish laborers on behalf of *PORR*.[157] While the adults had been deployed to produce concrete foundations, he – still a youth – had been forced to conduct various household

155 Spoerer, Zwangsarbeit, 45.

156 Syg. 312.534. Archiwum Akt Nowych [Archive of New Records] (AAN); and Zygmund B. ÖStA/AdR, ÖVF, 22.554; Helena B. Ibid., 220.317.

157 I thank Maria Czaputowicz-Głowacka for translating this source from Polish.

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chores. This included among other things cleaning the barracks and storeroom and repairing construction equipment in the smithy. While performing these duties, K. burned himself with tar and had to be brought to a hospital in Vöcklabruck. When he had recovered, he was taken to a nearby soda water factory to continue performing forced labor.[158]

4 Prisoners of War Deployed on *PORR AG* Construction Sites

While foreign civilian forced laborers – in accordance with the Nazi regime's racist hierarchies – were subject to a variety of differing regulations, prisoners of war were generally subject to the regulations of the Geneva Convention.[159] However, the Nazi regime contravened these regulations in many respects. Especially in the case of Soviet prisoners of war (and later also of Italian "military internees"), they did not apply them at all, with the justification that the Soviet Union had not ratified the Geneva Convention.[160]

It cannot be precisely determined how many prisoners of war were deployed by *PORR* on its individual constructions sites in the territory of the "Ostmark," yet the company's executive board reports at least offer a quantitative overview. These figures show that a large number of prisoners of war were already deployed by *PORR* from 1940 onward (247 as of October 1940). This number remained fairly constant until 1943 (with 220 as of April 1943 and 237 as of September 1943), before rising gradually and significantly over the course of 1943, reaching 1,847 in October 1943 and 2,555 in May 1944, and finally dropping toward the end of the war. In December 1944, there were still 623 prisoners of war deployed by *PORR*. At least with regard to some of the company's dozens of construction sites in the territory of the "Ostmark," it can be proven that prisoners of war were deployed in Carinthia and that some of these – depending on their country of origin – suffered under extremely bad living and working conditions.

4.1 Prisoners of War in "Oberdonau" and Styria

In late 1940, the Armaments Command Center in Linz reported that as of December 6, 1940, altogether 200 Bulgarians had ceased working on the construction site on behalf of *Stickstoffwerk Ostmark AG* (*IG Farben*) as their employment

158 Syg. 586.960. AAN.
159 On the history of prisoners of war in the "Ostmark," see the extensive study conducted by Speckner, In der Gewalt des Feindes.
160 Freund/Perz, Zahlenentwicklung, 17.

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contracts had ended. The construction site was therefore assigned 130 prisoners of war to replace the Bulgarian laborers from mid-December onward, with more to follow (it was not indicated where they were from).[161] From the summer of 1940, *PORR* was also involved in construction works on behalf of *Stickstoffwerke*, where it deployed almost 200 laborers (including many Bulgarians). It is therefore highly probable that the prisoners of war cited above were deployed by *PORR* following the departure of the Bulgarians.

There is evidence that British and French prisoners of war were deployed at the *PORR AG* construction site on behalf of *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.* in Kapfenberg.[162] The number of prisoners of war deployed in the vicinity of Kapfenberg rose from the fall of 1943 onward as construction work on the new steelworks in St. Marein entered a decisive phase. In late October and early November 1943, several large transports of British prisoners of war began arriving in the Mürz Valley from the Wolfsberg prisoner of war camp in Carinthia. Of around 1,000 men, about 440 were directly assigned to *PORR AG*.[163]

A number of prisoners of war from various countries were also deployed in Rottenmann, Styria, where *PORR AG* had been expanding a factory on behalf of *Palten-Stahlindustrie* and where the company was tasked in 1944 with realizing the relocation underground of a Graz-based ball bearing plant. Karl Deninger, the company's site manager at the time who was involved in numerous large-scale projects for *PORR* during the Nazi era,[164] reported in a later testimony about "some 30 captured Englishmen and Frenchmen, interned southern Italians and Russians, in addition to ten German-speaking laborers who formed part of the 120-man team."[165]

161 Kriegstagebuch des Kommandos des Rüstungsbereichs Linz, 4. Quartal 1940, Anlage 12–13, Stand der Bauvorhaben der Firma Stickstoffwerke Ostmark AG, December 31, 1940. BArch/MA, RW 21-38/5.

162 Aktenvermerk, Kapfenberg, December 21, 1940. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 247/1; and Erinnerungen Wilhelm Fessler, 80 Wanderjahre, Vienna 1986, 11. PA, Mappe 1079.

163 Aufstellung der englischen Kriegsgefangenen, November 9, 1943. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 527.

164 Deninger was deployed as site manager among other things for construction projects on behalf of the Waffen-SS at the Fasangarten barracks in Schönbrunn, Vienna, then as site manager for a *PORR* construction project on behalf of Heiser-Werke in Kienberg-Gaming (which was soon discontinued, however). He was then redeployed for the first time to Rottenmann (on the Palten-Stahlindustrie construction site) and intermittently to Wartberg-Mitterdorf im Mürztal (for the construction of reinforced concrete halls on behalf of Vogel & Noot), before finally returning to Rottenmann. Deninger-Erinnerungen, 2001. PA, Mappe 1843.

165 Ibid., 11.

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4.2 Prisoners of War in the Malta Valley

PORR AG also deployed prisoners of war in Carinthia for gravel and stone extraction works for a planned Reichsautobahn construction project near Gmünd. In late 1939, *PORR* had been commissioned by the Head Construction Office of the Reichsautobahn in Villach to establish a quarry in the Malta Valley, which already went into operation in early 1940.[166] In the following year, 1941, *PORR AG* managed to increase its performance at the quarry to 858,000 Reichsmark, a significant rise compared to the 330,000 Reichsmark generated in 1940, which had fallen short of the company's expectations due to a labor shortage.[167] The Malta Valley construction site – like the Reichsautobahn construction project generally – was discontinued in 1942.

The quarry was located near the Pflüglhof estate in the town of Koschach. A residential camp was established for the forced laborers at a distance of about two and a half kilometers – in the neighborhood of Brandstatt – with the laborers being deployed to extract granite.[168] The camp initially housed French and British prisoners of war from October 1940 onward, with Soviet prisoners of war arriving from 1941, who were generally treated worse than the former groups. While little concrete information is known about the living and working conditions endured by these prisoners of war, the fact that altogether 21 Soviet prisoners of war died on the construction site before its closure in 1942 evinced that the conditions were bad. While hardly any physical evidence remains at most of the former *PORR* construction sites today, concerning the fate of the prisoners of war and the forced laborers who were once deployed there, some wall remnants can still be found on the grounds of the former forced labor camp in the Malta Valley. There is now also a memorial to commemorate the deceased Soviet prisoners of war buried in a mass grave beside the chapel in Brandstatt, not far from the former prisoner of war camp.[169] Adorned with a red Soviet star, the inscription reads: "Here lie 21 soldiers of the Soviet Army who died during the Great Patriotic War of 1941–1945."

166 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, March 9, 1940, 6–7. PA.
167 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, July 1940, 3 and 6. Ibid.
168 I thank the local Carinthian historian Walter Egger for sharing valuable information on the camps in Malta.
169 Klampferer, Malta, 99.

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Figure 2: The mass grave and memorial in the Malta Valley. Source: photograph by Walter Egger.

4.3 Prisoners of War in Heiligenkreuz

PORR AG was involved in another huge Reichsautobahn construction project in Heiligenkreuz. In 1940, *PORR* was commissioned to build a bridge across the valley, with the project planned to last four years. The executive board estimated that it would implement a construction volume of 11 million Reichsmark in this period. According to a preserved company construction schedule, work on the establishment of the construction site was to begin in September 1940 and the bridge was to be entirely completed by November 1943. The company assessed that it would require 550 laborers to realize the construction project (during the period from May to July 1941).[170] However, by the time the construction project was discontinued, only a little more than 1 million Reichsmark of the construction volume had been realized. The company also deployed prisoners of war on this construction project, as the executive board reported to the board of directors in mid-1941: "The contract has been raised by 480,000 Reichsmark. The originally planned volume of 500,000 Reichsmark is also being raised to 1 million

170 Bauzeitplan PORR AG, Plan Nr. 5700/2. NÖLA, RAB 1938–1945, Schachtel 2005a, Div. Unterlagen für den Bau Talübergang Heiligenkreuz, 1938–1943.

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Reichsmark on account of the fact that, against all expectations, numerous prisoners of war are being assigned to the project, though this is contingent on the workforce being maintained."[171] A survey of the development of the company's workforce on the Heiligenkreuz construction site in the fall of 1941 revealed that the prisoners of war consisted of Serbian men. This survey also offered a much more detailed insight into the origins and activities of these laborers than do many other sources. On September 17, 1941, *PORR* reported to the Head Construction Office of the Reichsautobahn in Vienna that the construction site was initially staffed with 50 men, this number having in the meantime risen to a provisional peak of 383 laborers. This group consisted of six foremen, ten carpenters, nine masons, six operators, one concreter, two miners, four scaffolders, eleven unskilled laborers, 175 Serbian prisoners of war, eight men deployed as camp guards, 76 Bessarabians,[172] and 75 Bulgarians. *PORR* moreover reported that the workforce had in the meantime sunk again and henceforth only consisted of 258 men, as many of the laborers had been redeployed. The number of Serbian prisoners of war in particular had decreased, who now made up only 63 men, and the number of Bessarabians had sunk to 26, these latter men moreover having been marked for redeployment in the following two days. Finally, of the 75 Bulgarians originally deployed there, only two remained.[173]

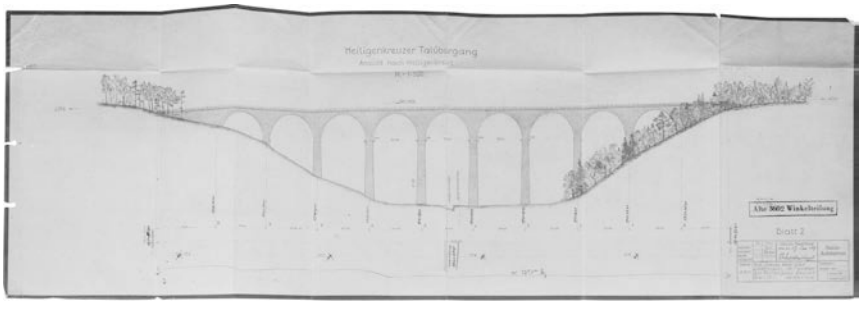

Figure 3: Site map for a valley bridge in Heiligenkreuz. Source: NÖLA, RAB 1938–1945, Sch. 2005a.

171 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, July 1941, 3. PA.

172 These were presumably members of German-speaking minorities from Southeastern and Eastern Europe, so-called Volksdeutsche. Bessarabia is a historical territory comprising parts of present-day Ukraine, Romania, and the Republic of Moldavia, which reached to the Black Sea.

173 Bericht über den Arbeiterstand beim Talübergang Heiligenkreuz, September 17, 1941. NÖLA, RAB 1938–1945, Schachtel 2005a, Div. Unterlagen für den Bau Talübergang Heiligenkreuz, 1938–1943.

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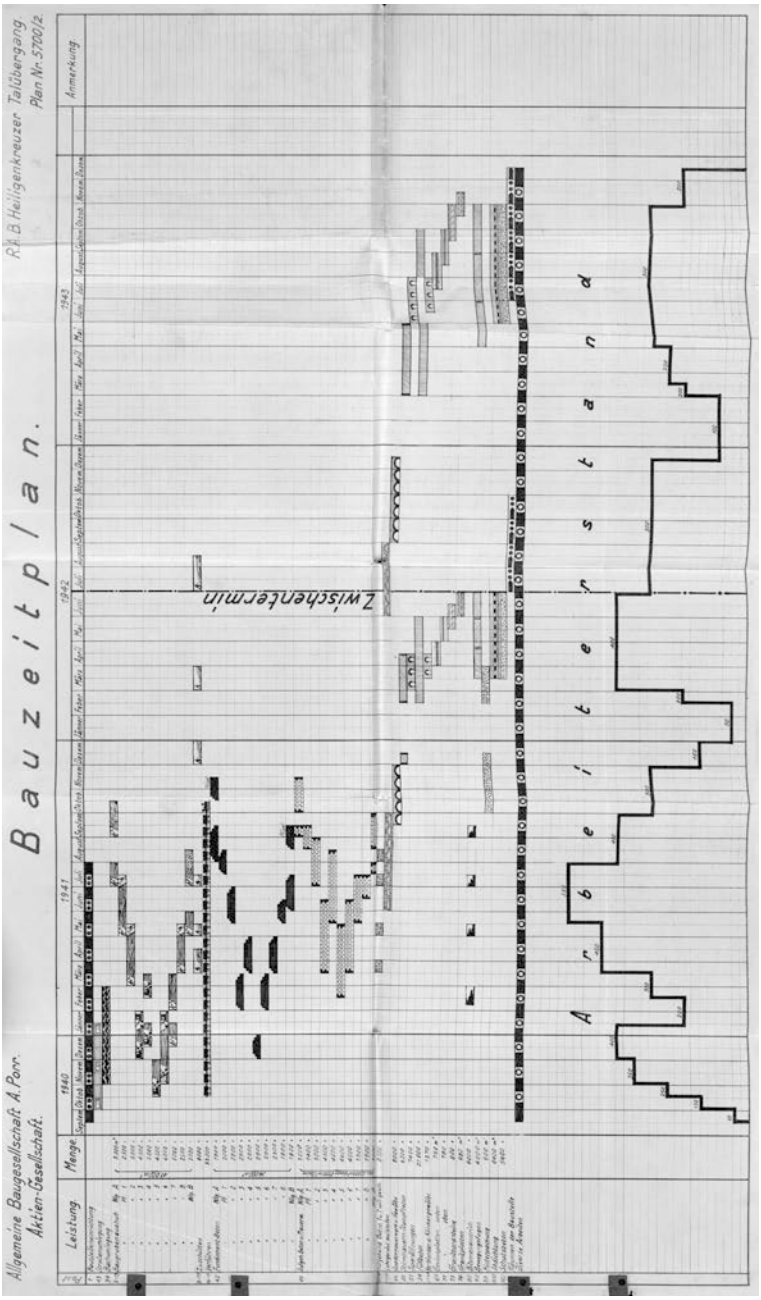

Figure 4: *PORR* construction schedule – Heiligenkreuz. Source: NÖLA, RAB 1938–1945, Sch. 2005a.

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An incident report from the regional government of "Niederdonau" offers an insight into the precarious situation of the laborers deployed at the Reichsautobahn construction site: In the winter of 1941/1942, the site had to be shut down due to prolonged frost. At the time, there were Soviet prisoners of war housed in the Reichsautobahn camps in Alland West and Heiligenkreuz, among whom a spotted fever epidemic had broken out that evidently lasted until February 1942. The camp was sealed off to prevent a possible spread of the disease.[174] According to research conducted by the Krems-based historian Robert Streibel, there were also French prisoners of war housed in the town of Sittendorf (not far from Heiligenkreuz) from 1941 onward, who were also deployed on the Reichsautobahn construction site. A little later – from September 1941 – Soviet soldiers of Ukrainian origin apparently also began arriving, though it is not known whether these two latter groups were also deployed by *PORR*. From around 1942 onward, Serbian civilian laborers were deported to the southern Vienna Woods in the course of the "gang crackdown" then taking place in the Balkans. It is questionable whether they were deployed on the Reichsautobahn construction site, as the construction activities of *PORR*, at least, had been entirely discontinued in Heiligenkreuz in early 1942.[175] Accordingly, the company's executive board reported in mid-1942 that "the contract totaling 5,860,000 Reichsmark has been canceled by the Reichsautobahn. According to the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry, a compensation claim for the canceled contract will hardly be possible."[176]

According to the company's executive board, of the other 2,555 prisoners of war deployed by *PORR* until mid-1944, only 604 were deployed on the territory of the "Ostmark" (for the most part presumably in St. Marein im Mürztal). The remaining 1,951 Italian prisoners of war[177] were deployed by *PORR* in Serbia to construct a railroad track to the copper mine in Bor in the framework of the giant infrastructure projects run by OT Südost.[178]

174 Bericht des Landrats Baden an die Reichsstatthalterei in Niederdonau, January 13, 1942 and February 12, 1942. Ibid., Reichsstatthalter in Niederdonau, Ia-10, Situationsberichte 1942–1945.

175 URL http://judeninkrems.at/der-tod-baute-mit/ (accessed November 27, 2023).

176 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, June 9, 1942, 2. PA.

177 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 423.

178 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, May 1944, 2. PA.

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5 Concentration Camp Inmates and "Labor Jews" in the "Ostmark"

The bottom positions in the Nazi regime's racist hierarchy were occupied by Jewish forced laborers and concentration camp inmates who had no exit, no voice, and a high mortality rate. Due to the sparse source base, it is difficult to paint a complete picture of either group, though there are some references to the deployment of members of both groups on *PORR AG* construction sites, both in the "Ostmark" and in the occupied territories.

5.1 The Deployment of Concentration Camp Inmates for Subterranean Armaments Projects

Through construction contracts commissioned by the SS, *PORR AG* was active briefly in the Ebensee sub-camp and subsequently in the Gusen II sub-camp. The company was also active in the vicinity of the Auschwitz concentration camp.[179] Various contemporary sources and eyewitness testimonies show that *PORR AG* deployed not only civilian forced laborers, but also concentration camp inmates in the framework of its construction projects in the vicinity of the Ebensee and Gusen II camps. Regarding Gusen, the following information is relevant: On August 9, 1944, the office of the engineer Karl Fiebinger commissioned *PORR AG* to "construct a sewage treatment facility at the point where the sewer tunnels discharge into the river Gusen."[180] Work was to begin immediately. Another clue was given by the former SS-Kommandoführer of the *Messerschmitt* subterranean project codenamed „Bergkristall" in Gusen II (St. Georgen an der Gusen), Wilhelm Friedrich Müller, during a US military tribunal in Dachau, where he appeared as a defendant. In his testimony, Müller referred – tangentially – to a labor detail in Gusen II, which he literally described as "Arbeitskommando *PORR* Nummer 3."[181] And finally, Rudolf Löcs, a concentration camp survivor (inmate number 127071), stated in a personal conversation with Rudolf Haunschmied from the commemorative initiative Gedenkdienstkomitee Gusen that that he had been deployed in the "*PORR* mineshaft" during his time as a concentration camp inmate in Gusen.[182]

179 See Maria Czaputowicz-Głowacka's contribution to this volume.

180 Vorläufiger Auftrag Ingenieurbüro Fiebinger an A. PORR Bauunternehmung, August 9, 1944. Sammlung Rudolf Haunschmied.

181 Aussage Wilhelm Friedrich Müller, September 10, 1947. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 549, Dachau Trial No. 28 – Gusen II – Box 000-50-5-28, Folder 404, Trial Transcript.

182 I thank Rudolf Haunschmied from Gedenkdienstkomitee Gusen for this information.

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While it remains unclear with regard to Gusen II how big the *PORR AG* labor detail was, there are specific numbers available concerning the Ebensee concentration camp – at least regarding one particular working day: A statistic from the Department for Labor Deployment in Ebensee dated August 17, 1944 reveals that *PORR* had been assigned 13 concentration camp inmates – including five skilled and eight unskilled laborers – for the "K.Lager" (concentration camp) working sector. This term indicated that *PORR* was conducting work within the concentration camp itself.[183] The daily procedure of the Department for Labor Deployment, which was responsible for forced labor in the concentration camp, saw the inmates being divided into labor details each day – in accordance with the needs of the various contractors – with the SS responsible for supervising the inmates. In practice, the concentration camp inmates were assigned to specific jobs by the civilian laborers working for the contractors, who also instructed them with regard to the technical performance of their duties.

5.2 Viennese "Labor Jews" Deployed by *PORR* and *Allbau* from 1940 Onward

From 1939, Nazi politicians began discussing the introduction of compulsory labor for Jews, who were already entirely ostracized from social (and professional) life on the basis of a range of racist laws, forced to live in collective apartments in Vienna, and dispossessed.[184] For example, the Nazi Mayor of Vienna, Hermann Neubacher, demanded from the Minister of Economic Affairs at the time, Walther Funk, that a solution be found for the 150,000 Jews remaining in Vienna, whom Neubacher described as a threat to public safety.[185] A statewide compulsion for Jews to perform labor was finally decreed on October 3, 1941,[186] although men categorized as Jews were already being deployed for forced labor by *PORR* and *Allbau* before then. At the latest in 1940, at least 83 men categorized as Jews were being deployed at the stockyard of *PORR AG* and on the Viennese construction sites of *Allbau*. The fact that these men were categorized as Jews is readily apparent from the name "Israel" or the abbreviation "Isr." attached to these laborer's names[187] in the company lists of the local Viennese health in-

183 Stärkemeldungen Ebensee, 29. 1. 1944–3. 5. 1945. Muzej Revolucije Naroda Hrvatske, Zagreb. I thank Nina Höllinger and Wolfgang Quatember from the archive of the Zeitgeschichte Museum Ebensee.

184 On Jewish forced labor, see the detailed work by Gruner, Zwangsarbeit und Verfolgung.

185 Neubacher an Funk, September 5, 1939. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2160-7; Lütgenau/Schröck, Zwangsarbeit, 69–70.

186 Hecht/Lappin-Eppel/Raggam-Blesch (eds.), Topographie, Anhang, 562.

187 Ibid., 561.

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surance provider.[188] Almost all of these Jewish forced laborers were men who were housed in collective apartments in the city's first and second districts in accordance with racist legislation.[189]

A glance at these men's dates of birth reveals that age played no role in their deployment. Seven of them were born before 1880, meaning that they were over 60 at the time they were deployed for labor. The oldest was Abraham Zahler, who was born in the village of Nyzhniv in Habsburg Galicia, present-day Ukraine, on December 1, 1874. Zahler was housed in a collective apartment at Max-Winter-Platz in Vienna's second district and was deployed as an unskilled laborer by *Allbau* for various road construction works in Vienna until his deportation to the Sobibor extermination camp on June 14, 1942.[190] Aside from Zahler, at least 57 more of these 83 Jewish men were deported to Nazi extermination camps from 1941 onward, including Auschwitz, Sobibor, Maly Trostenets, Opole, Riga, Majdanek, and Modliborzyce, where they were murdered.[191] Among them was Michael "Mischko" Schwarz, who was born in Vienna on November 24, 1897. In 1942, Schwarz was deployed for a while as an unskilled forced laborer by *Allbau.*[192] In early 1943, he was denounced to the Gestapo by his non-Jewish wife Rosa Schwarz (later called Schnedlitz) for alleged communist activities.[193] He was arrested and subsequently deported to Auschwitz, where he was murdered on November 25, 1943.[194]

As only the fewest of these men survived the Shoah, there are no reports concerning the type and intensity of labor they were forced to perform on the stockyards and construction sites of *PORR* and *Allbau.* However, various executive board reports suggest that they were predominantly deployed for heavy physical labor in the context of menial engineering works.

188 Betriebslisten, Film Nr. 997 u. Film Nr. 1.251. ÖGK Wien, Allgemeine Straßenbau AG, Wiener Baustellen (SG 5420); Film Nr. 962 u. Film Nr. 994. ÖGK Wien, PORR – Materiallager (SG 2182).

189 Hecht/Lappin-Eppel/Raggam-Blesch (eds.), Topographie, 562.

190 Betriebslisten 1941, Film Nr. 997. ÖGK Wien, Allgemeine Straßenbau AG, Wiener Baustellen (SG 5420); Betriebslisten 1942, Abraham Zahler, Film Nr. 1.251. Ibid.

191 Altogether 57 of the Jewish men deployed by *PORR* and *Allbau* in Vienna are listed on the DÖW victim database, URL: www.doew.at.

192 Betriebslisten 1942, Film Nr. 1.251. ÖGK Wien, Allgemeine Straßenbau AG, Wiener Baustellen (SG 5420).

193 Michael Mischko Schwarz, born November 24, 1897. Opferdatenbank des DÖW, URL: www.doew.at.

194 After the end of the war, Rosa Schnedlitz was prosecuted in a People's Court trial in Vienna for denouncing her husband and on June 24, 1947 was sentenced to five years in prison. Ibid.

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5.3 Hungarian Jews in Serbia

PORR and *Allbau* did not only deploy people categorized as Jews by the Nazi regime on the territory of the "Ostmark," but also in the framework of the huge OT construction projects in Serbia. Executive board minutes contain two specific references to the scale of deployment of Jewish forced laborers on the railroad construction project between Žagubica and Bor. First, in its report for the first half of 1944 dated July 26, 1944, the executive board of *PORR* noted that it had deployed altogether 1,058 Jews for its construction work on behalf of OT Südost in Serbia.[195] Second, the annual report compiled by the executive board in January 1945, which broke down the numbers retrospectively concerning the OT project in Serbia, cited 1,889 Hungarian Jews being deployed by *PORR* in August 1944.[196] In July 1944, up to 80,000 civilian forced laborers as well as "Italian military internees" and Hungarian Jews were deployed at the copper mines in Bor and on the railroad construction works between Bor and Žagubica, the latter group comprising 6,200 individuals in September 1944. The Hungarian Jews were acquired by OT from the Hungarian government as early as mid-1943 in return for deliveries of copper concentrate. Jewish laborers were interned in on-site camps under the worst conditions.[197] Eyewitness testimonies compiled in the framework of the "Commission for the Investigation of Crimes Committed by the Occupiers and their Collaborators"[198] in Yugoslavia reveal just how catastrophic the conditions were. The survivors reported about massive mistreatment and denigration in the labor camps, most of which were named after Nazi German towns (there were also camps called Innsbruck, Graz, Tirol, Wien, Vorarlberg, and Bregenz). The testimonies also document the conditions in the penal camps established specifically for alleged saboteurs, where beatings and torture were the order of the day. The laborers were forced to work on the railroad construction project and in the mines in all weather conditions from six in the morning to six in the evening. The Jewish forced laborers were often barefoot, which often resulted in debilitation and ailments.[199] When the construction works finally had to be discontinued due to increased partisan activities, the Jewish laborers were driven toward Nazi Germany on death marches, where they were then interned in various concentration camps. Many of the Jewish forced laborers did not survive the death marches and concentration camps.[200]

195 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, July 26, 1944, 1. PA.
196 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für das Jahr 1944, January 1945, 8–9. Ibid.
197 Rutar, Arbeit, 124 and 128.
198 Ibid., 125.
199 Ibid., 128–129.
200 Ibid., 126.

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5.3.1 Epilog: Abraham Endre Schwartz's Compensation Claim

The deployment of Jewish forced laborers would have legal consequences for *PORR AG* in the early 1960s:[201] First, the "Israeli Association of Former Nazi Forced Laborers at the Construction Site in Bor" submitted a demand to *PORR AG* for compensation payments amounting to 5 million Austrian Schilling, yet the company refused to pay up or reach a settlement.[202] Subsequently, one of the victims, Abraham Endre Schwartz, who had survived deployment for forced labor by *PORR AG* on the company's railroad construction project and had later emigrated to Israel, filed a claim with the Regional Court for Civil Affairs in Vienna against *PORR AG* and *Rella & Co.* Schwartz, who was originally from Budapest, where he had worked as a tailor, recounted his experiences in Bor in great detail in the suit:[203] Beginning on April 4, 1944, he was forced to wear the yellow star in Budapest. Then, in May 1944, he was brought to a forced labor camp, from where he was deported to Bor, Serbia, and housed in a camp by the name of Innsbruck. Schwartz was subsequently deployed for railroad construction works. The camp consisted of wooden barracks and was guarded by armed German and Hungarian soldiers. The Jewish laborers each had to wear large yellow stars on their chest and back, which were painted onto the fabric with oil-based paint. The crowded barracks each housed 35 to 40 men, who had to sleep on wooden cots without blankets or straw mattresses. The daily rations consisted of a small piece of bread and tasteless dehydrated vegetables. As the camp was located about four or five kilometers from the construction site, the forced laborers had to march to work every day, which meant that the working day lasted between 10 and 14 hours. Schwartz noted that he received no pay, nor were the laborers issued any work attire or protective gear. They were subject to repeated physical chastisements by the German guards at the workplace. A team of Hungarian soldiers was responsible for discipline within the camp. During labor deployment, on the other hand, Schwartz and his comrades were subordinated to the respective syndicate of construction companies, including *PORR AG* and *Rella & Co.*, who were contracted by Organisation Todt primarily to implement the railroad construction project (the two companies were each responsible for a particular construction section). Schwartz concluded:

> "Our labor was therefore exploited in the interest of these companies and for their uses and profit. […] The defendants determined and supervised the labor that was to be

201 The following account of the claim brought by Abraham Endre Schwartz against *Rella & Co.* and *PORR AG* is based on correspondence between *PORR AG* and its lawyer, Dr. Walther Wenisch. The case files from the Commercial Court in Vienna have not been preserved.

202 Klagebeantwortung PORR AG an HG Wien, December 9, 1964. PA, Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 4, Prozess Schwartz – Rella/PORR 1964–1971.

203 Walther Wenisch an Felix Klug, Jurist in Haifa, September 14, 1965. Ibid.

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> executed, requisitioned the laborers they required, and I, like my other comrades, received my work-related instructions directly from the defendants, whom we were wholly and entirely subordinated to during working hours."[204]

Given these circumstances, Schwartz demanded payment of compensation from both companies, *PORR AG* and *Rella & Co.*, amounting to 20,000 Austrian Schilling.[205] The case against both companies was handed from the Regional Court in Vienna to the Labor Court as the former did not consider this to fall in its jurisdiction. The Labor Court took the same position and referred the case to the Commercial Court.[206] In its initial statement of defense, *PORR AG* denied all charges. The company did admit to working in Serbia on behalf of Organisation Todt, which also provided the required laborers. However, *PORR* claimed itself not to have had any contractual agreements with the laborers in question and denied that they were subordinated to the company in disciplinary matters, nor was the company responsible for paying their wages: "We were merely responsible for notifying the labor details on behalf of Organisation Todt what work they were to be deployed for and where."[207] The company additionally denied knowing whether Schwartz really was Jewish or whether he had in fact been deployed for railroad construction works in Bor. The company also denied having anything to do with the "bad treatment and rations" described by Schwartz in his lawsuit, nor did it accept responsibility for the accommodations in the forced labor camp. The company angrily rejected Schwartz's allegation that it had profited from his forced labor: "Above all, we most energetically oppose the claim that the labor of these forced laborers was exploited in our interest and for our uses and profit."[208]

PORR AG finally also contested the demand for compensation amounting to 20,000 Austrian Schilling with the argument that the usual wage for an unskilled laborer in the summer of 1944 had merely been 0.65 Reichsmark per hour and that a subsequent value adjustment had no legal basis.[209] In the first round of negotiations, the presiding judge agreed with the company's arguments and denied the claim for compensation on the grounds that the statute of limitations had already passed and that there had been no contractual relationship between *PORR* and Abraham Schwartz.[210] Schwartz appealed, and the Higher Regional Court in Vienna referred the renegotiation back to the prior court with the argument that Schwartz merely had to prove that he had worked on the con-

204 Ibid.
205 Walther Wenisch an Felix Klug, Jurist in Haifa, August 6, 1965. Ibid.
206 Walther Wenisch an PORR AG, March 20, 1964. Ibid.
207 Klagebeantwortung PORR AG an HG Wien, December 9, 1964. Ibid.
208 Ibid.
209 Ibid.
210 Walther Wenisch an PORR AG, January 15, 1965. Ibid.

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struction section operated by *PORR*. The company, on the other hand, had to prove that it did not derive any benefit from his labor.[211] In response, the company's lawyer Walther Wenisch invoked the classic antisemitic cliché of the Jew who was only out to enrich himself: He suggested that Schwartz had already received compensation from the Federal Republic of Germany and now wanted to unjustifiably enrich himself further. At the same time, *PORR* called three of its former employees who had been deployed in Serbia to testify that the company had not derived any benefit from Schwartz's deployment.[212] This led to interviews with other former Jewish forced laborers – both in Hungary and Israel – lasting through to 1971. However, as no further documents were preserved, the outcome of the trial cannot be ascertained today.

35 years after Abraham Schwartz submitted his claim, further demands were made against the company, this time by former forced laborers from Poland.[213] *PORR AG* consequently retained a legal firm to arrive at a legal assessment of the situation. The firm concluded on the basis of Abraham Endre Schwartz's case that "the trial strategy employed at the time would probably not be successful today, as the company's records, some of which have in the meantime been made public, clearly show that *PORR* deployed forced laborers and regarded these as their own workforce."[214] Hence, the "matter must certainly be treated delicately and confidentially," particularly given the company's ongoing business interests in Poland, "which could be damaged if the case at hand is not dealt with deftly."[215]

The enactment of the Reconciliation Fund Law in 2000 finally established a systematic means to apply for (symbolic) financial compensation for forced labor performed during the Nazi period.[216] The individuals who were compensated – better late than never – through the reconciliation fund included at least 80 former forced laborers deployed by *PORR AG* in the "Ostmark" during the Nazi era. About 60 of them were from France and a little more than a dozen each from Poland and the present-day Czech Republic.[217]

211 Walther Wenisch an PORR AG, June 2, 1965. Ibid.

212 Walther Wenisch an PORR AG, June 11, 1965. Ibid.

213 These demands were brought by the Association of Poles Damaged by the Third Reich, whose members were represented by the Austrian lawyer Dr. Georg Zanger. Anwaltskanzlei Bruckhaus/Westrick/Heller/Löber an Dr. Georg Zanger, June 14, 1999. PA, Entschädigung von Zwangsarbeitern 1998–2001, Mappe 35.

214 Anwaltskanzlei Bruckhaus/Westrick/Heller/Löber, June 6, 1999, 16. Ibid.

215 Ibid., 17–18.

216 The Austrian federal government at the time passed the Federal Law Concerning the Fund for Voluntary Payments by the Republic of Austria to Former Slave and Forced Laborers of the National Socialist Regime (Reconciliation Fund Law), BGBl I Nr. 74/2004; URL: http://www.versoehnungsfonds.at/.

217 ÖStA/AdR, ÖVF.

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Christian Rabl

The Construction Activities of *PORR AG* in Kapfenberg and St. Marein

As demonstrated in Chapter 1, *PORR AG* was involved in numerous construction projects in the "Ostmark", and beyond, between 1938 and 1945. However, only fragmentary sources have survived regarding these projects. Hence, the question of the extent to which the company deployed forced laborers will be explored with regard to a specific case study. *Gebrüder Böhler & Co. AG* and *PORR AG* were already business partners before the Nazi era, yet their relationship gradually deepened following the beginning of World War Two, specifically in the context of the Wehrmacht's armaments programs, particularly those of the Luftwaffe.[1] This deepening occurred first at established *Böhler* sites in the Hafendorf and Deuchendorf districts of Kapfenberg, where massive construction works commenced from 1939 onward. In the summer of 1939, for example, a new artillery factory was completed in Hafendorf and construction of a tank factory commenced.[2] The *Böhler* site in Waidhofen an der Ybbs was subsequently expanded (including from 1941 by *PORR AG*) and, from 1942, a brand new steelworks was established near Kapfenberg in the twin municipality of St. Marein/St. Lorenzen im Mürztal.[3] As an overview of armaments construction projects in Styria from late 1940 shows, the expansion of the *Böhlerwerke* factories in Kapfenberg around this time were by far more extensive than all other Styrian armaments factories.[4] This underlines the special relevance of *Böhlerwerke* to the Nazi armaments programs in the territory of the "Ostmark." The present case study

1 The Upper Austrian historian Roman Sandgruber examined the company history of *Böhlerwerke* during the Nazi era. Unfortunately, the report he completed in 2001 entitled Die Gebr. Böhler & Co. AG 1938 bis 1945. Unternehmensentwicklung unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der ausländischen Zivilarbeiter, to which the synoptic analysis of the Austrian Historical Commission explicitly refers, could not be found to date despite intensive efforts. Jabloner/Bailer-Galanda/Blimlinger/Graf/Knight/Mikoletzky/Perz/Sandgruber/Stuhlpfarrer/Teichova, Schlussbericht, 45, fn. 67.

2 Schausberger, Rüstung, 47.

3 Manuscript on the company's history, Vienna, June 1942, 22–23. PORR-Archive (PA), Mappe 1470.

4 Karner, Steiermark, 243.

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examines – on the basis of a comparatively good source situation – the construction activities of *PORR AG* in Kapfenberg and St. Marein. Aside from collections of files in the *Böhler* archive,[5] witness testimonies of former French forced laborers and British prisoners of war and an extensive collection of registration index cards of foreign laborers deployed in Kapfenberg offer comparatively clear insights into the activities of *PORR AG* as well as the living and working conditions endured by the forced laborers it deployed.

1 Overview of Construction Projects

PORR AG was already commissioned in 1938 by *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.* in Kapfenberg to construct or expand factory facilities at the company's Hafendorf and Deuchendorf sites.[6] These expansion works were presumably the result of a visit paid by a commission of the Upper Command of the Army to *Böhler* in Kapfenberg, which took place on April 25, 1938, just over a month after the "Anschluss." *Böhlerwerke*, which had acquired "ample experience in the production of quality steels and weapons"[7] over the previous decades, was granted its first armaments contracts by the army during this meeting and was invited by the Upper Command of the Army to massively expand its factory facilities,[8] which were subsequently also categorized as "important for armaments production."[9] Due to the scale of its weapons manufacturing activities, *Böhlerwerke* advanced in the following years to become a significant player in the Nazi armaments production sector.[10] The focus of its production initially lay predominantly in areas of interest to the army,[11] later shifting with the construction of a new factory in St. Marein to meet the needs of the Luftwaffe.[12] The enormous factory ex-

5 Bestand A. Böhler. Steiermärkisches Landesarchiv (StLA).
6 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 2, 408.
7 Manuscript of the Kapfenberg construction office concerning the factory in St. Marein, June 5, 1944. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 501-2.
8 Ibid.
9 Berliner Beauftragter des Gauleiters und Reichskommissars Bürckel an Reichskommissar Bürckel in Wien, September 27, 1939. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Archiv der Republik (ÖStA/AdR), ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Vol. 3.
10 Aside from the Böhler site in Kapfenberg, Siegfried Beer and Stefan Karner only cited the Messerschmitt factory in Klagenfurt and the Steyr-Daimler-Puch factory in Graz as armaments production sites producing weapons at a scale of significance on a Nazi Germany-wide scale. Beer/Karner, Krieg aus der Luft, 8.
11 Between 1939 and 1945, the Böhler factories in Kapfenberg constituted the most important production sites of tank guns and attendant parts as well as of armored reconnaissance vehicles and armored personnel carriers. Schausberger, Rüstung, Anlage 17–18, 203–205.
12 Merkblatt Baudirektion Kapfenberg zu Besprechung mit Ing. Tarmann vom OKH, December 6, 1941. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 502.

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pansion works and the new construction in St. Marein eventually also had an increasing impact on the company's production output: The historian Stefan Karner surmised that *Böhler* produced around four times as much steel in 1944 as it had in 1940. The company also recorded enormous increases in other areas of production, for example in tin and tank casings (each of which increased by 400%), artillery (which underwent a 20-fold increase), munitions (which increased fivefold), and valve cones for airplane motors (which increased tenfold).[13] Meanwhile, by late 1944 the construction works of *PORR* in Kapfenberg and St. Marein would become the company's single largest construction project within the "Ostmark," generating a construction volume of almost 10 million Reichsmark between 1940 and 1944.[14] The focus of these construction works initially lay on expanding the site at Hafendorf: In 1940 alone, the annual construction volume at this site totaled more than 3 million Reichsmark,[15] with another 360,000 Reichsmark[16] generated in construction works in Deuchendorf.[17] The facility there, which was also known as Werk VI or Altes Werk, had only begun operations on November 4 1939.[18] Some construction projects in Deuchendorf were postponed in 1941,[19] which meant that the construction volume there subsequently declined to a few tens of thousands of Reichsmark annually.[20] By contrast, and despite repeated delays due to labor shortages, the annual construction volume in Hafendorf amounted to more than 2.6 million Reichsmark in 1941,[21] before dropping to 1.2 million Reichsmark in 1942. Parallel to this development, the work in St. Marein began to pick up steam, with the construction volume making up 500,000 Reichsmark in 1942.[22] In late 1943, the executive board reported a further construction volume of 1.3 million Reichsmark in Hafendorf[23] – which was a little less than expected.[24] This was com-

13 Karner, Steiermark, 250.
14 Jahresberichte des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, 1940 bis 1944. PA. Mappe PORR 38–45, Nr. 3 (all *PORR* executive board reports are in this folder, which will consequently not be cited separately in the following).
15 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für 1940, November 8, 1940, 3. Ibid.
16 Ibid., 4.
17 This was where new buildings for the cogging mill, the Martinswerk factory, the transformer building, and a kiln hall were to be constructed from 1938 to 1943. From 1944, an air raid shelter was built here. Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 2, 408.
18 Manuscript of the Kapfenberg construction office concerning the factory in St. Marein, June 5, 1944. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 501-2.
19 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, July 1941, 3. PA.
20 The annual construction volume in Deuchendorf totaled 54,000 Reichsmark in 1941, 20,000 Reichsmark each in the years 1942 and 1943, and 50,000 Reichsmark in 1944. Jahresberichte des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, 1941 bis 1944. Ibid.
21 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für 1941, February 9, 1942, 3. Ibid.
22 Bericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 20, 1942, 3. Ibid.
23 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für das Jahr 1943, January 20, 1944, 6. Ibid.
24 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, April 1943, 5. Ibid.

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pensated by a construction volume of 1.7 million Reichsmark generated through the new factory construction works in St. Marein, which from 1943 finally became the larger of the two projects, as is demonstrated by the figures from 1944: While the Hafendorf site still generated a construction volume of 1.25 million Reichsmark, the volume in St. Marein rose to 2.7 million Reichsmark, making this by far the largest construction project being implemented by *PORR* in the territory of the "Ostmark."[25] The enormous scale of the annual construction volumes reflects the great (wartime) importance of these projects, which in turn had a significant impact on the allocation of laborers. This occurred in close coordination between the various responsible authorities (the Upper Command of the Army and/or of the Luftwaffe and the employment agencies) and the building commissioner as well as the contracted construction companies. Aside from the annual construction volumes, the allocation of laborers also highlights the increased focus on the new factory construction works in St. Marein from 1943 onward.

In mid-1942, *PORR AG* was commissioned by *Gebrüder Böhler & Co. AG* – in addition to the ongoing expansion works in Kapfenberg and Waidhofen an der Ybbs – to implement a large-scale construction project for a giant new electric steel foundry and a rolling mill (Werk XII) in St. Marein.[26] This new construction project was instigated by the massive increase in demand for quality steel necessitated by the war, especially on behalf of the Ministry of Aviation and the Upper Command of the Army, who in turn required the steel above all for *Flugmotorenwerke Ostmark*.[27] Since *Böhler* considered an expansion of the main factory in Kapfenberg "no longer tenable" due to "the crowded conditions in the Thörl Valley,"[28] a new site had to be found. Planning for the Werk XII project in St. Marein, which was partly carried out by the office of the Viennese architect Karl Fiebinger,[29] already commenced in the spring of 1941.[30] On February 3, 1942, the *Böhler* construction office informed the Reichsstatthalter of Styria that the Minister for Aviation and Supreme Commander of the Luftwaffe had decreed in writing on November 27, 1941 that a new electric steel factory and a cogging mill be constructed in St. Marein in the framework of the Luftwaffe's armaments construction program. This project was categorized at the highest level of ur-

25 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für das Jahr 1944, January 1945, 5. Ibid.
26 On the construction history of the factory in St. Marein (though these works are entirely uncritical with regard to the phenomenon of forced labor), see Sirowatka/Schenk, 900 Jahre St. Marein, 157–176; Köstler, Stahl- und Walzwerk.
27 Aktennotiz der Baudirektion Böhler, March 5, 1942. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 524. On the development of Flugmotorenwerke Ostmark, see Perz, Projekt "Quarz," 121–146.
28 Technischer Bericht zur Baubewilligung (Entwurf), December 19, 1941. Ibid., Mappe 523.
29 Bericht Baustelle Werk XII, March 11, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 501-1.
30 Manuskript der Baudirektion Kapfenberg zum Werk Marein, June 5, 1944. Ibid., Mappe 501-2.

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gency and assigned to General Building Inspector Albert Speer and the chief of his building staff, Walter Brugmann (which was known colloquially as the "Baugruppe Brugmann"[31]).[32] The first internal construction discussion within the *Böhler* company took place shortly thereafter,[33] during which some disagreements with the district farming community concerning the use of the respective properties were also addressed.[34] Otto Karl Fröhlich, a professor at the Technical College in Vienna,[35] was also involved as an advisor in the St. Marein construction project and in the construction of a tunnel near Kapfenberg. Fröhlich was an expert in questions concerning the foundations of industrial buildings, large utility buildings, and bridges. He repeatedly met Fiebinger (in Vienna and Kapfenberg) for discussions between April 1942 and May 1943 and also corresponded with director Alfred Schuppler from the executive board of *PORR*.[36] Fröhlich was also deployed by "SS-Sonderstab Kammler" as a surveyor for foundation and ground engineering works at the subterranean tunnel project Hersbruck/Happurg, a sub-camp of the Flossenbürg concentration camp.[37]

In late March 1942, various construction companies had tendered offers for the large-scale construction project, which was divided into four construction sections.[38] Aside from *PORR AG*, the company *Pittel & Brausewetter* had also submitted an offer for sections two, three, and four of the project in St. Marein. The latter offer was marginally cheaper than that of *PORR AG*, yet the management of *Böhler* decided in favor of *PORR AG* nonetheless, since, due to its already ongoing construction projects on behalf of *Böhler* in Kapfenberg, *PORR* was in a position to transfer laborers and machines to St. Marein much quicker.[39] In April 1942, *PORR AG* and *Böhler* entered into renegotiations, and since *PORR* was willing to make some concessions in these discussions, it was ultimately

31 On Walter Brugmann's biography, see URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Walter_Brugmann (accessed March 3, 2025).

32 Baudirektion Böhler an Reichsstatthalter in der Steiermark, February 3, 1942. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 523.

33 Protokoll zu 1. Baubesprechung Werk XII am 18. 2. 1942, February 23, 1942. Ibid., Mappe 504.

34 According to Böhler, altogether 78 hectares of property were required for the first expansion phase of the factory in St. Marein, yet the district farming community was only willing to give up 30 hectares. An agreement was eventually reached by which only 41 hectares would be requisitioned from the agricultural sector in the first year of construction works (1942) but that the Böhler company retained the right to later also build on the remaining area. Ibid.

35 For a short biography of Otto Fröhlich, see URL: https://data.onb.ac.at/nlv_lex/perslex/F/Froehlich_Otto.htm (accessed March 3, 2023).

36 Rechnung Otto Karl Fröhlich für Beratungen inklusive Auflistung der Leistungen, January 16, 1945. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 522.

37 Perz, "Neue Österreichische Tunnelbaumethode," 256, fn. 37.

38 Protokoll zu Baubesprechung Werk XII am 31. 3. 1942, April 1, 1942. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 504.

39 Aktenvermerk über Baubesprechung der Firma Böhler am 31. 3. 1942, April 7, 1942. Ibid., Mappe 521.

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chosen over *Pittel & Brausewetter*.[40] *PORR AG* agreed among other things to already begin construction works on April 7, 1942, the Tuesday after Easter, and to supply 50 of its own laborers. Aside from *PORR*, other companies were also involved in the construction works, for example *Andorff* (for road and rail construction)[41] and *Waagner-Biro* (for steel construction).[42] The first phase of planning comprised the construction of two furnaces. However, following a visit to Deuchendorf by Gauleiter Sigfried Uiberreither on February 3, 1943, during which plans for Werk XII in St. Marein were discussed, among other things, it was agreed "due to the new circumstances"[43] – presumably referring to the capitulation of the Wehrmacht's 6th Army at Stalingrad the day before – to expand the dimensions of the factory. Since this expanded project required additional space, *Böhlerwerke* overhauled its plans for the factory after this meeting.[44] Henceforth, six furnaces were to be built capable of ensuring a monthly steel production of 18,000 tons.[45] This new and expansive plan for the steelworks in St. Marein was presumably the impetus for two further meetings between representatives of *PORR* and the *Böhler* site management that took place in Vienna in March 1943. During the first of these meetings, which took place on March 6, 1943, the building director of *Böhler*, Carl Haiderer, submitted the adapted construction plans for the St. Marein factory to the *PORR* executive board member Max Tazoll, who participated in the discussions along with director Schuppler, the senior engineers Josef Url and Ottokar Rakosnik, and Wilhelm Fessler, who had been deployed in Kapfenberg as a site manager since the fall of 1938. The construction plans for an electric furnace, a slag canal, a transformer building, crane runways embedded in concrete, and the laying of an overhead power line above the rooftops were discussed in detail.[46] This meeting also served to discuss Fessler's departure in just three weeks' time, as he was scheduled to transfer to the Organisation Todt (OT) railroad construction project in Bor (Serbia).[47] *PORR* an-

40 Aktenvermerk über die Verhandlungen zwischen Böhler und PORR, April 7, 1942. Ibid.
41 Vermerk zu Baubesprechung Böhler, October 21, 1942. Ibid., Mappe 504.
42 Vermerk zu Baubesprechung Böhler, March 23, 2943. Ibid.
43 Technische Zentraldirektion Kapfenberg an Baudirektion bezüglich Planung Marein, February 4, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 501.
44 Ibid.
45 Baudirektion bezüglich Planung des Werks XII, February 15, 1943. Ibid.
46 Bericht zu Besprechungen zwischen PORR und Böhler in Wien am 6. und 27. 3. 1943, April 5, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 504.
47 In April 1943, Fessler was summoned to the OT railroad construction project in Serbia (Bor–Žagubica). He was replaced in Kapfenberg by Franz Witzmann, who was transferred to Styria from Moosbierbaum. Josef Url was also active in Kapfenberg on behalf of *PORR*. Erinnerungen Wilhelm Fessler, 80 Wanderjahre, Vienna 1986, 10 and 12. PA, Mappe 1079. On Bor, see also Mišo Kapetanović's contribution to this volume.

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nounced that he would be replaced by Franz Witzmann,[48] who had previously been deployed on the *IG Farben* construction project in Moosbierbaum. Tazoll also announced that Josef Url would subsequently become more involved in the Kapfenberg construction project.[49] Haiderer, the site manager of *Böhler*, expressed his regret at Fessler's departure as well as his concern that the latter's transfer so shortly before the beginning of the construction season might have a negative impact on the building progress. The meeting also served the discussion of disagreements that had existed between Fessler and the site management of *Böhler*, though these were not specified more precisely.[50] These presumably related to dissonances caused by repeated changes made to the plans by the *Böhler* company's planning departments, which caused delays in the implementation of construction works by *PORR*.[51] The completion of the new factory was originally scheduled for as early as the spring of 1944,[52] yet in fact, Stahlwerk XII only went into operation at 5:30pm on June 20, 1944. Its official activation took place in the presence of Albert Speer on July 3, 1944.[53] This was also a cause for celebration for the leading staff members of *PORR AG*, for – like the staff members of the other commissioned construction companies – they received their premiums on the occasion of the factory's inauguration.[54]

48 Franz Witzmann joined *PORR AG* on May 1, 1938 and was deployed as a site manager on numerous road and industrial construction projects during the Nazi era. After the end of the war, he was appointed public administrator of *PORR-Ost* in Vienna, before being promoted to director of *PORR AG* on January 1, 1948. Following the reunification of Ost- and *West-PORR*, Witzmann became a member of the *PORR* executive board in 1958, advancing to General Manager in 1970 and finally becoming head of the executive board in 1972, before going into retirement in 1975. Nachruf auf Franz Witzmann, in: PORR-Nachrichten (1990) 109, 5.

49 Bericht zu Besprechungen zwischen PORR und Böhler in Wien am 6. und 27. 3. 1943, April 5, 1943. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 504.

50 Ibid., see also Chronik der Dienststellen des Amtsbereiches Speer. BArch R3/1740.

51 Aktennotiz der Technischen Zentraldirektion, March 27, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 521; Köstler, Stahl- und Walzwerk, 321.

52 Bericht Baudirektion Kapfenberg über Besichtigung Baustelle Werk XII, March 1, 1943. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 501.

53 Sirowatka/Schenk, 900 Jahre St. Marein, 174–175.

54 As senior site manager, Franz Witzmann received 1,000 Reichsmark, master builder Sonnleitner received 800 Reichsmark, and the foremen of *PORR* received between 300 and 500 Reichsmark. Liste der Prämienbezieher anlässlich der Inbetriebsetzung des Werks Marein, May 16, 1944. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 501-2.

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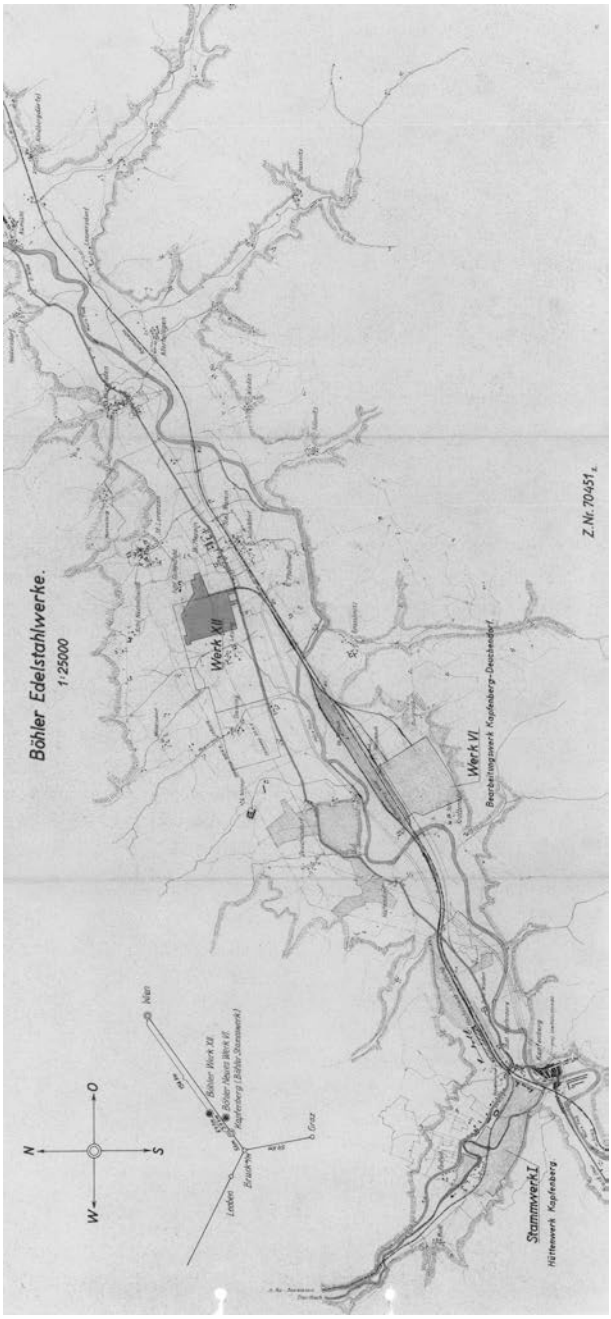

Figure 1: General plan of the Böhler construction projects in Kapfenberg/St. Marein. Source: StLa, Böhler-K-29-M-129-P.

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2 Labor Shortages: The Central Conflict between Böhler and *PORR*

In March 1940, a conference was held on the future organization of labor deployment in Kapfenberg, in which representatives of the Ministry of Labor participated alongside leading functionaries of *Böhlerwerke* and the contracted companies. *PORR* was represented by site manager Fessler. The sufficient supply of laborers at the construction sites was cited as the central challenge during these discussions, as was the related question of where these laborers were to be housed. At first, the participants reckoned that around 800 additional laborers were required for the expansion of the *Böhler* facilities in Kapfenberg. The suggestion of deploying "civilian Poles" was initially rejected, as these could neither be separately deployed nor housed and fed. The conference participants thought it was more realistic to deploy Slovaks, who were to be assigned by the employment agency in Bruck an der Mur.[55] As the sources reveal, disagreements would arise repeatedly between *Böhler* and *PORR* over the following years relating almost exclusively to the issue of labor deployment – not least of all due to the repeated expansion of the construction project, the rising time pressure, and the increased need for labor. The St. Marein construction project, which commenced in 1942, was of particular importance to the site management of *Böhler*, which was afraid that it would not be able to keep the promises it had made to the Nazi authorities concerning this project due to ongoing labor shortages.[56] The main accusation leveled against *PORR* by the General Manager of *Böhler*, Franz Leitner,[57] was that the company was not trying hard enough to requisition more laborers to quell the shortage, instead relying entirely on the contracting company to secure laborers. As evidence, Leitner cited the fact that *PORR* was only deploying 112 laborers as of July 7, 1942, yet the punctual implementation of the further construction sections required an additional 130 to 150 laborers.[58] The contracting company therefore could "not escape the impression that the *PORR* company does not have the necessary interest in acquiring its own laborers for its

55 Merkblatt, Konferenz zum Thema Arbeitseinsatz, Kapfenberg, March 12, 1940. Ibid., Mappe 247/3.

56 Schreiben der Baudirektion zu Arbeitseinsatz Werk XII, April 28, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 501.

57 Franz Leitner, a long-term senior staff member of Böhler, was appointed plenipotentiary for armaments by Albert Speer for a huge area – the newly formed Danube-Drava armaments district – as late as February 1945, which comprised the Armaments Commissioning Areas XVII (Vienna, "Oberdonau," and "Niederdonau") and XVIII (Styria, Carinthia, and the remaining Hungarian territory). Speer an Leitner, February 14, 1945. Bundesarchiv (BArch) R 3/1588, cited in Karner, Steiermark, 548; on Franz Leitner's biography, see also Köstler, Stahl- und Walzwerk, 313, fn. 40.

58 Bauüberwachung an Zentraldirektor Dr. Leitner, July 7, 1942. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 521.

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work on Werk XII. We do not understand that the Andorff and Hitthaller companies, the latter of which is a smaller enterprise, were able to provide 80 and 60 men, respectively, while the PORR company cannot."[59] *Böhler* pointed out that *PORR* had brought altogether around 30 of its own laborers to Kapfenberg in 1938 and that this core workforce had grown to 130 men, although 60 men were subsequently enlisted by the Wehrmacht or OT. The remaining 70 core laborers had predominantly been assigned to *Böhler* between 1940 and 1942. The contracting company attributed the "disinterest of the *PORR* company regarding the acquisition of labor"[60] to the fact that it had hitherto been able to operate virtually without competition. The contracting company argued that this had also been confirmed by the (above-mentioned) negotiations regarding the participation of the *Pittel & Brausewetter* company in the Kapfenberg construction works:

> "[At the time] we were told by them [the *Pittel & Brausewetter* company] that the PORR company, due to its connections to industrial circles in the Ostmark, had recently received a large number of big contracts without having been able to provide its own people for these works."[61]

The construction supervisors finally suggested that *PORR AG* should be challenged to provide additional laborers at short notice or accept that portions of its building contracts be transferred to other construction companies.[62] executive board member Schuppler and senior engineer Url countered the charges with the argument that *PORR* had been compelled to surrender around 160 laborers to OT since the fall of 1942, while numerous others had been enlisted by the Wehrmacht. Additionally, *Böhler* had not lobbied sufficiently to have important *PORR* laborers classed as indispensable. *PORR* consequently suggested conscripting large numbers of Bulgarian laborers.[63] Since Bulgarian laborers were not allowed to be acquired individually, the company suggested commissioning specific Bulgarian enterprises to send their entire workforce to Kapfenberg and St. Marein. *PORR AG* noted that it was already negotiating with a Bulgarian construction company that could provide 400 laborers, yet approvals from the Ministry of Labor and the Foreign Exchange Office were still pending. The company therefore argued in favor of both companies, *Böhler* and *PORR*, lobbying together to expedite the implementation of this recruitment measure.[64] However, the matter did not progress significantly in the following months, and

59 Ibid.
60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 Schreiben der Baudirektion zu Arbeitseinsatz Werk XII, April 28, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 501.
64 Ibid.

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by the summer of 1943, the site management of *Böhler* continued to doubt the efficacy of the plan to conscribe 500 Bulgarian laborers.[65]

In order to defuse the criticisms voiced by the site management of *Böhler*, Schuppler and Url also submitted a schedule with specific information on the number of laborers required, as well as the necessary machines and equipment.[66] Parallel to this, the head office of *PORR* in Vienna intervened in order to decisively reject the expressed criticisms and to emphasize that the company required the allocation of 500 additional laborers in order to keep to the stipulated construction schedules. *PORR* also pointed out that it had in early 1942 already voluntarily deployed 64 more core laborers to St. Marein than had been agreed upon. Moreover, at the Hafendorf and St. Marein sites, "107 individuals were enlisted for military service and 43 were conscripted by OT."[67] The Human Resources Department of *Böhler* replied in turn that these conscriptions were essentially dependent on the laborers' ages and their degree of fitness for duty as well as on the question of whether they had already performed compulsory military service. *Böhler* did concede that the labor supply was generally catastrophic, also in the industrial sector, and reported that although just recently 706 additional construction laborers had been classified as urgently required in the framework of the Adolf Hitler Tank Program,[68] yet their allocation to Kapfenberg was delayed, as the construction office of *Böhlerwerke* in Kapfenberg had already complained on August 11, 1943. Despite all efforts, the company had to date not managed to cover the need for more than 700 construction workers and it had little hope of meeting this need in future. This circumstance also meant that the construction schedules for Werk VI and Werk XII were in danger of being postponed and, consequently, that the completion of the construction works, the commencement of operations, and production would not take place as planned. *Böhlerwerke* therefore hired 500 Polish construction workers from the *Scheller* company in the late summer of 1943, with the framework contract allowing the former to assign these to other construction companies it had contracted as suited its needs. *Böhler* paid *Scheller* an hourly wage of 0.80 Reichsmark per skilled construction worker and 0.60 Reichsmark per unskilled construction worker.[69]

Altogether, it is clear in terms of time planning that both the contracting company *Gebrüder Böhler* and subsequently its contracted construction firms were placed under considerable pressure by the relevant Nazi authorities in

65 Vermerk der Baudirektion betreffend Werk XII, July 28, 1943. Ibid.
66 Merkblatt zu Besprechung zwischen Böhler-Baudirektion und PORR AG am 29. 4. 1943, May 6, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 504.
67 PORR AG an Gebrüder Böhler & Co. AG., May 4, 1943. Ibid.
68 Schreiben Gefolgschaftswesen, September 2, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 247-1.
69 Niederschrift, Kapfenberg, August 11, 1943. Ibid.

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relation to the construction project in Kapfenberg and even more so in St. Marein. This was, first, because of the altogether huge plans for armaments projects and the related assurances that had been made by the *Böhler* company, for example in the framework of the Adolf Hitler Tank Program. Second, due to the annual frost period, intensive construction works could mostly only take place in the period from March/April to October/November. Aside from the weather conditions, the decreased daylight in the winter months impeded the rapid completion of construction works, as the partly complicated installation works could not be carried out in artificial lighting conditions, meaning that sunrise and sunset constituted a natural limitation on certain works.[70] The construction office of *Böhlerwerke* in Kapfenberg therefore concluded critically in January 1943: "This year, we should not have a repetition of the situation in previous wartime years in which we only receive the required number [of laborers] in the late fall, since the days become shorter, the bad weather period begins, and by early December a decline in the number of laborers sets in yet again."[71]

3 The *PORR* Laborers in Kapfenberg and St. Marein

It is not known how big the *PORR* workforce deployed in the vicinity of Kapfenberg (meaning both the Hafendorf and Deuchendorf sites) was, since only fragmentary figures have been preserved: A discussion of the construction works held in January 1940 reveals that, altogether, 250 laborers were deployed by *PORR AG* for the Werk VI construction project in Deuchendorf.[72] In mid-May 1943, this number had risen to 305, including 186 foreign civilian laborers and 32 prisoners of war,[73] and in December 1944 there were still 269 laborers deployed in Deuchendorf.[74] There are more condensed figures available on the workforce deployed in St. Marein. In late July 1942, a few weeks before the commencement of construction works, there were 384 laborers deployed there, 216 of whom for *PORR* (of whom more than half were prisoners of war).[75] Of these, 146 laborers were deployed for earth and concrete works at the steelworks, ten for the construction of the transformer building, 30 for the creation of a field railway track,

70 Schreiben der Baudirektion zu Arbeitseinsatz Werk XII, April 10, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 501.
71 Schreiben Baudirektion zu Werk XII – Eisen- und NE-Metallbedarf sowie Arbeitereinsatz, January 30, 1943. Ibid.
72 Protokoll einer Baubesprechung am 9.1.1940, Kapfenberg, January 11, 1940. Ibid., Mappe 247/1.
73 Tabelle Bauarbeiter-Einsatz, May 15, 1943. Ibid.
74 Baufirmen Arbeiterstand, December 6, 1944. Ibid., Mappe 247/2.
75 Most of the remaining 168 laborers were deployed by the companies Andorff (99 individuals) and Hitthaller (41 individuals) and the rest by several smaller companies. Bericht über den Bauarbeiterstand im Werk XII per 27.7.1942, July 28, 1942. Ibid., Mappe 505.

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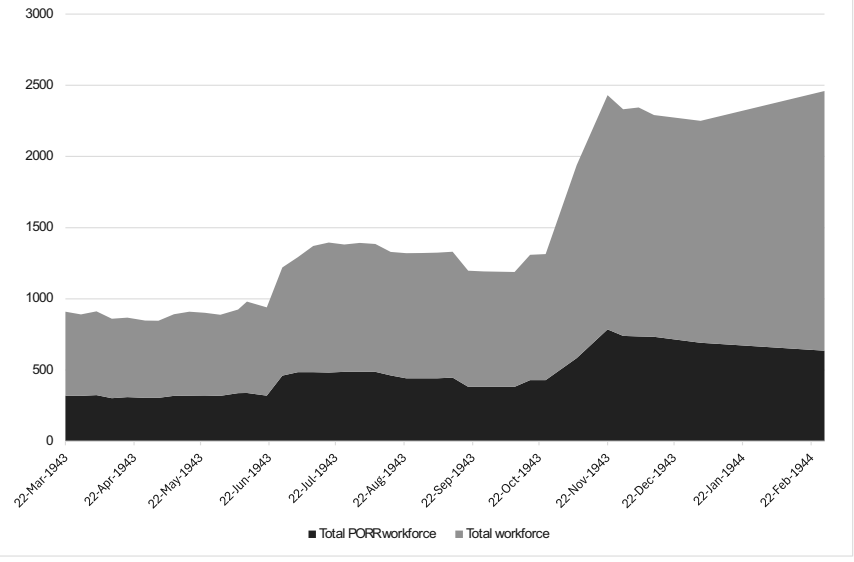
20 for gravel preparation, and ten in the *PORR AG* workshop. Of the prisoners of war, 27 could only be deployed for half a day at a time due to their bad physical condition. In the summer of 1942, another 120 prisoners of war were assigned to *PORR* for "soil excavations for the rolling mill foundations,"[76] and in late February 1943, there were altogether 356 laborers deployed in St. Marein, 199 of whom for *PORR*.[77] In March 1943, another 80 foreign civilian laborers (primarily from France) arrived in St. Marein, as a result of which the workforce increased to 473 laborers, of whom more than half (249) were deployed by *PORR AG*.[78] Between March 1943 and February 1944, the workforce in St. Marein was counted every week, although the figures do not distinguish between domestic and foreign laborers or prisoners of war (see the graph).



Graph 1: *PORR* Workforce in St. Marein im Mürztal. Source: Meldungen der Bauleitung Werk XII, 22. 3. 1943 bis 22. 2. 1944. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 527; calculations by the author.

76 Aktenvermerk, Bauüberwachung Kapfenberg, August 25, 1942. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 521.

77 Of these 356 laborers, 175 were foreign civilian laborers and 103 were prisoners of war. Aside from *PORR*, they were deployed by the companies Andorff (118 laborers, two foremen, two excavation foremen, and four overseers), Waagner-Biro (45 laborers), and Krumpholz (22 laborers). Bericht Baudirektion Kapfenberg über Besichtigung Baustelle Werk XII, March 1, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 501.

78 Bericht Baustelle Werk XII, March 11, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 501-a.

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3.1 Prisoners of War in Kapfenberg and St. Marein

The first indications of prisoners of war being deployed by *PORR AG* for construction works on behalf of *Böhlerwerke* in Kapfenberg date from 1940.[79] According to the site manager of *PORR*, Wilhelm Fessler, these were British and French prisoners of war.[80] There were presumably also Belgian prisoners of war[81] deployed in Kapfenberg along with – from the fall of 1943 – Italian military internees.[82] Following the commencement of the construction project in St. Marein in 1942, *PORR* was also assigned prisoners of war at this site, who were deployed for excavation works on the grounds of the planned rolling mill.[83] *Böhlerwerke* already began planning the construction of a civilian and prisoner of war camp on the territory of the municipality of St. Lorenzen, adjacent to Schloss Spiegelfeld, in late 1941. This camp was originally supposed to accommodate 216 civilian laborers as well as 450 prisoners of war.[84] However, the allocation of prisoners of war appears to have been repeatedly delayed. Consequently, the construction office in Kapfenberg complained in October 1942 concerning progress on the construction of Werk XII in St. Marein that "the additional 230 prisoners of war promised by Ostmotoren-Werke have not yet arrived."[85] Prisoners of war were being deployed in St. Marein regularly and in greater numbers at the latest by mid-1943. According to the *Böhler* construction office, altogether 90 prisoners of war were deployed as of April 27, 1943,[86] though this number sank a few weeks later – for unspecified reasons – to 48,[87] until around 1,000 British prisoners of war were relocated to St. Marein in the fall.

The prisoners of war were allocated to the construction companies for a fee and in coordination with the contracting company.[88] A memo concerning a

79 Aktenvermerk, Kapfenberg, December 21, 1940. Ibid., Mappe 247/1.
80 Erinnerungen Wilhelm Fessler, 80 Wanderjahre, Vienna 1986, 11. PA, Mappe 1079.
81 Speckner, Gewalt, 183.
82 The preserved documents from *Böhlerwerke* include numerous references to the large-scale deployment of Italian military internees, with up to 1,100 being interned in the specially established "Italian camp" in Schirmitzbühel, a neighborhood in Kapfenberg. It cannot be assessed from the source in question whether this group was also deployed for labor by *PORR AG*. Schreiben Gefolgschaftswesen Kapfenberg betreffend Lagerausweitung, December 8, 1943. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe130/1.
83 Aktenvermerk, Bauüberwachung Kapfenberg, August 25, 1942. Ibid., Mappe 521.
84 Aktenvermerk zu Besprechung der Böhler-Neubauüberwachung mit dem St. Mareiner Bürgermeister, December 13, 1941. Ibid., Mappe 590.
85 Baudirektion Kapfenberg bezüglich Baufortschritt Werk XII, October 12, 1942. Ibid., Mappe 501.
86 Schreiben der Baudirektion zu Arbeitseinsatz Werk XII, April 28, 1943. Ibid.
87 Bericht der Technischen Zentraldirektion Kapfenberg zum Arbeitseinsatz am Bausektor, May 7, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 247/1.
88 Aktenvermerk, Kapfenberg, December 21, 1940. Ibid.

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meeting between representatives of *Böhlerwerke* and several construction companies (including *PORR* and *Wayss & Freytag*) evinces that the construction companies were not content with the fee of 0.62 Reichsmark being charged per hour of labor by *Böhler*. The companies argued "that the performance of the prisoners of war falls far short of the hourly fee being charged." According to the National Association of the Construction Industry, their performance made up merely 18 to 58% of that of a normal laborer ("underperformance"). The companies moreover submitted an agreement that *Hermann-Göring-Werke* had reached with other construction companies, according to which the labor of a prisoner of war was worth merely 0.34 Reichsmark per hour. The companies also argued that more supervisors were required for the deployment of prisoners of war. They therefore demanded a reduction of the hourly fee to the level charged by *Hermann-Göring-Werke*, which the representatives of *Böhler* in turn rejected with the argument that the labor performance of the prisoners of war was greater than claimed by the construction companies. The companies finally agreed to a reduction of the hourly rate from 0.62 to 0.45 Reichsmark, which also covered the costs for the camp supervision. Since *PORR AG* held an older contract, its hourly rate was reduced to 0.42 Reichsmark, without however including camp supervision.[89]

Irrespective of the question of fees, the deployment of prisoners of war was a repeated cause of discontent: For example, the *Böhler* construction office complained that prisoners of war were assigned to the construction sites far too irregularly. They moreover often arrived unpunctually or too late, which in turn delayed the commencement of work by the civilian laborers: "Since unskilled construction workers today consist almost exclusively of prisoners of war, skilled workers are also impeded from starting work earlier."[90] These irregularities as well as the problem that communication with the prisoners of war was often hardly possible also provoked discontent among the contracted companies. They criticized that this situation impeded the achievement of an adequate work performance and announced that they would therefore not be able to stick to the agreed unit prices. They reserved the right to demand compensation in the case of an "inefficient construction process" for which they were not culpable. They therefore encouraged the human resources department of *Böhler* to intervene with the management of the prisoner of war camp.[91]

89 Ibid.
90 Baudirektion Böhler an Gefolgschaftsabteilung, March 8, 1941. Ibid., Mappe 247/3.
91 Ibid.

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3.1.1 The Group of British Prisoners of War

Documents from the *Böhler* company evinced that it was allocated a sizeable amount of British prisoners of war from the camp Stalag XVIII A in Wolfsberg (Carinthia) to work on the armaments construction project in St. Marein.[92] Some information is available today about this group – a large number of whom were also deployed by *PORR AG* – which was gradually assembled in the context of documentation and commemoration activities spearheaded by descendants of the prisoners.[93] The group comprised 994 men who were accommodated in a specially construction prisoner of war camp in St. Marein, known by the abbreviation "Work Camp 95 GW"[94] from 1943 onward. Around 40 of these British soldiers are known by name. They came from all parts of the United Kingdom, including England, Scotland, and Wales, as well as from Commonwealth countries such as New Zealand, South Africa, and Australia. The group's speaker and "Man of Confidence" was Maurice H. Mantle, a member of the Royal Army Service Corps[95] born in Cork, Ireland, in 1908. His assistant was William J. C. Walters, a member of the Royal Armoured Corps[96], born in Benoni, South Africa, in 1914. British Medical Officer James Munro, a member of the Royal Army Medical Corps, born in Saltcoats, Scotland, in 1901, was responsible for medical affairs.[97]

The group arrived in St. Marein in two stages in the fall of 1943.[98] The first portion arrived at the construction site on October 24, 1943. Comprising 539 men, 183 prisoners from this first transport were assigned to *PORR AG* (of whom 167 were unskilled laborers, twelve were carpenters, and four were masons). The company *Hochtief* received an even larger contingent (275 individuals). Of the 460 prisoners who made up the second transport, which arrived in St. Marein on November 8, 1943, *PORR* received more than half (254 individuals, including 231 unskilled laborers, 20 carpenters, one mason, and two other craftsmen).[99] To

92 On the development of Stalag XVIII A, see Speckner, Gewalt, 275–295.

93 URL: www.stalag18a.org (accessed November 28, 2023); and Klösch, Lagerstadt Wolfsberg. The commemorative activities – which are partly conducted together with the Lavanthaus Museum in Wolfsberg – include meetings of descendants that take place at irregular intervals in Wolfsberg, most recently in the summer of 2023.

94 The abbreviation GW stands for labor deployment in the field of trade and industry (gewerbliche Wirtschaft).

95 URL: www.stalag18a.org; URL: https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C171553 26 (both accessed November 28, 2023).

96 URL: www.stalag18a.org; URL: https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C179348 88 (both accessed November 28, 2023).

97 URL: www.stalag18a.org; URL: https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C174142 08 (both accessed November 28, 2023).

98 Bauüberwachung an PORR AG, November 22, 1943. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 521.

99 Aufstellung der englischen Kriegsgefangenen, November 9, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 527.

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put this in perspective: According to a survey dated November 22, 1943, 1,484 laborers were deployed at the construction site in St. Marein at this time, 751 of whom – more than half – were working for *PORR AG*. The above-cited 437 British prisoners of war therefore made up almost 60% of the workforce deployed by *PORR*. The largest construction works for which the *PORR* laborers were deployed in St. Marein were the construction of a steelworks (120) and a rolling mill (135) and the creation of a canal (220). Other smaller construction projects included the establishment of a crane track, a road, and various slit trenches, gravel preparation, and works on the firing range.[100]

In order to ensure that the living and working conditions for the British prisoners of war met the requirements of the Geneva Convention, the St. Marein construction site was visited in late November 1943 by the head of the Department of Protecting Powers Affairs from the Swiss Embassy in Berlin, Attaché Rudolf Denzler. He was accompanied among others by a representative of the Upper Command of the Wehrmacht in Berlin, a major of the Graz Infantry Battalion, and an "Abwehr" officer from Stalag XVIII A Wolfsberg, the camp that had dispatched the prisoners of war to Kapfenberg and St. Marein.[101] Denzler was given an overview of the accommodation of the British prisoners of war, the facilities in the barracks, the washing and sanitary facilities, the food situation, the medical supply, the clothing, the type of labor deployment, the compensation, and the opportunities for leisure activities. Denzler gave "Arbeitskommando 95 GW" an overall positive report.[102] At the time of his visit, there were almost 1,000 British soldiers present, who were housed in six sleeping barracks with a total area of 2,500 square meters, as well as a sanitary barracks, a washing barracks with a low-pressure hydronic heating system, a washing barracks with cold water, two toilet barracks, a provisional kitchen barracks, and a barracks for storage of care packages. There was also a guard barracks on site. The *Böhler* company moreover assured that the infrastructure would be further improved and the site expanded, with the prisoners of war being deployed in their free time to conduct the remaining works against payment, for example to construct shelter trenches.[103]

However, conflicts arose in the subsequent months between the British prisoners of war and the contracted construction companies, who were not content with the labor performance of the prisoners: On August 10, 1944, Denzler therefore traveled again to St. Marein for a meeting, during which *PORR AG* was

100 Arbeiterstand St. Marein, November 22, 1943. Ibid.

101 Merkblatt zu Besuch Denzler in St. Marein, November 30, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 590.

102 Bericht zu Arbeits-Kommando A. 95/GW Marein-St. Lorenzen, November 30, 1943. The National Archives (TNA), Work-Camps Depending on Stalag XVIII A.

103 Merkblatt zu Besuch Denzler in St. Marein, November 30, 1943. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 590.

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at times represented by its master builder Anton Sonnleitner and Franz Witzmann. The meeting focused on complaints by the British prisoners of war concerning their labor deployment and accommodation. One of the criticisms was that the construction companies were demanding too much work from the men during eleven-hour shifts. Some of the foremen had demanded – mistakenly, as *Böhler* claimed – that the prisoners excavate 3.6 cubic meters of soil in the course of eleven hours (as opposed to the agreed 3.3 cubic meters). Moreover, prisoners who had been determined by the doctor to be "less capable of work" had nevertheless been assigned to heavy labor. Another incident occurred at a construction site of *PORR AG* on August 9 and on the eve of August 10, 1944. The prisoners of war who submitted the complaint claimed that they had been compelled to perform too much labor in this time period, consisting of 90 mixing procedures with the mixing machine. However, 90 mixing procedures were determined to be appropriate in the course of the discussion, although it was noted that only 70% of normal performance could be expected of the prisoners of war. An agreement was finally reached that the prisoners would have to continue to perform 70% of normal labor performance and shifts were to remain eleven hours long per day, making up a working week of 65 hours.[104] It was moreover stipulated that in the context of soil excavation, a 70% performance capacity meant the excavation of around 3.3 cubic meters over the course of an eleven-hour shift. The laborers were permitted to perform the required work in a shorter timeframe if they so wished. They were also assured that "lesser capable" laborers and those classified as "agricultural prisoners of war" would be assigned lighter work. The determination of permanent incapacity for full labor performance was to be made by a doctor from the Stalag camp. The attaché approved these measures in agreement with the prisoner representative Maurice Mantle.[105]

104 By comparison, forced laborers in other sectors – for example those deployed in industry – sometimes already had to perform 72-hour working weeks from 1943 onward. On August 31, 1944, an obligatory working week of 72 hours was decreed for the wartime economy. Arnaud, Zwangsarbeit, 10.

105 Merkblatt zum Besuch von Attaché Denzler in St. Marein, August 11, 1944. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 501-2.

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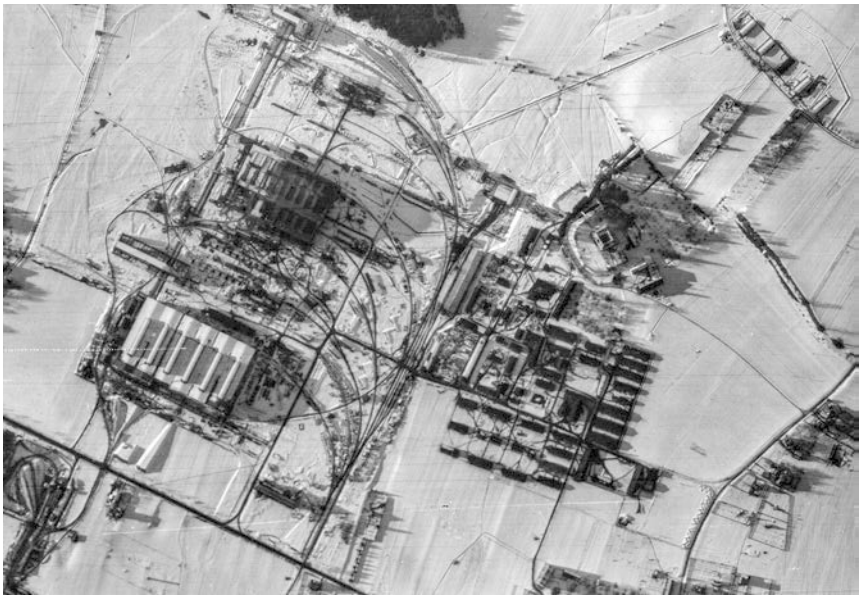

Figure 2: Aerial photograph of Werk XII in St. Marein and the prisoner of war camp, February 13, 1945. Source: Luftbilddatenbank Dr. Carls GmbH, 15SG-1186–4120.

3.2 Civilian Foreign Laborers in Kapfenberg and St. Marein

Aside from French, Belgian, British, and Italian prisoners of war, there were also several thousand civilian laborers from various countries deployed in Kapfenberg and St. Marein. In the course of this research, more than 1,100 of them could be identified by name, including more than 20 women. As demonstrated in the chapter on the *PORR AG* workforce (Chapter 6), these foreign laborers came from about 18 different countries and were subjected to various degrees of force during their deployment by *PORR AG*. Of the foreign laborers deployed by *PORR* in Kapfenberg, in the first two years of the war these predominantly came from Nazi Germany's allies Slovakia and Hungary and (from 1940 onward) increasingly also from Bulgaria. Starting in 1941, an increasing number of laborers was deployed from the Czech territories and all parts of the disintegrated Yugoslav state, augmented even further since 1942 with the first "Eastern Workers" from the Soviet Union. In 1943, the mass-deployment of French forced laborers began.

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3.2.1 The Group of "Eastern Workers"

While the *Böhlerwerke* documents concerning various national groups of foreign civilian laborers do not include specific numbers or information, there are at least some references to the deployment of "Eastern Workers": In the framework of the enormous construction project in St. Marein, Ukrainian women were deployed for the first time as forced laborers from late 1942 onward. In mid-November, for example, 80 Ukrainian women were assigned to the construction site for Werk XII, although the preserved sources do not state which companies deployed these women for forced labor. In any case, the registration index of the municipality of Kapfenberg reveals that from October 12, 1942, more than 20 women and girls from the region of Rostov were registered in the Deuchendorf camp, who were deployed by *PORR AG*. As an overview of labor deployment in St. Marein dated May 7, 1943 reveals, 30 of the 109 foreign laborers deployed by *PORR* at this time were "eastern workers," thus making up a third of the foreign workforce.[106] While their gender remains unknown, they were evidently deployed for earthworks. Aside from *PORR AG*, "Eastern Workers" were also deployed by the companies *Hochtief*, *Wayss & Freytag*, and *Diettrich*, among others.[107] By comparison, 99 "Eastern Workers" (including 42 women) were deployed for the *Böhlerwerke* construction project in the vicinity of Kapfenberg (including St. Marein) in May 1943, which meant they made up 4.7% of the 2,107 construction workers that the *Böhler* management stated were deployed for Werk I, VI, and XII.[108] In late 1943, *Böhlerwerke* again lobbied to recruit larger contingents of "Eastern Workers" for their construction project in Kapfenberg. The company therefore submitted a petition to be allowed to recruit the required laborers directly from the detention camps of the General Government.[109] This necessitated an expansion of the barracks camp – which pertained especially to the Deuchendorf site, which was gradually transformed into a pure "eastern worker camp" for both men and women.[110] As the registration records of the municipality of Kapfenberg reveal, hundreds of *PORR* laborers were housed in the Deuchendorf camp – in downright miserable conditions, as will be demonstrated later.

106 Bericht der Technischen Zentraldirektion Kapfenberg zum Arbeitseinsatz am Bausektor, May 7, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 247/1.
107 Ibid.
108 1,047 of these were foreign laborers, meaning about 67%. Ibid.
109 Schreiben Gefolgschaftswesen Kapfenberg betreffend Lagerausweitung, December 8, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 130/1.
110 Bericht der Baudirektion zur Lagerausweitung, December 24, 1943. Ibid.

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3.3 The Camps – Locations and Expansions

During construction works in the Nazi era, camps constituted the main method of accommodating large numbers of forced laborers, among other purposes. This was also true for Kapfenberg and St. Marein. The first labor camps in Kapfenberg were already operational since 1938, with an entire network of camp locations gradually developing in the vicinity of the town over the course of the war due to the constantly increasing number of foreign civilian laborers and prisoners of war, which was expanded in accordance with the respective need for accommodations. The responsibilities entailed in the administration of this camp network presented a logistical challenge to the *Böhler* company, which therefore decided in 1943 to establish a separate department to administer the various camps.[111] As an overview of *Böhlerwerke* from December 1943 evinced, an entire range of camp locations already existed by that point, namely Winkl, Redfeld, Werksstrasse 6 (Werk VI), and Deuchendorf as well as the Schirmitzbühel prisoner of war camp (which was sometimes also referred to as Ramsauerplateau), the Werk XII residential camp,[112] and the Reichsautobahn camp in Hafendorf. At the time, the latter constituted the largest barracks camp in Kapfenberg, with altogether 3,336 places. Deuchendorf had 1,878 places, Winkl 1,058, and St. Lorenzen 738. There were also another 540 places in the Bruck an der Mur camp and 584 in the Redfeld camp.[113] This large number of separate locations primarily reflected a shortage of real estate, which often rendered the expansion of existing camps impossible. *Böhlerwerke* therefore decided in early 1943, for example, to buy up a property in the vicinity of the Reichsautobahn camp from the administration of the Stubenberg estate in order to establish a new camp on the site, which lay between the Deuchendorf factory and the main factory.[114]

The companies working in Kapfenberg and St. Marein recruited members of their own staff as auxiliary police officers to guard the laborers housed in these camps. After absolving sentry training, they received an armband and a license to carry weapons.[115] This was also true of *PORR AG*, which deployed seven men as auxiliary police officers in the Deuchendorf camp, all of whom also lived on site.[116] Due to repeated conscriptions to the Wehrmacht, these auxiliary police

111 Schreiben Bauüberwachung Kapfenberg, December 29, 1943. Ibid.
112 Ibid.
113 Übersicht Plätze Barackenlager per 21. 12. 1943. Ibid.
114 Schreiben Baudirektion betreffend Baracken, January 28, 1943. Ibid.
115 Schreiben Kommandoführer des Kgf.-Arbeitskommandos Schirmitzbühel, July 11, 1940. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, A-I-1942, Schachtel 360.
116 Liste von Hilfspolizisten, July 9, 1940. Ibid.

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positions had to constantly be refilled.[117] The demand for staff members to guard the camps moreover kept rising due to the constant increase in the number of inmates and the size of the camps.

The facilities at the various camp sites (the quantitative occupancy in the barracks, security, perimeter fences etc.) varied due to the different regulations applied to the respective (national) groups accommodated there. The most important issue in this respect concerned freedom of movement, which was restricted to differing degrees for prisoners of war, "eastern workers," and civilian forced laborers, while the German core workforce, which was predominantly also accommodated in camps (albeit under completely different circumstances), was allowed to move freely and could leave their barracks at any time. This difference was also reflected in the structural design of the camps.[118] While foreign laborers and prisoners of war were mostly housed in Reich Labor Service barracks of the type RL IV/4 (designed for 72 men each) and partly in "Kabe barracks" (designed for 90 men each),[119] *Böhler* constructed better workforce barracks for German laborers, which were built with pumice concrete.[120]

The impact of the constant expansion or new construction of camps on the individuals accommodated therein can be seen in the registration index cards of the *PORR* laborers deployed in Kapfenberg: Entire (national) groups were repeatedly relocated from one camp location to the next. This is well-illustrated in the case of the *PORR* laborer Alois H. from the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia: H. worked for *PORR* – with a few interruptions – from October 12, 1939 to July 10, 1944. He was initially housed in the Schirmitzbühel camp before being relocated to the Hafendorf camp in March 1940. A year later, he was transferred back to Schirmitzbühel and another year after that – in February 1942 – he was sent to the Deuchendorf camp, from where he was transferred to the Reichsautobahn camp at an unspecified point in time, before finally returning for a third stay in the Schirmitzbühel camp in July 1944.[121]

117 For example, the *PORR* employee Gottfried S. had to quit his post as an auxiliary police officer when he was conscripted in December 1940. PORR AG an Landrat Bruck an der Mur, December 5, 1940. Ibid.

118 Jan van Pelt, Labour Service; Doßmann/Wenzel/Wenzel, Architektur auf Zeit.

119 Bericht der Bauüberwachung zur Barackenfertigstellung in St. Marein, May 27, 1944. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 130/1.

120 Besprechungsvermerk, Technische Zentraldirektion, May 11, 1944. Ibid.

121 Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten FVWur – Hrü, Alois H. Stadt Kapfenberg, Meldeamt.

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3.3.1 Deuchendorf and Hafendorf

A residential camp (called DAF-Gemeinschaftslager Deuchendorf) was already established by the German Labor Front in the Pötschach neighborhood of Kapfenberg in 1939. Along with laborers from other companies, it served to house more than 400 foreign laborers deployed by *PORR AG*.[122] At first, these primarily comprised men from Slovakia, Hungary, the Protectorate, and Italy, augmented from 1942 by laborers from Bulgaria and forced laborers from France. As of November 1942, this camp was accommodating 1,300 individuals.[123] Beginning in December 1942, a few "Eastern Workers" were housed in the Deuchendorf camp for the first time,[124] including the Ukrainian women deployed by *PORR AG*. In late 1943, all foreign laborers in Deuchendorf began to be relocated to the Bruck residential camp, the Reichsautobahn camp in Hafendorf, the Ramsauerplateau camp on Schirmitzbühel, and St. Lorenzen im Mürztal. The "eastern workers" were forced to live in notably more crowded conditions in Deuchendorf: According to the *Böhler* site management, 700 "eastern workers" could now be housed in an area that had previously served 439 German laborers.[125]

Another large residential camp existed in Hafendorf, which was sometimes also referred to as the Reichsautobahn camp. This also housed *PORR* laborers – predominantly of Slovak, Hungarian, and Czech origin – from as early as 1939. This camp would later house altogether 2,000 individuals, who by late 1942 consisted predominantly of foreigners "from 18 different nations."[126] When the Deuchendorf camp was repurposed as a camp for "Eastern Workers" in the winter of 1942/1943, almost 200 *PORR* laborers were relocated from Deuchendorf to Hafendorf – about half of whom were French, the rest consisting of Bulgarians and people from the Protectorate.

122 Bericht der Gendarmerie Hafendorf, May 31, 1941. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, Pe32-V-1941, Schachtel 295; Bericht der Gendarmerie Kapfenberg, October 8, 1941. Ibid.

123 Bericht der Gendarmerie Hafendorf, November 7, 1942. Ibid., A-I-1942, Schachtel 360.

124 Bericht der Gendarmerie Hafendorf, December 12, 1942. Ibid., Sch-Z-1942, Schachtel 362.

125 Bericht der Baudirektion zur Lagerausweitung, December 24, 1943. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 130/1.

126 Bericht der Gendarmerie Hafendorf, November 7, 1942. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, A-I-1942, Schachtel 360.

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3.3.2 The Schirmitzbühel Barracks Camp

The establishment of the Schirmitzbühel camp from June 1940 onward was directly related to the burgeoning deployment of prisoners of war in Kapfenberg. The camp was constructed by the company *Gemeinnützige Mürz-Ybbs Siedlungsanlagen GmbH* (*GEMYSAG*), for which it also deployed forced laborers.[127] The Schirmitzbühel camp was repeatedly expanded over the duration of its existence and thus consisted of numerous areas that differed from each other – particularly with regard to fencing and access – and were also assigned different names in the sources. This is because prisoners of war were subject to different regulations depending on their respective origins. In the following years, Schirmitzbühel primarily served the accommodation of British and French prisoners of war. New camp sections were eventually added for Soviet prisoners of war (from February 1942 – called the "Russian barracks"[128] or "Soviet camp"[129]) and by Italian military internees[130] (from late 1943 – called the "Italian camp" on Ramsauerplateau[131]). Moreover, the establishment of a separate "Jewish camp" behind the existing camp for French prisoners of war was being planned as late as the fall of 1942. It was supposed to house 1,000 Jewish skilled laborers who would be deployed for production at Werk VI in Deuchendorf.[132] However, the sources do not contain any further evidence regarding the realization of this plan, including details of where these Jews were supposed to have come from. There are also no indications that any forced laborers classified as Jews were actually deployed in Kapfenberg. This plan was therefore presumably dismissed.

127 Technische Zentraldirektion Kapfenberg an Gemysag, June 3, 1940. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 247/3. *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.* was the main shareholder in *GEMYSAG*, which was founded in 1938. URL: https://www.gemysag.at/unternehmen/ueber-uns (accessed June 12, 2024).

128 Protokoll zu 1. Baubesprechung Werk XII am 18. 2. 1942, February 23, 1942. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 504.

129 Bericht der Gendarmerie Hafendorf, November 27, 1942. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, Sch-Z-1942, Schachtel 362.

130 Bericht der Schutzpolizei Kapfenberg, March 5, 1944. Ibid., RO-Z-1944, Schachtel 412.

131 Aktenvermerk, Kapfenberg, October 19, 1943. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 247/1.

132 Merkblatt zu Besprechung Bauüberwachung mit Dipl. Ing. Liederer (Reichsministerium für Bewaffnung und Munition), September 28, 1942. Ibid., Mappe 130/1.

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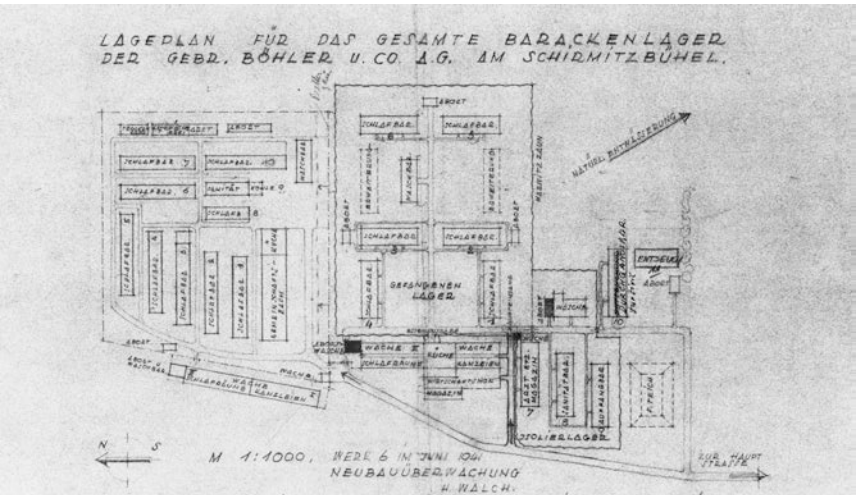

Figure 3: Site map of the barracks camp at Schirmitzbühel in Kapfenberg. Source: StLa, Böhler-K-29-M-129-P.

3.3.3 Further Camp Locations in Kapfenberg

Aside from the large camps in Deuchendorf and Hafendorf, in which the bulk of the foreign laborers deployed by *PORR* were housed, there were also a few camps in Kapfenberg, namely the Winkl camp in the northwest of the town and the Redfeld camp north of the main *Böhler* factory. The Winkl camp, which had already been established in 1939,[133] housed around a dozen laborers of various nationalities between 1940 and 1942 who were deployed by *PORR*. Similarly, the Kapfenberg registration cards indicate that only around a dozen *PORR* laborers were housed in the Redfeld camp, all of whom were men from Yugoslavia.

3.3.4 The Camps in St. Marein and St. Lorenzen

In March 1942, work began on the establishment of barracks for construction workers on a property adjacent to Schloss Spiegelfeld in St. Marein, which went into operation on March 30, 1942. At first, accommodations were established for 100 civilian laborers and 200 prisoners of war, but as early as April 1942, plans

133 Totenbuch 1939, Eintrag Nr. 81, August 31, 1939. Stadt Kapfenberg, Standesamt.

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were drawn up to expand the camp's capacity.[134] Before the British prisoners of war could begin work on the establishment of Werk XII in St. Marein,[135] restructuring measures were required in the accommodation situation. Some of the barracks in the St. Marein camp were subsequently vacated in order to "accommodate 1,000 English prisoners of war in 2 groups of 500 men each."[136] The civilian forced laborers were therefore moved temporarily to the Deuchendorf camp (altogether 200 men, including around 100 French forced laborers deployed by *PORR*) and the Redfeld camp (150 men), as well as to the Prettenthaler inn in Kindberg (80 men). According to the *Böhler* construction office, this restructuring measure had already freed up 540 places for British laborers by October 23, 1943. Another 218 civilian construction workers had to be relocated in order to house the second group of 500 British prisoners of war. The *Kraus* company was moreover tasked with building three further barracks with space for 420 men on an additionally leased property opposite the already existing camp Werk Lager XII in the first days of November 1943, as well as an additional kitchen barracks to serve the newly arriving 1,000 men. Until the latter was completed, two urns were set up in an already existing washing barracks to provisionally serve for the preparation of food. The labor deployment of all 1,000 British prisoners of war was scheduled to begin on November 8, 1943.[137]

The accommodation of prisoners of war in Kapfenberg and St. Marein was a never-ending topic for *Böhler*. Evidently, the Wolfsberg Stalag camp supplied both locations with prisoners of war as well as with military internees (meaning Italians). The labor details were assigned the numbers 95 GW (St. Marein) and 54 GW (Ramsauerplateau). The men in the latter detail were presumably not deployed by *PORR*. In early May 1944, the Stalag camp in Wolfsberg complained that the accommodations for the British and Italian laborers had not been completed on schedule.[138] Various construction measures were subsequently initiated in both St. Marein and the Ramsauerplateu camp on Schirmitzbühel to meet the accommodation demands.[139]

Another civilian labor camp for laborers deployed to build the new factory in St. Marein existed in the town of St. Lorenzen immediately adjacent. It also sometimes housed French forced laborers, including some who were deployed by *PORR AG*. One of these was the French caricaturist Philibert Charrin, who recorded his experience of forced labor deployment in drawings, which he went

134 Protokoll zu Baubesprechung Werk XII am 31.3.1942, April 1, 1942. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 50.
135 Aktenvermerk, Kapfenberg, October 19, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 247/1.
136 Ibid.
137 Ibid.
138 Schreiben der Böhler-Verwaltung, May 4, 1944. Ibid., Mappe 130/1.
139 Bericht der Bauüberwachung Kapfenberg, May 22, 1944. Ibid.

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on to publish for the first time in Lyon as early as 1945 under the title *S.T.O. 100 Dessins inedits.* In 2021, this work was republished in an annotated, trilingual edition by the Munich Documentation Center for the History of National Socialism.[140]

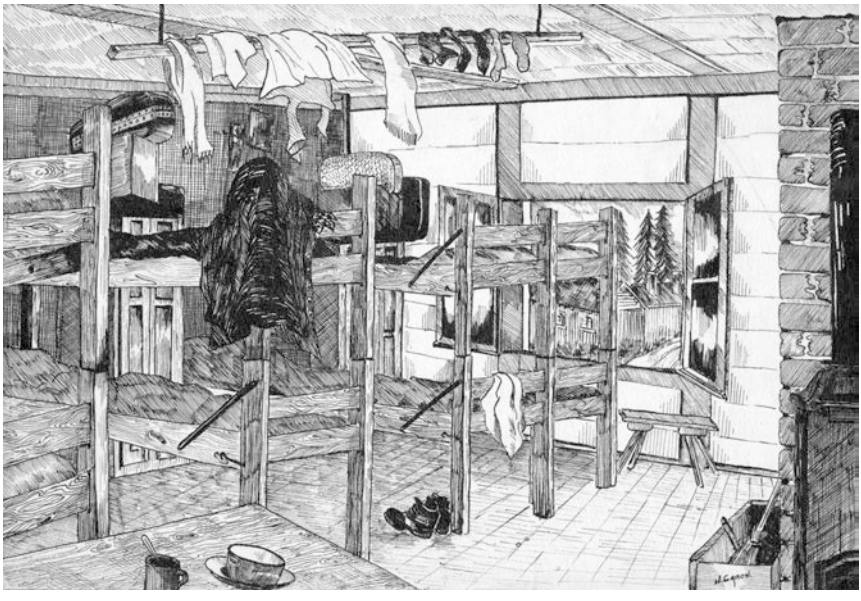

Figure 4: Drawing of the interior of a barracks in St. Marein by Jean Garon. Source: Collection Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation / Ville de Lyon, Collection Rene Basset.

4 Living and Working Conditions

4.1 Forced Labor on the Construction Project

The forced laborers and prisoners of war deployed in Kapfenberg and St. Marein by *PORR AG* were primarily used as unskilled and auxiliary laborers. The work they performed for the most part did not require special training and therefore consisted all the more of especially difficult physical labor. Especially in the spring and fall, the frozen ground made the already difficult forced labor all the more extreme.[141] Due to the enormous time pressure to realize these armaments construction projects, which had been declared essential to the war effort, night

140 Jung (ed.), Philibert & Fifi.

141 Bericht Baudirektion Kapfenberg über Besichtigung Baustelle Werk XII, March 1, 1943. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 501.

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shifts were sometimes implemented, too, for example at the construction site in St. Marein.[142] Depending on the needs of the various construction sites, laborers might be relocated from one site to another. In early 1942, for example, altogether 70 men (including 50 prisoners of war) were pulled from the construction site at Werk VI in Deuchendorf to plug an acute labor shortage at the sheet rolling mill construction site.[143] In August 1942, when *PORR AG* began earth excavation works for the foundations of the new rolling mill construction project in St. Marein, it was assigned 120 prisoners of war.[144] In March 1943, *PORR* was allocated a part of a property to create a gravel pit, at which numerous laborers were subsequently deployed for gravel production.[145] During the course of construction works, the *PORR* laborers in St. Marein were initially deployed above all to establish foundations, roads, sewers, and drainage buildings.[146] They were subsequently also deployed to construct rail and road infrastructure[147] and slit trenches and to perform various types of work in the residential and prisoner of war camps. Toward the end of 1943, construction began on the rolling mill, in which not only *PORR*, but also the construction companies *Hochtief*, *Andorff*, and *Wayss & Freytag* were involved.[148]

The extremely difficult physical labor was movingly portrayed in many testimonies of French forced laborers who had been deployed by *PORR* in St. Marein. George M. reported decades later about the difficult time he endured in St. Marein:

> "I was an auxiliary laborer: I loaded cement onto cars and conducted earthworks, which was arduous work. Snow or no snow, we had to work, otherwise we were not fed. We slept in wooden barracks with 24 men to a room. I was 20 years old, now I will soon be 80 and I still remember it. I worked for 27 months without being allowed to go home. My father was all alone, as my mother had died."[149]

As the following account submitted to the Austrian Reconciliation Fund by the Frenchman Pierre M. from Nice evinced, the laborers could be transferred at will between the construction companies based on necessity or performance requirements:

142 Aktenvermerk bezüglich Erdarbeiten Werk XII, August 25, 1942. Ibid., Mappe 521; Merkblatt der Technischen Zentraldirektion zu Arbeitseinsatz Marein, May 20, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 501.
143 Merkblatt zu Baubesprechung, Kapfenberg, January 6, 1942. Ibid., Mappe 247/1; Neubauüberwachung Kapfenberg an Gefolgschaftsabteilung, January 7, 1942. Ibid.
144 Aktenvermerk, Bauüberwachung Kapfenberg, August 25, 1942. Ibid., Mappe 521.
145 Vermerk über Besichtigung der Baustelle Werk XII, March 23, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 501.
146 Bericht Baudirektion Kapfenberg über Besichtigung Baustelle Werk XII, March 1, 1943. Ibid.
147 Merkblatt der Technischen Zentraldirektion zu Arbeitseinsatz Marein, May 20, 1943. Ibid.
148 Arbeitereinsatz, St. Marein, December 13, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 527.
149 George M. ÖStA/AdR, Österreichischer Versöhnungsfonds (ÖVF), 47624.

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> "I departed on a convoy on June 10, 1943 and arrived in Austria in mid-June at a barracks camp in St. Marein im Mürztal (Styria), where I was deployed along with the entire convoy as a construction worker for earth movement. I was subsequently sent to other camps at the behest of the company that deployed me: to Kapfenberg Nord – Hafendorf – Bruck an der Mur – Marburg – and for a month in December 1944 I was sent to Slovenia to dig trenches. I was finally repatriated to France on May 28, 1945. I was 21 years old, now I am 80. The past 57 years have passed waiting for an answer."[150]

René B., who was born in Lyon, later reported that he had been deployed in St. Marein to "dig canals at a depth of 8–9 meters with a pickaxe."[151] He had to work 60 hours a week, comprising eleven hours each weekday and five hours on Saturdays. Sometimes there were also "emergency situations" requiring work on Sundays.[152]

Hardly anything remained of the anyway meager wage the laborers were paid for this exhausting forced labor, as this was also used to cover their provisions and accommodation, as René B. recalled. This was merely a sham payment, as the Reichsmark that the laborers were given with one hand were then mostly taken away again with the other hand. Many of his comrades used what little remained of these Reichsmark to purchase Zora cigarettes. René B., who did not smoke, was able to save altogether 300 Reichsmark during 20 months of forced labor, which he later exchanged for Francs.[153]

René B. also recalled that he had been "baptized with the number 461" for his forced labor deployment by *PORR* in St. Marein, and that for two years he was called "461."[154] Some of his French comrades also remembered the dehumanization involved in forced labor deployment. George Lucien F., for example, recalled that the foremen mostly did not call him and his comrades by name but merely by number: "During work and during roll call, the foreman only mentioned our numbers. My number was 852."[155]

150 Pierre M. Ibid., 82715.
151 René B. Ibid., 35820.
152 Ibid.
153 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
155 George Lucien F. Ibid., 81474.

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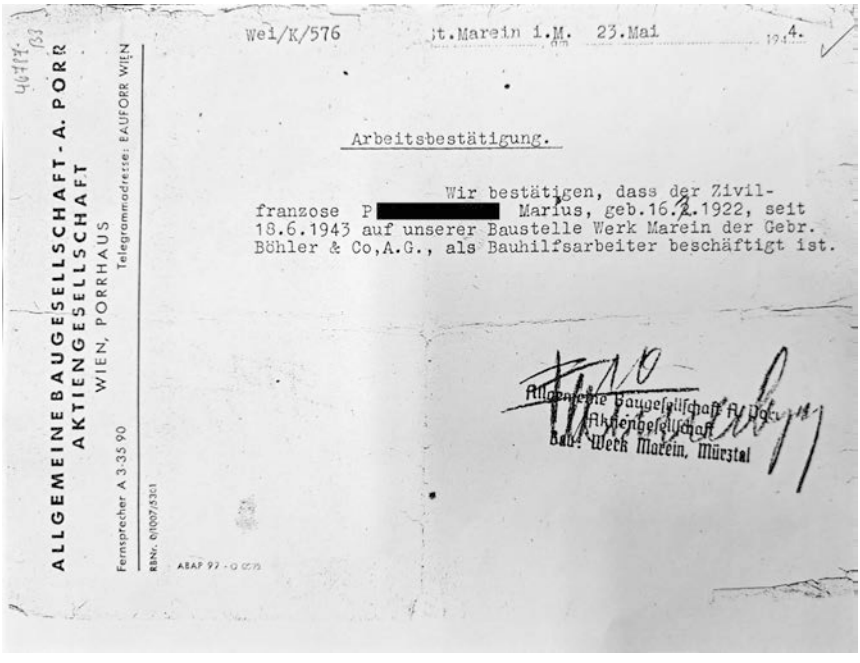

ALLGEMEINE BAUGESELLSCHAFT - A. PORR
AKTIENGESELLSCHAFT
WIEN, PORRHAUS
Telegrammadresse: BAUPORR WIEN
Fernsprecher A 3-35 90
RBNr. 0/1007/5301
ABAP 97 - 0 07.73

Wei/K/576 St.Marein i.M. 23.Mai 1944.

Arbeitsbestätigung.

Wir bestätigen, dass der Zivilfranzose P[redacted] Marius, geb.16.2.1922, seit 18.6.1943 auf unserer Baustelle Werk Marein der Gebr. Böhler & Co,A.G., als Bauhilfsarbeiter beschäftigt ist.

Allgemeine Baugesellschaft A. Porr
Aktiengesellschaft
Bau: Werk Marein, Mürztal

Figure 5: Labor certificate of the *PORR* auxiliary construction worker Marius P. Source: ÖStA/AdR, Österreichischer Versöhnungsfonds (ÖVF), 46.787.

4.1.1 Criticisms of Labor Performance and Discipline

Criticisms levelled by *PORR* against the laborers it deployed in Kapfenberg and St. Marein – regardless of their background – because of their ostensibly poor performance run like a red thread through the preserved documentation. In early 1940, a meeting took place to discuss the labor deployment and performance of the core workforce, in which several representatives of *Böhlerwerke* (human resources department and construction office) and of the contracted construction companies (including *PORR AG*) took part.[156] The latter complained that the laborers' operational readiness had "sunk catastrophically." The laborers apparently left the construction site whenever they pleased and returned home late from their vacations. The meeting therefore served to discuss possible solutions, apparently including punitive and denunciative methods. The German Labor Front was called upon to increase roll calls and the companies were to report those staff members "practicing passive resistance," who were subsequently to be

156 Rundschreiben Gebrüder Böhler & Co. AG, February 1, 1940. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 247/3.

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conscripted for compulsory labor[157] as a punishment. Laborers who extended their vacations without permission were to be retrieved by the employment agency by means of compulsory labor conscription.[158]

In February 1943, the *Böhler* construction office complained that the labor intensity on the construction sites was "extraordinarily low." Neither the prisoners of war nor the assigned civilian laborers were "sufficiently pulling their weight," hence the supervisors should at the very least "get involved in order to extract more" effort from the laborers.[159] The *Böhler* human resources department consequently suggested, due to the ineffective procedures of the guard details, that all instances of negligence, laziness, and objection be reported directly to the commandant of the prisoner of war camp. Should this measure also prove ineffective, the Armaments Command Center[160] would have to be informed.[161] The construction companies also complained that the "eastern workers" apparently did not evince enough "labor intensity," which was cited as the reason for delays in the construction works in St. Marein. However, the Central Technical Office of *Böhler* responded that while the criticism of deficient labor performance was understandable, this was not a sufficient excuse for the delay since the number of "Eastern Workers" made up less than 5% of the total workforce.[162]

On June 9, 1943, the site management at Werk XII in St. Marein invited representatives from all the companies working there to a "discussion regarding how to combat absenteeism."[163] *PORR AG* was represented by master builder Anton Sonnleitner at this meeting, in which the companies *Andorff*, *Krumpholz*, *Waagner-Biro*, *Hochtief*, *Dirnböck*, and *Böhler* itself also took part. The discus-

157 On compulsory labor, see: Benz/Graml/Weiß (eds.), Enzyklopädie.

158 Vermerk, Besprechung betreffend Arbeitseinsatz und Arbeitsleistung, February 6, 1940. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 247/3.

159 Baudirektion der Böhlerwerke Kapfenberg an Technische Zentraldirektion, February 15, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 247/1.

160 The Armaments Command Centers – until 1939 called Defense Economy Centers – were responsible for mobilizing the armaments factories. This meant that they were also responsible, among other things, for suggestions regarding staffing and manufacturing and the allocation of laborers, as well as production and manufacturing supplies. The Armaments Command Centers moreover contributed to the ongoing provision and assembly of Wehrmacht units and administered the budgetary means that they were assigned by the Defense Economy Inspectorate. The Armaments Command Center in Graz was responsible for *Böhlerwerke* in Kapfenberg and St. Marein. URL: https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/R%C3%BCstungskommando (accessed June 3, 2024); Schausberger, Rüstung.

161 Gefolgschaftsabteilung der Böhlerwerke Kapfenberg an Baudirektion – Verwaltungsabteilung, February 17, 1943. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 247/1.

162 Bericht der Technischen Zentraldirektion Kapfenberg zum Arbeitseinsatz am Bausektor, May 7, 1943. Ibid.

163 Merkblatt der Bauleitung Werk XII zwecks Bekämpfung des Bummelantentums, June 9, 1943. Ibid., Mappe 501.

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sion focused above all on the French laborers, about whom it was claimed that "playing hooky" had "increased again at an alarming rate."[164] All the punitive measures already employed by the companies and the factory security details had proven ineffective, which is why additional measures had to be taken in consultation with the German Labor Front. All the measures discussed, as was explicitly emphasized once more, would absolutely not apply to German labor comrades, but were to be directed exclusively at the foreign laborers. The key measure agreed at this meeting related to the distribution of food cards. A restriction was henceforth introduced whereby each worker had to present a stamp on their food card for the distribution of lunch and dinner which they previously had to receive from a foreman or supervisor.[165] Whosoever presented a food card at meal distributions in the barracks camp without an appropriate stamp would not receive a meal from the camp administration: "Cards without these stamps will no longer be valid and the workforce member will have no claim to compensation for payment or food cards."[166]

In June 1943, roll calls took place for the foreign civilian laborers deployed on the construction site at Werk XII in St. Marein. These were intended to "raise the labor intensity of the foreign workforce members of the companies contracted at the Werk XII construction site."[167] Separate roll calls took place based on the origins of the laborers. The French forced laborers were mustered on June 10, 1943, followed by laborers from the Protectorate, Poland, and Ukraine a day later. The roll call for the French forced laborers was accompanied by speeches by the Nazi Party District Chairman Resch and the go-between for French laborers deployed in Styria, Legrell. The laborers themselves were evidently permitted to speak during a short discussion at the end, during which they criticized the bad footwear above all.[168] As the performance of the French laborers apparently hardly improved, Legrell was summoned once more to St. Marein. On July 14 and 15, 1943, he visited St. Marein together with officials from the employment agency in Bruck an der Mur and the Department of Labor Deployment of the German Labor Front. Legrell was confronted with the accusation that the labor performance and discipline of the Frenchmen was extraordinarily bad. Legrell explained this by recourse to their political attitudes: "The young Frenchmen are of the opinion that they did not come here voluntarily and do not want to work for Germany."[169] Legrell was therefore "educated about the untenability of this

164 Ibid.
165 Ibid.
166 Ibid.
167 Merkblatt der Bauleitung Werk XII, June 12, 1943. Ibid.
168 Ibid.
169 Vermerk über Besuch des französischen Gauverbindungsmannes Legrell in St. Marein, July 16, 1943. Ibid.

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behavior," with the German representatives of the German Labor Front and the employment agency moreover threatening the Frenchmen with "the most stringent measures", should their discipline not improve.[170]

With regard to the German laborers, on the other hand, the *Böhler* construction office tried to achieve their goals with positive incentives, supported by the site managers of all the construction companies involved: For example, a mutual assembly was held in the St. Lorenzen residential camp on the evening of July 15, 1943, to which the local Nazi Party District Chairman Resch also showed up to enlighten the attendants about the relationship between the site managers and the German workforce. He encouraged the site managers to increase motivation through measures such as the appropriate organization of the dining rooms. The site managers were cast as role models for the laborers and thus had to demonstrate unceasing dedication. They were also encouraged to put more pressure on the foreign laborers with regard to their performance motivation.[171]

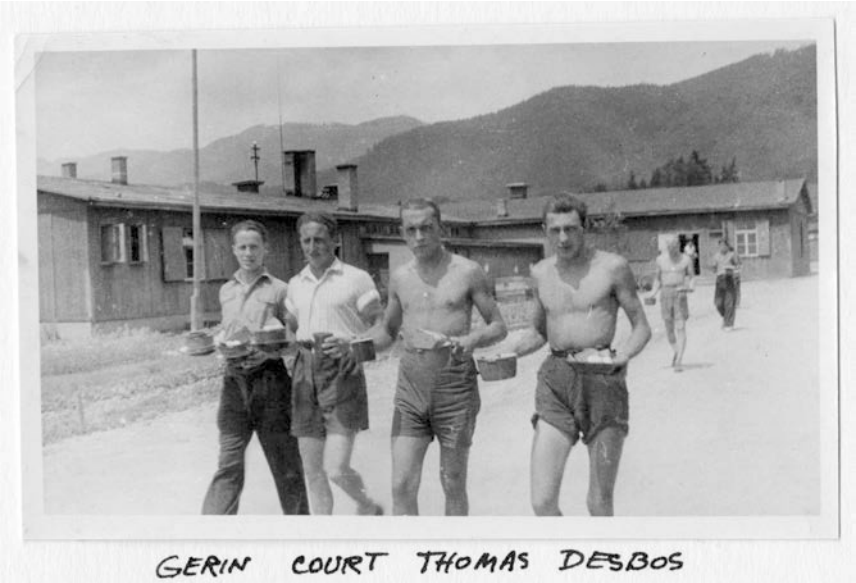

Figure 6: The French forced laborers Gerin, Court, Thomas, and Desbos following food distribution in St. Marein, undated. Source: Collection Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation / Ville de Lyon, Collection Rene Basset.

170 Ibid.
171 Vermerk zu Appell, Bauleitung Werk XII, July 16, 1943. Ibid.

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4.2 Labor Absconding and Delayed Returns from Vacation

The preserved documentation reveals that, along with other infractions, the laborers deployed by *PORR AG* at its Kapfenberg construction sites repeatedly absconded from labor. Those who dared flee the workplace ran the risk of being sent to a Nazi labor training camp in the event that they were caught. The issue of vacation entitlement and thus of returning late from vacation only applied to particular groups of laborers, such as the French, who were granted two weeks of vacation after one year of labor. In emergency cases – for example if relatives fell seriously ill – they could also apply for a special leave of absence.[172] Groups that ranked lower in the Nazi racist hierarchy, such as Poles and "Eastern Workers," naturally did not have this option. Returning from vacation late or failing to return at all was a particular source of irritation for the contracting and contracted companies alike. For example, the Central Technical Office of *Böhler* in Kapfenberg complained in May 1943 about the high percentage of absent construction workers on the Werk I and Werk VI sites, which was "due to inappropriate transgressions of vacation periods beyond the Easter holidays."[173] Numerous French civilian laborers used their vacations in order to go into hiding so as not to have to return to their workplaces. As this happened especially frequently at the Deuchendorf construction site, *Böhlerwerke* promptly decreed a ban on vacations with effect from November 27, 1943. In that month alone, 35 French laborers had gone on vacation and none of them had returned by the end of the month. Of the altogether 105 Frenchmen who had gone on vacation since that August, only two had returned for work – both of them delayed.[174]

As the registration documents from Kapfenberg show, these 105 Frenchmen included some of the laborers deployed by *PORR*. One of them was André G., who previously operated a cement mixer at a *PORR* construction site. Following a return home to visit his sick father, he decided not to return.[175] This issue was by no means restricted to the French laborers: The registration cards researched for this project revealed around 40 examples of *PORR* laborers who had "not returned from vacation" to their workplaces, including 18 laborers from the Protectorate. Another 20 laborers were marked in the registration cards as having "fled." The Frenchman Philibert Charrin had already received a certificate in October 1943 allowing him to return home for a two-week vacation in December.

172 Jung (ed.), Philibert & Fifi, 14.
173 Bericht der Technischen Zentraldirektion Kapfenberg zum Arbeitseinsatz am Bausektor, May 7, 1943. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 247/1.
174 Gebrüder Böhler – Werk Deuchendorf an Arbeitsamt Bruck an der Mur, November 27, 1943. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, E-P-1944, Schachtel 409.
175 André G. ÖStA/AdR, ÖVF 81268.

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Due to the new ban on vacations, however, he had to stay in St. Marein and was henceforth unable to return home until the end of the war.[176]

4.3 Illicit Contacts between Laborers

Following the racist hierarchization of different groups of forced laborers and prisoners of war, the Nazi regime also introduced restrictions of varying degrees of severity regarding their freedom of movement and the contact they were permitted to entertain with members of other groups. However, due to the manifold different groups of laborers deployed at the construction sites and housed in the camps, illicit contacts occurred repeatedly despite these restrictions, some of which led to police investigations.[177] These investigations were mostly instigated by denunciations by the camp guards or by members of the construction companies' core workforces. In December 1943, for example, the gendarmerie in St. Marein reported to the Gestapo in Graz about a case of illicit interactions between numerous people from the Protectorate and British prisoners of war. The report was submitted by Josef F., the supreme camp commandant of the St. Lorenzen residential camp, who had discovered prohibited luxury items during an inspection of the cupboards of laborers from the Protectorate that they had received from a British prisoner of war. One of the accused parties, Miroslaus J., was deployed by *PORR AG* and was denounced by the *PORR* construction foreman Johann D. He reported to the gendarmerie that J. had repeatedly conversed with British prisoners of war deployed by *PORR*, although he should have had nothing to do with these laborers. The problem according to D. was above all that the prisoners of war were being given their food in the communal kitchen since their arrival in late October 1942 as they had no kitchen facilities of their own yet. This allowed the civilian laborers to communicate with the prisoners of war. Moreover, the latter group were so widely dispersed across the construction site that they could only be monitored with difficulty. Since the laborers from the Protectorate received a lot of packages from home and their supply of bread was bountiful, they were able to trade bread for luxury items from the British men.[178]

In January 1944, the Polish laborer Stefan W. was denounced by the mason Adolf. W. from the town of Drassmarkt in Burgenland (both laborers lived in the St. Lorenzen residential camp). Adolf W. claimed that Stefan W. had illicitly

176 Jung (ed.), Philibert & Fifi, 14.
177 See generally: Widerstand und Verfolgung in der Steiermark.
178 Gendarmerie St. Marein an Gestapo Graz, December 14, 1943. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, S-Z-1943, Schachtel 385.

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interacted with a British prisoner of war, leading to a transfer of several luxury items in the dining room of the St. Lorenzen residential camp. In the course of his interrogation, Stefan W. stated that the British soldier had given him several luxury items in exchange for five lighters. He had sold these luxury items with the intention of sending the proceeds to his wife in Warsaw. The gendarmerie noted critically that such interactions between civilian laborers and prisoners of war in the camp were abetted by the fact that the various camps had been built too closely together.[179]

Figure 7: The Czech forced laborer Svatja Jirsch playing his guitar in the French barracks, undated. Source: Collection Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation / Ville de Lyon, Collection Rene Basset.

Another *PORR* laborer to face police investigation was the diesel locomotive engineer Vitislav H., who had been born in the Czech town of Olomouc in 1926. He had initially been deployed in Kapfenberg by *PORR*, where he was housed first in the Winkl camp and then the Werk VI camp before being transferred to the St. Marein construction site.[180] There, he was denounced by the *PORR* master builder Anton Sonnleitner for manufacturing a four-edged dagger (according to H. he had made this from a detached Russian bayonet he had found by chance). To this end, he had asked a *PORR* carpenter to produce a handle on the basis of a drawing he had prepared. Another laborer had reported this to Sonnleitner

179 Bericht der Gendarmerie St. Marein, January 9, 1944. Ibid., RO-Z-1944, Schachtel 412.
180 Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten FVWur – Hrü, Vitislav H. Stadt Kapfenberg, Meldeamt.

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because "the matter appeared dubious" to him. Due to the subsequent suspicion that other Czechs may also have manufactured or procured such weapons, "all Czech and Polish habitats in this barracks camp were searched."[181]

4.4 Transferals to Labor Training Camps

Laborers were sometimes transferred to so-called training camps or imprisoned for all kinds of actual or alleged misdemeanors, as is demonstrated by the case of Josef N. from the Bohemian town of Krokočín (Třebíč District). Originally housed in the St. Lorenzen camp, he was relocated to the Deuchendorf camp on October 22, 1942, where he was deployed as an unskilled laborer by *PORR*.[182] At an unknown point in time, N. left his workplace without permission but was captured in Vienna on April 6, 1943 and interned in the Oberlanzendorf labor training camp[183] for a period of time by the Gestapo.[184] A few weeks later, the Gestapo sent N. back to Styria, where he was handed over to the Schutzpolizei in Bruck an der Mur. They presented him to the employment agency, who in turn referred him back to *PORR AG* in Kapfenberg.[185]

A list of names compiled by the gendarmerie in Hafendorf on April 9, 1943 cites more than a dozen laborers interned in the St. Dionysen labor training camp outside of Bruck an der Mur who were released on March 23, 1943 and transferred back to their workplace in Kapfenberg. These were predominantly laborers deployed by *Gebrüder Böhler & Co. AG*, yet there was also one *PORR* laborer among them. Daniel K. had been deployed at the Deuchendorf construction site where he was housed in the barracks camp in building 29/1.[186] The Frenchman Marcel R. from Paris was arrested in November 1943 and brought to Leoben, where – for unknown reasons – he remained incarcerated until May 1944 before being returned to Kapfenberg.[187] By contrast, his compatriot Gaspard C. from Nice was sent to the Eisenerz penal camp on January 19, 1944.[188] While the

181 Gendarmerie St. Marein an Gestapo Graz, March 1, 1943. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, S-Z-1943, Schachtel 385.
182 Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten Nabp – Ruz, Josef N. Stadt Kapfenberg, Meldeamt.
183 On the history of the Oberlanzendorf labor training camp, see Arnberger, Arbeitserziehungslager Oberlanzendorf; Quellensammlung des Dokumentationsarchivs des österreichischen Widerstandes unter URL: https://www.doew.at/erinnern/fotos-und-dokumente/1938-1945/das-arbeitserziehungslager-oberlanzendorf (accessed June 3, 2024).
184 Gestapoleistelle Wien an Landrat Bruck an der Mur, April 21, 1943. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, A-R-1943, Schachtel 384.
185 Schutzpolizei Bruck an der Mur an Landrat Bruck an der Mur, May 15, 1943. Ibid.
186 Gendarmerie Hafendorf an Gendarmerie Bruck an der Mur, April 9, 1943. Ibid., S-Z-1943, Schachtel 385.
187 Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten Nabp – Ruz, Marcel R. Stadt Kapfenberg, Meldeamt.
188 Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten CZab – CZun, Gaspard C. Ibid.

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documentation did not evince who determined which labor training camp the individual in question was sent to, it is likely that – as in most such cases – the Gestapo was the authority in charge. While one might assume that camps would be chosen on the basis of geographical proximity, the case of André O., who was born in Lyon in 1923, demonstrates that this was certainly not always the case: O. had been deployed by *PORR* in Kapfenberg as an unskilled construction worker before being transferred – for undisclosed reasons – to the Lanzendorf penal camp in May 1944, eventually returning in late June 1944.[189]

No one was immune to transferal to a labor training camp, which could absolutely also affect laborers from states allied with the Nazi regime. This is clear from the case of two civilian laborers from Bulgaria deployed by *PORR*, who were sent to the Dionysen penal camp.[190] However, the laborers' respective origins did greatly affect the manner in which they were treated in the event that they were sent to a penal camp.

4.5 Leisure Time in the Camps

The preserved sources offered little information on how the civilian laborers and prisoners of war spent their free time in Kapfenberg and St. Marein, especially because hardly any personal documents of the former forced laborers have been preserved. The possibilities for how to spend their free time varied greatly between the different groups depending fundamentally on their origins. While Western European forced laborers were allowed to leave the camps, for example to undertake excursions or to organize and attend events, Polish forced laborers and "Eastern Workers," among others, were prohibited from doing so. The photographs, drawings, and reports of the former French forced laborer Philibert Charrin evinced that French forced laborers in St. Marein in particular made a great effort to engage in diverse and creative leisure activities. This was due not least of all to Charrin himself, who organized a whole range of activities. For example, he established a discussion group together with his French comrades under the title "François Villon,"[191] in which they discussed cultural topics like cinema, theater, and music. From 1943 onward, the French forced laborers organized several theater productions, most of which were staged in the St. Marein or St. Lorenzen camps and at least one of which – in October 1943 – was even shown in public on the main square in St. Lorenzen. Charrin moreover managed

189 Abmeldungen Ausländer, Kasten Jar – Bpuckh, André O. Ibid.

190 See my contribution "*PORR AG* and its Forced Laborers 1938–1945" (Chapter 6) in this volume.

191 See the biography of the French poet under URL: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fran%C3%A7ois_Villon (accessed March 3, 2025).

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Figure 8: The French forced laborer Gasperini playing Svatja Jirsch's guitar during his free time, undated. Source: Collection Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation / Ville de Lyon, Collection Rene Basset.

in early 1945 to put together an art exhibition in the building of the French professional association in Graz, in which he also presented some of his caricatures of forced laborers of different nationalities in St. Marein. His drawings, which were characterized by satire and sarcasm, always walked a think line. Some of his drawings (like some of his theater productions) were censored for including too open criticism of the forced labor deployment and the conditions under which the workforce had to live, which is why he kept his most "biting" works hidden in his barracks. Charrin naturally had the advantage that most of the German foremen and camp guards did not speak French and therefore could not understand the often unambiguous comments included in his caricatures.[192] Many of Charrin's caricatures – especially those depicting forced laborers from

192 Jung (ed.), Philibert & Fifi, 15.

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Figure 9: Poster of the "Cercle François Villon" founded by Philibert Charrin in St. Marein. Source: Collection Centre d'Histoire de la Résistance et de la Déportation / Ville de Lyon, Collection Rene Basset.

various countries – referred more or less explicitly to the predominant living conditions and the hierarchies that the forced laborers were subject to.

4.6 Deaths and Accidents during Forced Labor Deployment

Forced labor in the construction sector was characterized by great physical exertion as well as repeated accidents, which were often fatal. In some cases, these accidents were officially documented and/or investigated by the police. Those

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groups ranked at the bottom end of the forced labor hierarchy were hit especially hard by the difficult working and bad living conditions, meaning, above all, the "Eastern Workers" and Polish civilian laborers.

This is demonstrated by the death registers of the civil registry office in Kapfenberg for the period from 1939 to May 1945, in which all deaths in the municipality of Kapfenberg were recorded. At first, the number of deaths per year remained relatively constant in the period from 1939 to 1942, despite the increase in the residential population caused by the growing number of laborers arriving from other places, amounting to less than 200 cases per year. The situation deteriorated markedly from 1943 onward, as evident in the drastically rising number of deaths, which already amounted to 234 in 1943, rising again to 329 in 1944, and finally totaling over 400 for the entire year of 1945 (including 191 deaths by May 1, 1945 alone). The death registers of the civil registry office in Kapfenberg cited more than 100 cases that can be unequivocally identified as forced laborers due to the countries of origin of the deceased.[193] Around a quarter of these cases were foreign laborers who succumbed to accidents on the construction sites or during production on behalf of *Böhlerwerke.* Another quarter died during Allied air raids, which hit Kapfenberg repeatedly, for example on November 6 and December 11, 1944 as well as on March 8, 1945. The remainder died of various illnesses, with this latter group including a large number of individuals categorized as "Eastern Workers": In the period from 1944 to May 1945, 35 "Eastern Workers" died in Kapfenberg of lung diseases (mostly lung infections or tuberculosis). The fact that this cause of death is not mentioned in relation to any other national group points to the extremely bad living conditions that must have reigned in the Deuchendorf camp, which primarily housed "Eastern Workers" in this period. A particularly disturbing fact is that more than half of the deceased were babies, some of whom were only a few weeks or months old, as well as somewhat older children of "Eastern Workers" deployed in Kapfenberg.

4.6.1 Accidents during Labor Deployment

The construction work conducted by *PORR* in Kapfenberg and St. Marein was also accompanied by serious – in some cases also deadly – accidents. On May 10, 1941, the unskilled laborer Karl H. from Leoben was struck dead by a falling dump truck while loading gravel on the *PORR* construction site in Hafendorf. He

193 The deceased included individuals from Slovakia, the Protectorate, Greece, Italy (both civilians and prisoners of war), France (both civilians and prisoners of war), Belgium, Lithuania, Croatia, Bulgaria, Poland, and the Soviet Union (the latter of which were all called "Eastern Workers").

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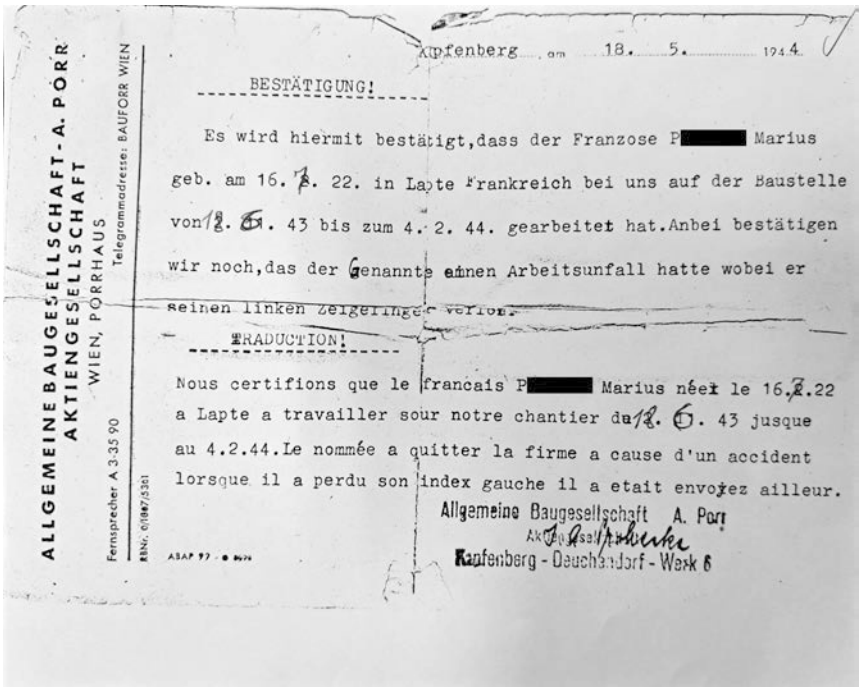
had been instructed by his foreman Karl J. to load the gravel at a nearby gravel pit. Three other laborers were also involved in this accident, although they escaped without injuries, as were two unnamed French prisoners of war who had just been churning the gravel when a trestle bridge collapsed. One of the two was injured, though it is unknown how severely. The foreman responsible for not sufficiently securing the trestle bridge, Hans D., was reported to the district court in Bruck an der Mur for endangering physical safety.[194]

Another French forced laborer named Marius T., who was born in Chalens [presumably Challans or Chaleins] in 1901, died following a work accident in Hall VI of the Deuchendorf factory on January 18, 1944. Deployed by *PORR* as a construction worker, he was struck dead by a two-by-four about two meters in length that a fitter dropped from a crane above T.'s head.[195]



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Kapfenberg am 18. 5. 1944

BESTÄTIGUNG!

Es wird hiermit bestätigt,dass der Franzose P[redacted] Marius geb. am 16. 7. 22. in Lapte Frankreich bei uns auf der Baustelle von 18. 6. 43 bis zum 4. 2. 44. gearbeitet hat.Anbei bestätigen wir noch,das der Genannte einen Arbeitsunfall hatte wobei er seinen linken Zeigefinger verlor.

TRADUCTION!

Nous certifions que le francais P[redacted] Marius néet le 16.7.22 a Lapte a travailler sour notre chantier du 18. 6. 43 jusque au 4.2.44.Le nommée a quitter la firme a cause d'un accident lorsque il a perdu son index gauche il a etait envoyez ailleur.

Allgemeine Baugesellschaft A. Porr
Aktiengesellschaft
Kapfenberg - Deuchendorf - Werk 6

Figure 10: Confirmation of a work accident suffered by Marius P. Source: ÖStA/AdR, Österreichischer Versöhnungsfonds (ÖVF), 46.787.

194 Bericht der Gendarmerie Hafendorf, May 10, 1941. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, Pe32-V-1941, Schachtel 295.

195 Sterbebuch 1944, Eintrag Nr. 13. Stadt Kapfenberg, Standesamt; Bericht der Gendarmerie Hafendorf, January 19, 1944. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, RO-Z-1944, Schachtel 412.

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4.6.2 Accidents and Disease in the Camps

In December 1942, an investigation was launched because fires had broken out repeatedly in various barracks camps, ignited by overheating stoves.[196] In the course of this investigation, the Kapfenberg building inspection wrote a report proposing a range of measures to increase safety standards. On the one hand, these included structural measures relating to the wood stoves in the individual rooms, while on the other, new fire extinction facilities were installed (in the Deuchendorf camp and St. Marein residential camp). A general regulation for barracks stipulated that there should be a distance of at least eight meters between the exterior walls of two barracks – presumably to prevent the rapid spread of fire. The building inspection assured that this minimum distance was given in all cases.[197] Moreover, individuals from the *Böhler* factory security detail were appointed to serve as fire watchmen within the barracks camp and trained accordingly.[198]

In the winter of 1942, an isolation barracks had to be established in the Schirmitzbühel prisoner of war camp as numerous cases of paratyphoid fever had arisen among a group of "eastern workers" – presumably in the Deuchendorf camp – and the isolation hospital in Bruck an der Mur was already overcrowded with these patients. An existing barracks known as the "transitory barracks" immediately adjacent to the decontamination facility was temporarily repurposed to this end.[199] The crowded conditions in which all the forced laborers had to live, in combination with the difficult labor itself and the often insufficient provisions, facilitated the outbreak of epidemics, which consequently represented a permanent threat. As a result, the individual rooms in the barracks were completely emptied at regular intervals and deloused with gas, as can be seen in a preserved photograph taken by the French forced laborer Michel Richard in St. Marein in August 1944.[200]

196 See as a case in point Gendarmerie Hafendorf an Landrat Bruck an der Mur, January 23, 1943. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, S-Z-1943, Schachtel 385; Bericht der Gendarmerie Hafendorf, November 27, 1942. Ibid., Sch-Z-1942, Schachtel 362.

197 Schreiben der Bauüberwachung betreffend Brände in den Baracken, December 21, 1942. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 130/1.

198 Bernard D., Schreiben des Werkluftschutz St. Marein, January 25, 1944. ÖStA/AdR, ÖVF 3259.

199 Bauüberwachung an Baudirektion (Verwaltung), December 7, 1942. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 130/1.

200 Photograph by Michel Richard, "désinfection au camp – baraque 8, un dimanche d'été," August 1944. Estate of René Basset (two original photographs in the possession of the author).

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Figure 11: Disinfection in Barracks 8 in St. Marein in August 1944. Source: Photograph by Michel Richard, Basset Collection. The original is in the possession of the author. I thank Catherine Aubonnet for leaving it to me.

5 The Final Phase of the War in Kapfenberg and St. Marein

In early 1944, *Böhlerwerke* began to focus all of its remaining forces on the project in St. Marein. This placed enormous pressure to perform on the *PORR* workforce, for the explicit goal was to increase the construction volume by 1 million Reichsmark in 1944.[201] Due to the great significance of *Böhlerwerke* to the Nazi armaments program, the Kapfenberg site was also repeatedly targeted by Allied air raids,[202] for example – as mentioned above – in November 1944 and March 1945. *PORR*, among other companies, was subsequently also tasked from mid-1944 with creating air raid tunnels and shelters[203] in Kapfenberg, for example in

201 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für 1943, January 20, 1944, 6. PA.

202 Beer/Karner, Krieg aus der Luft, 220–221.

203 In May 1944, construction began on a project for the subterranean production of airplane crankshafts in production tunnels that first had to be dug. *Böhlerwerke* was contracted for this work by the Armaments Delivery Office, which it assigned to the Hochtief company to implement. At the same time, several new air raid shelters were constructed in Kapfenberg. An additional 350 Polish skilled and unskilled laborers were to be acquired for the implementation of the subterranean production project by Hochtief against payment of 45,000 Reichsmark. Besprechungsvermerk Technische Zentraldirektion, May 11, 1944. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 130/1.

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the vicinity of Werk VI.[204] To this end, *PORR* had already requested permission from the district authorities in June 1944 to build an ordnance warehouse in the area.[205] However, construction work ceased altogether in early 1945 and the ordnance was confiscated by the gendarmerie before the application could even be approved.[206]

In September 1944, *Böhlerwerke* informed the contracted construction companies (including *PORR*) that additional construction sections in Kapfenberg would have to be discontinued and that all laborers freed up by these measures would be redeployed to the St. Marein construction site.[207] In November, the head of OT-Einsatzgruppe IX, Vogl, paid another visit to Kapfenberg, presumably in order to requisition laborers for the construction of the "South-East Wall."[208] *Böhlerwerke* managed nevertheless to get another 400 laborers assigned to its St. Marein construction project,[209] but it is questionable whether the construction works were progressing at all by this stage given the repeated Allied air raids in the winter of 1944/1945. As late as December 1944, *PORR* still had 232 laborers at its disposal at Werk VI in Kapfenberg and 358 at Werk XII. A further 148 laborers were still listed in the workforce register but (for undisclosed reasons) were not fit for action.[210] By the beginning of 1945, the construction works in St. Marein and Kapfenberg practically ceased, excepting the partial operationalization of the steelworks in St. Marein. The 1944 annual report of the *PORR* executive board stated that "a large portion of the workforce has been redeployed to build fortifications or to serve on the front with OT."[211] These laborers were eventually deployed to work on the South-East Wall along the border between Hungary and Burgenland. The Frenchman René B., for example, reported that he was transferred to the construction site of the South-East Wall in Rax near Jennersdorf.

204 Aktenvermerk betreffend Bauvergebung, Baudirektion Böhler, March 22, 1944. Ibid., Mappe 521; Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 2, 409.

205 PORR AG – Baustelle St. Marein an Landrat Bruck an der Mur, June 26, 1944. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, E-P-1944, Schachtel 409.

206 PORR AG – Baustelle St. Marein an Landrat Bruck an der Mur, May 4, 1945. Ibid.

207 Protokoll, Besprechung Umsetzung von Bauarbeiten, September 9, 1944. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 247/2.

208 Vogl served in "OT-Einsatzgruppe Südost" as an "Einsatzgruppenleiter" and Engineer General up to the fall of 1944. Following the evacuation of the OT positions in the Balkans (see Mišo Kapetanović's contribution to this volume), he was recalled to the "Ostmark" to help with the OT's "South-East Wall" construction project. Schreiben des Amt Bau-OT, OT-Chronik für den Monat September 1944, November 30, 1944, 3. BArch R 3/1367, Reichsministerium für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion; and URL: https://www.malselvhistorielag.no/documents/PDFFileListDiverseHistorisk/Handbook-of-the-organisation-TODT-O-T-UK-1945.pdf (accessed June 24, 2024).

209 Aktenvermerk, Büro Generaldirektion Böhler, Dr. Leitner, December 2, 1944. StLA, Bestand A. Böhler, Mappe 247/2.

210 Baufirmen Arbeiterstand, December 6, 1944. Ibid.

211 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat für 1944, January 1945, 4–5. PA.

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From January to March 1945, he was forced to excavate armor-piercing trenches in the deep-frozen ground at minus 20 degrees Celsius.[212] His compatriot Armand G., who was also deployed in Rax, stated that he was deployed by *PORR* both in St. Marein and on the "South-East Wall" construction site.[213]

In the final two months of the war, cases of labor absconding increased dramatically, especially among prisoners of war and "Eastern Workers." The incident reports of the gendarmerie in Kapfenberg documented numerous cases of *Böhlerwerke* laborers who left their workplace without permission, but also the fact that many individuals were caught in the vicinity of Kapfenberg who had fled from elsewhere, including individuals who had tried to escape the bad working conditions at the "South-East Wall" construction site.[214]

6 The End of the War and the Disassembly of the Factory in St. Marein

Immediately after the end of the war in May 1945, the Soviet Red Army took control of the Mürz Valley and confiscated all three *Böhler* factories in Kapfenberg and St. Marein, among other things, all of which were classified as German property. The facilities of the only partially completed Werk XVII were entirely disassembled on Soviet orders on May 22, 1945. The aim was to move the entire facility – the electric arc furnaces in particular had aroused Soviet interest – to the Soviet Union.[215] Some of the French forced laborers previously deployed by *PORR* were again deployed to assist in the disassembly. Georges-Luis G. later reported that he and some of his comrades had been ordered by the Russian occupiers to assist in the disassembly of the factory in St. Marein, which took around 20 days. He and many of his comrades were then gathered in Leoben and Linz and sent back to France on June 5, 1945.[216]

Bit by bit, the remaining halls disappeared from St. Marein, with some buildings later being adapted and repurposed. In the late 1980s, a memorial was erected on the edge of a residential neighborhood in the municipality of St. Lorenzen that commemorates the former factory and the forced labor that occurred there.

212 René B. ÖStA/AdR, ÖVF 35820.
213 Armand G. Ibid., 66016.
214 Diverse Berichte der Gendarmerie- und Schutzpolizei-Einheiten, March and April 1945. StLA, BH Bruck, Gr. 14, A-0-1945, Schachtel 438.
215 According to Hans Jörg Köstler, the transport of the facility ended in Hungary, where the parts were finally destroyed since they had been improperly stored. Köstler, Stahl- und Walzwerk, 336–337.
216 Georges-Luis G. ÖStA/AdR, ÖVF 37012.

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7 The Long-Term Impact of Forced Labor

Aside from the trauma that remained with many individuals following their deportation from their homelands and their deployment for forced labor, many also suffered long-term or even permanent physical aftereffects from the exhausting work they were forced to perform as unskilled laborers in the construction sector. The Frenchman Marius R., for example, who had worked in agriculture before his forced conscription, suffered ongoing medical problems after his return: "When I returned in June 1945, I was very weakened and often suffered from bronchitis, hence it was difficult for me to resume my abovementioned job. But I was happy to see my family in France again after this difficult separation."[217] His compatriot André G. from Cannes was also deployed by *PORR AG* in St. Marein and the work he was forced to perform in the construction sector also had a permanent impact on him. G. reported that the earth excavation works repeatedly led to seepage, in which case he had to perform his duties standing in water. He suffered from rheumatism ever since.[218] After the war, Jules C. was repatriated by the US Army and suffered for many years thereafter from the dysentery he had contracted toward the end of the war, which also prevented him from resuming employment.[219] During his deployment for forced labor in St. Marein, Michel René R. developed a middle ear infection that was not treated properly. He permanently lost his hearing in one ear and was therefore recognized in France as a 25% invalid and a civilian casualty of the war.[220] During the course of his deployment by *PORR* in St. Marein, Marius P. suffered a work accident during which he lost his left index finger.[221] Meanwhile, Jean D. prematurely lost numerous teeth following his forced labor deployment and fell ill with diabetes in 1946.[222]

Many of the young Frenchmen who were exploited as construction workers by *PORR AG* in Kapfenberg or St. Marein/St. Lorenzen between 1943 and 1945 in the framework of the Service du Travail Obligatoire (STO) would go on to meet regularly even decades later in order to commemorate their mutual experience of forced labor deployment. On March 14, 1995, for example, the men met at the restaurant "La Taverne" in Fontaines-Saint-Martin to celebrate a "FRÖHLISCHES FÜNFZIGJAHRFEIER,"[223] or festive fiftieth anniversary celebration, as they called it in slightly erroneous German. These men only received symbolic

217 Marius R. Ibid., 105077.
218 André G. Ibid., 48743.
219 Jules C. Ibid., 54466.
220 Michel René R. Ibid., 36243.
221 Marius P. Ibid., 46787.
222 Jean D. Ibid., 66382.
223 René Basset. Ibid., 38820.

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financial compensation from the Austrian state in the early 2000s – if they were even still alive by that point – following the establishment and budgeting of the Austrian Reconciliation Fund.

Figure 12: Commemorative photograph by Rene Basset on the occasion of a meeting of former French forced laborers from St. Marein in 2001. Source: ÖStA/AdR, Österreichischer Versöhnungsfonds (ÖVF) 35.820.

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Oliver Rathkolb

Profit at any Cost: The Confiscation of Assets within *PORR AG* after 1938

1 Ernst August, Herzog von Braunschweig und Lüneburg: A Pioneer of "Aryanization"

Before the Nazi takeover, the company *Allgemeine Baugesellschaft – A. PORR Aktiengesellschaft*, which was headquartered on Operngasse 11 in Vienna's fourth district, had a total capital stock of 22,050 shares at 100 Austrian Schilling per share. These were divided as follows:

2,000 Dr. Martin Kink, Vienna

2,208 Franz Emil Hollitzer, Vienna

600 Director Ludwig Wilms, Vienna

4,192 *Wieden AG für Geschäfts- und Wohnhäuser*

2,018 *Union-Baumaterialien-Gesellschaft*

150 Director Wertanek, Bad Deutsch-Altenburg

50 Josef Ullrich, Vienna

10 Alfred Schuppler

10 Procurator Anton Ehlich

1,580 Ottokar Stern

681 Siegfried Pick

550 Adelheid Stern

32.20% (=7,101 shares) counted as fluctuating unknown holdings.[1]

In 1938 – meaning already before the increase resulting after 1938 from strategic investments relating to the armaments sector – *Allgemeine Baugesellschaft – A. PORR AG* was a company with good prospects for the future. German investors

1 Compass 1938, 544. Notably, 900 shares are missing from this list.

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previously familiar with the Austrian market consequently showed an interest in the company, for example the Duke of Cumberland, Ernst August, Herzog von Braunschweig und Lüneburg. He had already moved his primary residence to Villa Weinberg in Gmunden, Austria, following World War One, where he remained until late 1933.[2] Gmunden had previously been home to his predecessors, who entertained a lavish royal household in exile there since the House of Hanover had fought alongside the Habsburgs against Prussia in 1866. The family initially lived in Villa Thun (the Queen's Villa), later living in Villa Klusemann, and from 1886 in Cumberland Castle.[3]

In late 1933, Ernst August relocated to what was by then Nazi Germany. In the course of a legal dispute between the House of Welf and the Prussian state, the Supreme Court had ordered that Blankenburg Castle as well as the ancestral castle Marienburg be returned to the family along with the Calenberg Estate and two agricultural enterprises and that the family be paid 8 million Reichsmark from the Welf Fund.[4]

Before the "Anschluss" of Austria in 1938, Ernst August had already bought up minority shares in companies from Jewish owners in the framework of politically and racially motivated confiscations of assets. As he himself testified in his denazification trial in 1949: "In the years 1935, 1936, or 1937, I acquired minority shares from the Reichskreditanstalt bank in Berlin in the Berlin-based company *Feibisch AG*, later known as *Teppichwerke Berlin-Treptow*, and in *Beckerwerke AG*[5] in Chemnitz."[6]

After 1945, he also testified that he held sufficient investment capital in Austria, his second home, due to the sale of properties and the forced sale of real estate in Salzgitter to *Reichswerke Hermann Göring*.[7] Ernst August claimed that he bought up the majority of shares in *PORR* in order to ensure that there was enough revenue for the pension fund of his coworkers and their widows.

2 See his self-portrayal in his denazification files. Beilage zum Fax Klaus Wiegrefe (Der Spiegel) an Oliver Rathkolb, February 3, 1999.

3 On the Dukes of Cumberland, Braunschweig und Lüneburg, see URL: https://www.lpbzooeg.at/schlosscumberland/ueber-uns/chronik (accessed June 1, 2024).

4 On Cumberland Castle, see URL: https://www.gmundens-schaetze.at/schloss-cumberland.html (accessed June 1, 2024).

5 This company was actually called *Eduard Becker Söhne AG*. One of the three members of the company's board of directors, the lawyer Dr. Arthur Weiner, was murdered in 1933, while the two Becker brothers went into exile in the Netherlands. The "Aryanization" of the company began in October 1937 and, in 1938, it was renamed Becker-Werke AG. Becker-Werke Aktiengesellschaft, Chemnitz, URL: http://www.sietz.de/DT-2496.htm (accessed June 1, 2024).

6 Ralph-Herbert Meyer, Ernst August und die schicksalhaften Zufälle, in: Der Löwe, April 23, 2019, URL: https://www.der-loewe.info/ernst-august-und-die-schicksalhaften-zufaelle (accessed June 1, 2024); for a biography of Ernst August von Braunschweig und Lüneburg, see Steckhan, Herzog.

7 Meyer, Hitlers Holding; Wysocki, Arbeit für den Krieg.

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The "Highest Asset Management of Herzog Ernst August von Braunschweig und Lüneburg" used the "Anschluss" of Austria in the early hours of March 12, 1938 to enact an unusually rapid takeover of stock portfolios in *Allgemeine Baugesellschaft – A. PORR AG* that had previously belonged to owners of Jewish origin. The pseudo-legal basis of this confiscation of assets, which was justified with racist arguments as "Aryanization," was the Decree on the Registration of Jewish Property from April 26, 1938[8] and the Law to Protect the Austrian Economy from April 14, 1938.[9]

It was previously not known what contacts Ernst August may have entertained within the Nazi Party in the "Ostmark" for this particular transaction, yet his informants were exposed in the restitution trial of the heirs of Lothar Elbogen:[10]

> "Immediately following the German invasion of Austria, he received an offer to acquire a range of first-class Jewish businesses from Adolf Hitler's confidant, the former post office clerk and later Financial Inspector Millacher [sic, Matthias Mielacher] and Rafelsberger, the head of the Property Transaction Office."[11]

What Ernst August failed to mention is the fact that he had been informed that Elbogen was detained along with his wife because he had refused to sell his company on the cheap. In vain, his mother pled with the "Duke of Cumberland" for help: "My son, Dr. Lothar Elbogen, whose company You, Your Royal Highness, are Aryanizing, has been in prison for a year already. […] I beg of You, entreatingly, Royal Highness, give me back my child," as Melanie Elbogen wrote to Ernst August, the head of the House of Welf, on July 4, 1939.[12] Following his release, Elbogen fled to Yugoslavia. After the invasion of the Wehrmacht, he was imprisoned in the Zasavica camp, where he died on October 12, 1941.

It appears entirely logical that Ernst August's contacts with regard to the confiscation of assets were also active in the case of *PORR*, as demonstrated by the speed at which his purchase was processed and the disinterest of the Nazi Property Transaction Office in trying to attain a higher sales price through other potential offers.

8 RGBl I 1938, 414.
9 GBlÖ Nr. 82/1938.
10 Kriechbaumer, Dunkelheit, 223.
11 Schreiben an die Rückstellungskommission beim Landesgericht für Zivilrechtssachen Wien, December 31, 1947 (Abschrift). National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 260, USAC Austria, Internal Affairs/DP Division, General Records of the Denazification Branch, Box 26, File 133. On Mielacher, see Venus/Wenck, Entziehung, 313.
12 Geöffnete Akten zeigen NS-Verstrickungen der Welfen, in: Süddeutsche Zeitung, November 17, 2016, URL: https://www.sueddeutsche.de/wissen/geschichte-geoeffnete-akten-zeigen-ns-verstrickungender-welfen-dpa.urn-newsml-dpa-com-20090101-161117-99-214723 (accessed June 1, 2024).

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On May 18, 1938, the foundations were laid for the establishment of the Nazi Property Transaction Office, the purpose of which was to quickly liquidate the real estate and industrial property belonging to Jews, to find suitable buyers for this confiscation of assets (which in racist Nazi jargon was called "Entjudung" or "de-Jewification"), and to deduct a series of levies from the sales price.[13] As early as July 20, 1938, the "Highest Administration of the House of Braunschweig und Lüneburg am Harz-Blankenburg" tendered offers to the Property Transaction Office for the stock portfolios of Ottokar Stern (1,580 shares), Siegfried Josef Pick (550 shares), and Adelheid Stern (550 shares). All three of these individuals were stigmatized as Jews.

168,533 Reichsmark were offered for the shares belonging to Ottokar Stern, 72,640 for those belonging to Siegfried Josef Pick, and 58,667 for those belonging to Adelheid Stern. At the same time, the Highest Administration of the House of Braunschweig und Lüneburg purchased 1,689 shares of the *PORR AG* subsidiary *Wieden AG für Geschäfts- und Wohnhäuser* for 180,160 Reichsmark. This company was not affected by the state's persecution measures. The tendered offers were accepted on August 3, 1938 and approved by the Department of Industry of the Property Transaction Office.[14]

As early as April 13, 1938 – meaning before the Property Transaction Office had even been established – *PORR AG* itself acquired 40% of the shares of the company *Stern-Gesellschaft für moderne Grundbautechnik mbH*, which had originally belonged in equal measure to Ottokar Stern and *PORR AG*. Following this confiscation of assets, the company was renamed *Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft m.b.H.*

PORR AG moreover tried on July 6, 1938 to acquire 1,082 equity shares of the company *Union-Baumaterialien-Gesellschaft* belonging to the *Stern* group, though this attempt at confiscating assets was not approved by the Property Transaction Office.

The purchase of the above-cited 1,689 shares of *Wieden AG für Geschäfts- und Wohnhäuser* by the Asset Management of the House of Braunschweig und Lüneburg on August 3, 1938 was ultimately classed as not requiring approval by the Nazi Property Transaction Office since no Jews were involved in this transaction.

An overview from 1942 reconstructs the shareholdings of *PORR AG:* Of altogether 22,050 shares, 7,101 (32%) were held by unknown entities, 5,028 were classed as "Aryan property," 2,503 belonged to *Wieden AG*, 2,918 belonged to

13 Felber/Melichar/Priller/Unfried/Weber, Ökonomie der Arisierung, Teil 1.
14 PORR AG, Bass/EK, November 30, 1942. Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Archiv der Republik (ÖStA/AdR), E-uReang VVSt.

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Union-Baumaterialen-Gesellschaft (of which 47% were held by unknown entities), and the House of Braunschweig und Lüneburg held 4,500 shares.[15]

This portion of shares meant that in 1938, within just four months of the Nazi takeover, the Asset Management of the House of Braunschweig und Lüneburg had in record time assumed the strongest position within *PORR AG*, in which it had previously not been invested.

A retrospective investigation, which was instigated by an internal audit of the office of the Reichsstatthalter in Vienna in 1944 due to the opinion that the sales price for these shares had been too low, was discontinued by order of the Minister of the Economy. The office of the Reichsstatthalter had originally demanded a back-payment on the basis of a sales price recalculated according to the most recent available share price before the contract was concluded, which stood at 125 Reichsmark per share as of June 29, 1938 – the shares had in fact been sold at a unit price of 160 Austrian Schilling (= 106.67 Reichsmark). However, following an intervention by the Asset Management of the House of Braunschweig und Lüneburg in Berlin, the rate of September 13, 1938 at 108 Reichsmark per share, which was closer to the date the contract had been concluded, was once again taken as the applicable standard, and so the demand for back-payment was repealed.[16]

Figure 1: Herzog Ernst August von Braunschweig und Lüneburg together with an SA man. Source: Historisches Museum, Hannover.

15 Ibid.
16 Reichsstatthalter an Oberste Verwaltung, October 5, 1944. Ibid.

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Figure 2: Herzog Ernst August (second from the right) in the Great Garden in Herrenhausen, 1938 – his arm is raised in a Nazi salute. Source: Historisches Museum, Hannover.

This microfilm copy (Figure 4) of a registration card for Herzog Ernst August von Braunschweig was attached to a letter from the Berlin Military Post, 7771 Documentation Center, sent on September 20, 1948 by Peter M. Warren (Chief of Records) to the US Forces in Austria – Denazification Division.

This card originated in the collections of the Nazi Party central index of party members. It was stored for a long time in the Berlin Document Center, before this US institution was transferred to the Federal Archive in Berlin.

Warren's letter moreover remarks on the case of Ernst August that his registration card dated August 28, 1941 was created in relation to an investigation pending future membership in the Nazi Party. The card includes a note reading: "Being processed at the court of arbitration (Panzerschrank Pg. Schneider)." This means that Ernst August von Braunschweig applied for membership in the party, but that his application caused an internal discussion about whether he should be

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Figure 3: Herzog Ernst August and Herzogin Viktoria Luise von Braunschweig und Lüneburg together with Nazi leaders at an event in the Herrenhausen Gardens. Source: Historisches Museum, Hannover.

accepted, hence the deferral to a court of arbitration. There is no further information available.

2 Complex Restitution between German Property and Long-winded Restitution Processes

While the confiscation of assets occurred very quickly during the Nazi era, subsequent restitution processes were long-winded and extremely complex. This was a result among other things of the fact that part of *PORR AG* and its subsidiaries, including the company headquarters at Operngasse 11 in Vienna's

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Name Braun hweig Herzog von August Ernst
geb. Geb.-Ort
siehe auch Ernst August
Stand
Wohnort
Straße
V.K. erstellt am: 26.8.41
lt.
Bemerkungen: Vorgang bei Schiedsam
(Panzerschrank Pg.Schneider)
Ha.
Vormerkkarte

Figure 4: Copy of a microfilm of a registration card for Herzog Ernst August von Braunschweig. Source: National Archives, College Park, Maryland, Record Group 260 – Allied Commission Austria, Karton 556, Project A.

fourth district, lay in the Soviet zone of Austria (which comprised Lower Austria, several districts of Vienna, Burgenland, and Upper Austria north of the Danube). These portions of the company were claimed by the Soviet occupation power and consequently confiscated in 1947, following which they were managed directly in the framework of the Administration of Soviet Property in Austria.

At the same time, however, the Republic of Austria also assigned public administrators to these portions of the company as the federal government also wanted to take possession of them as former German property (as they had only been acquired after the "Anschluss" in 1938). In 1948, the company was therefore divided into an *Ost-PORR* headquartered at Operngasse 11[17] (which included the stockyard and repair workshops at Absberggasse 47 in the tenth district) and a

17 Part of this group were 40 soccer players, in: Der fortschrittliche Bauarbeiter, No. 8, June 15, 1950, 10. In 1949, an individual called Moisejew was named General Manager along with an architect called Fritz Nollert. BM für Vermögenssicherung und Wirtschaftsplanung, GZ 102.193-6/49. ÖStA/AdR, E-uReang Vermögenssicherung, Vermögenssicherung und Wirtschaftsplanung.

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Figure 5: Prince Ernst August of Hannover, Herzog von Braunschweig und Lüneburg, with his wife, Princess Viktoria Luise (born Princess of Prussia) and daughter Princess Friederike (later Queen of Greece). Source: Historisches Museum, Hannover.

West-PORR headquartered at Faberstrasse 20 in Salzburg, in the US occupation zone.

In July 1947, the public administrators of the Salzburg branch of *Allgemeine Baugesellschaft – A. PORR AG* in Vienna were recorded in the trade register at the Regional Court in Salzburg: Dr. Martin Kink (President of the Vienna Chamber of Commerce) and Franz Witzmann[18] (who had been a site manager on large-scale construction sites of *PORR* in Vienna during the war).[19]

This portion of the company (*West-PORR*) was only restituted after the conclusion of the State Treaty on May 15, 1955, and even this process ended up being multilayered and in many respects difficult.

18 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 28.
19 Salzburger Volkszeitung, July 10, 1947, 3.

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Parallel to this development, the original owners and/or their heirs tried to get their assets in *PORR AG* and/or its subsidiaries restituted that had been confiscated after 1938 and/or to claim compensation for losses suffered due to dismissal. This schematic overview shows clearly the diverse agents and their demands in the years 1946 to 1958, which related to the following shareholding in *PORR AG:*

Ottokar Stern (1,580 shares)

Siegfried Josef Pick (550 shares)

Adelheid Stern (550 shares).

The claims of Siegfried Josef Pick (who lived in Vienna and later worked again for *PORR AG* as a consultant) and Adelheid Jongman, previously called Stern (who lived in Vancouver, Canada) were partially acknowledged by the Restitution Commission at the Regional Court in Linz on November 11, 1948.[20] The restitution opponent, meaning the accused, was Ernst August, Herzog von Braunschweig und Lüneburg, who was represented by the appointed trustee, Dr. Edwin Lowatschek. When Ernst August died on January 30, 1953, all claims were subsequently directed at his underage and eponymous heir.

Following the nullification of the sales contract of July 20, 1938, Pick, who had returned to Vienna from exile in the United Kingdom, was awarded 1,750 new shares along with coupons backdated to 1944 to compensate for the 681 old shares he had lost, while Adelheid Jongman received 1,414 new shares along with coupons.

At the time, the question remained of whether the "rules of honest commerce [had been] observed" in 1938, which is why the court only partially acknowledged the claims.

In 1954, a settlement was also accepted by the Republic of Austria. However, the settlement additionally stipulated that after the restitution of their shares, Siegfried Josef Pick and Adelheid Jongman had to pay 72,642 Austrian Schilling and 58,668 Schilling, respectively, to the Asset Management of the House of Braunschweig und Lüneburg.[21]

Due to the incomplete documentation, it remains unclear how much of the original sales revenues the individuals affected were able to take into exile after 1938. In many cases, these revenues shrank significantly or were swallowed up altogether due to the forced payment of various taxes – both real and contrived – such as the "Reich Flight Tax" and, following the November Pogrom in 1938, the "Jewish Property Tax."

20 BM für Vermögenssicherung und Wirtschaftsplanung, GZ 170.592-15a/49. ÖStA/AdR, E-uReang Vermögenssicherung, Vermögenssicherung und Wirtschaftsplanung.

21 BM für Finanzen, GZ 260.222-35/55. ÖStA/AdR, Finanzen BMF 2Rep.

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Director of Construction Ottokar Stern, who went by the name Solvey-Stern while in exile, moreover concluded an agreement with *West-PORR* to compensate for his dismissal in 1938. This entailed the retroactive payment of 15 monthly instalments of 2,000 Austrian Schilling as of September 1, 1948.[22] He also signed a consulting contract with the company on June 1, 1949 that entailed a monthly fee of 1,650 Schilling.

Compensation for Solvey-Stern's loss of 50% of the shares in the business would take significantly longer: On January 13, 1958, a few years after the restitution settlement in 1950 (RK 389/49), Ottokar Solvey-Stern signed over the entire 50% of the shares to *Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft m.b.H.*, which had been taken from him in 1938, in return for payment of 935,000 Austrian Schilling[23] to be paid to *PORR AG* in 24 monthly instalments (plus 2% interest for each outstanding instalment). This finally compensated for all shares, payments of dividends, demands, and claims for indemnification.

An absolute majority of shareholders approved this settlement – the only exception being Friederike, Queen of Greece. She was the daughter of Duke Ernst August and held 6,300 shares.

In the framework of another restitution settlement, the succeeding Duke of Braunschweig received 50% of the shares, which had been taken over by the Republic of Austria on the basis of Article 22 of the State Treaty (regarding the nationalization of German property).[24] The Republic of Austria had taken possession of altogether 14,852 shares, half of which were granted to the Duke of Braunschweig, who was also given preemptive rights on another 3,300 shares. The remaining 4,126 shares were also initially reserved for the Duke of Braunschweig as a "free contingent." The facsimile in Figure 6 shows the distribution of shares before the settlement with Solvey-Stern.

On May 8, 1945, Ernst August, Herzog von Braunschweig und Lüneburg, held 28,380 shares, which granted him power of disposition over 52.035% of the shares. Of this portfolio, 7,228 shares had been confiscated from owners of Jewish origin in 1938 (1,751 from Pick, 1,414 from Jongmann, and 4,063 from Solvey-Stern). Another 13,780 shares came from former private property held in banks, 1,072 from additional acquisitions from banks and stock exchanges, and 6,300 from the estate of Franz Emil Hollitzer. These shares, which were kept at the *Aufhäuser* bank in Munich, were confiscated by the US military government

22 BM für Vermögenssicherung und Wirtschaftsplanung, GZ 104.715/3-6/49. ÖStA/AdR, E-uReang Vermögenssicherung, Vermögenssicherung und Wirtschaftsplanung.

23 This would be worth 564,394.05 Euros today. Historischer Währungsrechner der Oesterreichischen Nationalbank, URL: https://www.eurologisch.at/docroot/waehrungsrechner/#/. accessed on July 14th, 2025.

24 BM für Finanzen, 320.008/69-35/57. ÖStA/AdR, Finanzen BMF 2Rep AR.

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	bisher	nach Vergleich Fiskus/Herzog/Porr AG
Dr.Solwey-Stern	4.062	4.062
Baurat Pick	1.750	1.750
Dr.Rinesch	1.414	1.414
Wertanek & Töchter	8.550	8.550
Hollitzer	2.105	2.105
Kammerlander	1.000	1.000
Dr.Kink	5.000	5.000
Wilms	1.400	1.400
Friederike v.Griechenland	6.300	6.300
Herzog v.Braunschweig	14.853	1.927
Bundesrepublik		12. 926 (in Hinkunft Porr Union Baumaterialien)
fluktuierender Besitz	10.266	10.266
	56.700	56.700 Stück Aktien je Nom.
100 .- RM/S.		

Figure 6: Final distribution of shares in *PORR AG* following the conclusion of the State Treaty and the settlement in 1957. Source: BM für Finanzen, 320.008/69-35/57. ÖStA/AdR, Finanzen BMF 2Rep AR.

in Bavaria and were to be kept sealed by the US High Commissioner in Austria until the conclusion of the State Treaty.

The question remains of whether the US military government or, from 1949, the German federal government would have confiscated Ernst August's shares if they had known that he may have been a member of the Nazi Party.

The US National Archives contain a copy of a registration card concerning membership in the Nazi Party of "Braunschweig Herzog August Ernst," which was created on August 28, 1941 with the remark: "Being processed at the court of arbitration (Panzerschrank Pg. Schneider)."[25] No further documents concerning Ernst August's potential membership in the Nazi Party could be found, yet the registration card suggests that he applied for membership.

Politically, the duke had openly and completely supported the Nazi regime and Adolf Hitler from 1933 onward, as evident in the following speech held to members of the House of Welf on May 7, 1938:

> "Comrades! Today, we continue to follow our Führer, Chancellor Adolf Hitler, to serve the Reich and our homeland on the basis of the racial community. May God protect him and our beloved German fatherland. Thus, we greet the SA formations and the patriotic

25 Vormerkkarte, Braunschweig Herzog von August Ernst, August 28, 1941. NARA, RG 260, USAC Austria, Internal Affairs/DP Division, General Records of the Denazification Branch, Box 26, File 133.

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associations present here today, with whom we wish to fight and build shoulder to shoulder in loyal comradery, with the old Lower Saxon greeting: 'Halt fast! Man to!'"[26]

The duke and his wife Viktoria Luise, Princess of Prussia, also met Hitler in the Reich Chancellery. Due to their familial relationship to the British King George V, Ernst August and Viktoria Luise even presented themselves in London in 1934 as "convinced supporters of the Führer."[27] Their son, Prince Ernst August, joined the SS on September 30, 1933, but quit the organization again on September 15, 1934.

Returning to the restitution case: The restitution applications submitted by the public administrator of *PORR AG* regarding the shares of Ernst August of Hannover junior that had been acquired from private property and acquisitions from banks were rejected. The 6,300 shares from the Hollitzer estate were awarded to Friederike, Queen of Greece, Ernst August's daughter, in the framework of a barter agreement secured on the basis of a Ministerial Council decision from July 10, 1956.

Only in 1958 were *Ost-PORR* and *West-PORR* formally reunited on the basis of a contract signed on April 14, 1948.[28] The public administrators of *Allgemeine Baugesellschaft – A. PORR AG* had previously called an Annual General Meeting on March 3, 1958, at which they were relieved from office while an executive board was appointed in their stead.[29] 85.7% of the total capital was represented at this general meeting.

The House of Braunschweig-Lüneburg only sold its shares in *PORR*, meaning also its majority, in 1991, apparently for 2 billion Austrian Schilling (adjusted for inflation, that would equal 261,435,464 Euros today[30]). These were bought by an investment group of Austrian banks and insurance companies.[31]

It should moreover be noted that during the Nazi era from 1933 to 1945, Ernst August was involved in altogether nine cases in which property belonging to individuals of Jewish origin was confiscated.[32] One of these related to the aforementioned businessman Dr. Lothar Elbogen, owner of the Austrian company *Wiener Talkumfabrik*.[33]

26 Hannoverscher Anzeiger, May 8, 1933.
27 Der Spiegel, No. 6, February 7, 1999, 103.
28 Wiener Zeitung, August 8, 1958.
29 BM für Finanzen, GZ 215.036/20 35/58. ÖStA/AdR, Finanzen BMF 2Rep.
30 News, No. 5, 1999, 197. On the development of inflation rates, see URL: https://finanzrechner.at/statistik/inflation?betrag=2.000.000.000&waehrung=ats (accessed June 1, 2024).
31 Subsequently, in 1991, Bank Austria owned 33.5% of the shares, Bundesländer-Versicherung owned 18%, and Raiffeisen Zentralbank owned 7.5%.
32 For an overview of these "Aryanizations," see URL: https://www.landtag-niedersachsen.de/drucksachen/drucksachen_18_07500/05501-06000/18-05687.pdf (accessed June 23, 2024).
33 Felber, Bergwerksunternehmen.

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On June 17, 1939, the duke bought Dr. Lothar Elbogen's shares in the Vienna-based company *Eduard Elbogen* for 340,000 Reichsmark from *Österreichische Kontrollbank für Industrie und Handel*,[34] which was tasked with liquidating large companies belonging to Jews. This acquisition included the affiliated companies *Österreichisch-Alpinen Talksteinwerke Adolf Brunner & Co.* and *St. Cathreiner Talkumwerke* in Oberndorf an der Leitha as well as *Rabenwälder Talksteinwerke GmbH* in Vienna and *Steiermärkische Talkumgewerkschaft Kammern GmbH* in Kammern. In October 1939, the duke bought another part of the company located in Hnúšťa (Nusten) in Slovakia directly from Elbogen for 50,000 Reichsmark.

Ernst August of Braunschweig-Lüneburg subsequently bought other company portions not belonging to Jews, which made up altogether 60% of his entire business value. He had also acquired the shares of the Jewish banker Martin Aufhäuser[35] in the latter's private bank, in which Ernst August subsequently became a limited partner.[36] Aufhäuser had previously been deported to the Dachau concentration camp during the November Pogrom in 1938, while his colleague and shareholder, Emil Kraemer, committed suicide.

In February 1942, Ernst August acquired the company *Baryt Co., Reichl & Bleyer* in Pernharz/Pernarec (Pilsen District) in Bohemia for 59,650 Reichsmark via the divestment fiduciary in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. In 1943, he acquired the company *Mühldorfer Grafit-Bergbau AG* for 130,000 Reichsmark, in which Dr. Otto Zucker had previously held 85% of the shares; due to the latter's Jewish origins, however, his assets had already been confiscated previously.

In 1944/1945, Ernst August also acquired a graphite deposit in the vicinity of St. Lorenzen near Rottenmann for 12,000 Reichsmark that had previously belong to Sara Tafler, who was of Jewish origin, and been confiscated by the German exchequer. Duke (1887–1953) and Prince (1914–1987) Ernst August of Hannover became the majority shareholders. They moreover bought the former factory *Hinterschweiger Werke* from the local savings bank in Wels (located in the Gau "Oberdonau" at the time), which they transformed into *Flugzeug- und Metall-*

34 After the "Anschluss" in 1938, Österreichische Kontrollbank für Industrie und Handel was tasked by the Nazi regime to liquidate and sell the 100 or so largest enterprises belonging to Jewish owners. Weber, Arisierung.

35 After the November Pogrom in 1938, Martin Aufhäuser's private bank was "forcibly Aryanized." The owner fled into exile to the USA in 1939, where he died in Los Angeles in 1944. Höpfner, Unabhängig.

36 "Er machte, was ihm nützte," Interview mit Professorin Cornelia Rauh, in: taz, December 2, 2016, URL: https://taz.de/Interview-mit-Professorin-Cornelia-Rauh/!5359255/ (accessed June 1, 2024).

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Figure 7: Around 1933: Operngasse 11, Vienna. Built by *PORR*, the "PORRhaus" counts as one of the most important buildings constructed in Vienna in the early 1930s. Source: Historisches Museum, Hannover.

bauwerke GmbH Wels. Numerous forced laborers and prisoners of war were deployed in this factory until it was destroyed during an air raid in 1944.[37]

In occupied Yugoslavia, Ernst August rounded off his deposits of natural resources through the acquisition of a small deposit of kaolin in Buchenschlag (Bukovžlak near Celje), which he bought from the office of the Reich Commissioner for the Consolidation of German Peoplehood in Marburg (Maribor).

37 "Völlig verborgene Kapitel der Welfengeschichte," Interview mit Thomas Schuhbauer, in: NDR, September 4, 2014, URL: https://www.ndr.de/geschichte/chronologie/Verborgene-Kapitel-der-Welfengeschichte,welfen168.html (accessed June 1, 2024); NS-Zwangsarbeit in Rüstungsfirma der Welfen, in: NDR, August 18, 2014, URL: https://www.ndr.de/geschichte/chronologie/Zwangsarbeit-in-Ruestungsfirma,welfen144.html (accessed June 1, 2024) and Kitzmantel/Neuwirth/Witibschlager, Flugzeug- und Metallbauwerke Wels.

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In summary, through the "Aryanization" of shares in *Allgemeine Baugesellschaft – A. PORR AG*, Ernst August of Hannover became a majority shareholder in a company that he had previously been uninvolved in within a period of just four months. Following the return of the non-"Aryanized" shares by the Republic of Austria, the House of Hannover remained an important shareholder of *PORR AG* until 1991. The shares confiscated from Jewish owners had to be restituted or the former owners had to be compensated for the losses.

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Bertrand Perz

PORR AG as Part of the Construction Sector in the Territory of Austria from 1938 to 1945

Although *PORR* constituted one of the largest Austrian construction companies before 1938, it was a small enterprise in comparison to the larger German construction companies. Yet it still played a significant role both in the territory of Austria and the territories occupied by Germany during the Nazi era. This chapter examines the development of the Nazi construction sector in the territory of Austria between 1938 and 1945 in order to better understand the position of the *PORR* company within the construction industry.

1 The Situation of the Construction Sector in Austria from the "Anschluss" to the Beginning of the War – The Industrialization of the Construction Companies

1.1 The Discrepancy between the Nazi Construction Programs and Construction Capacities

On March 26, 1938, Field Marshal General Hermann Göring announced a "Construction Program for Austria" to great propagandistic musical accompaniment in the hall of the Nordwestbahnhof train station in Vienna. This program was intended to economically integrate the recently annexed country as quickly as possible into Nazi Germany with regard to the "Four Year Plan," the drive for self-sufficiency, and preparations for war, and to make use of the country's available resources. As such, it entailed extensive construction plans.[1]

Eleven of the seventeen points entailed in the program directly concerned the construction sector, including the construction of barracks and airfields, the expansion of the extractive and armaments industries, the operationalization of *Wiener Neustädter Flugzeugwerke*, the gigantic construction of a new facility for

1 Aufbauprogramm für Österreich, cited in Schausberger, Rüstung, 186–187.

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Reichswerke Hermann Göring in Linz, the twofold increase in capacity of *Alpine Montanwerke*, and the expansion of a pulp mill in Lenzing. The proclaimed construction plans also included large transportation projects, above all the construction of 1,100 kilometers of the Reichsautobahn and several bridges over the Danube as well as the accelerated development of the Rhine-Main-Danube Canal and the establishment of a large port in Vienna. Additionally, large-scale investments in power plants, for example in Kaprun in the Hohe Tauern range and in Ybbs-Persenbeug on the Danube, were intended to spur the exploitation of hydropower. The construction program moreover entailed a range of further measures, all of which included construction projects, for example the expansion of the chemical industry, the construction of new railroad lines, and the expansion of agriculture, for example through torrent control.[2] This rapidly assembled project list did not even include many projects that commenced soon thereafter, such as the extensive construction of dams in the Silvretta Alps to supply electricity to industrial centers like the Ruhr district. The list also did not include large-scale projects considered essential and soon realized by the Office for Economic Expansion at the Ministry of Economy, such as the expansion of the aluminum industry in Ranshofen and of nitrogen plants in Linz, both of which began in 1939.[3]

A representative of the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry, the industrial sector's lobby group,[4] stated in November 1938 that the construction program initiated after the "Anschluss" required "an extraordinary commitment from the construction sector," estimating that the construction volume of the most important among the recently commenced projects, for example highway construction, the establishment of hydroelectric power stations, urban development, the expansion of the Danube to accommodate large ships, and the establishment of *Reichswerke Hermann Göring* in Linz, would amount to somewhere between 700 million and 1 billion Reichsmark in the first phase of construction alone.[5] While the construction volume of Nazi Germany (excluding Austria) totaled between 10 and 12 billion Reichsmark in 1938, this figure rose to over 13 billion Reichsmark in 1939 due to the "Anschluss" of Austria and the occupation of the Czech Sudeten territories.[6]

2 Schausberger, Rüstung, 186–187.
3 Ibid., 34; Lüftner, Wir vom Stickstoff.
4 On the emergence and purpose of the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry and its 14 district groups, see Botzet, Ministeramt, 129. The Ostmark District Group was established on July 21, 1938. Bericht über die Sitzung der Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie, Bezirksgruppe Ostmark, July 23, 1938, Österreichisches Staatsarchiv/Archiv der Republik (ÖStA/AdR), ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Vol. 1.
5 Huberti, Bauwirtschaft, 337–338.
6 Gogl, Laying the Foundations, 316.

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In 1938, estimates among the circles around the Reich Commissioner for the Reunification of Austria and Germany, Josef Bürckel, arrived at similar figures: According to these, the public construction volume for the "Ostmark" (meaning construction projects of the army, the Luftwaffe, the municipalities, and the national construction offices) would amount to about 650 million Reichsmark in the second half of the year, of which the Austrian construction sector would only be able to take on a maximum of 100 million Reichsmark.[7]

Indeed, the capacity of the Austrian construction sector, which was undercommissioned and still struggling with the effects of the economic crisis, did not meet the demands of the envisioned construction program. According to a statistical overview compiled by the newly established "Ostmark" District Group of the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry concerning the 27 most important construction companies in Austria, their combined annual turnover in 1937 totaled about 40 million Reichsmark (60 million Austrian Schilling).[8] Hence, their construction capacity amounted at most to 6% of the estimated construction volume of up to one billion Reichsmark. Even taking into account the fact that the Austrian construction sector had only been commissioned at a third of its capacity in 1937, it was clear that the ambitious construction program could not be realized without the involvement of the larger German construction companies.

The statistical overview of the construction companies in Austria for the year 1937 offers a clear picture of their size by comparison to the German construction companies. At that point in time, the six largest Austrian construction companies were *Universale-Redlich & Berger Bauaktiengesellschaft* (with an annual turnover of 9 million Austrian Schilling or 6 million Reichsmark), followed by *PORR AG* (7.5 million Schilling or 5 million Reichsmark), the companies *Teerag-Asdag* and *Rella & Co.* (each with a turnover of about 5 million Schilling or 3.3 million Reichsmark), and the companies *Mayreder, Kraus & Co.* and *STUAG* (*Strassenbau- und Tiefbau-Unternehmung AG*, each with a turnover of almost 4.6 million Schilling or 3 million Reichsmark).[9]

The largest German construction companies operated in completely different dimensions in comparison to the total revenue of the 27 Austrian companies listed, which altogether made up around 40 million Reichsmark.[10] In 1937,

7 Scheil, Konzept "Lenkung und Förderung der Bauwirtschaft in der Ostmark," July 21, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Vol. 2.

8 Statistische Angaben der wichtigsten Baufirmen Österreichs aus dem Jahre 1937, Beilage 2, July 20, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Vol. 1.

9 Subsidiaries like *Allgemeine Strassenbau AG* and *Allgemeine Steiermärkische Baugesellschaft* are cited separately in the list of 27 construction companies.

10 Statistische Angaben der wichtigsten Baufirmen Österreichs aus dem Jahre 1937, Beilage 2, July 20, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Vol. 1.

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Dyckerhoff & Widmann (*DYWIDAG*), headquartered in Berlin-Wilmersdorf, booked an annual turnover of 79.4 million Reichsmark,[11] while *STRABAG*, another one of the largest German construction companies, booked 43.7 million Reichsmark,[12] a figure still greater than the combined turnover of the 27 cited Austrian companies put together. The figures relating to the respective workforces revealed similar differences: While the 27 Austrian construction companies combined had a total of 569 employees and 8,124 laborers on their payrolls, *DYWIDAG* alone engaged 928 employees and 10,471 laborers[13] while *STRABAG* engaged 310 employees and 9,000 laborers.[14]

1.2 The Structural Problems of the Austrian Construction Sector and State Regulation Attempts

The question of how much of the construction volume envisaged by the Nazis in 1938 could be taken on by Austrian companies did not only relate to questions of size, but also, above all, to the alleviation of structural deficiencies in the Austrian construction sector.

The most acute problem was the lack of laborers, both skilled and unskilled, which not even the large number of the unemployed could plug, since only a very limited portion of this labor reserve came from the construction sector. In addition, many laborers, especially the much-desired skilled laborers, were recruited by German companies after the "Anschluss." This meant that they were not available to implement the new construction projects in Austria.

These structural problems in the Austrian construction sector were therefore discussed extensively by the sector's interest groups and the responsible state authorities in 1938, as were possible solutions. In August 1938, the Ostmark District Group of the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry conducted a survey among the Austrian construction companies to ascertain what they perceived to be the greatest difficulties in taking on construction contracts. The responses were relatively uniform, encompassing shortages in labor,

11 Vermögensverkehrsstelle an Baurat Scheil, RK für die Wiedervereinigung betr. Ansuchen der Fa. Dyckerhoff & Widmann, August 10, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-2-1.

12 Pohl, STRABAG, 191.

13 Vermögensverkehrsstelle an Baurat Scheil, RK für die Wiedervereinigung betr. Ansuchen der Fa. Dyckerhoff & Widmann, August 10, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-2-1.

14 Pohl, STRABAG, 191. The workforce of Philipp Holzmann was similarly large in 1937, including 1,010 employees and 12,400 laborers. Pohl, Philipp Holzmann, 230. So was the workforce of Hochtief, which comprised 13,180 individuals. Pohl/Siekmann, HOCHTIEF, 196.

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equipment, and construction machinery and to some degree also construction materials.[15]

The representative of the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry, Dr. Günter Huberti, concluded in his summary analysis that "there was not and is not a sufficient local implementation apparatus available" for the construction projects planned in the "Ostmark."[16] Huberti attributed this circumstance to the country's interwar situation resulting from the establishment of the diminutive Austrian state in 1918 and the world economic crisis, the consequences of which had endured through to the "Anschluss." During this period, the number of construction companies had decreased from 13,000 to half that number, with 40,000 construction workers (a good third), including highly qualified laborers, having moreover emigrated. Even if this portrayal of the Austrian development of the previous 20 years was presumably rendered especially grim in the interests of the Nazi regime, Huberti was probably not wrong when he stated about the scope of the contemporary Austrian construction sector that, taken altogether, this amounted in size to "about one single construction company of the second tier in present-day Germany."[17]

Huberti identified the glaring lack of equipment such as tools and construction machinery in the Austrian construction sector as another significant problem, which explained why the level of mechanization in construction projects was extremely deficient by comparison to that in Germany. The crises of the interwar period had led to a significant decrease in the equipment fleet of Austrian construction companies and there was a "great shortage of all modern technical equipment for civil engineering, excavators, tracks, rolling stocks, and so forth."[18] The limited deployment of machines resulted in turn in a lack of technical knowledge. Huberti also pointed out that the larger Austrian construction companies lacked the necessary capital endowment for large-scale projects.[19] This meant that the companies were hardly able to tender serious offers for large-scale construction projects, most of which also had to be implemented in the shortest possible timeframe. The financial conduct of the Austrian construction companies, Huberti assessed, had to be understood in relation to the economic crisis. He used a soccer match as an analogy to highlight

15 Wirtschaftsgruppe Bauindustrie, Bezirksgruppe Ostmark in Gründung, Auszug aus den Antwortschreiben der Firmen, August 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Vol. 1.
16 Huberti, Bauwirtschaft, 337–338.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 "The construction companies in the Ostmark have been financially extremely weakened by the period of decline they underwent recently; they lack the capital reserves that would allow them to enter into free competition with the construction companies of Germany." Ibid.

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the unequal conditions for competition between German and Austrian construction companies:

> "The current competition is not unlike a match between two soccer teams, one of which is a guest on the field belonging to the other. The Ostmark team has the advantage of playing on its own field [...]. In terms of numbers, however, it is totally weak and does not have enough resources. It has maintained its technique, but not been able to practice enough in friendly matches. These circumstances will altogether have a negative impact if the superiority of the German team in training and power reserves becomes so great that it eclipses whatever chances remain for the Austrian team."[20]

This is the background against which efforts were undertaken by the state from the spring of 1938 onward, accompanied by the direct involvement of the relevant interest groups,[21] to bring the Austrian construction firms up to the standards of their German peers and thereby to make them more competitive. However, this tendency to exert centralized control over the development of the construction sector was not only limited to the specific situation of the economic area of Austria annexed by Germany; it was only introduced earlier in this context due to the pressure to adapt. In fact, the German construction sector generally, meaning also the larger German construction companies, were already struggling at the time of the "Anschluss" in 1938 due to the "Four Year Plan" and the preparation for war, and the construction wishes of the state and economy were steadily exceeding the actual capacities of the construction sector.[22]

The commencement of construction on the "West Wall" in mid-1938, a gigantic fortification complex against France, finally exceeded the building capacities of the German construction sector altogether.[23] Almost half a million laborers, four to five times the size of the workforce deployed for the construction of the Reichsautobahn, were put to work on the construction of this fortification complex up to 1940, which could fairly be described as one of the largest construction projects of the Nazi state altogether.[24] In order to cope with this project, measures were implemented to impose state control on the construction sector, for example the introduction of compulsory labor.[25]

20 Ibid.

21 Ernst Langthaler rightly pointed out that the Nazi regime in annexed Austria "also used commercial institutions for self-regulation of its economic goals [...] alongside state economic institutions exerting external control." Langthaler, Österreichs Wirtschaft, 688. Christiane Botzet also described the policies of the General Plenipotentiary for the Regulation of the Construction Sector in similar terms, as he largely incorporated the construction sector into his regulating activities. Botzet, Ministeramt.

22 Ibid., 116–117; Gogl, Bauwirtschaft, 299–322.

23 Ibid., 306; Pohl, Philipp Holzmann, 215.

24 Die unabhängige Historikerkommission Planen und Bauen im Nationalsozialismus (ed.), Planen und Bauen, 21.

25 Gogl, Bauwirtschaft, 314.

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In 1939, almost half of the cement, iron, and steel produced for construction purposes in Germany went to the Upper Command of the Wehrmacht, above all for the construction of the West Wall.[26] The construction of the Reichsautobahn was regarded as an organizational model for this project, and the so-called Organisation Todt (OT) eventually emerged from the construction of the West Wall.[27]

Centralized control of the entire construction sector, which had already been discussed for a long time and which had become overdue on account of the burden placed on the construction sector, was implemented step by step. This included on the one hand the prioritization of particular construction projects on the basis of urgency, which also entailed controlling the consignment of construction machinery, materials, and laborers, and on the other hand the appointment on December 9, 1938 of a General Plenipotentiary for the Regulation of the Construction Sector by Göring as Plenipotentiary of the "Four Year Plan," an office to which Fritz Todt was appointed.[28]

1.3 The (Limited) Efficacy of Protective Measures for the Austrian Construction Sector against German Competition

State control on Austrian territory began just a few weeks after the "Anschluss." In order to improve the situation of Austrian companies, and not just those in the construction sector, against German competition, a Law to Protect the Austrian Economy was enacted on April 14, 1938,[29] which was supposed to remain in force until October 1, 1938. For propagandistic reasons alone, it was already the stated policy of the Nazis to give Austrian companies preference in the commissioning of construction projects in the territory of former Austria. As a result, all German companies had to undergo an admission procedure before accepting construction contracts or establishing branch offices in Austria. Permits were generally granted by the Reichsstatthalter in Austria, who sometimes tasked other authorities to conduct admission procedures. Applications had to be submitted to the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry or, after its establishment, directly to its Ostmark District Group. Following review, an application for approval was submitted to the Department for the Protection of the Economy at the Property Transaction Office, which decided whether the petitioning German

26 Ibid., 319. The industrial sector received a third of the construction iron and steel, while the Reichsautobahn continued to receive 12.9% of the cement.
27 Ibid., 299–322; Lemmes, Zwangsarbeit, 222–223.
28 Botzet, Ministeramt, 117; Gogl, Bauwirtschaft, 218.
29 Gesetz zum Schutz der österreichischen Wirtschaft, April 14, 1938, GBlÖ Nr. 82/1938.

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construction company should be awarded the desired commission in former Austria.[30]

German construction companies were initially only allowed to work in joint ventures with Austrian companies. The establishment of joint ventures was generally not a complicated matter, except for the provision that companies from a particular area were required to accept commissions. Large-scale projects in the Nazi era were for the most part implemented in this form, since there was hardly a construction company around that could handle these construction volumes independently. Moreover, joint ventures minimized the risks for these companies.[31]

German companies were generally only supposed to be commissioned in the event that Austrian construction companies were not able to implement a given project. However, some German companies – like *Polensky & Zöllner* – had already possessed branch offices in Austria before 1938, hence their offers were not treated as German. While the establishment of new branch offices by German construction companies, which allowed the admission procedure to be circumvented, were only approved in the event that the German company in question was involved in numerous construction projects in Austria, the fact remained that this was already the case with many companies in the course of 1938.

Ultimately, due to the deficient performance capacities of the Austrian companies, German companies were able to acquire approvals or at least exemptions by entering into joint ventures with their significantly smaller Austria counterparts, especially with regard to large-scale subterranean construction projects because of the extensive machine operations these required. For example, due to their prior power plant construction work experience, the Munich-based construction company *Alfred Kunz & Co.* and the Berlin-based company *Beton- und Monierbau* were able to acquire a general contract worth 20 million Reichsmark to construct the Silvretta retaining walls in Vorarlberg in 1938.[32]

Austrian companies were faced not only with a lack of technical equipment, which in turn meant they were not able to offer competitive prices, but also time pressure. A typical example is the construction of the Nibelungen Bridge in Linz. The large German construction company *Wayss & Freytag* applied for approval

30 The Economic Committee for the Construction Industry itself regarded the procedure as complicated, but at the same time necessary due to the tricky structural issues characterizing the Austrian economy. Huberti, Bauwirtschaft, 337–338.

31 Pohl, Philipp Holzmann, 209.

32 Korrespondenz betr. Zulassung der Bauunternehmung Alfred Kunz & Co. in einer Arbeitsgemeinschaft mit Beton- und Monierbau zur Errichtung der Silvretta-Staumauer August–September 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-2-1; Alfred Kunz GmbH & Co., 100 Jahre Baugeschichte, 112.

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to construct this bridge in 1938, entering into a joint venture with the Linz-based construction company *Mayreder, Kraus & Co.* in order to fulfil the legal requirements.[33] At the same time, *Wayss & Freytag* applied for approval to establish a branch office.[34] This sparked an appeal by the Austrian company *Wayss & Freytag-Meinong*, which had become independent from the German company *Wayss & Freytag* in 1932.[35] The appeal was presumably inspired less by the construction contract itself, as the Austrian company *Wayss & Freytag-Meinong* had not submitted an offer for the construction of the Nibelungen Bridge, than by the planned establishment of a branch office, which was seen as a problem due to the two companies' almost identical names.[36] Ultimately, the appeal against the construction approval was rejected. As Werner Sarlay, the construction director responsible for the implementation of the Nibelungen Bridge, pointed out, no Austrian construction company was capable of erecting the bridge piles at short notice, especially given their lack of technical equipment, while withholding approval would delay the construction of the bridge by over a year. Concerning the issue of names, the Austrian company *Wayss & Freytag AG und Meinong GmbH* was referred to the courts. In the end, the German company *Wayss & Freytag* was also permitted to establish a separate branch office in Vienna.[37]

Such argumentation concerning time pressure and the urgency of a given construction project eventually led to concessions being made generally in the admission of German companies. This is evident for example in the case of the large-scale construction project on behalf of *Reichswerke Hermann Göring* in Linz. This was being implemented by a joint venture between the two German companies *Hochtief*[38] and *Heilmann & Littmann* with the help of the Austrian construction company *Pittels Neffe Negrelli & Co.* The latter, which had been part of *Österreichisch-Alpine Montangesellschaft* since 1923, itself became part of the *Reichswerke* enterprise when this state corporation took over *Alpine Montangesellschaft.*[39] The construction company – which was henceforth renamed

33 Rafetseder, Zwangsarbeit, 5.

34 Korrespondenz zu Wayss & Freytag betr. Nibelungenbrücke. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-2-1.

35 Wayss & Freytag, which was headquartered in Frankfurt, went bankrupt in 1932 and was subsequently reestablished as Neue Baugesellschaft Wayss & Freytag, before changing back to its original name in 1942. Its Austrian subsidiary Wayss & Freytag und Meinong became an entirely independent Austrian company as a result of the bankruptcy.

36 Korrespondenz zu Wayss & Freytag betr. Nibelungenbrücke. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-2-1.

37 Wayss & Freytag AG, Geschäftsbericht für das Jahr 1939, June 2, 1940. ZBW Leibnitz-Informationszentrum Wirtschaft, Firmen/Institutionenarchiv (ZBW), URL: https://pm20.zbw.eu/ (accessed January 10, 2024).

38 Pohl/Siekmann, HOCHTIEF, 150.

39 Bau Aktiengesellschaft "Negrelli," General Records 1945–1950. The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) Record Group (RG) 260, EU, USACA – GEA Branch, 1945–

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Bau- Aktiengesellschaft "Negrelli" – nevertheless formally counted as an Austrian company, meaning that the joint venture still met the appertaining legal requirements.[40] Since the establishment of the *Reichswerke* location in Linz, which was to serve iron mining and processing, required the contracting of multiple companies, *Reichswerke Hermann Göring* requested – successfully – in the summer of 1938 that blanket approval be granted for the commissioning of German companies. This was justified by reference to the stipulated deadlines for completion of the construction project and the fact that it would "not be possible, given the pace of the construction works, to apply for special approval in every individual case as stipulated in the admission procedure."[41]

This argumentation also allowed German construction companies to receive preferential treatment in the construction project most visible to the Nazi public, namely the Reichsautobahn, as Bernd Kreuzer analyzed in his study on highway construction in Upper Austria:

> "At least in the beginning, Austrian companies were given preference in commissions for construction projects. However, these companies often proved to have insufficient performance capacities, particularly in terms of their machinery, meaning that many German construction companies ended up receiving commissions nonetheless. In order to meet the stipulated deadlines, Todt repeatedly authorized the heads of the Highest Offices for Construction to 'freely assign the construction sections if necessary at prices deemed appropriate by the Highest Office for Construction of the Reichsautobahn.' The construction sites themselves were characterized by track construction works and the increasing deployment of heavy earth-moving machinery and other construction equipment."[42]

The legal territorial protection for Austrian companies may have been an existentially supportive measure in the early phase of adjustment in 1938, yet its efficacy was limited, as the increasing presence of large German construction companies showed. Large-scale projects like the construction of the Reichsautobahn, various power plants, and port facilities as well as the expansion of industry could not be implemented without large German construction companies like *Philipp Holzmann*, *STRABAG*, *Hochtief*, *Grün &*

1950, Bau Aktiengesellschaft Negrelli, URL: https://www.fold3.com/image/270357902 (accessed January 4, 2024).

40 Korrespondenz betr. Antrag der Hochtief AG zur Bildung einer ARGE mit Heilmann & Littmann und Pittels Neffe Negrelli & Co., hier Schreiben an Vermögensverkehrsstelle, Abteilung für Wirtschaftsschutz, September 20, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-2-1. The company was taken over entirely by Reichswerke Hermann Göring in Berlin in 1940 and renamed Bau-Aktiengesellschaft "Negrelli."

41 Korrespondenz betr. Antrag der Reichswerke Hermann Göring um generelle Genehmigung zur Beschäftigung von Altreichsfirmen, hier Schreiben an die Bezirksausgleichstelle, August 2, 1938. Ibid.

42 Kreuzer, Schnelle Straßen, 152.

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Bilfinger, and *DYWIDAG*. The territorial protection measures were therefore not extended beyond October 1938, even though this was being demanded by the representatives of the Austrian construction sector.[43] One of the reasons for ending these restrictive measures was the fact that German companies only invested a limited amount of energy into acquiring construction contracts on Austrian territory due to the construction of the "West Wall" and it was not in the interests of the state to further deter this investment by imposing complicated admission procedures.[44]

In order not to endanger the ambitious construction program for annexed Austria in the context of the general overburdening of the German construction sector, it became essential to find solutions to the question of how the construction performance of the Austrian construction companies could be increased.

1.4 The Industrialization of the Austrian Construction Sector

The Economic Committee for the Construction Industry lobbied in favor of a targeted investment in the Austrian construction sector, even though the involvement of German construction companies was regarded as indispensable:

> "If the disproportionality between the volume of contracts at present and in the near future on the one hand and the means to implement these contracts on the other hand is to be overcome, then the assistance of German companies is surely indispensable; it nevertheless remains imperative, from the perspective of economic rationalism and justice, that the local infrastructure be allowed to unfold its greatest possible performance capacity on the basis of the remaining and therefore healthy core substance. This can be achieved by offering it competitive opportunities equal to those of the German companies when applying for contracts in the Ostmark."[45]

A key issue concerned solving the glaring labor shortage in the construction sector. Although the *Wiener Institut für Wirtschafts- und Konjunkturforschung* (*Viennese Institute for Economic Research*) stated that the "number of individuals employed in the construction sector" had risen "from 45,000 in March 1938 to around 120,000 in late 1938," the "emigration of qualified construction workers to Germany" was nevertheless "tangible," with "foremen and civil engineers" in particular short supply.[46] The labor shortage affected all construction

43 Huberti, Bauwirtschaft, 337–338.
44 Ibid.
45 Ibid.
46 Das Jahr der Eingliederung, 43–44. These figures are to be viewed with caution since workforce numbers in the construction sector fluctuated significantly from season to season.

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projects in the territory of Austria, meaning also the large German construction companies involved in these projects. Yet these had the possibility of resorting to their core workforces and transferring these to specific construction projects, while Austrian companies had severe difficulties even establishing a core workforce in this situation. One possible solution, namely the repatriation of laborers from Germany, was regarded skeptically by the Economic Committee for the Construction Industry, as the following comment by Huberti evinced:

> "The primary means of overcoming these difficulties would be the repatriation of the Austrian laborers to their homeland and to their professions. However, whether it would be possible in the foreseeable future to recall the 40,000 or so Austrian construction workers currently working in Germany in addition to supervisors and engineers seems doubtful given the shortages reigning there, too."[47]

Huberti considered it more likely that the move of construction workers to other professions could be curtailed, although he also pointed to the problem of more attractive salaries in other sectors as a factor causing general competition.

Two other measures directly addressed a structural improvement of the equipment available to the genuinely Austrian construction companies. On September 26, 1938, a "special Ostmark contingent for the acquisition of equipment" was agreed upon, which provided for preferential delivery of construction machinery.[48] Even more importantly, the cost of acquiring equipment was eased through substantial subsidies decreed by the Ministry of Finance in September 1938, which also exempted fixed assets in Austria from depreciation.[49]

These measures proved effective, even if they did not completely solve the problems at hand. Among other things, this is because the machine industry could only cover the demand for construction machinery with difficulty, as the *Institute for Economic Research* remarked in early 1939:

> "The construction sector was among those hardest hit by the operation at maximum capacity of the machine industry in Germany and the insufficient capacities of Austrian machine production, which is currently in transition, as the construction sector saw itself faced with tasks after the Anschluss with which it was not equipped to deal. In March 1938, the entire machine stock of the Austrian construction sector was no larger than that of a small-scale German company. For example, there were altogether only 18 excavators in the Ostmark. Yet, despite all efforts, the acquisition of additional machines has only proceeded slowly. Only by assigning a specific contingent, and having the German machine industry prioritize orders from the Ostmark, could performance capacities be increased. However, there is still a shortage of heavy construction machinery today. In July 1938, the order balance totaled 550 million Reichsmark (as opposed to 50 million Reichsmark in 1937). For the coming season, it is estimated at 800

47 Huberti, Bauwirtschaft, 337–338.
48 Ibid.
49 Ibid.

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> million Reichsmark, although only about half of this sum will presumably be manageable this year due to the lack of machinery in addition to labor and construction material shortages."[50]

Another issue relating directly to the mechanization of the construction sector concerned the technical training of the laborers deployed by Austrian construction companies, as a representative of the *Verein Deutscher Ingenieure* (Association of German Engineers) pointed out. One proposed measure involved sending Austrian skilled laborers to intern on construction sites in Germany:

> "A further difficulty arises from the fact that the construction sector in the Ostmark completely stagnated in the previous era. As a result, there was no machine stock available. It would have been possible to help our labor comrades from the Ostmark by providing them with machines, but this was not done. This would in any case have misfired since there are hardly any individuals there who would have been capable of operating these machines, and since the German construction industry is not in a position to supply individuals with these technical skills. Instead, 200 laborers from the Ostmark will be distributed to construction sites in Germany once the frost period and the winter conditions are over so that they can familiarize themselves with the machinery in use here, in order to later be deployed rationally, meaning with the greatest possible efficacy."[51]

An additional measure designed to help train Austrian skilled laborers and their successors was the establishment of a training center along the lines of preexisting construction training sites in Germany. The foundations for this center were laid in Baden bei Wien in November 1938.[52] Huberti reckoned that these measures would allow for "the gradual redevelopment of the core workforces in the construction companies and their general improvement" by as early as 1939.[53]

Aside from solving the issues of labor shortages and technical equipment, the improvement of construction material deliveries and the reduction of the associated costs were considered of importance, as the latter were significantly higher in annexed Austria than in the rest of Nazi Germany.[54] How essential the increase of construction material deliveries was, is demonstrated by the case of the construction of the Silvretta retaining walls. This required an estimated 80,000 tons of cement, twice as much as the annual production level in Vorarlberg in 1938.[55]

50 Das Jahr der Eingliederung, 43–44.
51 Vogler, Rationalisierung, 12. Huberti argued in very similar terms. Huberti, Bauwirtschaft, 337–338.
52 Ibid.; see also Vogler, Rationalisierung.
53 Huberti, Bauwirtschaft, 337–338.
54 Ibid.
55 Walser, Bombengeschäfte, 118.

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Despite the expansion of production, the ongoing massive shortage of construction materials led to a downgrade of previously planned construction projects:

> "The construction materials in short supply include above all bricks, cement, construction iron, and timber. The reigning shortages have rendered it necessary to ration iron and erect distribution centers, which operate on the basis of a scale of urgency regarding individual construction projects. This has proven necessary despite extreme expansions in production. The cement industry has increased its production from 429,000 tons in 1937 to 650,000 tons in 1938 and, with the help of new investments, will be able to produce 950,000 tons in 1939. The total production of bricks and shingles is estimated to amount to 500 million pieces in 1938, meaning 25% more than in 1937. 700 Austrian companies were involved in this volume of brick production, with several previously retired brickworks having been reactivated. The overexploitation of the existing construction capacity has led to a series of construction projects designed to create new workplaces, which were either in the planning stage or already begun, having to be discontinued for the time being."[56]

These estimates regarding the performance capacities of the construction sector were upheld into 1939, as a report from the Ostmark branch of the Ministry of Labor evinces, which also emphasized the disproportionally high construction demand generated by the adaption process of the Austrian economy:

> "The construction notices submitted to employment agencies in the Ostmark up to May 1 of this year relate to construction projects amounting to 450,000,000 Reichsmark. This means that the proportion of the Ostmark within the construction volume of the entire German state stands at 16%. In other words, the construction volume of the Ostmark is almost twice the size as the population of the Ostmark is in proportion to the total population of the state. This circumstance is to a large extent the result of the damage wrought by the previous regime and also arises to some degree from the targets of the Four Year Plan. However, the construction sector in the Ostmark is currently not in a position to master this construction volume, as it lacks the necessary workforce and constructions materials."[57]

Representatives of the Ministry of Labor clearly supported the prioritization of construction projects. In order not to endanger projects that were important for the state and the economy, "such construction projects that do not belong to this especially urgent group of projects should be significantly curtailed, postponed, or discontinued altogether."[58]

56 Das Jahr der Eingliederung, 50–51.

57 Reichsarbeitsministerium, Zweigstelle Österreich für Arbeitseinsatz und Arbeitslosenhilfe an Reichskommissar und Gauleiter der Ostmark betr. Lage der Bauwirtschaft, 26. 7. 1939. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Vol. 2.

58 Ibid.

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Despite all the structural problems of the Austrian construction sector, the Austrian construction companies appear to have profited massively from such measures and the general construction boom that occurred from the "Anschluss" to the beginning of the war. Another conspicuous circumstance is that the difficult acquisition of construction machinery was evidently mastered quickly. The largest Austrian construction company, *Universale Redlich & Berger*, stated about the 1938 fiscal year:

> "All of a sudden, the construction sector took off and the number of contracts increased abruptly, spurring us to a marked expansion of our workforce in order to allow us to participate completely in this new sphere of activity. Our ample stocks of inventory, which were lying unused for years in our stockyards, were restored to operational standards in our on-site workshops, and we also acquired a great range of new tools and machines."[59]

The development of the workforce was also assessed positively. In late 1937, the company had 68 employees and on average 815 laborers on its payroll. In 1938, its workforce reached a peak of 195 employees, not including foremen, and 3,991 laborers.[60]

This positive tone concerning the economic development was also evident in the 1938 business report of *STUAG:*

> "Through an appropriate increase in its workforce and extensive additions to its inventory, the company was in a position to triple its revenue in 1938. Aside from various subterranean construction works and surface works on state, regional, and municipal roads, the company also implemented works on the Reichsautobahn, managing at extremely short notice and through painstaking preparatory work to deploy the necessary workforce and inventory in order to successfully take on this workload. In accordance with the regulations concerning the promotion of investments, the extensive acquisition of inventory in 1938 could be almost entirely written off."[61]

The reports from 1939 were similar. The company *Universale*, now trading under the name *"Universale" Hoch- und Tiefbau AG*,[62] remarked on the development of its construction business in 1939:

59 Achtzehnte ordentliche Hauptversammlung der Aktionäre der "Universale-Redlich & Berger Bauaktiengesellschaft" über das Geschäftsjahr 1938 und die Reichsmarkeröffnungsbilanz vom 1.1.1939, July 28, 1939. ZBW, URL: https://pm20.zbw.eu/ (accessed January 8, 2024).

60 Ibid.

61 STUAG, Geschäftsbericht über das 9. Geschäftsjahr 1938, June 6, 1939. ZBW, URL: https://pm20.zbw.eu/ (accessed January 10, 2024).

62 The name change was introduced following the company's fusion with *Österreichischen Realitäten-AG*. Achte ordentliche Hauptversammlung der Aktionäre der "Universale" Hoch- und Tiefbau AG, March 4, 1940, Geschäftsjahr 1939. ZBW, URL: https://pm20.zbw.eu/ (accessed January 8, 2024).

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> "We have been fully employed in all areas of construction. We experienced the greatest increase in contracts from the German industrial sector, for which we are implementing a series of large-scale factory and plant complexes. In terms of structural engineering, we were additionally busy constructing storehouses and warehouses, barracks, and settlement complexes. In terms of subterranean construction, we were busy continuing work on several power plant projects, completing earthworks projects and Reichsautobahn bridge projects transferred to us, and implementing further works on road and bridge construction projects in almost all regions of the Ostmark. In the last fiscal year, we were running 17 structural engineering sites and 12 subterranean construction sites, including large-scale construction sites deploying 400 to 600 laborers each."[63]

The business report also noted that this increase in performance had been made possible by new acquisitions of equipment and that the company had "made full use of the preferential opportunity to write off" these acquisitions.[64]

Another significant actor in the Austrian construction sector – *Bau-Aktiengesellschaft "Negrelli"* – also saw these developments positively. Due to its membership in the *Reichswerke Hermann Göring* corporation, *Negrelli* was one of the few Austrian construction companies in a position to acquire construction contracts in Germany, namely at the Salzgitter construction site. Within three weeks of the outbreak of war, it was able to increase its capital stock nine-fold, from 333,000 Reichsmark to 3 million Reichsmark.[65] According to its business report for 1939, the company's revenues had "increased six-fold in contrast to the fiscal year 1937 and four-fold in contrast to 1938. The company's workforce has also grown concurrently."[66]

The efficacy of the measures to foster the Austrian construction sector is also evident in the development of *PORR AG*, which recorded a five-fold increase in its order balance between 1937 and 1939 and an increase in revenue from 5 million Reichsmark (7.5 million Austrian Schilling) in 1937 to over 14 million Reichsmark in 1939.[67]

In a commemorative publication from 1970, the company *Mayreder, Kraus & Co.* only spoke briefly but nevertheless informatively about its development during the Nazi era, describing the period from 1938 through to the beginning of

63 As of December 31, 1939, the company had a workforce of 272 employees including managers and on average 3,500 laborers. Ibid.

64 Ibid.

65 Geschäftsbericht der Bau Aktiengesellschaft "Negrelli" für das Jahr 1939, Vienna 1940. NARA RG 260, EU, USACA – GEA Branch, 1945–1950, Bau Aktiengesellschaft Negrelli, URL: https://www.fold3.com/image/270357984 (accessed January 4, 1024).

66 Ibid.

67 Geschäftsbericht 1939 Allgemeine Baugesellschaft – A. PORR AG. ZBW, URL: https://pm20.zbw.eu/ (accessed January 10, 2024); Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 410; see also Christian Rabl's contribution to this volume (Chapter 2).

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the war retrospectively as the "industrialization" of the construction sector in Austria:

> "Thanks to the extensive acquisition of equipment with the help of state-guaranteed credits, the industrialization of the Austrian construction sector began in the late 1930s. Large-scale highway construction contracts, the establishment of industrial complexes, and the generous commencement of hydropower projects resulted in a massive expansion in construction volume."[68]

In sum, targeted subsidization and investment measures coupled with a massive simultaneous surplus in supplies had enabled the largest Austrian construction companies to reduce their structural deficiencies and undergo an industrialization process in the transition to war. The formation of joint ventures with large German construction companies had allowed the Austrian companies to acquire a lot of experience, which enabled them to participate in large-scale construction projects both domestically and in the occupied territories in the largely state-controlled construction economy after the outbreak of war.

2 The Construction Sector from the Outbreak of War until 1944 – Building on Behalf of the Nazi Politics of Conquest

The outbreak of war effected fundamental changes in the construction sector in Nazi Germany. Construction projects deemed essential to the war effort were prioritized over civilian construction projects like residential buildings, urban redevelopment, and the Reichsautobahn. In subsequent years, the focus of construction activities generally moved to the occupied territories, with no other economic sector relocating its activities to such a great extent to foreign territories dominated by Nazi Germany.[69] In the territory of Nazi Germany itself, construction focused predominantly on the establishment or expansion of military facilities and the armaments industry. With the intensification of Allied air raids from 1942/1943 onward, the elimination of air raid damages and air defense for industrial facilities relevant to armaments production, as well as for state institutions and the civilian population, became ever more important. The high demand for labor in the construction sector led to the increasing replacement of domestic laborers by prisoners of war and foreign civilian laborers, the latter of whom were at first acquired on a voluntary basis, but were soon forcibly recruited. From 1942/1943, concentration camp inmates were also deployed for

68 100 Jahre Mayreder, 62.
69 Gogl, Bauwirtschaft, 299; Botzet, Ministeramt, 115.

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labor. In the context of all these developments, construction activities in the territory of Austria constituted a special case.

2.1 The Prioritization of Construction Projects Deemed Essential to the War Effort

Following a general halt on construction in August 1939 in preparation for the invasion of Poland, virtually all construction projects deemed unessential to the war effort were discontinued from October 1, 1939 or were inspected with regard to their significance to the successful conduct of war, with corresponding priority lists of construction projects being compiled.[70]

On October 11, 1939, following a request from the Office of the Wartime Economy and Armaments of the Upper Command of the Wehrmacht (OKW), Göring decreed that all construction projects be organized into four groups on the basis of their urgency.[71] The first two groups comprised almost exclusively the armaments industries relevant to the war, the third group included various military structures, as well as structures relevant to the Four Year Plan and *Reichswerke Hermann Göring*. This meant that not only military and armaments industry construction projects were continued, but also projects for the extractive industry and energy infrastructure. The fourth and final group exclusively listed "structures for the civilian sector."

The development after the outbreak of war can generally be seen as a continuation of the measures already introduced since 1938 to regulate the construction sector. However, the policy of adapting state and economic construction projects to the available capacities of the construction sector, which was initiated with the appointment of a General Plenipotentiary for the Regulation of the Construction Sector, was now implemented even more rigorously. Construction projects deemed essential to the war effort were now given priority in the consignment of laborers and construction materials for the construction sites. To this end, around 20 quota providers were appointed, most prominently the Upper Command of the Wehrmacht and *Reichswerke Hermann Göring*. The General Plenipotentiary for the Regulation of the Construction Sector stipulated their construction volume and the quota providers could then each adjudicate on consignments within their respective sphere of responsibility. While this diminished the excess demand as construction projects could already be prioritized on this level, the excess could not be entirely eradicated.[72]

70 Thomas, Wehr- und Rüstungswirtschaft, 172.
71 Ibid.
72 Gogl, Bauwirtschaft, 319–321.

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The regulation and prioritization of the construction sector generally provided a certain measure of planning security, especially with regard to workforces, who were subsequently protected from being conscripted or redeployed to other projects. For the smaller construction companies in particular, the regulated allocation of resources meant a reprieve from the struggle for laborers, construction equipment, and materials.[73] This meant a better starting position especially for the Austrian construction companies in relation to their superior German counterparts. Indeed, the Austrian companies had previously expressed grave concern at the prospect that the special contingents of construction machinery they had been promised might disappear following the outbreak of war.

2.2 The Idiosyncratic Development of the "Ostmark"

The outbreak of war was less incisive with regards to the construction sector in the territory of Austria, as this was still undergoing a process of catching up with and integrating into the German economy – a process that would last into the middle of the war – and the state wanted neither of those developments to be disturbed. The infrastructural construction projects that had been begun in 1938/1939, for example in the energy sector, were in full swing when the war began and far from being completed, as was the expansion of the extractive and armaments industries. This included almost all power plant construction projects and industrial construction projects, such as the Linz location of *Reichswerke Hermann Göring* and new factories constructed on behalf of the largest Austrian armaments company, *Steyr-Daimler-Puch AG*, in Steyr, Graz, and St. Valentin, which did not become operational until as late as 1941.[74]

In the civilian construction sphere, too, for example with regard to the Reichsautobahn, the discontinuation of works on account of the war was not as much of an issue in the territory of former Austria as it was in Nazi Germany as a whole, although these projects did not have any immediate relevance for the state's Blitzkrieg strategy. Even the most ambitious construction plan that Hitler had announced at the groundbreaking ceremony in Walserberg for the Salzburg–Vienna highway in April 1938 for this first, large highway section on formerly Austrian territory was not scheduled to be completed until the fall of 1941. As far as the Nazi leadership was concerned, the blitzkrieg war would already have been successfully concluded by this point and German hegemony in Europe realized.

Three quarters of ongoing highway projects across Nazi Germany, which held, above all, propagandistic value, were discontinued, with those projects that were

73 Ibid., 320.
74 Rathkolb (ed.), NS-Zwangsarbeit; Perz, Projekt "Quarz," 83–116.

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continued serving to close gaps between highway segments and to complete segments running around cities that were deemed important by the military. Yet the construction of the Salzburg–Linz–Vienna route continued uninterrupted in order to create a continuous route from Munich to Vienna, as was the construction of the Breslau–Vienna highway and the expansion of the stretch from Salzburg to Villach, which was to serve as a winter-proof Alpine crossing to Southeastern Europe.[75] In these cases, the principle of prioritizing construction projects according to their importance to the war effort was clearly superseded by propagandistic considerations.

Aside from the construction of highways, the construction of monumental structures was also continued, for example the erection of two large bridgehead buildings at the Nibelungen Bridge in Linz, which continued until 1941.[76]

Georg Thomas, the head of the defense economy in the Upper Command of the Wehrmacht, was anything but pleased with these exceptions to the discontinuations, as he remarked in his postwar memoirs:

> "Unfortunately, this decree did not lead to a total discontinuation of construction works not essential to the war effort, which meant that the construction of the Reichstautobahn and numerous monumental buildings continued to place demands on laborers and materials."[77]

Although the war against France in the spring of 1940 led to a temporary cessation of highway construction, work was resumed at many of these construction sites in the summer of 1940,[78] with resources being diverted away from the construction of the "West Wall," which was no longer considered necessary after the victory over France. All the ongoing Reichsautobahn construction sites were finally completed in early 1942. The resources this freed up were then required for the construction of the "Atlantic Wall," which began at the same time, while the laborers were redeployed above all in the armaments industry.

A significant factor underlying the stringent construction activities in the armaments industry was Austria's geographical position, as this was considered an area safe from air raids. Indeed, it would only be targeted by air raids from the summer of 1943 onward. Its consequent function as the "Reich's air raid shelter" meant that it became the preferred location for new industrial projects.

This consideration also swayed the decision of where to construct the new *Flugmotorenwerke Ostmark* facility, which formed part of the Göring program. Due to its sheer size, this construction project, which began in the first half of 1941 in Wiener Neudorf, south of Vienna (with branch factories in Brünn/Brno

75 Kreuzer, Tempo 130, 63.
76 Rafetseder, Zwangsarbeit, 4.
77 Thomas, Wehr- und Rüstungswirtschaft, 172.
78 Kreuzer, Tempo 130, 63; Kreuzer, Schnelle Straßen, 93.

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and Marburg/Maribor), constituted the most expensive industrial investment of the Ministry of Aviation. Up to 10,000 predominantly forced foreign laborers were earmarked for the construction of the factory in Wiener Neudorf, also including concentration camp inmates from the summer of 1943 onward.[79]

Another consequence of Austria's apparent invulnerability to air raids was the relocation of industrial complexes from areas sensitive to aerial warfare to its territory. A case in point is the relocation of large parts of *Heinkel-Flugzeugwerke* from Rostock to the vicinity of Vienna in 1942.[80] These industrial relocation projects also entailed extensive construction activities.

The discontinuation of many civilian construction projects generally meant that only large-scale construction projects were continued in the territory of Austria, which could often only be implemented by large construction companies. This again limited the viable contractors to large German companies and a few Austrian companies.

This is the context in which *PORR AG* in 1940 took on construction projects on behalf of, among others, *Gustloffwerke Hirtenberg*, *Zellwolle Lenzing*, and *Stickstoffwerke Ostmark* in Linz, and in 1941 on behalf of *Flugmotorenwerke Ostmark*. The company *Bau-Aktiengesellschaft "Negrelli"* also recorded a very positive development in 1940, despite the war. According to its business report for 1940, that year had brought

> "another significant increase in revenue by comparison to previous years, meaning that our business volume is now at its highest level since the company was founded. Our activities in 1940 primarily included the establishment of structures important to the war effort, not just in the Ostmark, but also in Germany."[81]

Like most other large construction companies, *Negrelli* also noted that the company had been able to further expand its equipment stock on account of the investment subsidies for the "Ostmark." *Negrelli* was subsequently active in the industrial construction sector, especially on behalf of *Reichswerke* in Linz.[82]

Even if Austrian construction companies found that they had become more competitive by comparison to 1938 on account of targeted subsidization and

79 Perz, Projekt "Quarz," 126–145.

80 On the development of Heinkel during the Nazi era generally, see Fröhlich, "Der Häftlingseinsatz wurde befohlen"; Perz, Zwangsarbeit.

81 The contract specifically earmarked as taking place in Germany concerned construction works in Salzgitter on behalf of the corporation Reichswerke Hermann Göring, which also owned Negrelli. Geschäftsbericht der Bau Aktiengesellschaft "Negrelli" für das Jahr 1940, Vienna 1942. NARA RG 260, EU, USACA – GEA Branch, 1945–1950, Bau Aktiengesellschaft Negrelli, URL: https://www.fold3.com/image/270357961 (accessed January 4, 2024).

82 Geschäftsbericht der Bau Aktiengesellschaft "Negrelli" für das Jahr 1942, Wien 1944. NARA RG 260, EU, USACA – GEA Branch, 1945–1950, Bau Aktiengesellschaft Negrelli, URL: https://www.fold3.com/image/270357918 (accessed January 5, 2024).

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increased industrialization, German construction companies continued to dominate most large-scale construction projects during the war (including in joint ventures).

On some large-scale construction projects, the leading positions were solely occupied by German companies, for example in the construction of the flak towers in Vienna, which were erected by *Phillipp Holzmann AG*, *Gottlieb Tesch GmbH*,[83] and *Dyckerhoff & Widmann*.[84] The situation was similar on the port construction project in Linz, for which the two German subterranean construction companies *Richard Schulz*[85] and *Karl Stöhr*[86] had been commissioned. German companies also predominated at one of the largest power plant construction projects, namely the Tauern Dam in Kaprun, for which the joint venture *ARGE Tauernsperre* was established by *Beton- und Monierbau AG*, *Lenz & Co.*, and *Polensky & Zöllner*.[87]

Companies like *PORR AG* thus continued to be disadvantaged after the beginning of the war despite their very good order situation, a circumstance they attributed to the fact that ever more contracting parties came from Germany and therefore allegedly gave preferential treatment to construction companies headquartered in Berlin, rather than to Austrian companies unknown to them.[88]

However, there were also some exceptional cases[89] in which Austrian companies were given preference for construction projects, for example *Universale* in the construction of the Loibl Tunnel and *PORR AG* together with *Universale* in the expansion of *Zellwolle Lenzing*.[90] This was also the case in smaller power plant construction projects, with *Murkraftwerk Dionysen*, for example, being built by

83 Bauer, Wiener Flaktürme, 78; Pohl, Philipp Holzmann, 238; Rafetseder, NS-Zwangsarbeits-Schicksale, 363.

84 Dyckerhoff & Widmann, Niederlassung Wien, Bericht über die Dyckerhoff & Widmann KG, September 14, 1947. NARA RG 260, EU, USACA – GEA Branch, 1945–1950, Basic Source Documents on Dyckerhoff and Widmann KG, URL: https://www.fold3.com/image/270032946 (accessed January 13, 2024).

85 The company's own account is very uncritical of the Nazi era. URL: https://www.schulz-tiefbau.de/125-jahre-jubil%C3%A4um/ (accessed January 9, 2024).

86 URL: https://www.fold3.com/image/269919060. Stöhr continued building in Linz until mid-1943, then its equipment was transferred to Bavaria.

87 Beton- und Monierbau Aktien-Gesellschaft, 13; in its commemorative publication, the company complained that it had lost its entire construction site equipment in 1945 and was not compensated for this, with the Austrian government henceforth contracting four Austrian construction companies to complete the project. The companies Hinteregger & Fischer, Leonhard Moll, and Union-Baugesellschaft were involved in the project during the war, even though they were not part of ARGE Tauernsperre. Reiter, Tauernkraftwerk Kaprun, 133.

88 Vierteljahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, March 9, 1940, 2. PORR-Archive (PA).

89 No systematic examination of large-scale construction projects and the companies involved has been undertaken to date.

90 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 417–418; Sandgruber, Lenzing, 68; *PORR* is also mentioned in Lackner/Stadler, Fabriken in der Stadt, 704.

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two Austrian construction companies, namely *Universale* and *Hinteregger & Fischer*.[91]

2.3 The Special Significance of Forced Labor for Construction Activities in Austrian Territory

Despite the discontinuation of numerous civilian construction projects after the beginning of the war, there was still an acute shortage of laborers. In order to compensate for conscriptions to the Wehrmacht as well as for the relocation of construction sites along with their domestic laborers to the occupied territories, a policy was increasingly implemented – befitting a general tendency in the German wartime economy from late 1939 onward – first of deploying prisoners of war for labor, and soon also foreign civilians, who were increasingly recruited by force.[92] In 1941, for the first time concentration camp inmates were also directly deployed for construction works.

The continuation of numerous construction projects due to the ongoing process of adapting the Austrian economy was also reflected in the number of laborers deployed and their makeup. Between 1939 and 1944, the number of laborers working in construction halved in Nazi Germany (excluding Austria) while remaining almost the same in the territory of Austria.

Table 1: Laborers in the construction sector (including foreign civilian laborers and prisoners of war), 1939–1944.

	1939	1940	1941	1942	1943	1944
Germany	1,309,452	962,580	961,363	687,425	595,634	617,758
"Ostmark"	72,115	76,155	81,752	80,213	73,001	73,875

Source: Figures cited in Wagenführ, Die deutsche Industrie

The extreme labor shortage that had existed since 1938 was countered in the construction sector with an especially intense deployment of foreign forced laborers.[93] In late 1939, the first Polish prisoners of war were deployed in the "Ostmark," where almost 11,000 individuals were already being forced to work by

91 Karner, Im Strom der Zeit, 77.

92 To date, hardly any studies have been conducted on forced labor in individual construction companies in Austria. Aside from the discussion of forced labor in Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, there is also a study on Teerag-Asdag by Lütgenau and Schröck. Lütgenau/Schröck, Zwangsarbeit.

93 Forced laborers were already being deployed on construction projects from 1938 onward, yet the Austrian Jews, Sinti, and Roma deployed in the construction sector were quantitatively negligible. See generally: Gruner, Zwangsarbeit und Verfolgung; Schweitzer, "Anständig beschäftigt."

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February 1940, above all on construction projects and in agriculture. By December 1940, this figure had risen to over 87,000 and – following the German victory in Western Europe – included many French and Belgian prisoners of war. The ongoing assignment of prisoners of war also reflected the military situation. In September 1941, following the occupation of Yugoslavia, prisoners of war from Serbia constituted the second-largest group, at 28,000 prisoners, after French prisoners of war. Unlike in the rest of Nazi Germany, in the territory of Austria, these prisoners were predominantly deployed not in agriculture, but in the construction sector, especially on projects in the framework of the "Four Year Plan." By late 1940, over 51% of all prisoners of war in this territory were deployed in the construction sector (compared to 23% in Nazi Germany generally), with 43% still working in this sector by late April 1941 (compared to 21% in Nazi Germany).

With the gradual completion of a large portion of industrial construction projects, the situation in the territory of Austria began to resemble that in the state overall, with the proportion of prisoners of war in the construction sector sinking to under 20% by mid-1942, though this was still significantly higher than the state-wide average.[94]

The recruitment of foreign civilian laborers was just as essential for the construction sector as the deployment of prisoners of war. This circumstance also reflected the intensive construction activities for the expansion of industry and infrastructure in the "Ostmark," which continued into the war years. The initial acquisition of laborers, above all from Southeastern Europe, was soon replaced with forced recruitment of foreign laborers from Western and Eastern Europe, with individuals from Poland and the Soviet Union facing particular discrimination. In May 1942, almost a quarter of all foreign civilian laborers deployed in the territory of former Austria, 61,311 individuals in total, were working in the construction and ancillary construction sectors. By November 1943, this figure had dropped to 12.8% (though the absolute number had risen to 65,555 individuals), compared to only 6.7% state-wide. In August 1944, 11.6% of civilian foreigners (62,482 individuals) were still deployed in the construction sector, compared to only 6.1% across Nazi Germany generally.

The proportion of foreign laborers among all the laborers deployed in the construction sector in the territory of Austria (excluding concentration camp inmates) reflects the total dependence of this sector on forced labor: By 1942, foreigners already constituted around 75% of the workforce deployed in the construction sector, rising to 89% in 1943 and standing at 88% in 1944.[95] This

94 Freund/Perz, Zahlenentwicklung, 162.

95 These figures were compiled on the basis of Wagenführ, Die deutsche Industrie, and the contemporary journal Der Arbeitseinsatz im Deutschen Reich (from July 1943 called Der

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proportion was also reflected in the workforce of *PORR AG*, in which foreign forced laborers constituted up to 90% of the total workforce.[96]

This shift in the workforce is also reflected in the business reports of the construction companies, as shown paradigmatically in the following by reference to a report from the largest Austrian construction company, *Universale*. This stated with regard to the 1940 fiscal year:

> "The implementation of these construction projects, which were predominantly scheduled with tight construction deadlines, required the deployment of foreign laborers along with all available equipment and machines."[97]

The company's statements for 1941 are similar, during which it "deployed foreign laborers and prisoners of war to replace our German workforce members who have been conscripted for military service."[98]

Concerning 1943, *Universale* stated that it had been able, despite all difficulties, to implement its construction works thanks "especially to the increasing deployment of foreign laborers and prisoners of war."[99]

Concentration camp inmates were first deployed by construction companies from mid-1941 onward. One of the first Austrian companies to deploy these prisoners for labor was *Rella & Neffe*, which in June 1941 acquired Spanish Republicans from the Mauthausen concentration camp for the construction of a highway slip road from Vöcklabruck and Gmunden to the interchange at Regau.[100] To this end, the first sub-camp of the dual concentration camp Mauthausen-Gusen was established in Vöcklabruck, to which more than 300 Spanish Republicans were sent.[101] With the total discontinuation of highway construction in the spring of 1942, these prisoners were transferred to Ternberg to work on the construction of a power plant on the River Enns, where they were forcibly de-

Arbeitseinsatz im Grossdeutschen Reich). See also the figures in Freund/Perz, Zahlenentwicklung, 112–127, and Butschek, Wirtschaft, 121–127. There are sometimes significant discrepancies between the figures cited in Wagenführ and those cited in the journal, without a clear reason. Hence, these figures should be treated with caution.

96 On the development within *PORR AG*, see Christian Rabl's contribution to this volume (Chapter 2).

97 Neunte ordentliche Hauptversammlung der Aktionäre der "Universale" Hoch- und Tiefbau AG, June 10, 1941, Geschäftsjahr 1940. ZBW, URL: https://pm20.zbw.eu/ (accessed January 8, 2024).

98 Zehnte ordentliche Hauptversammlung der Aktionäre der "Universale" Hoch- und Tiefbau AG, June 8, 1942, Geschäftsjahr 1941. Ibid.

99 "Universale" Hoch- und Tiefbau AG, Geschäftsbericht für 1943. Ibid.

100 On the request for these prisoners, although it makes no reference to this initial establishment of a sub-camp, see Schweitzer, "Anständig beschäftigt," 126.

101 The actual reason for the establishment of this sub-camp, namely to construct a highway slip road, was previously not known; see among other things Obermair, Lager Vöcklabruck; Freund/Perz, Konzentrationslager in Oberösterreich, 104–107.

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ployed by *Universale*, *Allgemeine Hoch- und Ingenieurbau-AG*, and *PORR*.[102] Aside from Ternberg, the power plant on the Enns in Grossraming was also constructed using concentration camp inmates. This project was headed by a joint venture between the companies *Alfred Kunz & Co.* and *Rella & Co.* (not to be confused with *Rella & Neffe*). This construction project was discontinued in September 1944 due to the development of the war.[103]

In the years 1942 and 1943, concentration camp inmates were predominantly deployed to work on industrial construction projects. Sub-camps of the Mauthausen concentration camp were established at various armaments company locations, for example at *Steyr-Daimler-Puch AG*, *Reichswerke Hermann Göring* in Linz, *Heinkel-Werke* in Schwechat, *Rax-Werke* in Wiener Neustadt, and *Flugmotorenwerke Ostmark* in Wiener Neudorf. These initially served the establishment of production sites, with the laborers being deployed by the construction companies commissioned to implement the respective projects.

One exception to this dominance of industrial construction projects was the construction of the Loibl road tunnel. This tunnel project, which was begun for strategic reasons in 1941/1942 (namely to establish an important road link from Carinthia to Slovenia), was implemented from 1943 onward by *Universale* with the use of civilian forced laborers as well as inmates from the Mauthausen concentration camp.[104]

2.4 "Far beyond the Borders": The Relocation of Construction Activities to Territories Occupied by Germany

No other sector in Nazi Germany relocated its activities into the occupied territories during the war to the same extent as the construction sector.[105] Construction activities overall were radically scaled back in the territory of Nazi Germany following the outbreak of war, especially due to the cessation of state investments in construction projects not deemed essential to the war effort, the discontinuation of the "West Wall" construction project following the conquest of France, and the final discontinuation of Reichsautobahn construction projects in early 1942.[106]

102 Freund, Zwangsarbeit beim Bau der Ennskraftwerke, 47; Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 417; Freund/Perz, Konzentrationslager in Oberösterreich, 137.
103 Alfred Kunz GmbH & Co., 100 Jahre Baugeschichte, 113; Freund, Zwangsarbeit beim Bau der Ennskraftwerke, 76; Freund/Perz, Konzentrationslager in Oberösterreich, 142.
104 Freund, Was "kostet" ein KZ-Häftling?; Perz, "Neue Österreichische Tunnelbaumethode."
105 Gogl, Bauwirtschaft, 312.
106 Ibid., 299.

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Construction companies were able to compensate for the decline in domestic demand by becoming active in the occupied territories. Through the direction of the General Plenipotentiary for the Regulation of the Construction Sector, whose remit was extended to the occupied territories following the outbreak of war, and the increasing relocation of construction activities to these territories, Austrian companies also increasingly participated in construction projects there. The main contracting party was OT, which was headed by the General Plenipotentiary for the Regulation of the Construction Sector Fritz Todt and, after his death, by Albert Speer. Contracts were also granted by individual parts of the Wehrmacht as well as by civilian occupation authorities. These contracts were rendered attractive due to the policy of the General Plenipotentiary for the Regulation of the Construction Sector to acquire companies on a voluntary rather than a compulsory basis as well as by the assured supply of labor, construction machinery, and materials.[107] The paramilitary organization of OT also meant that construction companies were given far-reaching authority with regard to supervising forced laborers and local subcontractors and to administering their construction sites.[108]

The larger Austrian construction companies typically worked in the framework of joint ventures with large German construction companies, as they had already done previously in the "Ostmark," often in more or less the same constellations. In the context of the OT projects, *PORR AG* specifically acquired many construction contracts in occupied Eastern and Southeastern Europe as well as on the "Atlantic Wall," in Italy, and in Slovakia.[109] The company's great interest in such projects was demonstrated by its active efforts to acquire contracts in Upper Silesia and Galicia by dispatching an executive board member there.[110] The involvement of *PORR AG* in the construction of the "Atlantic Wall" alone had a construction volume of 1.5 million Reichsmark.[111]

This focus on construction contracts in occupied territories is also reflected in the business reports of *Universale*. The report for 1940, for example, states: "Our numerous construction sites lay predominantly in the Ostmark, followed by Upper Silesia, the General Government, and France."[112] The 1941 report stated: "There were altogether 35 construction sites this year, 20 structural construction

107 Ibid., 317.
108 Ibid., 312–313.
109 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 422–427.
110 Ibid., 422; see generally Gogl, Laying the Foundations, 242.
111 Ibid., 426.
112 Neunte ordentliche Hauptversammlung der Aktionäre der "Universale" Hoch- und Tiefbau AG, June 10, 1941, Geschäftsjahr 1940. ZBW, URL: https://pm20.zbw.eu/ (accessed January 8, 2024).

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sites and 15 subterranean construction sites, spread across the Ostmark, Upper Silesia, and the General Government."[113]

In its commemorative publication for the hundredth anniversary of its establishment, the construction company *Mayreder, Kraus & Co.* briefly but clearly addressed its activities during the war as follows:

> "Construction activities in the homeland had to be adapted to armaments facilities, transport facilities, airfields, and finally air defense structures. War-related deployments brought MAYREDER far beyond the borders, for example to work on rail and tunnel construction projects in Narvik."[114]

The construction project in Norway referenced here was typical of the activities of Austrian construction companies in the occupied territories. In the framework of the "Atlantic Wall" construction works begun in late 1941, the Norwegian coast was also to be fortified against Allied landings. This project, which was run by "OT-Einsatzgruppe Wiking" and implemented with the use of tens of thousands of forced laborers, was regarded as particularly essential to the war effort, and vast quantities of resources were expended in its realization. Following the German occupation of Norway, a core component of this fortification system was the construction of a rail connection of great military and strategic importance, which would connect Trondheim via Fauskes to Narvik and on to Kirkenes. Thousands of Soviet prisoners of war were forced to work alongside Serbian and Polish forced laborers on this "Nordlandsbane" project, which was only partly realized.[115] The Austrian construction companies *Universale*, *Mayreder*, *Kraus & Co.*, and *STUAG* worked on the section from Fauske to Narvik in collaboration with German companies with whom they had already worked together in Austria, including *Hochtief*, *Grün & Bilfinger*, and *Philipp Holzmann*.[116] Prominent Austrian military geologists and technicians like the rock mechanic Leopold Müller and the tunnel expert Ladislaus (von) Rabcewicz were involved in planning and consulted on this project. Whether this fact played any role in the commissioning remains unclear, yet a connection can be assumed.[117]

Larger construction companies like *PORR AG* generally had better chances of landing contracts in the occupied territories. However, the case of the company *Swietelsky* demonstrates that smaller companies also managed to acquire contracts in these territories: It was commissioned to work on the military road

113 Zehnte ordentliche Hauptversammlung der Aktionäre der "Universale" Hoch- und Tiefbau AG, June 8, 1942, Geschäftsjahr 1941. Ibid.

114 100 Jahre Mayreder, 62.

115 See generally about this project Gogl, Laying the Foundations, 333–334; as well as Bohn, Reichskommissariat Norwegen, 363–379; Heber, Atlantikwall, Bd. II/II, 248–250; Ellingsve, Nordlandsbanens krigshistorie.

116 Gogl, Laying the Foundations, 192–194 and 246; Pohl/Siekmann, HOCHTIEF, 173.

117 Häusler, Wehrgeologie in Norwegen; Perz, "Neue Österreichische Tunnelbaumethode."

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known as Durchgangsstrasse IV in Galicia, which was predominantly realized with the use of Jewish forced laborers. This small Upper Austrian construction company, which had been rather insignificant before the "Anschluss," presumably relied on its connections with Nazi functionaries to land this job.[118]

3 Construction Companies during the Final Phase of the War – Evacuations, Bunker Construction, and the Elimination of Air Raid Damage

In 1944, the advance of Allied troops in Eastern and Western Europe alike led to the general retreat of construction companies from the occupied territories. At this time, OT also became active in the territory of Nazi Germany directly, most prominently in the construction of large-scale bunker facilities on behalf of the armaments industry, for example in Kaufering and Mühldorf in Bavaria.[119] Construction sites could not always be evacuated in time when the front line approached, which sometimes led to construction companies losing their equipment. Business reports, for example that of *Universale* for 1944 (which was only written in 1948, after the war had long been over), contained remarks on this circumstance such as: "The military and wartime economic measures of the 1944 fiscal year led to a significant breakdown of business. We therefore endeavored, wherever possible, to shut down our construction sites located outside of Austria."[120]

Construction activities within Nazi Germany itself were affected, above all, by the development of aerial warfare. The most pressing tasks of the construction sector henceforth included eliminating air raid damage in cities and undertaking measures to maintain industrial production, rail and road traffic, and infrastructure generally in the aftermath of air raids. Large-scale construction projects now especially included air defense structures. Aside from shelters for state institutions and the domestic civilian population, these predominantly comprised large-scale construction projects for the subterranean relocation of the armaments industry from the fall of 1943 onward. These attained similar proportions to the construction of the "West Wall" from 1938 to 1940 and the

118 The Documentation Center of Austrian Resistance is currently conducting a study on the involvement of *Swietelsky AG* and its subsidiaries in construction projects on behalf of Nazi Germany, with results expected in late 2024. URL: https://www.doew.at/erforschen/projekte/arbeitsschwerpunkte/zwangsarbeit/studie-zur-involvierung-der-swietelsky-ag-und-ihrer-tochterfirmen-in-bauvorhaben-desdritten-reiches (accessed January 11, 2024).

119 Raim, Dachauer KZ-Außenkommandos Kaufering und Mühldorf.

120 "Universale" Hoch- und Tiefbau AG, Geschäftsbericht für 1944. ZBW, URL: https://pm20.zbw.eu/ (accessed January 8, 2024).

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construction of the Atlantic Wall from 1942 onward, requiring vast quantities of resources such as labor, construction machinery, and materials such as cement and steel. The provision of these resources could now only be secured through crisis committees with plenipotentiary powers. In early March 1944, for example, the "Jägerstab" (fighter unit) established by the Armaments Ministry and Ministry for Aviation was instructed to do everything in its power to maintain and, if possible, to increase fighter plane production levels despite intense Allied air raids.

In order to acquire the laborers necessary for the subterranean relocation program, the fighter unit assigned "SS-Sonderstab Kammler" to implement the construction works for the largest tunnel complexes. This unit had already deployed many thousand concentration camp inmates to construct tunnels for rocket production works in the so-called Mittelwerk near Nordhausen and in Ebensee in the Salzkammergut region in the fall of 1943. Aside from Ebensee, the tunnel projects in St. Georgen an der Gusen (on behalf of the airplane company *Messerschmitt*) and in Melk (on behalf of *Steyr-Daimler-Puch* and *Flugmotorenwerke Ostmark*) constituted the largest construction projects in Austrian territory in the final phase of the war, each of which comprised a construction volume of around 30 million Reichsmark. In these three tunnel construction projects in Upper and Lower Austria alone, as many as 30,000 inmates from the Mauthausen concentration camp were deployed at any given time to perform forced labor under lethal conditions on behalf of the contracted construction companies.[121]

To this end, these companies relocated their engineers, skilled laborers, equipment, and machines from other construction sites that had been deemed not immediately essential to the war effort and hence discontinued. A characteristic example was the renewed discontinuation of the construction site for the Danube power plant in Ybbs-Persenbeug (originally discontinued in 1939, work had provisionally resumed there in 1943). This project had been run by the companies *Grün & Bilfinger* and *Alfred Kunz & Co.* in a joint venture under the name "Donauschleuse."[122] Now operating under the new name "ARGE GrüKu," they henceforth served as the leading construction companies in the establishment of the tunnel complex "Esche II" (from mid-1944 called "Bergkristall") in St. Georgen an der Gusen, which was to serve the company *Messerschmitt* in the production of fighter jets of the model Me 262.[123] The Austrian construction

121 On the background to these three construction projects, see Freund, Arbeitslager Zement; Perz, Projekt "Quarz"; Perz, KZ-Zwangsarbeit.

122 Alfred Kunz GmbH & Co., 100 Jahre Baugeschichte, 113; Oertel, Donaukraftwerk Ybbs-Persenbeug, 269. Smaller Austrian construction companies like A.(dalbert) Kallinger and Ostmärkische Baugesellschaft were also involved in this project.

123 Perz, KZ-Zwangsarbeit, 36.

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companies *Mayreder, Kraus & Co.* and *Ferro-Betonit* were also operating there as a second joint venture under the name ARGE MaFe. *PORR AG* was also involved in construction works on this tunnel complex, albeit to a smaller extent.[124]

Regarding construction activities generally, the prior circumstances continued to characterize this phase, with large German construction companies like *Grün & Bilfinger*, *Alfred Kunz & Co.*, and *Wayss & Freytag* predominating. For example, the company *Dyckerhoff & Widmann*, which was conducting works on the concentration camp construction site in Ebensee from the fall of 1944 onward, claimed to dispose of an order volume to the tune of 3.5 million Reichsmark and of construction equipment with a replacement value of around 250,000 Reichsmark.[125]

Here, too, the larger Austrian construction companies were incorporated into joint ventures and/or were assigned specific tasks in the framework of these construction projects. Some of the larger companies were active on several subterranean construction projects simultaneously, for example *Mayreder, Kraus & Co.*, which was active in Ebensee, St. Georgen an der Gusen, Melk, and on the subterranean project "Schlier" in Redl-Zipf.[126] Aside from the mining company *Grossdeutsche Schachtbau- und Tiefbohr-GmbH* and the above-mentioned company *Mayreder, Kraus und Co.*, which were responsible for the propulsion works, the following companies were deployed on the tunnel project of "SS-Sonderstab Kammler" ("Quarz") in Roggendorf near Melk on behalf of *Steyr-Daimler-Puch AG* and *Flugmotorenwerke Ostmark: Wayss & Freytag*, *Rella & Co.*, *Bau-Aktiengesellschaft "Negrelli"*, *Czernilofsky*, *Himmelstoss & Sittner*, *Hofmann & Maculan*, *Philipp Holzmann AG*, *Lang & Menhofer*, *Latzel & Kutscha, Mahal & Co.*, *Stigler & Rous*, *STUAG*, *Überland Hoch-, Tief- und Strassenbau*, and *Radebeul Unternehmung für Betonbau und Strassenbefestigung.*[127] The situation was very similar at the tunnel project in Ebensee, where more than a dozen well-known German and Austrian construction companies were active, including *PORR AG.*[128]

124 See Christian Rabl's contribution to this volume (Chapter 2).

125 Dyckerhoff & Widmann, Baustelle Ebensee, Kurzer Bericht über Baudaten und Wertbewegungen, May 24, 1947. NARA RG 260, EU, USACA – GEA Branch, 1945–1950, Basic Source Documents on Dyckerhoff and Widmann KG, URL: https://www.fold3.com/image/270032917 (accessed January 13, 2024).

126 Ing. Mayreder, Kraus & Co., Linz, Dubiose Forderungen. NARA RG 260, US, USACA – Property Control Branch, 1945–1950, O3.0037 Li Mayreder, Kraus & Co., URL: https://www.fold3.com/image/306492546 (accessed January 4, 2024).

127 Konkursakte "Quarz Ges.m.b.H." Az.: S 8/46. Handelsgericht Wien.

128 Baustelle Ebensee, Firmenliste. NARA RG 260, EU, USACA – Property Control Branch, 1945–1950, Sch 317n Baustelle Ebensee: Reports (1947–1949), URL: https://www.fold3.com/image/312135655 (accessed April 12, 2024); Freund, Arbeitslager Zement, 254–256.

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Austrian construction companies took on a more dominant role in smaller subterranean construction projects, for example the establishment of underground air raid shelters in Linz, which were implemented with the use of inmates from the Linz II sub-camp. The companies involved here from the spring of 1944 onward included *Teerag-Asdag*, *Latzel & Kutscha*, and *Rella & Neffe*.[129] A similar situation presented itself at a tunnel construction project in Peggau on behalf of *Steyr-Daimler-Puch AG*, in which *Negrelli* and the Viennese construction company *Eduard Ast & Co.* were active.[130]

While the exploitation of concentration camp inmates for forced labor on these tunnel construction projects was not a new experience for the above-cited construction companies, the enormous extent and extreme form of exploitation here was new to many. At over 30% annually, the inmate death rates on the tunnel projects were higher than on all other construction projects that these companies had previously implemented with the use of concentration camp inmates. Almost all of these projects continued until just a few weeks before the collapse of the Nazi state. In the immediate postwar period, the construction companies therefore submitted detailed claims for open bills to the relevant authorities, most of which consisted of public administrative bodies, who were now wrapping up these construction projects.[131]

In the final phase of the war, construction companies including *PORR AG* were actively constructing defensive fortifications along the borders, for example the so-called South-East Wall on the border to Hungary. Tens of thousands of Jews deported from Hungary, living in conditions comparable to those in the concentration camps, were deployed as forced laborers for these projects.[132]

4 Conclusion

The development of the construction sector in Austrian territory throughout the entire Nazi era reveals that the initial structural deficits of the Austrian companies, including a lack of capital, a low level of mechanization, a lack of technical expertise, and prevailing labor shortage, were quickly resolved through targeted state measures and investments. Nevertheless, the enormous construction volume planned by the Nazi regime could only be realized with the massive involvement of the most important and large-scale German construction compa-

129 Lütgenau/Schröck, Zwangsarbeit, 98–104; Perz, "Auf Wunsch des Führers …"
130 Hurdax, Untertageverlagerung, 51.
131 The sources on these incidents are widely scattered. A representative example is the collection of the USACA, Property Control Branch, 1945–1950, held at NARA, Washington, D.C, which was also used for this contribution.
132 Lappin-Eppel, Sonderlager.

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nies. In annexed Austria, targeted subsidization measures quickly led to state control of the construction sector in consultation with interest groups, as would soon become the norm across Nazi Germany with the appointment of a General Plenipotentiary for the Regulation of the Construction Sector and then especially following the outbreak of war.

The general situation of the construction sector in Austrian territory differed from that in the rest of Nazi Germany. The measures introduced to integrate the Austrian economy into the German economy, which aimed at military expansion and in 1938 was already operating at high levels, resulted in the special subsidization of numerous construction projects in Austria. Concurrently, these projects were not scaled back to the same degree as were comparable projects in the rest of Nazi Germany following the outbreak of war. In Austria, construction activities during the Nazi era peaked during the war. The challenge that this posed, specifically with regard to providing sufficient laborers to maintain the various construction projects, was ultimately resolved by resorting to forced labor by prisoners of war and civilian foreigners with special intensity.

The targeted measures introduced in 1938 to industrialize the construction sector allowed Austrian construction companies to participate in many construction projects in the occupied territories during the war, mostly in joint ventures with large German construction companies. Austria's geographic position, which placed it outside of the range of Allied airplanes until the summer of 1943, meant that new, large-scale construction projects were still being implemented domestically around the midpoint of the war, in which Austrian construction companies were also often involved. Thus, Austrian companies continued to profit from a good contract situation during the war. In the final phase of the war, construction activities concentrated, above all, on the establishment of air defense structures and defensive fortifications and on the elimination of air raid damage. The subterranean relocation of the armaments industry became the dominant construction focus from 1944 onward, including in Austrian territory, for which tens of thousands of concentration camp inmates were deployed as forced laborers. However, some of the construction companies had already exploited forced labor from concentration camp inmates previously.

The most important Austrian construction companies, most of which willingly participated in the Nazi politics of expansion, were generally able to massively expand their capacities during the Nazi era. The damage sustained during the war and the disassembly of infrastructure in its aftermath also affected the construction sector, yet the effects of the war also meant that construction companies could look forward to extensive construction projects in the framework of necessary postwar reconstruction measures. In sum, Austrian construction companies ultimately had a good starting position in the postwar period. As the company *Rella & Co.* remarked retrospectively:

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> "The integration of Austria into the large economic sphere of Nazi Germany in 1938 necessarily entailed further expansion and strong mechanization and the company was quickly able to latch on to this development. This put it in a position to implement large-scale construction projects that had never been realized in Austria before."[133]

Rella & Co. was not alone in this assessment.[134] After 1945, when German construction companies almost completely disappeared from the scene, Austrian companies were in a position to, mostly without German competition, take on large-scale reconstruction projects and/or to complete construction projects begun under National Socialism, above all power plants and the highway network. The compensation of forced laborers was also not an issue for Austrian construction companies in the immediate postwar period, as, until the 1990s, such claims were referred to the Federal Republic of Germany as the legal successor to Nazi Germany.[135]

Despite all differences that may have existed in finer details, the development of *PORR AG* during the Nazi era was altogether typical for a large Austrian construction company at the time.

133 75 Jahre Baugesellschaft H. Rella & Co.

134 The company Mayreder, which was able to increase its revenue from 3 million Reichsmark (4.5 million Austrian Schilling) in 1937 to 6.3 million Reichsmark in 1944, also shared this assessment of the industrialization of the Austrian construction sector. The annual revenue figures for 1942 through 1945 are recorded in NARA RG 260, Roll 08, US, USACA – Property Control Branch, 1945–1950, O3.0037 Li Mayreder, Kraus & Co., URL: https://www.fold3.com/image/306492242 (accessed January 4, 2024).

135 On the development of forced labor compensation, see Feichtlbauer, Zwangsarbeit.

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Conclusion

The Nazi assumption of power on March 12, 1938 negatively affected both the management and the shareholders of *PORR AG*, which constituted the second-largest construction company in Austria at the time. Like many other companies in the country, which had been ruled by an authoritarian regime following the abolition of the constitution in 1933, the "Anschluss" was implemented quicker within the corporation than externally through the invasion of the Wehrmacht, the onset of Gestapo persecution measures, and the promulgation of manifold Nazi policies of injustice. Although it would take two months for the racist and antisemitic Nuremberg Laws to be introduced into the "Ostmark," as the country was henceforth known, the exclusion and stigmatization of Austrians of Jewish origin and the persecution of politically undesirable persons within the company began within a matter of days.

Within *PORR AG*, the key figure in the seizure of power was the Carinthian civil engineer Max Tazoll. He had held an administrative board position in the company since 1934, while at the same time being very well-connected to numerous Nazi networks as an illegal Nazi (the Nazi Party had been banned in Austria in June 1933). On the other hand, Tazoll's Nazi connections did not prevent him from establishing good relations with representatives of the dictatorial Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime, with *PORR AG* receiving important state commissions during this period, such as the Grossglockner High Alpine Road project.

Two longstanding administrative board members and shareholders, Dr. Ottokar Stern and Siegfried Josef Pick, were forced to resign due to their Jewish background. The latter had worked for the company since 1910 and eventually succeeded Alfred Porr as technical director. As accomplished engineers and businessmen, both Stern and Pick shaped the innovative direction pursued by *PORR AG*. The next individual forced to resign was President Ernst Christian Mosing, because his wife was of Jewish origin. Three further administrative board members tendered their resignation due to political reasons or because of Jewish spouses, though one of them eventually returned to his position. Martin

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Kink, a longstanding administrative board member and shareholder, was also forced out for political reasons. The political and racist restructuring of the administrative board was already completed by March 18 and henceforth consisted solely of Nazi Party members or Nazi sympathizers, with Max Tazoll as the newly appointed president and "company leader."

Beyond the managerial level, eight "non-Aryan" employees were dismissed. Moreover, shares belonging to people of Jewish origin, such as Stern and Pick, were expropriated at record speed and, under political pressure, were sold at very low prices to the House of Hanover, Brunswick, and Lüneburg. This particularly rapid liquidation was also achieved thanks to Nazi networks that had already been established before 1938. By September 29, 1938, the company's "Aryanization," as such wrongful expropriations were euphemistically called, had already been achieved among all administrative staff and shareholders. His Royal Highness Ernst August, Prince of Hanover, personally attended the administrative board meeting that took place in the *PORR* company headquarters that day.

Ottokar Stern and Siegfried Josef Pick were able to flee into exile in Switzerland and the United Kingdom, respectively, but only after they had been robbed of significant assets in the framework of the Gildemeester Operation.

The new Nazi management of *PORR* itself also acted as an "Aryanizer," buying the villa of a Jewish owner in Heiligenkreuz in 1940. Together with the Karl-Volkert-Haus in Heiligenblut at the foot of the Grossglockner, which the Gestapo expropriated from the "Naturfreunde" tourist association in May 1938, it was to serve German staff members as a recreational retreat.

Following a settlement, the Heiligenkreuz property was restituted to the widow of the pre-1940 owner in 1947, in exchange for repayment of the sales price. The second property was only formally restituted to the "Naturfreunde" tourist association in 1950.

The Nazi seizure of power in March 1938 also sparked a massive phase of expansion for *PORR AG*. In the context of planning for war, the Austrian economy was forcibly brought into alignment with the German economy, a move propagandistically labeled a "construction program" for Austria by Hermann Göring as early as March 1938. This entailed above all large-scale construction projects in the extractive and armaments industries, the energy sector, and roadworks, especially the expansion of the highway system.

As early as May 4, 1938, the new Nazi company management reacted to these large-scale infrastructure projects, which had partly already been planned for the "Ostmark" before 1938, by propagating *PORR's* entry into the entire sphere of industrial facility construction – from the planning stage through to implementation – while at the same time quitting the structural engineering and residential construction sectors.

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The company's rapidly growing volume of commissions led to a correspondingly strong growth in the number of employees. The new Nazi managers of *PORR AG* wasted no time betting actively on the Nazi armaments policies in the infrastructural sector. This in turn secured large-scale commissions that allowed the company, like other construction companies, to expand significantly.

The company was once again quick to strategically reposition itself just a few months after the outbreak of World War Two, following the invasion of Poland. In November 1939, the company announced its total adaptation to the wartime economy, with its managers preparing initial exploratory trips to various locations, including Krakow. Like the construction sector of the Nazi state as a whole during the course of the war, *PORR AG* relocated ever more of its activities beyond the borders of Nazi Germany and into Nazi-occupied territories and Nazi-allied states. The company identified "Baubüro Speer" (responsible for "Luftwaffe" and air defense construction as well as urgently required settlement construction), "Baubüro Dr. Todt" (responsible for all industrial armaments construction), "Baubüro Krauch" (responsible for all chemical industry construction), and *Hermann Göring Werke – Alpine Montangesellschaft* in Linz as key future contracting partners.

Other key contracting partners would include – in descending order of total construction works – *Organisation Todt*,[1] *Gebrüder Böhler & Co.*, *IG Farben*, *Zellwolle Lenzing AG*, *Hermann Göring Werke*, *Schöller & Bleckmann*, the *Reichsbahn and Reichsautobahngesellschaft* (for construction projects in the "Ostmark"), *Flugzeug- und Metallbauwerke Wels*, the city, municipality, and companies of Vienna, the Wehrmacht, and the "Luftwaffe."

Toward the end of World War Two, when armaments facilities crucial to the war effort were relocated to subterranean tunnel systems, *PORR AG* also became involved in subterranean armaments production projects, trench construction, and other large projects of Organisation Todt in Serbia, France, Ukraine, and Italy.

In 1937, *PORR AG* had been the second-largest construction company in Austria and had already profited greatly from the job-creation projects of the Dollfuss-Schuschnigg regime, with an annual revenue of 7.7 million Schilling, 730 workers, and 124 employees.

1 Organisation Todt (OT) was a paramilitary organization within the Nazi state named after its first leader, Fritz Todt. It was initially deployed as a construction battalion that exploited forced labor to execute gigantic construction projects in the territories occupied by Germany, including the "West Wall" and later the "Atlantic Wall." From 1943 onward, the OT was also active in the territory of Nazi Germany itself, responsible among other things for the construction of air defense facilities and subterranean armaments production projects. Seidler, Organisation Todt.

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PORR AG's construction contracts in the period from 1939 to 1944 reveal that its annual construction output rose significantly at first, from 14 million Reichsmark in 1939 to around 18.5 million in 1941, an increase of around 28%. The war-related suspension or cessation of ongoing construction projects (for example roadworks) caused a slight decline in 1942 by contrast to the year before, totaling around half a million Reichsmark. Yet *PORR AG* quickly managed to more than compensate for these deficits with new projects in the occupied territories, as well as new large-scale projects in the "Ostmark." In 1944, the highest ever value was attained with almost 24 million Reichsmark. This means that – regarding the entire wartime period from 1939 to 1944 – *PORR AG's* construction output increased by about two thirds (65.81%).

Despite its increased activities in foreign countries allied with Nazi Germany and in the occupied territories, from 1942 onward *PORR AG* generated its greatest annual output in the "Ostmark." From 1943, its contracts outside of Nazi Germany increased to 8.7 million Reichsmark (compared to 11.6 million Reichsmark domestically), peaking in 1944 with 11.9 million Reichsmark abroad (compared to 12 million Reichsmark domestically).

PORR's subsidiary company Allbau profited even more from construction projects in the occupied territories and in countries allied with Nazi Germany (such as Slovakia). Allbau's total construction output outside of Nazi Germany increased from about 35% in 1940 to 63% in 1941, leveling off at a high rate of around 90% in subsequent years. In 1944, its total output was worth 3.4 million Reichsmark.

Ranked by country without differentiation between occupied countries and countries friendly with Nazi Germany, *PORR's* construction projects in Serbia and Slovakia were by far the most numerous, followed by Italy, France, the occupied territories of the Soviet Union, the General Government, and Nazi Germany (including both the "Ostmark" and Germany proper). Within Austria itself, *PORR's* large-scale projects concentrated on Styria and Gau "Niederdonau," followed by "Oberdonau." Its construction output in "Greater Vienna" and the former regions of Carinthia, Salzburg, and Tyrol was lower.

After 1938, all construction activities in annexed Austria were faced with a shortage of both skilled and unskilled labor due to the construction boom sparked by the Nazi takeover. Nevertheless, *PORR AG* was able to significantly expand its workforce before the start of the war.

Before the "Anschluss" in March 1938, *PORR's* workforce had numbered around 600 individuals (including 200 skilled and 400 unskilled laborers). By the end of November 1939, this figure had increased fivefold to around 3,200 individuals (including 1,305 skilled and 1,895 unskilled laborers).[2]

2 Jahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, November 3, 1939, 17–19. PA.

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Despite the cessation of numerous construction projects that were not crucial to the war effort, this trend continued until mid-1940.[3] Thus, the executive board registered as many as 5,000 laborers as of July 5, 1940.[4]

However, due to the massive labor shortage caused by the war, no construction project could be realized without the excessive deployment of forced laborers, in some areas including slave laborers from concentration camps.

This meant that, until the end of 1943, the number of foreign laborers continued to rise in proportion to the total number of laborers. Thus, in the fourth quarter of 1943, almost 90% of the 6,519 laborers working for *PORR* came from abroad, amounting to altogether 5,758 individuals (including both civilian foreign laborers and prisoners of war).[5] The company's increasing reliance on foreign labor essentially corresponded to the situation of the entire construction sector in Nazi Germany.[6]

Between 1939 and 1945, there were foreign laborers from at least 18 different countries active on *PORR AG's* construction sites. However, due to the regulations of the Nazi regime, they were not subject to equal requisition or treatment. The bottom rung of the hierarchy was occupied by Jews and concentration camp inmates. So-called Eastern Workers and workers from Poland were also disenfranchised and stigmatized. The status of prisoners of war (for example from France, but excluding those from the Soviet Union) was theoretically regulated by the Geneva Convention. In practice, however, they were also forced to perform labor. Following the overthrow of the fascist dictator Benito Mussolini and the partial occupation of Italy by the Wehrmacht in September 1943, numerous Italian former soldiers were also forcibly deployed for labor as "Italian military internees."

In the course of researching the present volume, the scattered and incomplete sources were used to create a database documenting the fates of 3,100 foreign laborers deployed by *PORR AG* in the "Ostmark." The largest number of the documented laborers consisted of individuals from Bulgaria (778), followed by laborers of Czech (608), Slovak (313), French (245), and Italian (244) origin – including 33 women from the occupied territories of the Soviet Union. These sources also document eight fatal workplace accidents and several arrests by the

3 It must also be noted that labor deployment in the construction sector was subject to significant vacillations. Aside from a strong fluctuation within the workforce, this was also conditioned to a severe degree by the order situation, shortages of materials and natural resources, and weather conditions.

4 Halbjahresbericht des Vorstands an den Aufsichtsrat, July 1940, 2. PA.

5 According to the figures cited by the board of *PORR* in October 1943, there were 6,519 laborers working for the company, including 3,911 civilian foreigners and 1,847 prisoners of war, meaning that only 761 of the laborers came from Nazi Germany.

6 See Bertrand Perz's contribution to this volume.

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Gestapo as well as internments in labor training camps similar to concentration camps.

On the basis of numerous case studies, the researchers were able to show concretely the enormous physical exertion that characterized forced labor in the construction sector, which also led repeatedly to fatal accidents. The "Eastern Workers" and Polish civilian laborers were especially hard-hit by the difficult working and living conditions.

In the first years after the Nazi takeover, bilateral agreements were concluded with friendly and collaborating states concerning the deployment of non-German laborers – including Italy (up until the downfall of Mussolini), Slovakia, Croatia, Hungary, and Bulgaria. At least theoretically, these agreements offered some labor protection, which was of no help, however, in the event of refusal to work or attempts to flee, as such actions were punishable by internment in the brutal labor training camps.

From 1943 onward, *PORR AG* took on construction contracts in the framework of the relocation underground of the armaments industry. This involved the construction of tunnel systems, for which thousands of concentration camp inmates were deployed from the Ebensee sub-camp and the Gusen concentration camp.[7] The Development of these tunnel systems was not the first time construction companies like *PORR AG* deployed forced labor from concentration camps, as it had already executed projects in the vicinity of the Auschwitz concentration camp. What was new, however, was the enormous extent and extreme form of exploitation of inmate labor that these later projects entailed. At 30% per annum, the mortality rate in the tunnel projects was higher than all other construction projects that these companies had previously executed using labor from concentration camp inmates.

In occupied Poland, *PORR AG* ran six construction sites – among other things establishing the pile foundations for factory buildings and an electrical plant for *IG Farben* at the Auschwitz extermination camp. Together with two other companies, it also secured the construction of a factory for *IG Farben* in Auschwitz. *PORR AG* moreover had a high stake in the expansion of the smelter at the Ostrowiec steelworks, for which it received the fourth-highest payment from among the participating companies.

Forced laborers from Poland and other states were deployed on these construction sites alongside inmates from the Auschwitz III Monowitz concentration camp. At the *IG Farben* factory in Auschwitz, this involved up to 389 individuals for a period of 33 months, at times including up to 45 concentration camp inmates. *PORR AG* also worked for the Central Construction Office of the Waffen-SS and the Auschwitz police, although only a small sum of 1,064.61

7 See Christian Rabl's contribution to this volume (Chapter 1).

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Reichsmark is documented for these projects. Larger projects obviously failed due to the labor shortage.

At Auschwitz, *PORR AG* generated an income of 3,630,000 Reichsmark, while its income in Parchwitz and Ostrowiec only amounted to about 1,300,000 Reichsmark due to the approach of the Red Army at the time.

The researchers were unable to find specific testimonies of laborers from the *PORR* construction sites in occupied Poland, yet the contextual documentation from other construction projects is solid and reveals the extreme working and living conditions there, which were especially lethal for concentration camp inmates. Ranked by construction output, Poland was the country with the third-largest operations run by *PORR*. The company's most lucrative projects were in occupied Serbia and in collaborating Slovakia.

In Yugoslavia, which was occupied from April 1941 onward, the company focused especially on repair works and infrastructure projects on behalf of Organisation Todt as well as Einsatzgruppe Südost (especially in Serbia).

PORR's subsidiary company *Allbau* played a significant role for Organisation Todt in the creation and improvement of important transportation links. Its area of operations extended to strategically important regions in present-day Slovenia, Serbia, and North Macedonia. Its activities in the vicinity of the Bor mining complex is also documented. Due to the British naval blockade, the copper reserves in Bor were of great strategic importance. In 1942 and 1943 alone, around twelve companies constructed 68 large-scale facilities, with *PORR* being responsible for a crucial 42-kilometer narrow-gauge railroad.

In 1943, Serbian labor recruits were deployed alongside prisoners of war and forced laborers. In 1944, 1,777 Italian military internees and 22 Serbs were active on this construction site. Moreover, deported Hungarian Jews were deployed by *PORR* in 1944, who after 1945 would provide ample testimony on the difficult working and living conditions.

While *PORR* was confronted with the realities of occupation in numerous occupied states, in the case of Slovakia it was dealing with a formally independent fascist state with close ties to National Socialism, which had separated itself from the Czechoslovak state. The company bid successfully for various construction projects in Slovakia – for example the expansion of the Podbrezova smelter and the construction of office buildings and smaller company buildings in Bratislava, among others for Dynamit-Nobel.

In 1943, the activities of the Slovak branch constituted as much as 13.6% of *PORR's* total activities. Subsequent projects included construction to modernize both the glass industry in Lednické Rovné and *Mautner-Textilwerk* in Ružomberok, the largest Slovak textile company, which was adapted to the war economy. *PORR* was also involved in the modernization of the paper factory in Ružomberok, for which it established a special office in Bratislava.

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Road construction constituted another important business sector in Slovakia. From 1939 to 1941, *PORR's* subsidiary company *Allgemeine Strassenbau AG*, which had offices in Trenčín and Banská Bystrica, built or modernized 70 kilometers of roads between Kostolné–Starý Hrozenkov, Trenčín–Vlárský priesmyk, and Banská Bystrica–Brezno. Almost 950 laborers worked on this project. In 1945, Organisation Todt commissioned the company to conduct rampart and fortification works in the vicinity of Považská Bystrica, for which forced laborers were deployed alongside Hungarian Jews from the Engerau labor camp.

In the final phase of the war, *PORR AG* again exploited Jewish forced laborers, as it had already done at the beginning of the war. Beginning in 1940 at the latest, at least 83 men of Jewish origin and of various ages were forced to work at *PORR AG's* materials store as well as on *Allbau's* construction sites in Vienna. Of these, 57 were later murdered in Nazi extermination camps or mass execution sites.

Forced laborers of Jewish origin were also deployed on construction sites abroad – for example, there is documentary evidence of 1,800 Hungarian Jews, both male and female, who were exploited in inhuman working and living conditions in the environs of the Bor mining complex in Serbia.

In the final phase of the war, construction companies including *PORR AG* were active in establishing defensive fortifications along the borders of Nazi Germany, for example in the construction of the "South-East Wall" on the border to Hungary. Tens of thousands of Jews deported from Hungary were deployed for this project in conditions resembling those of the concentration camps.[8]

PORR AG was a large construction company by Austrian standards. However, a comparison with construction companies in Germany proper reveals great differences to the small Austrian companies: The top six in the Austrian construction sector were *Universale-Redlich & Berger Bauaktiengesellschaft*, followed by *PORR AG*, the companies *Teerag-Asdag* and *Rella & Co.*, and the companies *Mayreder*, *Kraus & Co.* and *STUAG* (*Strassenbau- und Tiefbau-Unternehmung AG*).

In comparison to the total turnover of the 27 largest Austrian construction companies, which comprised around 40 million Reichsmark in 1937,[9] the German construction sector moved in entirely different dimensions. The annual turnover in 1937 of *Dyckerhoff & Widmann* (*DYWIDAG*) alone comprised almost 80 million Reichsmark,[10] while that of *STRABAG* totaled almost 44 million

8 Lappin-Eppel, Sonderlager.

9 Statistische Angaben der wichtigsten Baufirmen Österreichs aus dem Jahre 1937, Beilage 2, July 20, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-0, Bd. 1.

10 Vermögensverkehrsstelle an Baurat Scheil, RK für die Wiedervereinigung betr. Ansuchen der Fa. Dyckerhoff & Widmann, August 10, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-2-1.

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Reichsmark in the same period.[11] The latter figure alone was thus greater than the turnover of the 27 largest Austrian companies put together.

In 1937, these 27 Austrian construction companies employed altogether around 600 staff members and over 8,000 workers. By contrast, *DYWIDAG* alone employed over 900 staff members and more than 10,000 workers.[12]

Due to the fact that the war of aggression was already being planned in 1937 and on account of targeted funding initiatives and investments in this context, the larger Austrian construction companies had already greatly reduced their structural deficits by this point, including insufficient capital resources, outdated equipment fleets, skilled labor shortages, and altogether underdeveloped industrial structures. Meanwhile, syndication with large German companies allowed them to gain experience and become competitive, meaning that they could successfully bid for large construction contracts following the outbreak of war, both domestically and in the occupied territories.

On account of its structural reformations and technical innovations, *PORR AG* in particular was able to secure many construction contracts in the framework of the OT projects in occupied Eastern and Southeastern Europe, as well as the "Atlantic Wall" and projects in Italy and Slovakia.[13]

The most important Austrian construction companies, who for the most part participated willingly in the Nazi politics of expansion, were able to expand their capacities enormously during the Nazi era. While destruction at the end of the war and disassembly in its aftermath also affected the construction sector, the war's impact also promised extensive future construction projects due to the necessary reconstruction. This ultimately meant good starting conditions for Austrian construction companies in the postwar period, also because the overall structure of Austria's economy had been transformed by 1945 through excessive armaments policies and nationalization. Despite the wartime destruction, sufficient infrastructure remained in many areas. Thus, the products of forced and slave labor formed the basis of successful economic reconstruction in the Second Republic.

Abraham Endre Schwartz survived deployment by *PORR AG* for forced labor in railroad construction in Serbia, afterwards emigrating to Israel. In 1964, he filed a suit against *PORR AG* and *Rella & Co.* at the Regional Court for Civil Affairs in Vienna, but his case was rejected. Since the court documents were destroyed, only fragments of the proceedings could be reconstructed. These fragments document the excessive working conditions on the railroads in Bor,

11 Pohl, STRABAG, 191.

12 Vermögensverkehrsstelle an Baurat Scheil, RK für die Wiedervereinigung betr. Ansuchen der Fa. Dyckerhoff & Widmann, August 10, 1938. ÖStA/AdR, ZNsZ RK Materie, 2218-2-1.

13 Matis/Stiefel, "Mit der vereinigten Kraft […]," Vol. 1, 422–427.

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Serbia, including stigmatization with a large yellow Jewish star and overcrowded barracks with 35 to 40 men having to sleep on wooden beds without blankets or straw mattresses. Rations consisted of a small piece of bread and tasteless dehydrated vegetables. The four-kilometer march to the distant railroad construction site was just as exhausting as the 14-hour working day. The German guards also practiced corporal punishment.

Of course, as numerous interviews and medical records prove, the physical suffering and psychological trauma did not end with the war and liberation, but continued to shape the entire lives of many victims. Aside from the negative psychological impact, they also suffered longer-term physical damages, as is documented in the records of the reconciliation fund.

Only in the year 2000, following an agreement between the USA and the Austrian Republic, was a law passed in Austria that enabled former forced laborers to receive compensation. Of the 3,100 individuals documented in the forced laborer database as having worked for *PORR AG*, only 80 ultimately received financial compensation for the exploitation and persecution they suffered.

Compensation for forced and slave labor only became possible through the state-run reconciliation fund, to which companies from various sectors also contributed. Previously, all claims for compensation had been rejected, a practice that was supported by the Austrian courts. By contrast, claims raised by former Nazi managers relating to the Nazi era were approved time and again.

This also applied to *PORR*, although – in contrast to many other companies in Austria – *PORR* did reappoint the top functionaries Martin Kink and Siegfried Pick as administrative board members after 1945, both of whom had been dismissed in 1938. Kink had moreover been detained by the Gestapo for two months in 1944 for listening to foreign radio broadcasts,[14] while Pick was financially dispossessed and driven into exile in the United Kingdom.

The postwar period – like 1938 – also saw changes in the shareholder sphere. On May 8, 1945, Ernst August, Duke of Brunswick and Lüneburg, owned 28,380 shares, comprising over 52.035% of all shares. This included 7,228 shares that had been expropriated from owners of Jewish origin in 1938. The shares stolen in 1938 were only returned following a difficult restitution settlement – Siegfried Pick and Adelheid Jongman, formerly Stern, were granted the return of their shares in 1948, though the Republic of Austria only accepted this settlement in 1954.

14 Oliver Rathkolb, Biografien (Österreich), in: Hermann Schäfer, Die Rotary Clubs im Nationalsozialismus: Die ausgeschlossenen und diskriminierten Mitglieder. Ein Gedenkbuch, Göttingen 2024, 804.

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Ottokar Stern, who called himself Solvey-Stern during his time in exile, received compensation for his dismissal in 1938 and, from 1949, worked as a consultant for *PORR*. Following a settlement in 1950, he moreover had his 50% share of *Wiener Pfahl- und Betongesellschaft m.b.H.* restituted.

In 1957, the Republic of Austria returned the shares to the successor to the Duke of Braunschweig that his father had acquired through legal business and not through "Aryanizations" in 1938. As German property, these shares had been nationalized by the Republic of Austria. Friederike, Queen of Greece and daughter of Ernst August of Hanover senior, also remained a shareholder of *PORR AG*.

Following liberation from National Socialism, 19 *PORR AG* employees were dismissed and another 18 made redundant on the basis of the Austrian denazification laws. Following the partition of the company into a *PORR East* in the Soviet zone and a *PORR West* in Salzburg, only one former Nazi remained at the top management level of the company – he acted as an informant for the Soviets in Vienna.

Despite these measures and the return of top managers from the period before 1938, the former illegal Nazi Max Tazoll, who had pulled the strings during the Nazi takeover in 1938, received 15,000 Schilling in a settlement in 1949 and then another 65,000 Schilling in 1955 from profit-sharing during the Nazi era. Moreover, in 1948, 19 *PORR* team leaders and site managers had already been granted altogether 90,000 Schilling plus 4% interest from profit-sharing plus a refund of their trial expenses by the Labor Court in Vienna.

Despite all differences, the development of *PORR AG* during the Nazi era and in the first postwar years can be regarded as typical for larger Austrian construction companies.

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Authors and Editors

Maria Czaputowicz-Głowacka, MA, studied history and sociology at the University of Warsaw, the Humboldt University of Berlin, and the University of Utrecht. Her research interests include social memory, the politics of history, and the representation of the latter in urban space. She is currently working on her doctoral project on the political death cult of the twentieth century at the University of Warsaw. She has worked as an author, team member, and coordinator on various academic, public, and cultural projects.

Mišo Kapetanović, PhD, is a cultural anthropologist with a research focus on workers' culture, cultures of memory, and popular music. He is a postdoctoral scholar at the University of St. Gallen and is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow at the Institute for Habsburg and Balkan Studies at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna. His main research interest is queer history in the Slavic regions of the Dinaric Alps before modernization.

Bertrand Perz was Professor at the Department of Contemporary History at Vienna University until 2023, Head of the Academic Advisory Board of the Mauthausen Memorial, and member of the Academic Advisory Boards of the Buchenwald, Mittelbau Dora, and Bergen-Belsen memorials. He is a board member of the Austrian Resistance Archives (DÖW), President of the Austrian Society for Contemporary History, and an associate member of the Art Restitution Advisory Board of the Republic of Austria. His research interests include National Socialism, concentration camps, forced labor, the Holocaust, and the history of transportation.

Christian Rabl is a research associate and coordinator of the Melk Concentration Camp Memorial on behalf of the Mauthausen Memorial. He is the co-founder and academic head of the Center for Contemporary History in Melk, chairman of the memorial initiative St. Aegyd Sub-Camp, and co-founder of the Lower Austrian dissemination, documentation, and networking project "Zwischen-

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räume." He received the Mauthausen Memorial Research Prize in 2018 for his dissertation "Der Mauthausen-Komplex vor Gericht."

Oliver Rathkolb was Professor at the Department of Contemporary History at Vienna University until 2024, Head of the International Academic Advisory Board of the House of European History (European Parliament, Brussels), and member of the Advisory Boards of the Salzburg Festival Archive and the Jewish Museum Vienna. He is the author, editor, and co-editor of numerous publications on various topics in the fields of European and Austrian contemporary, cultural, and media history and editor of the journal "zeitgeschichte" and the book series "Zeitgeschichte im Kontext."

Sybille Steinbacher is Director of the Fritz Bauer Institute and holds the Chair for Research on the History and Impact of the Holocaust at Goethe University Frankfurt am Main since 2017. From 2010 to 2017, she was Professor of Contemporary History/Comparative Dictatorship, Violence, and Genocide Studies at Vienna University. She is Head of the Scientific Board of Trustees of the Buchenwald and Mittelbau-Dora Memorials Foundation and the author, editor, and co-editor of numerous publications on the history and aftermath of National Socialism.

Pavel Szobi, PhD, is Assistant Professor at the Institute for International Studies at the Charles University and was a project team member at the Department of Contemporary History at Vienna University. He is the author, editor, and co-editor of numerous publications on various topics in the field of European economic history, pan-European relations, and North-South relations during the Cold War.

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