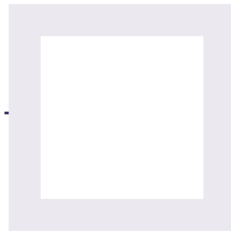
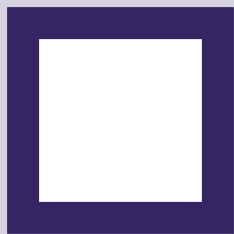
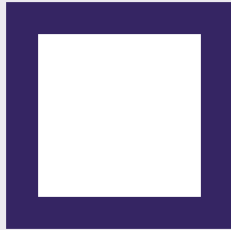


**Place of Remembrance
of Forced Labor in
the Volkswagen Factory**





Forced Labor in the Third Reich. An Introduction. Hans Mommsen	3
Room 1 - The "Volkswagen" Project	11
Room 2 - The Expansion of Armaments Production and Systematic Development of Forced Labor	31
Room 3 - Concentration Camp Prisoners	81
Room 4 - Dispersal of the Volkswagen Plant to Underground and Decentralized Locations	113
Room 5 - Remembrance	143
Room 6 - Confronting the History of the Volkswagen Factory in the Third Reich	157
Appendix:	
Corridor - Air-Raid Shelters and Bombing of the Volkswagen Factory – the Place of Remembrance at an Historic Location	171
Photographs and Documentation	177
Imprint	178
Color Photos and Diagrams	180



Forced Labor in the Third Reich. An Introduction.

Hans Mommsen

The use of millions of foreign workers as forced laborers was a prominent feature of the National Socialist wartime economy. Far from being an exception in this regard, Volkswagenwerk GmbH in fact relied on involuntary labor to a disproportionate extent. This was primarily a consequence of the company's inability to build up a regular workforce of its own prior to the beginning of the Second World War. Neither the recruitment of Dutch workers nor extensive advertising campaigns in the less developed peripheral regions of the Reich, such as on the Lower Rhine and in the Lausitz (the area around Cottbus and Görlitz), yielded more than limited success.

The construction of the factory and the town would thus not have been possible without the recruitment of Italian workers, who were initially hired under an agreement between the German Labor Front (DAF) and the Italian *Dopo Lavoro* and later worked pursuant to international treaties.

However, most of the Italians were withdrawn after Italy entered the Second World War in the early summer of 1940. From then on, the factory was subject to chronic labor shortages, which it tried to overcome by making use of foreign forced laborers.

In the years 1943 and 1944, when the use of forced labor reached its peak, forced laborers and foreign workers assigned to obligatory service ("Dienstverpflichtete") accounted for more than two thirds of the total workforce and as much as 80% of all production workers. This put the Volkswagenwerk at the top of the scale in the use of foreign workers, the average use of whom in German armaments factories was only 30%. Under the pressure of circumstances, Volkswagenwerk GmbH moved into the vanguard of this development and strove from early on to find ways and means to facilitate the use of forced laborers from an organizational point of view.

It was not the use of forced laborers as such, but rather its magnitude and systematic organization which were novel and brought upon the Third Reich the odium of being an exploitative state in this regard as well. Prisoners of war had also been put to work during the First World War, and the recruitment of workers from the Benelux countries was a regular occurrence in the inter-war period. The initial stages of employment of foreigners under the Third Reich were a continuation of these practices. The use of Polish and French prisoners of war remained by and large within the bounds of the Geneva Convention. The general demand for French workers was particularly high.

After the conquest of Poland, recruitment of Polish men and women initially took place on a voluntary basis. However, the regime's discriminatory regulations, which were rooted in racial prejudice and intended to shield the Germanic race from "contaminating influences" ("volkspolitische Gefahren") quickly led to isolation housing, a ban on the use of public facilities, the required wearing of a Polish identification patch, and to a prohibition against contacts, particularly of sexual nature, with the German population.

De facto exclusion from German society was but one of two salient features characterizing the use of Polish civilians in the labor force. The other was markedly lower payment in comparison to German workers, partially as a result of the so-called "Polish compensation levy" ("Polenausgleichsabgabe"), which was later extended to apply in more drastic form to all "Eastern workers" ("Ostarbeiter"). The nominally voluntary basis of work inside the Reich boundaries soon became meaningless, however, as "recruitment" took place by forcible means and degenerated into outright manhunts in the Generalgouvernement Poland.

Internal distinctions thereby developed within the multi-million man and woman army of foreign forced laborers. Workers assigned to obligatory service from the Benelux countries, Denmark, and Spain worked for the same wages and social welfare benefits as did German members of the workforce. The same was later true of workers recruited in France, who came nominally in exchange for French prisoners of war. However, the compulsory housing in communal living quarters constituted a considerable restriction on individual liberty. Furthermore, grants of leaves of absence became increasingly rare and were finally abolished altogether. After the Dutch in particular responded by fleeing back to Holland, the Gestapo retaliated with increased repression of those who remained, treating them in some measure as collectively responsible for the escapees. As the war drew to a close, the situation of the workers assigned to obligatory service from the Benelux countries, Denmark, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, and Southeastern Europe thus differed only in degree from that of the forced laborers from Eastern Europe.

A qualitative change in the use of foreign labor began in the autumn of 1941 as the German Wehrmacht experienced its first setbacks in the war with the Soviet Union and then was defeated outside Moscow at the end of the year. Since the summer of 1941, the representatives of the Four-Year Plan had been raising a storm of opposition against Hitler's ban on the use of Soviet prisoners of war inside the boundaries of the Reich. For ideological reasons, this ban was emphatically supported by Heinrich Himmler and Martin Bormann, who sought to uphold the cliché of Russians as racially inferior "Untermenschen", which Goebbels propagated.

By contrast, Paul Pleiger, head of the Hermann Göring Werke and director of the Reich Coal Association ("Reichsvereinigung Kohle") spoke for the majority of large industrialists in noting that Russian prisoners of war had already proven to be reliable workers during the First World War and included numerous skilled workers, who could be used either for anthracite coal mining or in the iron and steel processing industries, where they were urgently needed. Not until October 1941 was a final decision taken to use Soviet prisoners of war inside the so-called "Altreich" in industry as opposed to agriculture, where they were already at work.

As a concession to the racist ideology of the NSDAP, an assortment of discriminatory and humiliating disciplinary measures was devised with regard to the housing, nutrition, general treatment, and employment of Soviet prisoners of war in industrial enterprises. These measures were designed to relegate the Soviet prisoners of war to the bottommost rung of the workforce and isolate them from all contact with their German fellow workers. The Wehrmacht was in charge of caring for the prisoners of war.

As a consequence of the completely inadequate level of nutrition, the prisoners' work output remained substantially below that of their German counterparts despite their willingness to work. Moreover, the slightest infringement of company rules or Wehrmacht regulations was met with draconian punishments, which frequently ended in the death of the prisoners in question, who were left to starve.

Volkswagenwerk GmbH was among the first German industrial firms to employ Soviet prisoners of war. It devoted considerable energy to making effective use of Soviet prisoners for industrial production despite the above-described politically motivated working conditions and did not hesitate to send its representatives to the stalags in order to recruit skilled workers. However, these initiatives were a total failure since the prison camps inside the Reich's borders were ravaged by a disastrous typhus epidemic which swept through the camps behind the front lines. For this reason, there were virtually no more Soviet prisoners of war available by the end of 1941. Most of them had died in the camps in the occupied part of the Soviet Union, since no steps were taken to ensure their survival. While a comparatively small number of Soviet prisoners of war remained at the Volkswagenwerk or were newly recruited in the spring of 1942, the vast majority of the infected prisoners were removed to Bergen-Belsen.

In light of this situation, German industry stepped up the pressure which it had begun exerting on the Reich leadership in the autumn of 1941 to move workers from the occupied part of the Soviet Union to Germany in order to put an end to the severe labor shortage in the armaments industry. The recruitment of the so-called "Ostarbeiter" or "Eastern workers" grew into a massive deportation program which, from March 1942 onwards, was pushed ahead by Gauleiter Fritz Sauckel following his appointment to the post of Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment ("Generalbevollmächtigter für den Arbeitseinsatz"). More than 2.5 million workers were transported from occupied Soviet territory to destinations inside the Reich borders. Once the system of forced labor was functional, the various labor office districts in the "Altreich" were each supplied with forced laborers from certain predetermined transit camps. For the Volkswagen factory, this was the Lublin transit camp, in which the persons destined for deportation to the Reich were temporarily held. The civilian authorities, the SS, the police, and the Wehrmacht as well all took part without distinction in this hunting down of human beings.

Just as was the case with the use of Soviet prisoners of war for work within the Reich borders, an array of discriminatory regulations over and beyond those established for Polish workers was also enacted for the "Eastern workers". These regulations were motivated by the desire to appease the racist conceptions of the Nazi Party and the SS and preclude all fraternization with the German population by subjecting the Eastern workers to treatment palpably worse than that of other segments of the workforce.

Chaotic conditions frequently prevailed in the initial stages. Women rounded up in the fields while harvesting the autumn crops did not receive the necessary winter clothing, at least, not to a sufficient extent, nor were they given proper footwear, at best receiving wooden clogs in spite of winter's onset. There were also instances – such as at the Volkswagen plant – in which women impressed as Eastern workers were forced to walk long distances barefoot from their camps to their place of work even in the dead of winter. The delousing procedures which were soon adopted were frequently carried out in a humiliating manner.

Even after conditions had become more settled, the prison-like camp housing of the Eastern workers left much to be desired in all respects. The sanitary conditions were deplorable and appropriate medical care lacking. Above all, the food rations lay far below those of the foreign workers recruited in the West. In the initial stages at least, the rations were so small that work performance dropped unrelentingly and malnutrition disorders spread. Companies which sought to improve the nutrition of their Eastern workers were the exception rather than the rule, even though the factory food service systems provided an opportunity to discreetly supplement the provisions in the work camps, which were also under company control, at least in some measure. Instead, the tendency to link food rations to work output and use them partially as incentive bonuses became a widespread practice.

This gave the less productive members of the forced labor contingent little chance in their struggle against hunger. Not until relatively late did the factory managements begin buying used clothing in the Benelux countries and distributing it to the destitute forced laborers after first meeting the needs of the German workforce.

Like the Poles, the Eastern workers were nominally wage-earners, all of whom were, however, relegated to the very bottom of the pay scale. Even these wages were fictitious for the most part. The Poles themselves hardly had any net earnings. In addition to the special Polish levy, by which 15% of wages were paid to the state in ostensible return for exemption from military service, and the denial of company social welfare benefits, deductions were also made to pay for housing in camps. The situation of the Eastern workers was even worse. They were subjected to such high deductions that they in effect received only about 40% of the wages paid to the rest of the workforce even before deduction of charges for food and housing. Moreover, in many companies it became standard practice not to pay the civilian Soviet workers anything at all and instead to regard them as civilian prisoners.

A separate study would be required to determine the extent to which the banks made yet further deductions from the portion of these meager wages which they transferred to the occupied territories or the Generalgouvernement Poland as support for the families of the forced laborers. While ridiculously small in themselves, the sums transferred represented a considerable amount in the aggregate. How much ever arrived in the workers' East European homelands is currently unknown.

At first, the allocation of Eastern workers was extravagant in that pregnant women and the sick were sent back to their homelands, which made it doubtful whether even the forced recruitment practices would prove successful. However, beginning in 1943 a progressive labor shortage developed which was also related to the declining German military success. It is revealing that the deportation of large numbers of local inhabitants as workers was one of the objectives of the battle of the Kursk salient, which was designed as a sweeping envelopment operation, but failed in every respect.

Because of the ideological rigidity of the National Socialist leadership and the inflexibility of the bureaucracies which administered and supervised the use of forced laborers, it was not until the middle of 1943 that the regime began improving the Eastern workers' food, clothing, and shelter in certain respects and allowing them more freedom of movement outside the camps, though only on Sundays. The German authorities also made an attempt to organize the various ethnic groups to which the Eastern workers belonged into "folk" associations and to invest them with a semblance of autonomous rights. At the same time, the authorities now considered it necessary to deport entire families, which were in some cases no longer torn apart. However, the fate of the children who were born in the camps or taken there with their parents remains largely unknown even today – except as regards the compulsory housing of newborn infants in factory-run nurseries, the consequences of which were catastrophic, as in the case of the nursery operated by the Volkswagenwerk in Rügen.

The desolate conditions to which the majority of the Polish and Soviet forced laborers living inside the Reich borders were subjected did not lead to any significant refusal to work in the factories. The control exercised by the plant security guards, the Gestapo, and the local Nazi party officials was too pervasive for that. However, there were widespread attempts to improve personal circumstances by switching to other work.

In the last years of the war, there are thought to have been some 40,000 forced laborers who had illegally left their assigned place of work and found work in other firms, even though the Gestapo arrested up to 34,000 runaways per month and committed them to one of the "work education camps" that had been springing up like mushrooms since 1940 for having breached their labor contract. From these camps they emerged after up to six months of "reeducation", physically depleted and mentally broken, in which condition they were returned to their original firms.

Although they frequently had civilian guards, the "work education camps" were an instrument of oppression using methods which did not differ in the slightest from those of the concentration camps. Approximately one out of every eight foreign industrial workers and one out of every ten German industrial workers spent time in such a camp. This explains why the industrial workforce only rarely responded to the regime's repression with acts of open resistance.

After the influx of Eastern workers had dried up, the armaments industry considered itself obliged to exhaust every possible labor reservoir in order to maintain or expand production.

In some cases, this was done with a view to ensuring the firm's ability to compete in the peacetime economy which would follow. The firms in question were certainly able to avoid accepting the concentration camp prisoners offered to them. However, they showed no hesitation in taking this step, just as they had shown none in using Wehrmacht personnel serving prison terms ("Militärstrafgefange-ne") or, after the summer of 1943, Italian military internees. One may assume that the firms would have preferred other workers, but the labor market had been swept clean.

Above all for extraordinary projects such as moving production operations underground, it therefore seemed logical to make use of concentration camp prisoners. In the case of Volkswagenwerk GmbH, this was initially done with the intention of constructing a light metals alloy foundry, which was needed for later peacetime production. Requests for labor were not directed to the local labor office officials in these cases, but instead went to the SS Central Economic Administrative Office ("Wirtschaftsverwaltungshauptamt"). In many cases, the firms had the opportunity to select the prisoners whom they considered qualified directly from the concentration camps. The prisoners' housing in satellite concentration camps took place at the expense of the SS Central Economic Administrative Office. The firms paid RM 6 per day for skilled workers and RM 4 per day for unskilled workers and female workers.

Viewed quantitatively, the number of concentration camp prisoners used by industry was fairly low, especially in the regular production process. In the spring of 1944, there were approximately 32,000 such workers, but this figure was rapidly rising. The greater part consisted of Jewish workers who had been deported to Auschwitz in the period from May 1944 onwards and selected there for work inside the Reich. These included a large number of women prisoners, who, because of the labor shortage, were no longer sent to the gas chambers immediately upon arrival in Auschwitz, as had previously been the case.

In the late stages of the war, Jewish work details were apparently assigned directly to the individual armaments firms. There were now also instances in which Jews whose marriage to "Aryan" spouses afforded them some measure of protection were assigned to forced labor and used for work connected with moving key armaments production facilities underground. Most of these were withdrawn by the end of the war, and some fell victim to the barbaric death marches, which were a reflection of the senselessness of the regime's final labor deployment policies. There are no known instances in which the management of firms using Jewish forced laborers or concentration camp prisoners made any notable effort to improve their situation. Management had apparently grown accustomed to resorting to this source of labor, which was systematically developed by the SS, and regarded its use as normal without experiencing any moral scruples whatsoever. Management's central motive was to make maximum use of existing industrial capacity at any price. While no direct pressure was exerted on management to compel it to use concentration camp prisoners, it feared being deprived of raw materials and workers if it did not.

In considering the above outlined system of forced labor in the Third Reich, one notes a pervasive habituation to a situation in which the generation of energy, the production of raw materials, the manufacture of industrial goods, and the raising of food was to a great extent accomplished using various categories of forced labor, including prisoners of war and concentration camp prisoners. For major industries, this required certain adaptations in production processes to permit large scale use of labor trained on the job. This was the principal reason for the shift to assembly-line production, which was by no means motivated solely by the desire for long-term rationalization of production operations.

There are indications that management expected to use predominantly unskilled labor from the subjugated territories for industrial mass production in the European-African macro-region which it believed the Reich would control in the future. The German members of the workforce would be skilled workers without exception and fill the posts of master craftsmen and foremen. This vision was prefigured – and developed to the point of tragic absurdity – by the war-time economic system which actually arose under the Nazi regime with respect to the vast majority of forced laborers, who lived and worked under inhuman and exploitative conditions.

It is true that forced labor during the Second World War was not limited to the Third Reich and that it was presaged by developments during the First World War. Above all, the Soviet Union had developed a system of forced labor camps beginning with the phase of liquidation of the Kulaks. This system built upon the traditions of the czarist autocracy, but lacked the fundamental trait of racism which makes National Socialist labor policy unique.

Nazi propaganda depicted the Slavic workers as racially inferior "Untermenschen". The actions taken to isolate them from the German population for this reason (and because Goebbels feared an infectious spread of Bolshevik ideas) provided the impetus for an intensified system of discriminatory regulations. These regulations were invented by multiple bureaucracies vying with each other for power and influence in a racially indoctrinated society and were designed to prevent the Eastern workers and the Poles – notably those of female gender – from having any social contacts inside or outside of the factories.

There were undoubtedly also feelings of sympathy and compassion for the forced laborers in the factories, but it was dangerous to show these openly and virtually impossible for German workers to help their unfortunate colleagues, to provide them with extra food, or even to treat them like human beings. It is true that conditions differed from firm to firm, and that some help was forthcoming from the German population in small firms, on the farms, and during work for private persons. However, when forced laborers were assigned to projects outside of the factories to clear away bombing rubble, build roads, or work in the construction industry (which drew its supply of forced laborers mainly from the Organisation Todt), the rancor of guards and suspicious party officials generally stifled any manifestation of human feeling in its incipency. ■



The "Volkswagen" Project

The vision of mass motorization following the American model grew in importance in Germany in the late 1920s. This was an idea which the National Socialist regime wished to use to its advantage. The search for the right experts led to Ferdinand Porsche, who was commissioned in June 1934 by the Reich Automobile Industry Association ("Reichsverband der deutschen Automobilindustrie") to develop a Volkswagen (literally, a "car for the people" or "people's car"). In May 1937 the German Labor Front ("Deutsche Arbeitsfront" or DAF) took control of the project.

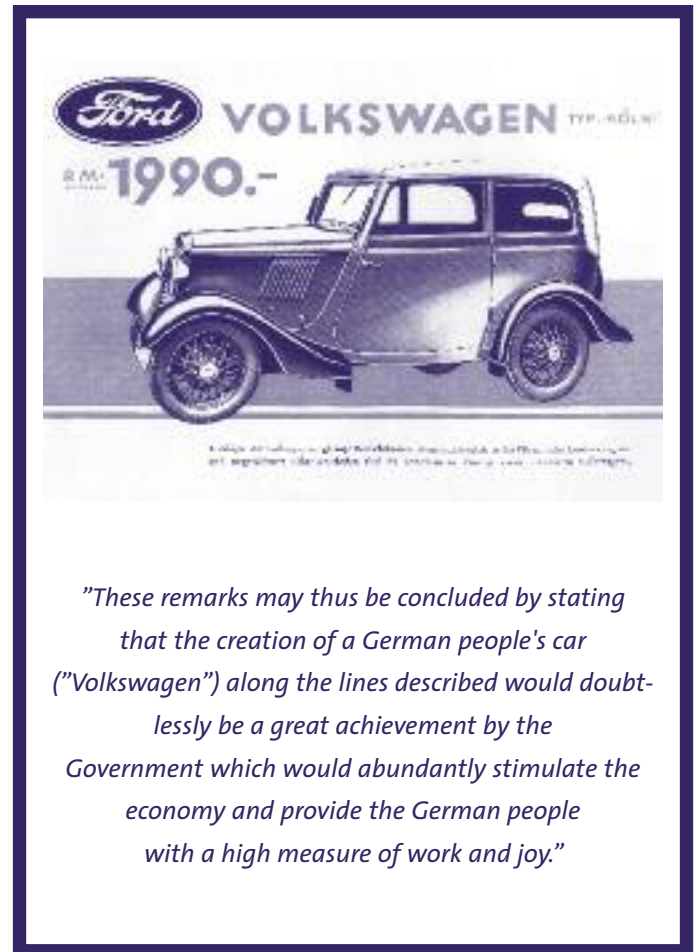
An independent "model factory" was to be built beside the Mittelland Canal near Fallersleben for the assembly-line production of up to 1.5 million cars per year. Its construction and operation were the responsibility of Volkswagenwerk GmbH, which was founded in 1938 as a subsidiary of the DAF's business enterprise entity.

The outbreak of the war threatened to foil the ambitious plans to build the largest and most modern car factory in the world, especially since there was no place for the production of civilian vehicles in the priorities established for a wartime economy. The company adapted to these conditions by branching out and accepting armaments orders in addition to work within its line of business.

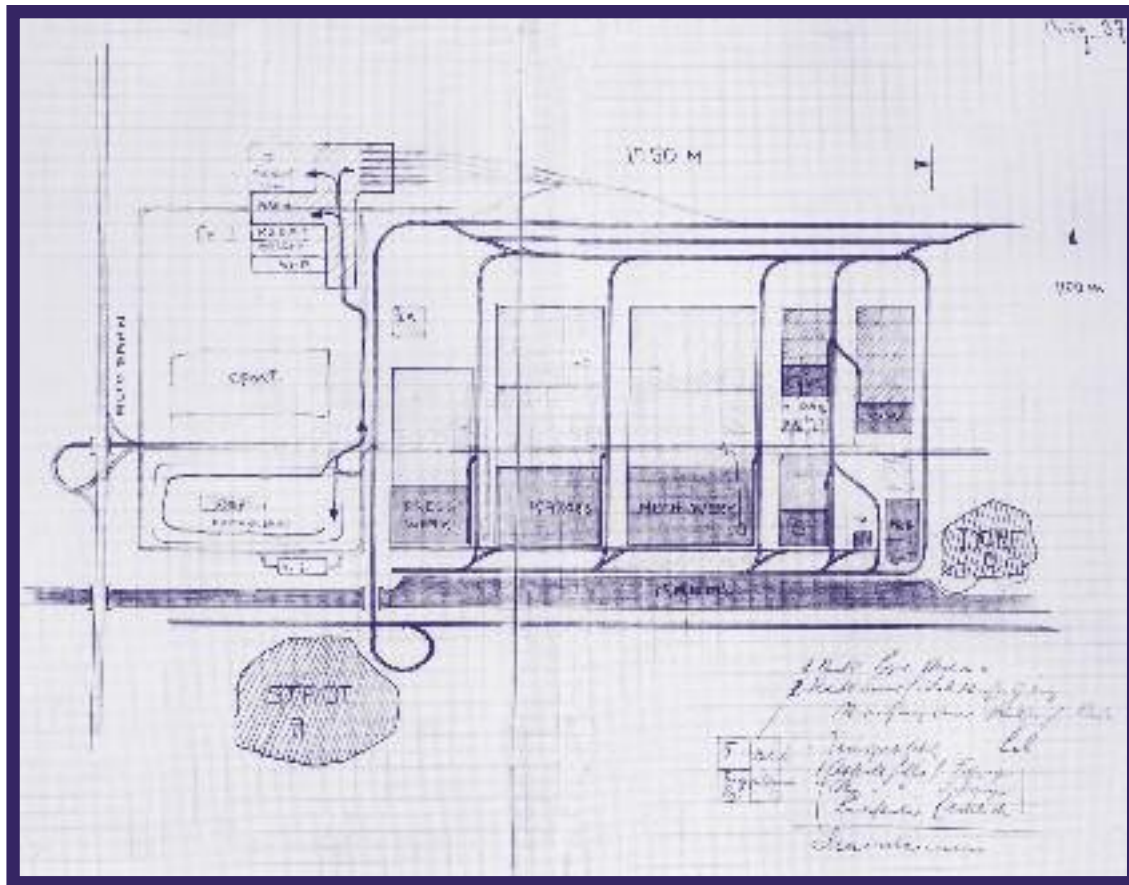
The shortage of resources and labor impeded the construction of the factory facilities, so that foreign civilian workers were hired, particularly from Italy, starting as early as the middle of 1938. The newly founded company furthermore lacked a regular workforce for the commencement of production operations. From the middle of 1940 on, it also used involuntary workers from militarily occupied countries.

Ferdinand Porsche, "Memorandum on the German Volkswagen", May 1934

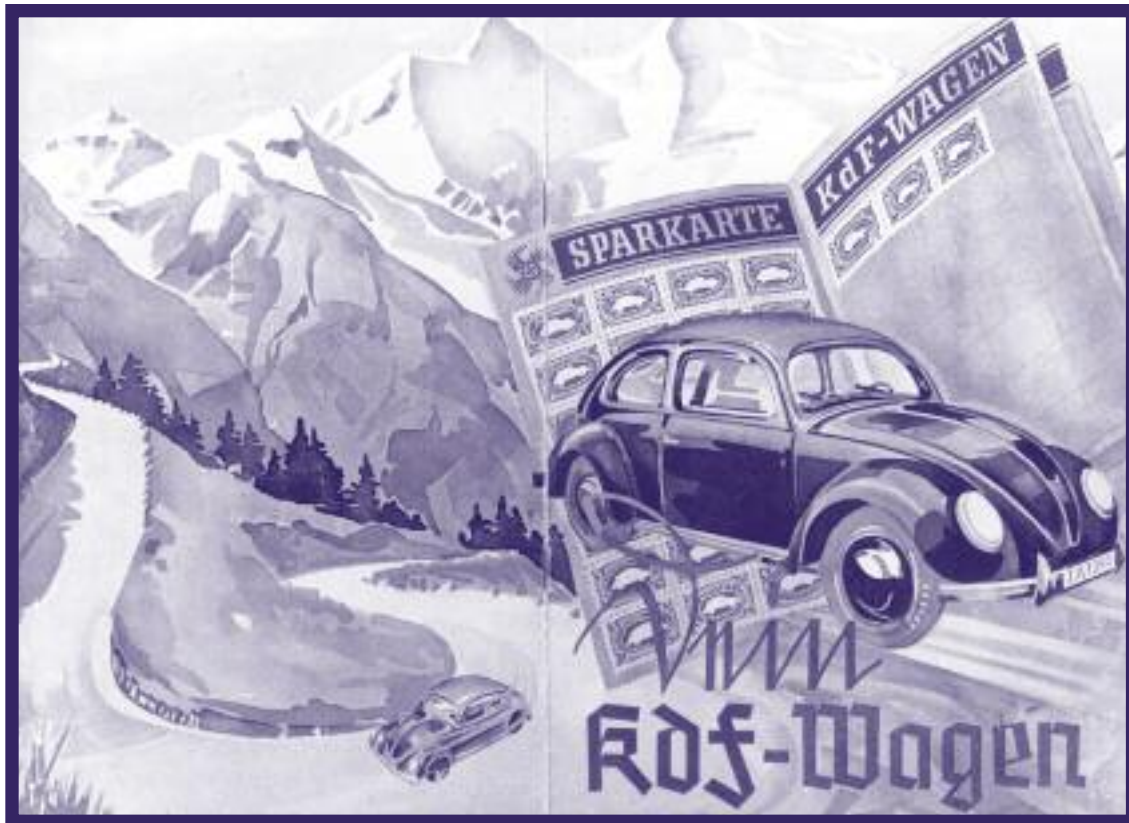
In the early 1930s, several automobile manufacturers, including Ford, developed inexpensive passenger vehicles designed for a broad range of buyers and marketed these under the term "Volkswagen".



"These remarks may thus be concluded by stating that the creation of a German people's car ("Volkswagen") along the lines described would doubtlessly be a great achievement by the Government which would abundantly stimulate the economy and provide the German people with a high measure of work and joy."

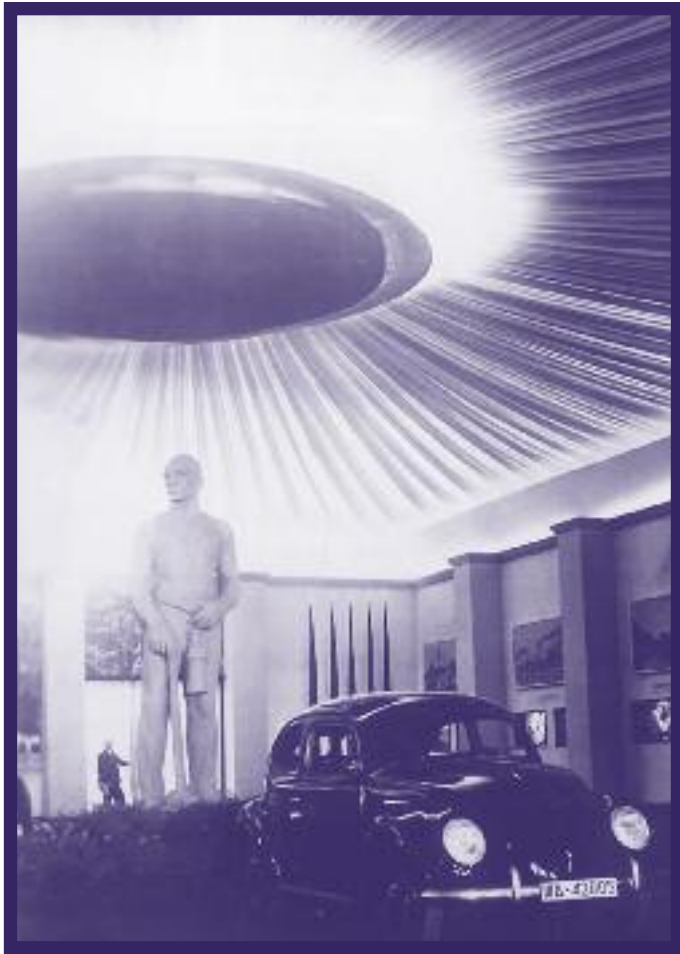


A planning drawing of the factory with the handwritten notes of its author, Fritz Kuntze, who later became the manager of the power station, August 1937



Cover picture of the advertising brochure "Your KdF Car", August 1st, 1938

The German Labor Front ("Deutsche Arbeitsfront") placed the "Kraft durch Freude" (Strength-Through-Joy – KdF) Car at the center of its socio-utopian propaganda. Purchasing the car was to be facilitated by a special "KdF savings plan". However, the low general income level restricted the acceptance of this installment savings plan, in which a total of 336,000 savers had enrolled by the spring of 1945. 630 KdF Cars were produced by the end of the war.



Presentation of the KdF Car at the Central German Industrial Exhibition in Halle/Saale, September 23rd to October 9th, 1938

Advertising measures such as motor tours around the country and exhibitions greatly increased the popularity of the "Volkswagen". The National Socialists made the KdF Car into an icon of modern dreams of mobility for everyman.



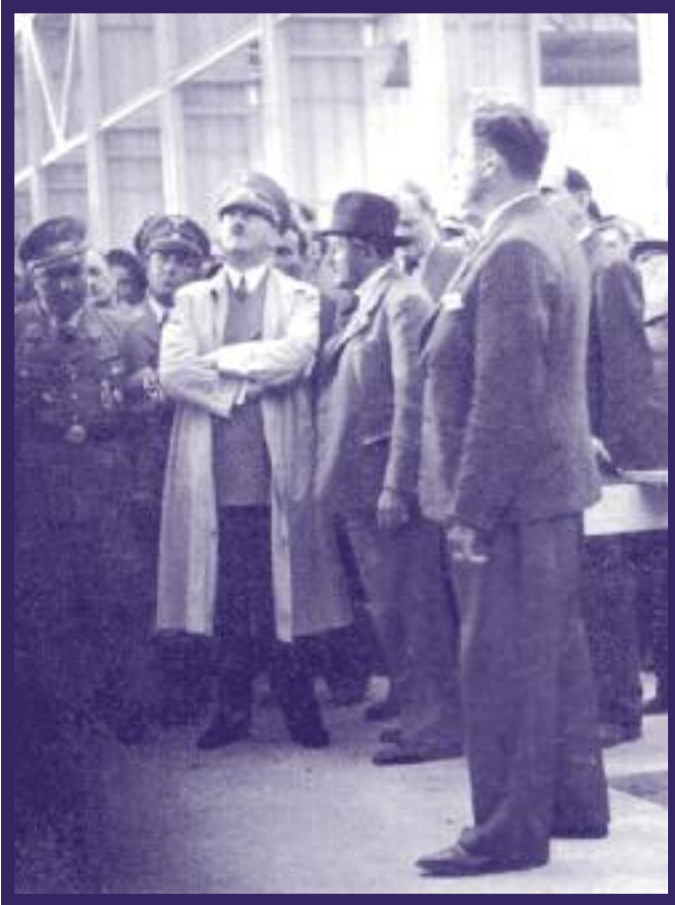
**Model of the Volkswagen plant,
February 1938**

The factory designed by the renowned industrial architects Rudolf Mewes, Fritz Schupp, Martin Kremmer, and Karl Kohlbecker was closely modeled after Ford's "River Rouge" factory in Detroit, Michigan (U.S.A.). The draft versions called for a factory complex of gigantic proportions. Due to the war, only four production halls and the power station were completed out of the three construction tiers originally envisaged.



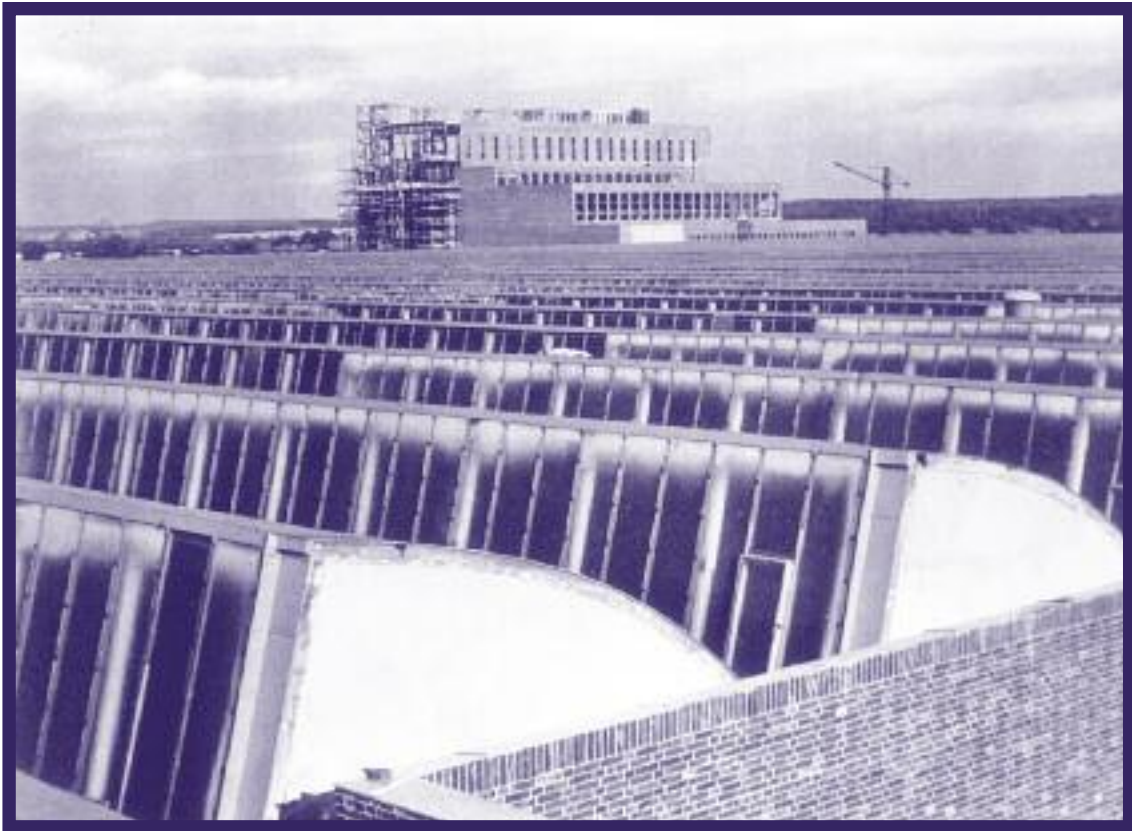
View of the factory halls and the southern perimeter buildings from the roof of the power station, June 7th, 1939

Plant construction was held up due to the preparations for war. The "model factory" envisaged by the German Labor Front ("Deutsche Arbeitsfront") remained a mere torso, in particular because almost all the social facilities in the plant were cancelled.



Visit to the press shop by Adolf Hitler,
June 7th, 1939

In the front row, from right to left: Dr. Bodo Lafferentz, director of the "Strength-Through-Joy" office of the German Labor Front and senior general manager of Volkswagenwerk GmbH, Ferdinand Porsche, Adolf Hitler, and Robert Ley, the director of the DAF. The German Labor Front had the largest membership of any Nazi organization and dominated the Supervisory Board of Volkswagenwerk GmbH. It used funds taken from the trade unions, which had been forcibly dissolved, to finance the construction of the plant.



View of the shed roofs of the factory halls and the power station, 1939



The cornerstone of the Volkswagen plant, which was rediscovered on the grounds of the plant in Wolfsburg in 1998

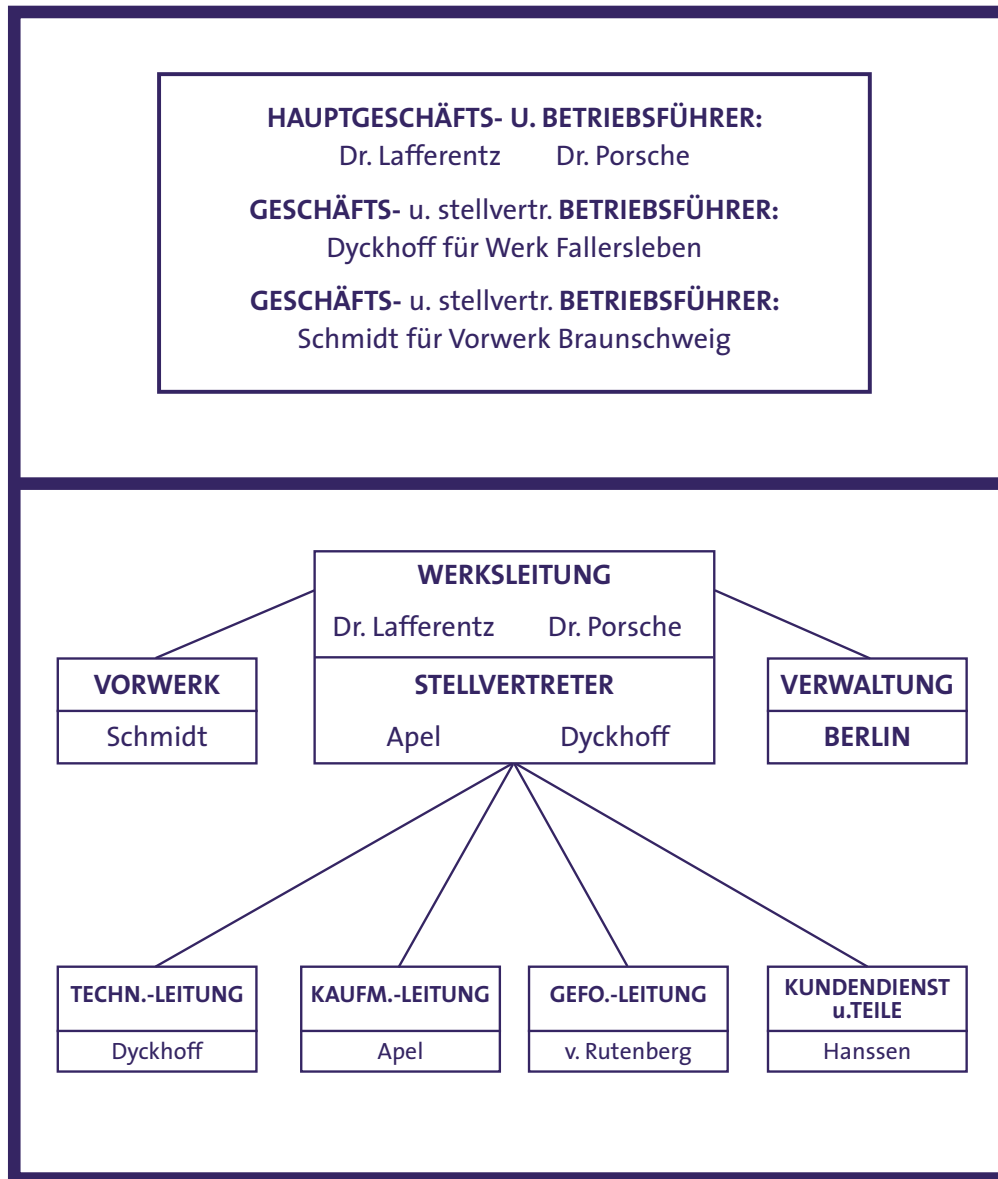
The plant's cornerstone was laid on May 26th, 1938, in the presence of prominent political officials and more than 50,000 spectators, who had been ordered to attend. Hitler's speech was staged by the German Labor Front as a one-hour long receipt of orders.

Automobile Manufacturing and the War

In September 1939, the start of the Second World War interrupted the development of the firm. Projects having no "direct significance for the defense economy", such as equipping the factory with the rest of its machinery or constructing prestige buildings, were now subordinated to armaments concerns. At the same time, the firm had to ward off an attempt by the Junkers group to take over the unused factory halls for the construction of military aircraft.

The situation posed an existential crisis for the company because the Volkswagen plant, having been designed for the production of civilian passenger vehicles, was largely unprepared for the wartime industrial mobilization. The armaments order volume for bombs or wooden auxiliary airplane fuel tanks in March of 1940 prompted management to note – accurately – that the production halls were "still largely unused and empty".

The Volkswagen company thus tried all the harder to ensure the continued existence of the plant by taking on airplane repair work. Efforts to develop a military version of the KdF Car yielded no immediate results. Although progress was made in converting the incipient automobile plant into an armaments factory, the plant was also supposed to remain able to resume the production of civilian cars immediately after the war's end, which was thought to be imminent.



Organizational Chart of Volkswagenwerk GmbH,
January 8th, 1940

The Beginnings of Forced Labor

Even while the plant was still under construction, there had not been enough workers. The German Labor Front recruited more than 3,000 construction workers for a limited period through its Italian partner organization. The start-up of production was also accomplished by using foreign workers, coming above all from the Netherlands, Italy, Belgium and Denmark. With regard to payment, food and shelter, and general treatment, these migrant workers were on a par with the German employees. The employment of foreign substitute workers became a permanent solution for the Volkswagenwerk because it lacked a regular workforce of its own.

In June 1940, 300 Polish women were assigned to the plant by the Labor Office of the State of Lower Saxony. These were the first involuntary laborers in the factory. They were employed in the construction of wooden airplane drop tanks, the manufacture of which had been classified as "important to the war effort". Polish citizens were subject to numerous forms of discrimination promulgated in March 1940 by Heinrich Himmler's police apparatus in its so-called "Polish Decrees" ("Polen-Erlasse").

The recruitment of initially 700 and then more than 1,000 German military personnel serving prison terms caused the number of involuntary workers to rise. Starting in February 1941, the prisoners were housed in a part of the general camp that was fenced in with barbed wire, where they were subject to arbitrary treatment by their guards.

Setting up machinery in the press shop, 1939

The Volkswagen plant was equipped with the most modern production equipment available. The numerous specialized machines, some of them imported from the United States, were supposed to ensure high efficiency for the single-product company. After the outbreak of the war, they hampered the conversion to armaments production.



Manufacture of wooden airplane drop tanks, 1940

The acceptance of armaments work necessitated a large amount of improvisation. Paradoxically, in 1940 the "ultra-modern car factory" generated almost half of its overall sales by manufacturing wooden auxiliary airplane fuel tanks.





**Female forced laborers assembling
wooden airplane drop tanks, 1942**

At their place of work, female forced laborers were exposed to considerable health hazards, since they worked with hot-setting adhesive without any safeguards when manufacturing the fuel tanks. Basic work safety rules were disregarded.

“So far, the orders placed with the factory have not been predictable and systematic. With slight exceptions (such as the manufacture of wooden drop tanks and SC 250 K bombs), constant changes in order type and order volume have kept the highly qualified workforce from getting beyond the machine set-up and start-up phases and accomplishing productive armaments work. This is why very large areas of excellent factory floor space are still standing idle today.”

**Armaments Command (“Rüstungskommando”) Brunswick,
“Comprehensive Overview of Developments in the
Armaments Industry between April 1st, 1940 and June 30th,
1940”, dated July 9th, 1940**

"There are 75,000 Ford workers employed at the River Rouge plant, and 140,000 in the United States.(...) Ford is the only large company in the USA that hires Negroes and Whites without distinction in its plants. The Negroes are primarily assigned to physically hard tasks, such as in the forge and the foundry."

"Automated operations require a workforce composition differing from that in normal operations. (...) The actual machine operators (...) can be unskilled workers or trained on the job, since German skilled workers will regard mere insertion and removal of production pieces as beneath them. (...) In the not-too-distant future, we anticipate using more primitive people from the East and the South to operate the automatic machines, while making better use of our more highly qualified workers to set up machines and as toolmakers."

Ghislaine Kaes, Ferdinand Porsche's private secretary and nephew, "Lecture on the Trip to North America by Dr. Ing. h.c. Ferdinand Porsche in 1936", January 29th, 1937

Otto Dyckhoff, Technical Director and General Manager of Volkswagenwerk GmbH, "Lecture on Automation in Production, with Special Reference to the Volkswagen Plant", March 1941

Adapted to the conditions at the Volkswagen plant, the Ford factory concept made it possible to use a large number of workers who were unskilled or trained on the job. After the Nazi dictatorship's policy of conquest had turned the population of the occupied territories into a spoil of war, a process of racial stratification began in the factory as well. Forcibly deported involuntary workers subject to discrimination were used to fill the less qualified positions.



The "P" patch, Reich Law Gazette ("Reichsgesetzblatt"), March 1940

Male and female Polish workers were to be "recognizable as such by all persons and at all times".



Private photograph of Mrs. Stanisława Krukowska, on the back of which is written: "Rühen, September 1st, 1940"

The women between the ages of 14 and 32 who were assigned to the construction of wooden airplane auxiliary fuel tanks at the Volkswagen plant in June of 1940 by the Labor Office of the State of Lower Saxony faced onerous discrimination as a result of the so-called "Polish Decrees" of March 8th, 1940. The "Police Ordinance on Markings to Distinguish Male and Female Civilian Workers of Polish Origin Working in the Reich" obligated them to wear a precisely defined, mass-produced letter "P" that was permanently affixed to their clothing.

Group photograph of Polish women workers, 1941. Sitting in the middle is Regina Strojowska, age 43; standing from left to right: Janina Jatczak, Zofia Chrostek, Krystyna Strojowska, Leokadia Balcerzak

In addition to the racially motivated stigmatization by the "P", all forms of human expression on the part of the women workers from Poland were in fact strictly regimented: besides a night curfew and exclusion from public life, including all cultural and social events, the establishment of a special legal regime for foreigners placed them under the exclusive control of the terrorist state police machine.

Portrait of Krystyna Strojowska at age 16, 1941





Portrait of Eugenia K. Kardas. On the back the young woman wrote: "For my dearest parents from captivity in a distant country – Daughter Gienia. Ruchem [Rühen], March 4th, 1941"

The quarters assigned to the women workers from Poland at the Volkswagen plant were located 12 kilometers away in the former labor service camp in Rühen, far outside the plant and the town in order to isolate them from the rest of the workforce.



Photograph of three Polish women workers. Eugenia K. Kardas stands in the middle, November 1942



The Expansion of Armaments Production and Systematic Development of Forced Labor

The receipt of large-scale armaments orders in the summer of 1941 enabled Volkswagenwerk GmbH to consolidate its economic position. The firm's civilian option, however, was gradually being pushed into the background. The production of a light multi-purpose vehicle called the "Kübelwagen" (lit.: "bucket-seat car") as the military version of the KdF (Strength-Through-Joy) Car had been slowly gaining momentum since the summer of 1940. This and the production of stoves for bunkers and, above all, air force armaments contributed to the firm's upwards trend.

The labor shortage, which had become chronic, led to the increased use of forced labor. Volkswagenwerk GmbH started using Soviet prisoners of war in October 1941, becoming one of the first companies to do so. In the spring of 1942, civilians from the occupied part of the Soviet Union, the "Eastern workers" ("Ostarbeiter"), began working at the Volkswagen plant.

While involuntary workers were initially substitute laborers used in limited-term armament projects, forced laborers – both prisoners of war and civilian workers – soon became an operationally indispensable part of the productive workforce. On April 30th, 1944, the 11,334 people from various foreign countries constituted a majority of the total workforce, which totaled 17,365. Different regulations applied to each group of foreigners. For racist reasons, the Nazi regime established a system of regulations and treatment which was graduated from west to east. This subjected Soviet prisoners of war, "Eastern workers", and Polish forced laborers to drastic disadvantages compared with workers from Western Europe.

VW Type 82 Kübelwagen ready to be picked up in front of the northern perimeter buildings, 1942

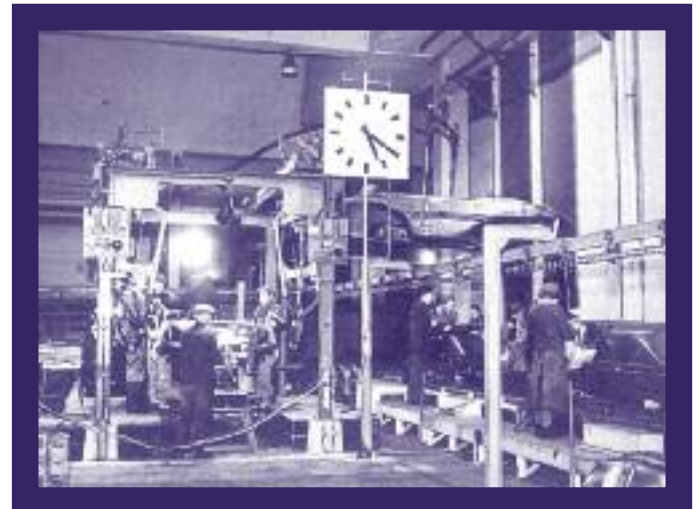
The series production of the military version of the KdF Car started in mid-1940. The production targets could generally not be met. In 1943, vehicle production nevertheless accounted for 41.5 % of overall sales, or 93 million Reichsmark out of a total of 225 million Reichsmark.



Body construction and assembly line of the VW Type 166 amphibious vehicle, 1943

Production of the VW 166, an all-wheel driven amphibious vehicle, started in mid-1942. The total number produced reached 14,276 by the end of the war. They were used mainly by the army and the Waffen-SS.

Semi-automated welding devices made it possible to construct the bodies in timed production cycles.

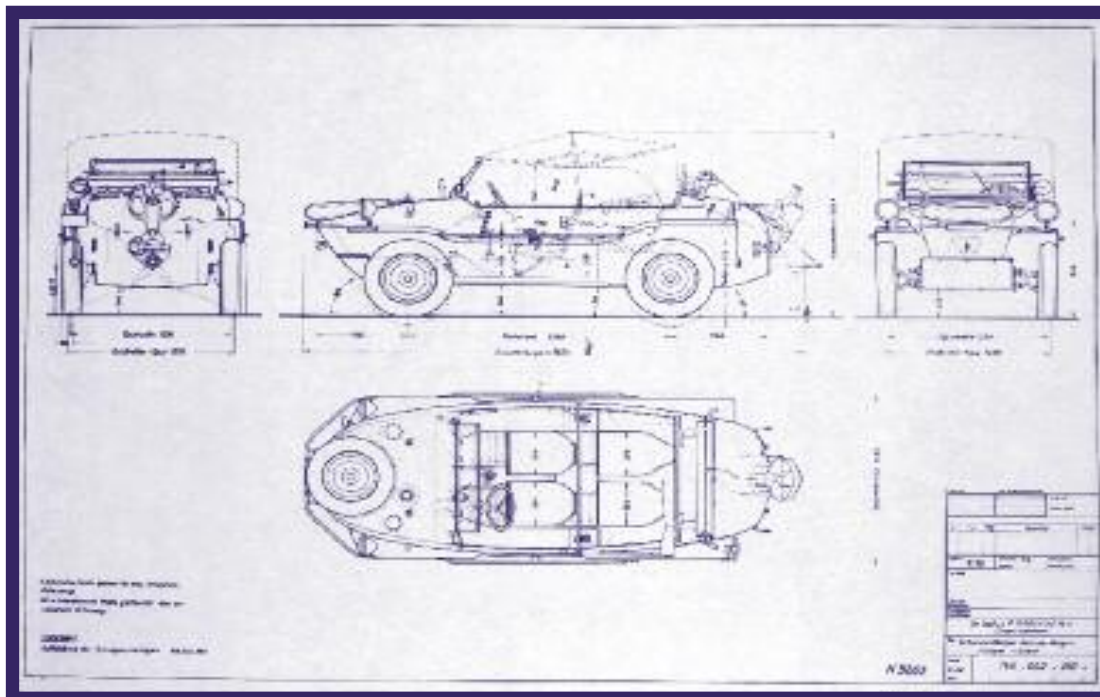


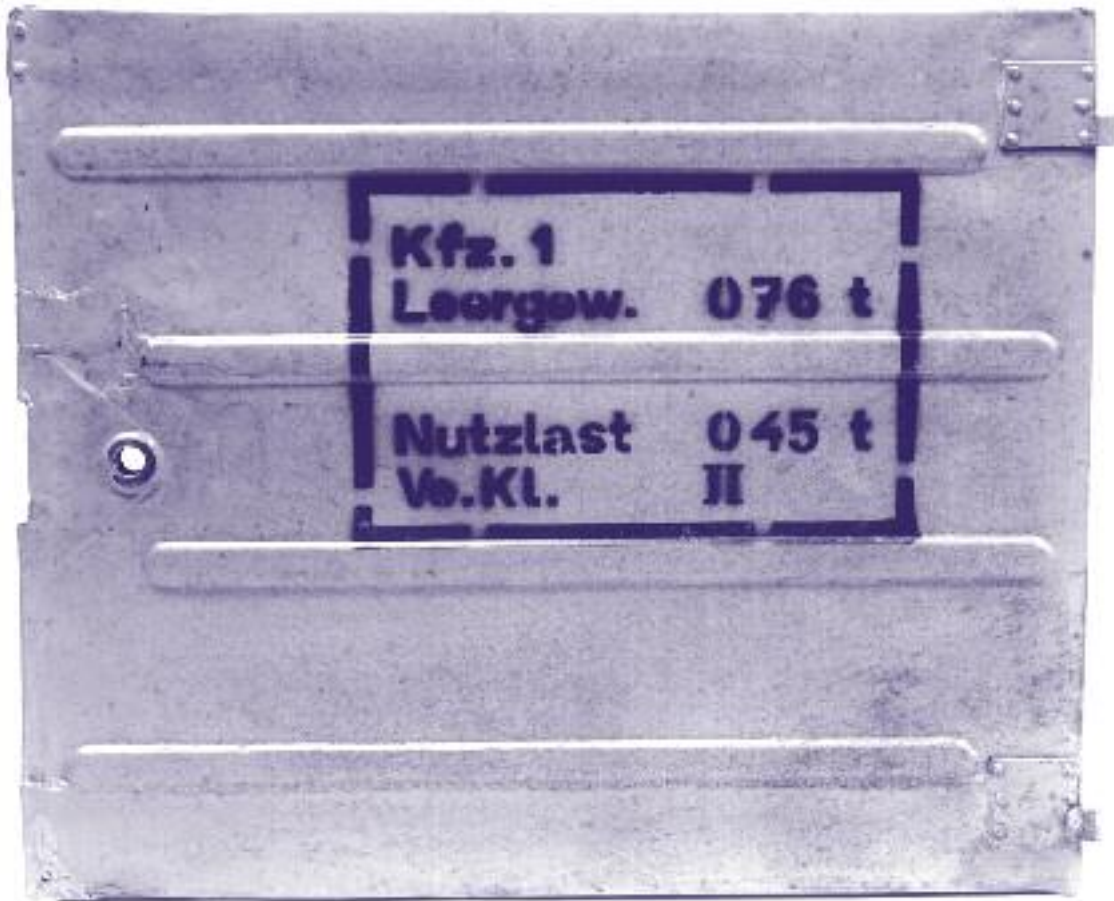


Assembly line for Ju 88 wings, 1941

Orders from the air force ("Luftwaffe") allowed the company to expand. Except for the year 1941, the air force's percentage of the firm's overall sales during the war amounted to well over 50 %.

Construction drawing of a VW Type 166 amphibious vehicle





Door of a VW Type 82 Kübelwagen, January 1944

In March 1942, Volkswagen received a monopoly on the production of military passenger vehicles. This made the Kübelwagen the most widely built German military passenger car, assuring a certain minimum use of factory production and assembly line capacity and leading to a rise in sales.

Soviet Prisoners of War

The first 650 Soviet prisoners of war were selected for work in the Volkswagen plant in the beginning of October 1941 at the Central Prisoner of War Camp ("Stammlager" or Stalag for short) XI D in Fallingb. This was the first instance of the assignment of Soviet prisoners of war to an industrial enterprise, which became general practice by the end of October 1941.

Previously, the army had intentionally let Soviet prisoners of war starve to death. The few surviving men were in a catastrophic state of health. In order to make them fit for work, the Volkswagen management argued in November 1941 that the Soviet prisoners of war should be "fed and nursed" back to health. However, this made little difference in their chronic malnutrition. In addition, typhus ran rampant in January 1942. The prisoners of war were put in quarantine in R. Those who came down with the disease were transported to the prisoner of war hospital in Bergen-B., which was feared as a place of certain death.

The number of Soviet prisoners of war rose to 850 in the spring of 1942. In the plant, they primarily performed work which was physically arduous or particularly dirty. Exposed to harassment by the plant security force ("Werkschutz") and the army guards, they suffered from the wretched treatment and from nutrition, housing, and clothing of the worst sort. No wages were paid. However, the Soviet prisoners of war tried as best they could to satisfy the demands made on them in order to avoid being sent back to the stalag, where the mortality was extraordinarily high.

Soviet prisoner of war marked "SU" with oil-based paint at work on the assembly line, 1942

Soviet prisoners of war were to be used in work details in order to isolate them from the other workers at their workplace as well. However, this was incompatible with work efficiency, so that they were assigned to a wide range of different production sectors beginning in the spring of 1942.



Soviet prisoners of war installing a chassis, 1942

The Soviet prisoners of war included numerous skilled metal workers.





At heavy work in the iron foundry, 1944

The Volkswagenwerk paid the German army 48 pfennigs (RM 0.48) for each hour worked by the Soviet prisoners of war. The prisoners of war themselves received a mere 20 pfennigs (RM 0.20) per day, paid to them in so-called "camp money".

Personnel file of the Soviet prisoner of war
Alexandr Mingaljev

This officer, born in 1910, was captured in July 1942. In civilian life he was an automobile technician. On December 9th, 1944 he was transferred from the stalag in Sandbostel to Labor Detail 104 ("Arbeitskommando 104") in Fallersleben.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25

B **Personalkarte I: Persönliche Angaben**

Stammort: **Halag XIA**

Name: **Mingaljev Alexandr** **Александр Михайлович Мингалев**

Wohnort: **Halag XIA**

Ordnungs-Nr.: **1910 Halag XIA**

Abteilung: **1910 Halag XIA**

Arbeitsdienst-Zahl: **3304**

Wohnort des Vaters: **Halag XIA**

Wohnort der Mutter: **Halag XIA**

Wohnort des Ehepartners: **Halag XIA**

Staatsangehörigkeit: **Russe**

Blutgruppe: **B II**

Lebenspartner: **26.02.1934**

Belehrung: **Autotechniker**

Abteilung Nr. in dem Ort des Geistes: **26**

Religion: **Orthodox**

Religionsstand (bis zum 1.1.1942): **Orthodox**

Ob gesch., kast., vererbt, eingetrag.: **Orthodox**

Höhere Personalbeschreibung

Wuchs	170	Blau	
Haar		Braun	

Alter: **34**

Abteilung: **16**

Arbeitskommando: **Arbeitskommando 104**

Standort: **Fallersleben**

адрес по месту: Адрес по месту: Красная Армия г. Кызылсоло Александр III. П.

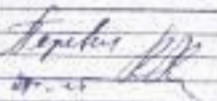
Personen: **Mingaljev**


Bekanntmachung der Schiffsbewehrung		Beschreibung der Bewehrung		Zusätzliche Angaben		Anmerkungen	
Nr. <u>1012</u>		Beschreibung der Bewehrung		Zusätzliche Angaben		Anmerkungen	
Date: <u>12. 12. 1914</u>							
Ort	Ort der Befehl	Ort der Befehl	Ort der Befehl	Ort der Befehl	Ort der Befehl	Ort der Befehl	Ort der Befehl
Bezeichnung der Bewehrung				Bezeichnung der Bewehrung			
Art	Art	Art	Art	Art	Art	Art	Art
Ordnung	Ordnung	Ordnung	Ordnung	Ordnung	Ordnung	Ordnung	Ordnung
Datum	Datum	Datum	Datum	Datum	Datum	Datum	Datum

Bekanntmachung der Bewehrung		Bezeichnung der Bewehrung		Bezeichnung der Bewehrung	
Date		Date		Date	
12. 12. 1914		12. 12. 1914		12. 12. 1914	
Ordnung		Ordnung		Ordnung	

Kommandos

Ordnung	Bezeichnung der Bewehrung	Bezeichnung der Bewehrung
1	von Art 2 in 100 Pausen	100 Pausen
2	von Art 3 in 100 Pausen	100 Pausen


 12. 12. 1914

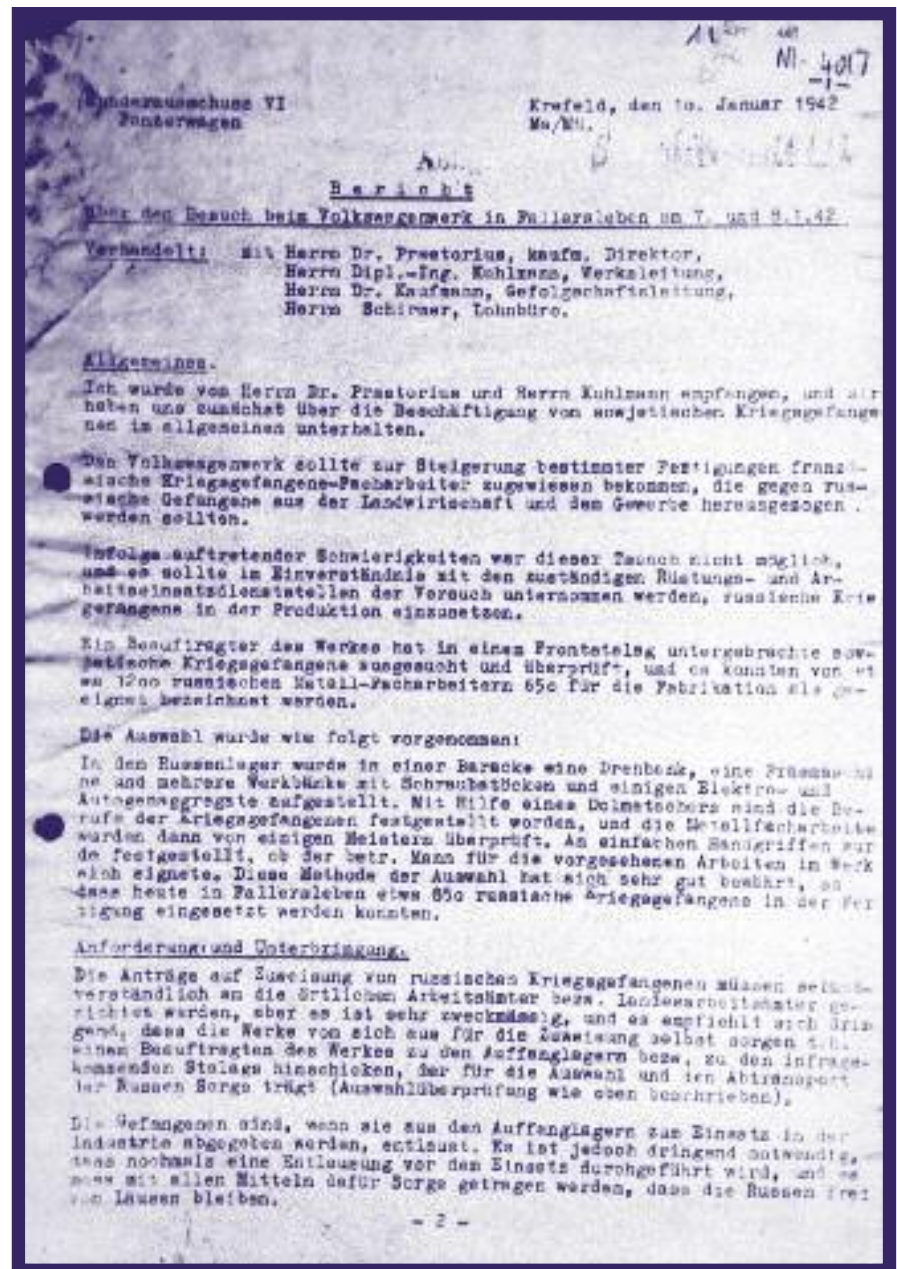
				Handwritten Name	Military Station	Service No.	Branch
Rank or Position			Grade	Service Dates			
Designations while on active duty:							
Date	Grade	Branch	Service No.	Date	Grade	Branch	Service No.
1941	Private	Infantry					
1942	Private	Infantry					
1943	Private	Infantry					
1944	Private	Infantry					
1945	Private	Infantry					
1946	Private	Infantry					
Date	Grade	Branch	Service No.	Date	Grade	Branch	Service No.
1947	Private	Infantry					
1948	Private	Infantry					
1949	Private	Infantry					
1950	Private	Infantry					
1951	Private	Infantry					

Remarks

Date	Description of Remarks	Signature	Date	Description of Remarks	Signature
10.4.45	Demoted to Private (R.I.C.)		10.4.45	Resignation	
19.7.48	Resignation		19.7.48	Resignation	
21.8.48	Resignation		21.8.48	Resignation	
20.11.48	Resignation		20.11.48	Resignation	
1.10.44	Resignation		1.10.44	Resignation	
11.1.45	Resignation		11.1.45	Resignation	
11.1.45	Resignation		11.1.45	Resignation	
21.8.48	Resignation		21.8.48	Resignation	
21.8.48	Resignation		21.8.48	Resignation	

Report of Special Committee VI: Armored Vehicles ("Sonderausschuß VI – Panzerwagen") on its visit to the Volkswagen plant in Fallersleben, January 10th, 1942

Ministerialdirektor Dr. Werner Mansfeld, head of the Committee for Labor Utilization at the Office of the Commissioner for the Four-Year Plan ("Geschäftsgruppe Arbeitseinsatz beim Beauftragten für den Vierjahresplan"), portrays the use of Soviet prisoners of war in the Volkswagen plant as an organizational challenge. He describes prisoner selection by Volkswagen company representatives.



Der Defekt des Übertragens von Fleck-Typhus ist außerordentlich gering. Im Allgemeinen sind bekanntlich sämtliche russischen Gefangenenerkrankte wegen Fleck-Typhus-Fällen gesperrt. Bei größeren Einheiten von Russen, über 500 bis 1000 Mann, wird sehr sorgfältig geachtet, die Befreiung einer eigenen Kabinenabteilung zu vermeiden. Das Volkswagenwerk hat eine besondere Einrichtung und bedeutet es sehr, diese nicht gleich zu Anfang erfüllt zu haben.

Der Gesundheits- und Ernährungsstand der Russen aus direkt eingetragenen Transportgruppen oder aus anderen Arbeitskommandos (Zuckerbäckerei oder Kartoffelverarbeitung) durchschnittlich mittelmäßig, vernachlässiglich oder gar so dass einen direkten Hinweis nichts in Frage steht.

Sehr schlecht ist der Gesundheitszustand der Kriegsgefangenen, die schon längere Monate nach Transporten und Marschen in Gefangenenerkrankungen waren. Es ist schwer zweifellos, diese Russen zunächst "aufzupapieren", um den Gesundheitszustand zu bekommen, dass sie nur Anforderungen der Arbeit auch in einer Standhalten. Der Betriebsarzt muss auch eingeschaltet werden.

Die Unterbringung der Russen ist vorgeschrieben. Marschen, winterliche Unterstände (Priskamni), besondere Aufenthaltsräume, Tische, Stühle usw. sind nicht vorgesehen. Vorgesehen sind selbstverständlich eigene Klosettanlagen für die Russen.

Kinnis.

Mit Herrn K a h l w a n n habe ich dann im Betrieb der Einheiten der Russen mir ansehen können. Im Allgemeinen beschäftigt russische Kräfte, im

- a) Flugzeugbau: Herstellung und Bearbeitung von kleinen Pressenteilen für Leitwerke an Reparaturflugzeugen.
- b) Pressen: Arbeiten an Pressen.
- c) Ofenbau: Herstellung von Schweißgrabenöfen, Arbeiten an kleinen Pressen und Stänzen, Schweißapparaten, Verdichtungen.
- d) Herstellung von Laufrädern für Kampfwagen, Drehteilen, Kleinabschweißungen, Arbeiten an Pressen für Gummlaufwerke, Transporterbauteile.

Die Russen sind entweder in einer geschlossenen Kolonne von 20 und mehr Mann eingestakt unter Aufsicht eines deutschen Fachpostens, oder in kleineren Gruppen von 2 und 3 Mann, wobei ein deutscher Vorarbeiter die Aufsicht führt, der eine Binde "Deutsche Wehrmacht" trägt.

Die Russen machen keinen schlechten Eindruck. Es waren meistens sehr gesunde Menschen mit klaren Gesichtern, aber nicht der ausgeprägten weissen oder mongolischen Typ. Ich hatte den Eindruck, dass der Russen keine Arbeit macht zwar aber immerhin so, dass eine gewisse Leistung da war. Wie ich hörte sind einige Russen darunter z.B. Elektroarbeiter, die auch mit eingeschlagen sind. Wie ich auch von Herrn Dr. Proctorius gehört habe, hat man mit der Arbeitsweise der Russen zufrieden. Mit wenigen Ausnahmen hat der Russen ernstwillig. Bisher sind Gebotsgehalte und auch Verweise im Falleralien noch nicht vorgekommen.

Wenn Vergewaltigungen irgendwelcher Art bei den Russen vorkommen muss der Betriebsarzt sofort und dann auch ganz energisch und empfindlich bestraft werden.

Die Russen wurden nur in Tagelohn beschäftigt und zwar von 6,30 Uhr bis nachmittags 11,30 Uhr. Mittag- und Abendverpflegung geschieht in der Baracke.

In Petrozavodsk ist der Beweis erbracht, dass der russische Kriegsgefangene auch in der Produktion eingesetzt werden kann und bei richtiger Einweisung und richtiger Behandlung auch eine gewisse Leistung erbringt.

Da die Betriebsverhältnisse bei jedem Werk der Panzerfirmen selbstverständlich verschieden sind, kann eine allgemein gültige Regel über den Konsum einzelner nicht gegeben sein. Es ist aber bei den geforderten und notwendigen Russenarbeiten, der Deutschen Industrie weiter zu kommen, wäre folgendes zu beachten:

Nr. 4077

- 3 -

1) Jede Firma muss von sich aus die Zuweisung von russischen Kriegsgefangenen vorantreiben und ähnlich wie im Fallersleben einen geeigneten Mann mit der Auswahl beauftragen. Längere Schreibereien und Verhandlungen führen nicht zum Erfolg sondern tatsächlichen Handeln. Wichtig ist die richtige fachliche Auswahl. Zweckmäßig wie oben beschrieben durch entsprechende Meister.

2) Sicherstellung der Unterbringungs- und Entlassungsmöglichkeit, Bauhaltung der Menschen selbst, der Kleidung und der Unterkunftsraum- ist außerordentlich wichtig.

3) Langsame Gewöhnung an kräftigere Kost, falls diese für die Arbeitseinstellung notwendig ist. Dies selbstverständlich im Rahmen der bestehenden Möglichkeiten.

4) Wichtiger und zweckmäßiger Einsatz im Werk, wobei die Möglichkeit bestehen kann, die Russen zunächst je nach Eigenart des Betriebes in Transport- oder Abfuhrkolonnen geschlossen einzusetzen und die hierdurch freiwerdenden deutschen Arbeitskräfte mit wichtigeren Arbeiten zu beschäftigen oder in kleineren Gruppen unter Aufsicht entsprechender Vorkarbeiter mit der Durchführung von Facharbeiten oder anderen Maschinenarbeiten zu beschäftigen. Hierbei kommt es sehr auf die Mitarbeit des Betriebsleiters, vor allen Dingen nach der Meister an, die sich für die richtige Beschäftigung von Russen unter Einhaltung der Vorschriften einsetzen müssen.

Ich habe dann noch mit Herrn Schirmer über die Lohnabrechnung kurz gesprochen. Fallersleben rechnet mit dem Stielag pauschal ab. Hierfür sind jedoch auch Richtlinien festgelegt, die örtlich mit den Abrechnungsstellen zu vereinbaren sind. Interessant ist die Feststellung, dass im ganz Russland ein Lohngruppensystem von 1 bis 7, wobei die Gruppe 1 oder best. beschl. russische Facharbeiter war. Man hat hier einen gewissen Anhalt, wenn man bereits bei der Auswahl durch den Dolmetscher feststellen kann, welcher Lohngruppe der betr. Russe angehört hat.

Herrn Dr. K a u f m a n n, der speziell den Russeneinsatz bearbeitet, berücksichtigt Ende Januar aus dem russischen Gebiet bei Leuberg direkt aus dem Frontgebiet nach Russen für Fallersleben bereuzholen.

Es wird zweifelloß manche Kleinarbeit beim Russeneinsatz zu leisten sein, aber ich glaube annehmen zu dürfen, dass wir ohne den Einsatz der russischen Kriegsgefangenen in der Produktion den Arbeitskräftebedarf nicht werden decken können.

gez. H a n s l i d

December 5th, 1941

"The Volkswagen plant described the work done by the Soviet prisoners of war as good; so far no difficulties, sabotage tendencies, etc. have been observed. (...) Better food is necessary because of their physical debilitation, since a considerable drop in performance occurs after only four hours of work."

March 27th, 1942

"The use of Russian prisoners of war is merely a question of nutrition. At present the ratio is still two of them to one German worker. Russian prisoners of war cured of their typhus and once again made available to the firms weigh only 40 kilograms on an average, and must therefore first be cared for before they can be put to work. Russian prisoners of war are, without exception, willing to work, and able to perform well when they have had enough to eat."

February 3rd, 1942

"Of the 865 Soviet prisoners of war assigned to the Volkswagen plant, 37 have died in the meantime, 3 of these of typhus. 30 Russians who were sent later and given temporary quarters elsewhere in the plant have remained healthy and are working satisfactorily, while 835 Russians are not working. Of these, 230 have been transported to Bergen."

July 27th, 1942

"The efficiency of entire Russian work deployment depends solely on the food they receive."

From the war journal of the Armaments Command Brunswick ("Rüstungskommando Braunschweig"), 1941–1942

"Eastern Workers" ("Ostarbeiter")

Civilian workers from the occupied parts of the Soviet Union were referred to in bureaucratic terminology as "Eastern workers" ("Ostarbeiter"). Within the German Reich and in the Volkswagen plant as well, they constituted the largest group of foreigners. The recruitment of "Eastern workers" commenced in the spring of 1942, after more than half of the Soviet prisoners of war had died due to malnutrition, disease, and mass shootings. By May 1944, the number of "Eastern workers" in the company had grown to more than 4,800 individuals – half of them women, but also numerous young people and children.

The "Eastern workers" were in most cases deported by the use of massive force. Subjected to numerous forms of racial discrimination, they lived in a part of the general camp that was fenced off by barbed wire and soon became overcrowded. The workers were not allowed to move about freely and were completely in the arbitrary power of the plant security force ("Werkschutz"). Pocket money was all that the "Eastern workers" saw of their wages. The food and clothing supplied to them were also utterly inadequate. Although slight improvements in the situation were made in 1943 due to the widespread labor shortage, no fundamental change occurred in their working and living conditions.



Female worker welding, 1943

"Eastern workers" frequently had accidents while at work. The reasons were inadequate health and safety regulations, insufficient instruction and training, and also physical exhaustion due to poor nutrition.



Female worker in the press shop, 1943

Female "Eastern workers" assembling engines, 1943

More than half of the those deported from the Soviet Union were women.



Female forced laborers in provisional production sectors of the press shop, 1944



*"If you had only seen the sort of soup they gave us
in the morning. Nothing but grass and straw.
How on earth can I eat that?"*

The young Russian forced laborer Olga P. in a letter
to her Dutch friend Piet W., 1944



"Eastern workers", women and men, attending a sporting
event. Photograph taken in 1943

Many "Eastern workers" were deported to Germany without being able to take more with them than they were wearing at the time. For this reason, the Volkswagen plant purchased large amounts of clothing in the autumn of 1942. However, this was offered to the German workforce in exchange for their old clothes. The "Eastern workers", women and men, were given the old clothing, for which they had to pay the full price.



Excerpts from the film "Fremd-Völkische im VW"
("Persons of Foreign Ethnicity at VW")

The plant photographer Fritz Heidrich made a film in the years between 1942 and 1944 on the foreign women and men working at the plant.





Children of the Forced Laborers

The deported "Eastern workers" included numerous pregnant women. Families were also deported to the Volkswagen plant together with their small children. In addition, in spite of strict prohibitions and sanctions, it was never possible to prevent sexual contacts completely in the camps.

The practice of returning pregnant women to their home countries continued only until December 1942. Afterwards, the Volkswagen plant management set up a hut in the east camp for births and for the accommodation of infants.

The situation worsened in the summer of 1943 when all children born to foreigners in the entire Gifhorn District were accommodated. Since only 20 babies had been cared for up till then, neither the facilities in the huts in the Schachtweg, which were used from October 1943 onwards, nor the Russian and Polish nursing staff were prepared for the care of 120 infants.

The Volkswagen plant tried to counter the rampant disease and cramped conditions by moving the "Nursing Home for Foreign Children" ("Ausländerkinder-Pflegeheim") to Rühren in June 1944. There as well, the Polish and Russian babies were separated from their mothers immediately after birth. The nursing staff was not equal to the situation and poorly trained in most cases. By the end of the war, 365 children had died as a result of neglect and insufficient care.

The factory doctor in charge, Dr. Hans Körbel, was sentenced to death by a British military court and executed on March 7th, 1947.



The Volkswagen factory Nursing Home for Foreign Children,
1944



Polish parents at their child's graveside,
June 4th, 1945

"Why did nobody provide for the children? There were two German nurses with the children, and another nurse, a German. They weren't young nurses any longer, these two. They had to see that children were dying, that children were lying among lice and vermin. (...) Children with scabies from their little heads right down to their toes. And children like these were bathed, two, three children, four children, all of them in the same bathtub, without it being cleaned, all in the same water. And it spread like the plague."

! ! !
Sara Frenkel, a Polish Jew who worked as a nurse at the town hospital under a false identity, was transferred to Rūhen for a month. Interview in 1991

"I don't know exactly where the mothers-to-be were taken to give birth. Not far from Wolfsburg (approx. 12 km) there was a children's home or a nursery for infants in which the mothers had to leave their children, and be sent back to work themselves, of course. The parents or the mothers were able to visit their children every Sunday, but unfortunately the children survived for only a few months there, no child longer than six months; after that they died 'for various reasons'. I knew some people who were a few years older than I was; they loved each other and wanted to marry after the war. They also had a child whom they visited every Sunday, but only for five months – there was great despair."

! ! !
From the written report from memory of the Polish forced laborer Julian Banaś, 1991

French Civilian Workers and Prisoners of War

As of Spring 1943, there were approximately 1,000 French prisoners of war working at the Volkswagen plant. They were part of work force 1366 of the Stalag XI B Fallingb. The German army offered, within the framework of a Franco-German agreement, the prisoners of war a new status as civilians. Only 300 French prisoners, however, preferred to accept the greater level of freedom as civilian workers as opposed to the protection given to prisoners of war as laid down in the Geneva convention.

Apart from the prisoners of war, approximately 1,500 forced French civilian recruits of the "Service du Travail Obligatoire" (STO) were put to work. They arrived at the Volkswagen plant in two separate transports in March and July 1943. These contingents were part of the "Jeunesse Ouvrière Française Travailleuse en Allemagne" (JOFTA), an organisation founded by the Vichy government which recruited young people for work in Germany.

Both prisoners of war and STO workers were forced to go to work. Together with the other Western Europeans, the French were, however, privileged amongst the foreign workers. They had some key functions, but were also subjected to arbitrary repressive measures and victimisation.

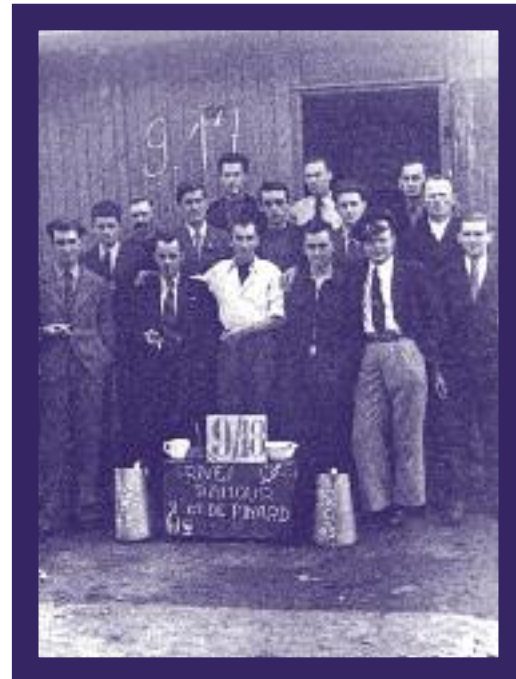
French civilian workers in their Sunday suits in front of a hut in the general camp ("Gemeinschaftslager"), 1943

French civilian workers took advantage of their freedom of movement and attended the rare entertainment events.



French civilian workers in front of their hut, 1943

On September 12th, 1943, this group of French civilian workers summed up their six-month stay in the Volkswagen plant with the following self-ironic epigram: "Deprived of love and wine" ("privés d'amour et de pinard").



”With respect to the French prisoners of war, the factory receives an extended workday supplement for two thirds (...) of those at work. If one compares the amount of food distributed with the allocation received, then there is a difference in the factory’s favor, from which the factory at its discretion claims to provide cakes and noontime meals on special holidays. The [labor detail] commander, the company, and the battalion have never agreed to this and demonstrated that the firm has withheld considerable amounts of food, above all from the French prisoners of war. (...) When the conspicuous and unusually large discrepancies concerning the French prisoners of war were pointed out to it, the factory replied that errors must have been made in preparing the calculations. This is to be assumed, but even then intolerable savings still remain, above all when one considers that the firm is quite satisfied with the work output of the French prisoners of war, and that some of them hold key positions, such as the French prisoner of war who always completes the payroll accounting for 17,500 members of the workforce in three nights without making a mistake.”

⋮ From a draft report by the Special Commissioner
⋮ (“Sonderbeauftragter”) Fritz Täuber, 1944

Dutch Workers in the Volkswagen Plant

On May 15th, 1943, 205 Dutch students arrived at the Volkswagen plant. They had been impressed as forced laborers after refusing to sign a "declaration of loyalty" to the German occupying power. However, the majority of Dutch workers were people recruited for labor service. In the spring of 1944, a total of 750 Dutch were working in the plant.

With regard to wages, nutrition, and housing, the Dutch were on a par with German workers. In addition, due to their command of languages and their technical qualifications, many students functioned as links between the German management personnel and the foreign workers. They took advantage of this fairly liberal framework to develop their own forms of living and frequently took the initiative in arranging joint events with other groups of forced laborers.

The men, who were mostly under 20 years old, demonstrated remarkable intellectual independence and pronounced self-confidence. Since they distanced themselves clearly from the Nazi regime, they were considered to be stubborn and recalcitrant. However, in the event of open acts of defiance the Dutch as well got caught up in the wheels of the penal system. On July 17th, 1943, after a spontaneous musical procession involving French and Dutch workers, the plant security force ("Werkschutz") and the Gestapo (Secret State Police) intervened with rubber truncheons and firearms. After interrogations, they sent 40 people to the infamous Work Education Camp 21 ("Arbeitserziehungslager 21") in Salzgitter-Watenstedt. Those involved returned three weeks later "as different human beings".



A small group of Dutch students in front of their hut
in the late summer of 1943



Dutch students in front of one of the stone huts on the
Laagberg after the liberation



Group photo of the Dutch students, September 1943

Of the total of 255 students who had been working in the Volkswagen plant since the early summer of 1943, only 170 were still in Fallersleben at the beginning of 1944. The others had taken advantage of their home leave to flee.

Title page of the ordinance gazette for the occupied Dutch territories, March 13th, 1943

On the basis of this ordinance, Dutch students were pressured to sign the declaration of loyalty under the threat of being "sent to a concentration camp".

 Verordnungsblatt Verordeningenblad für die voor het besetzten niederländischen bezette Nederlandsche Gebiete gebied Stück 9 Afllevering 9	
Ausgegeben am 13. März 1943	Verschienen 13 Maart 1943
INHALT.	INHOUD.
Seite	Blz.
27. Verordnung des Reichskommissars für die besetzten niederländischen Gebiete über besondere Massnahmen im Universitäts- und Hochschulwesen 125	27. Verordening van den Rijkcommissaris voor het bezette Nederlandsche gebied betreffende bijzondere maatregelen op het gebied van het onderwijs aan universiteiten en hoogeschole 125
28. Verordnung des Generalsekretärs im Ministerium für Erziehung, Wissenschaft und Kulturverwaltung zur Sicherung der Ordnung an Universitäten und Hochschulen 127	28. Besluit van den Secretaris-Generaal van het Departement van Opvoeding, Wetenschap en Kultuurbescherming ter beveiliging van de orde aan universiteiten en hoogeschole 127
27. VERORDNUNG des Reichskommissars für die besetzten niederländischen Gebiete über besondere Massnahmen im Universitäts- und Hochschulwesen.	27. VERORDENING van den Rijkcommissaris voor het bezette Nederlandsche gebied betreffende bijzondere maatregelen op het gebied van het onderwijs aan universiteiten en hoogeschole.
Auf Grund des § 5 des Erlasses des Führers über Anweisung der Regierungsbefugnisse in den Niederlanden vom 18. Mai 1940 (RGBl. I S. 778) verordne ich:	Op grond van § 5 van het Decreet van den Fuhrer over de uitoefening van de regeringsbevoegtheden in Nederland van 18 Mei 1940 (R.W.B. I, blz. 778) bepaal ik:
125	125

"The accused, born in Leeuwarden, administrative district of Friesland, on March 28th, 1921, entered the territory of the Reich in 1943 for work purposes. (...) Since July 1943, he has worked in the Volkswagen plant, where he was last employed as a controller in the inspection department. Since the beginning of his stay in Germany, Kop, whose attitude is clearly very anti-German, has sent letters to his relatives and acquaintances living in Holland, circumventing the prescribed channels. (...) In the letters, Kop comments on the allegedly poor treatment of the plant's workers and of prisoners of war. In addition, he mentions that the secret weapon ("die geheime Waffe") is being produced in the factory where he works (...)."

From a letter by the Senior Public Prosecutor at the Hildesheim Regional Court to the Senior Reich Prosecutor at the Berlin People's Court of Justice ("Volksgerichtshof"): "With reference to the investigation proceeding against the Dutch student of physics Marinus Kop, currently controller in the Volkswagen plant, Town of the KdF Car ("Stadt des KdF-Wagens"), Camp12," April 27th, 1944



The Dutch student Marinus Kop



Army Court Martial ("Wehrmachtsgewicht") Potsdam to the Senior Reich Prosecutor at the People's Court of Justice, September 20th, 1944

On August 15th, 1944, the Dutch student Marinus Willem Georg Kop was "sentenced to death for the betrayal of state secrets and for betrayal of the people with a campaign of lies". He was charged with having attempted to pass on information about the VW plant facilities to persons in Holland. Marinus Kop was executed on September 18th, 1944.

Italian Military Internees

Following the fall of Benito Mussolini and Italy's armistice agreement with the Allies, in early September 1943 the German army interned by force of arms numerous members of the Italian armed forces, who had previously been its allies. Several hundred thousand Italian soldiers were transported to prisoner of war camps within the German Reich in order to exploit their labor. In October 1943, roughly 1,000 of the so-called Italian military internees (IMI) were sent to the Volkswagen plant from the Central Prisoner of War Camp XI B ("Kriegsgefangenen-Mannschafts-Stammlager") in Fallingb. One month later, they were followed by 200 Italian officers.

The food, clothing, shelter and general treatment of the Italian military internees were equivalent to those of the Soviet prisoners of war. The supposed "traitors" were subjected to unconcealed political and moral defamation by the National Socialists. The military internees were shouted at and maltreated for the slightest of reasons. They were not allowed to speak to civilian workers. Since there was a lack of food, clothing, and footwear, many of the military internees were in pitiful physical condition during the winter of 1943/44.


A change in the situation occurred in the summer of 1944, when conversion to civilian status was granted under pressure from the so-called puppet government in the northern part of divided Italy. However, the living conditions improved only for a few.

"The situation is in many instances worse and more threatening than this short report, which avoids details, actually indicates. Immediate action is absolutely essential in order to avoid deaths like those we had in the case of the Russians, and in order to prevent the survivors from lapsing into a state of depressed morale or total apathy, from becoming hostile to us or unreceptive to a propaganda effort that comes too late. In contrast, my continuous visits to large and small labor details have convinced me that the Northern Italians can become our friends and workers of equal value, and that the Southern Italians, with their childlike qualities, are easy to handle and guide and able (after a process of education requiring, it is true, considerable effort) to assimilate somewhat to our culture and attain a work output of 50-60 % instead of merely 10-20 %. This will, however, only be possible if the special leaders ("Sonderführer") are employed as links between the plant and the army and prove their worth."

⋮ Excerpt from the report of Sonderführer Täuber,
⋮ Central Prisoner of War Camp XI B (Kriegsgefangenen-
⋮ Mannschafts-Stammlager) in Fallingbostal to Major Kalder,
Army Supreme Command, "Ref.: Italian military internees",
February 23rd, 1944

Personnel file of Dionisio Argenti

Born in 1921, this soldier was taken prisoner in Crete on September 12th, 1943. He was sent to the Volkswagen plant as a forced laborer via the Central Prisoner of War Camp X B ("Kriegsgefangenen-Mannschafts-Stammlager") in Sandbostel. Three and a half months later, on February 24th, 1944, he died there, of exhaustion.


MILITÄR		WÄHRER PERSONALBEZEICHNUNG	
Name: ARGENTI		Staatsangehörigkeit: Italien	
Vorname: DIONISIO		Dienstgrad: Soldat	
Geburtsdatum und -ort: 3-7-1921 Crete		Waffenart: Artillerie	
Religion: Röm. kath.		Geburtsort: Crete	
Ehemalige Dienststelle: V. Horio		Wurde für besondere Verdienste:	
Anfangsname im Kriegsgefangenenlager: Argenti		Gefangenennummer (bis zum 12-9-43): Crete	
		Ob krank, todt, erkrankt eingetruen: gesund	
Militär		Währer Personalbezeichnung	
Vater: [Handwritten]		Ehemalige Dienststelle:	
Mutter: [Handwritten]		Name und Religion der persönlichkeitsfähigen Tochter in der Dienstzeit:	
Fingerabdruck (bei unrichtiger Schreibweise)		Argenti V. Horio	
		Brevetto di Valitudine	
		[Handwritten]	

1- A 004/0419
Des. Kriegsgefangenen

11242411
Eingetragene bei Kriegsbeginn Nr. 11242411
Eingetragene bei Kriegsbeginn Nr. 11242411

Personnel file of Angelo Antonini

Angelo Antonini was taken prisoner on September 9th, 1943. From November 10th, 1943 on, he worked in the Town of the KdF Car. He died of pneumonia on January 29th, 1944, and was buried in the Forest Cemetery ("Waldfriedhof").

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25																							
Teil I: Personelle Angaben STALAG XB Gefangenschaftsnummer: <i>Zweyflager</i>																		Matrikelnummer: <i>153382</i> Bucht: <i>XB</i>					
Name: ANTONINI Vorname: <i>Angelo</i> Geburtsort: <i>28.8.416 Casia</i> Religion: <i>Röm. Kathol. (Venezia)</i> Beruf vor Krieg: <i>fu Giuseppe</i> Familienname der Mutter: <i>Flocco obla</i>												Staatsangehörigkeit: <i>Italien</i> Dienstgrad: <i>Soldat</i> Dienstort: <i>Artillerie-Regiment Lager</i> Dienstort: <i>Bauer</i> <i>Villa Venedi</i> Matrikel Nr. (Memento bei Dienstort): <i>50605</i> Gefangennahme (Tag, Monat, Jahr): <i>DERVIS 9.9.43</i> Ob krank, besch., erkrankt, verletzt: <i>Gesund</i>											
I-A 004/0131 Die Originalangaben												Nachtr. Dienstleistungsleistungen											
Datum: <i>1.7.44</i> Unterschrift: <i>ANTONINI</i>												Datum und Ort (falls für je dienstleistungsleistungen nicht in der Form für die Gefangenen)											
												ANTONINI <i>Italien</i> <i>Via Musili - J. Michele di</i> <i>Tagliaruello - (Venezia)</i> <i>Italien</i>											
Abteilung der Dienstleistungsleistungen Nr. <i>111111</i> Datum: <i>X-B</i> Name: <i>ANTONINI</i>																							

"From there I was moved from one camp to another, to forced labor in open terrain, with pick and shovel, [where I] made foundations for the huts that were to serve other unhappy people like us. I think the place was called "KdF", near Fallersleben (...). Not far from our camp there was a huge factory for amphibious vehicles and aircraft engines, and also for wings. (...)

This work with pick and shovel was arduous, and the food was meager. My body quickly suffered from this so much that, with the help of a nasty bout of diarrhea, my weight fell to 45 kilos. Under these conditions, with this work and a temperature of between -15° and -18° [Celsius; Fahrenheit = from $+5^{\circ}$ to -0.4°], I would soon be dead. (...)

Under no circumstances could I continue living this way. Since I was rejected each time I reported myself sick because (as the interpreter told me) neither blood nor any injuries were visible, I thought out a plan. In the middle of the night, while everyone was asleep, I went to the red-hot stove in the hut and pressed my left foot against the back of it utterly fearlessly. (...) The next morning I reported myself sick and was certified unfit to work on the huts. (...) Since I was working in the kitchen, I began to regain some of my strength. My diarrhea was also treated with pills."

||| Cesare Pilesi, former Italian military internee in Fallingbostal,
||| Fallersleben, Schönebeck, and Mittelbau-Dora.
His report was published as a book in Italy in 1984.

Mechanisms of Repression and Arbitrary Force

The Nazi dictatorship made itself felt at virtually all levels of the factory, where the Gestapo (Secret State Police) maintained an office of its own. The Gestapo officers were assisted by a military counter-intelligence officer, who acted as an "auxiliary body". His task was to see to it that the secrecy regulations were observed, and he was to report "efforts hostile to the state" immediately.

However, the "Werkschutz" (the plant's own security force) was the most important instrument of surveillance and punishment. The guards and patrols controlled not only the plant grounds, but also the camps and the surroundings of the town in order to punish non-conformism, supposed sabotage, or refusal to work. The list of punishments and arbitrary actions was long, beatings were an everyday occurrence. Master craftsmen ("Meister") and foremen ("Vorarbeiter") either carried out corporal punishment themselves or with the aid of the plant security force, which they called in to help. Arrest in bunkers could be made worse by the denial of food and additional repressive measures.

Initially, the plant management passed reports of supposed offences along to the Gestapo, which was responsible for committing forced laborers to Penal Camp 18 ("Straflager 18"), which was located on the plant grounds. Others were sent to Work Education Camp 21 ("Arbeitserziehungslager 21") near Salzgitter, which was especially feared. Since numerous prisoners either died there or were unable to resume work as a result of the deterioration in their health, it later became standard practice to avoid involving the Gestapo in the use force on plant grounds whenever possible.

SS-Obersturmführer Albert Liese

Until 1940, the SS-Sondersturm Volkswagenwerk, was responsible for guard and security functions. This SS unit was then converted into the plant's own security force ("Werkschutz"), which was later also responsible for guarding the foreigners' camps.



SS guard on the pedestrian bridge over the Mittelland Canal, 1939

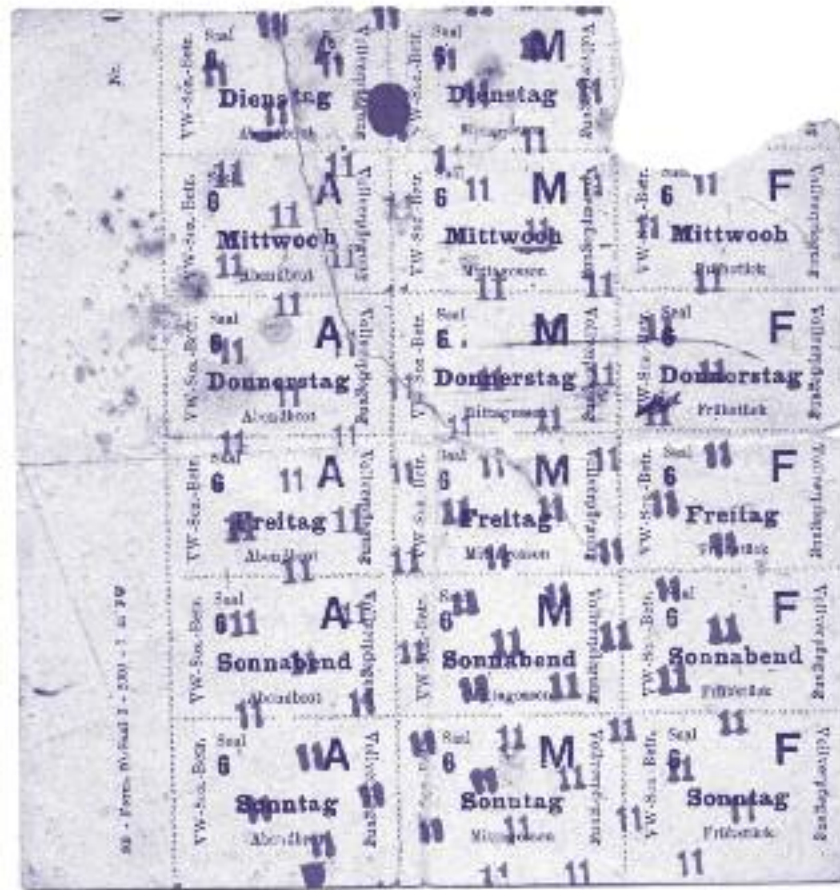




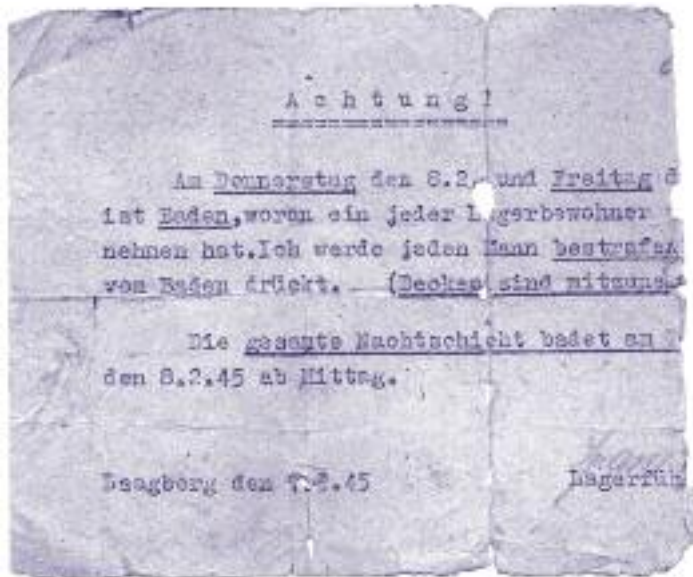
1. Postcard for contacting the plant after
"enemy action"



2. Soap Cards



3. Food Tickets



4. Bathing orders Laagberg, February 7th, 1945

Verlaubschein für Lohnempfänger

Name: Rotman Adress: 46 10-087

geb. d. d. 11. 11. 3 um 2:30 in ...

Arbeitsort: Verband der Metallarbeiter B.A.

Stempel: Verband der Metallarbeiter T-37

Stempel: Mechanisches Werkstoff

Arbeitsort
...

Form 1234 1945

5. Leave pass

The stamp of the mechanical workshop first aid station confirms that Johan Rotman visited the plant doctor.



6. Control card for foreign letters



8. Bath coupon



7. "Special allowance" card

1. – 8. Original documents
provided for the exhibition by Johan Rotman

A multitude of certificates, confirmations, and stamps document the omnipresent regimentation that dominated the everyday life of the forced laborers.



Photograph of the former French forced laborer, Pierre Bernard (below right). At left, an aluminum ring made by him bearing a picture of his wife.





Concentration Camp Prisoners

The first initiative for the use of concentration camp prisoners came from the SS in the form of a proposal made in March 1941 by the Reichsführer SS, Heinrich Himmler, to use Jewish forced labor and concentration camp prisoners in constructing the town. Even though this idea was not actually carried out, the project paved the way for cooperation between the company and the SS.

In January 1942, when the SS wanted to make greater use of the labor of the concentration camp prisoners, the management of Volkswagenwerk GmbH and the Reichsführer SS agreed to build a light metals foundry that had already been planned for some time. For this purpose, the concentration camp "Arbeitsdorf" ("Work Village") was established on the plant grounds in April 1942. It received 800 prisoners and existed until October 1942.

In 1944, the company again resorted to the use of concentration camp prisoners, thereby participating in the exploitation of what was the last labor reserve available to the Nazi dictatorship. In addition to the use of concentration camp prisoners at the company's underground sites, satellite concentration camps were also established at the end of May 1944 in the Town of the KdF Car: the Laagberg camp, the men's Hall 1 labor detail, and the women's Hall 1 labor detail. It is estimated that a total of 5,000 concentration camp prisoners performed forced labor for the Volkswagenwerk during the Second World War.

Forced labor camps, penal camps, and concentration camps
on the grounds of the Volkswagen plant and in the Town
of the KdF Car



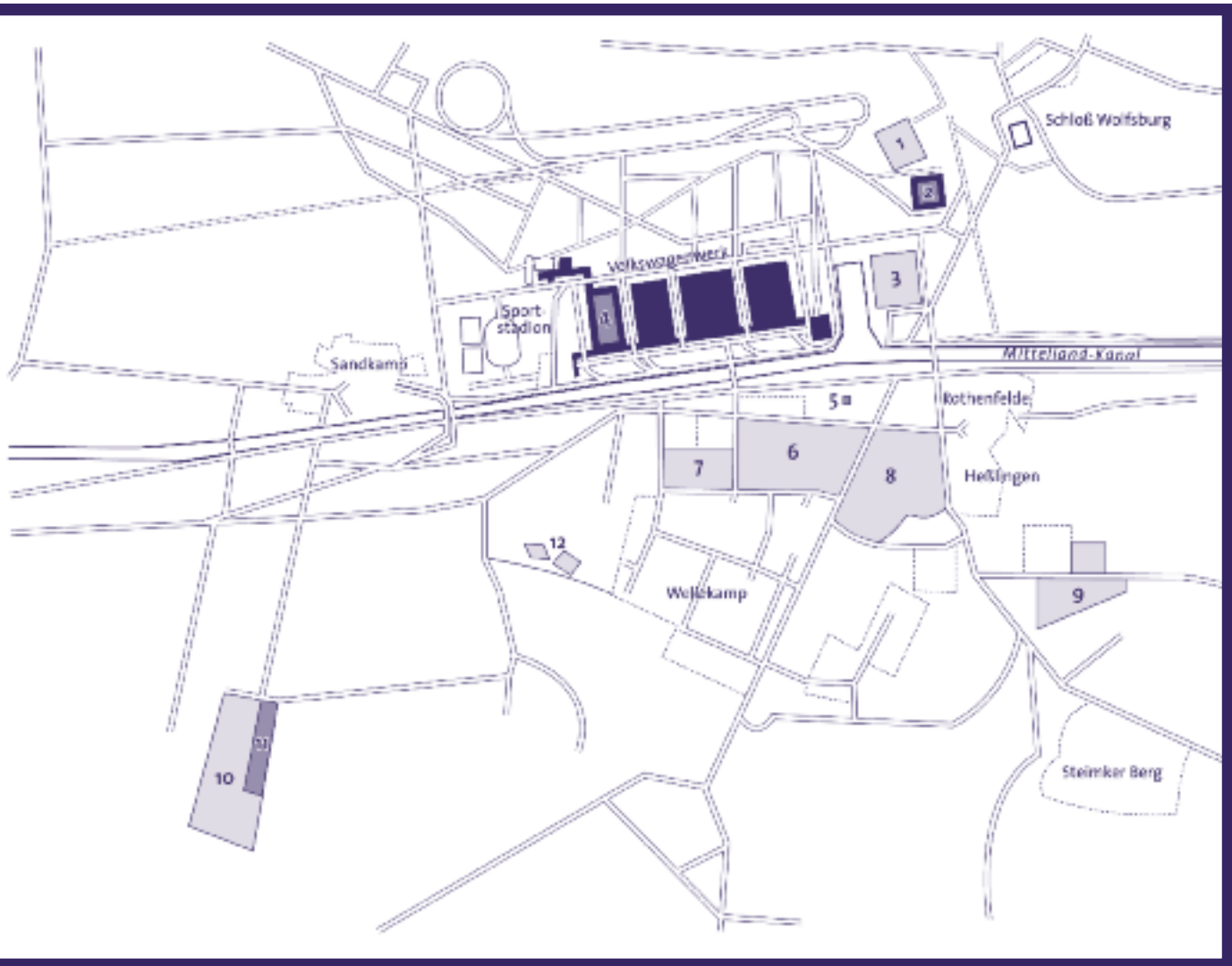
Penal and concentration camps

- 2 KZ "Arbeitsdorf" (Work Village)
- 4 Satellite concentration camp in Hall 1
- 11 Satellite concentration camp Laagberg
- 5 Penal camp 18



Forced laborer camps

- 1 Foundry camp
- 3 Canal port camp
- 6 General camp
- 7 Camp for military convicts and prisoners of war
- 8 "Eastern workers" camp
- 9 Reislingen camp
- 10 Laagberg camp
- 12 Hutted camp Hohenstein



The "Work Village" ("Arbeitsdorf")

The concentration camp prisoners were supposed to finish constructing the light metals foundry, on which work had been stopped since October 1939. In-plant production of cast aluminum parts was planned not only for armaments production, but also for the postwar manufacture of the civilian KdF sedan as well. The SS intended to intensify its economic efforts and extend its influence within the armaments industry. It attached great importance to the project, which is why it established the "Work Village" as an independent concentration camp.

The first prisoners arrived from the Neuengamme concentration camp in April 1942. Transports from Sachsenhausen and Buchenwald followed later. The majority of the 800 prisoners had been imprisoned for political reasons. Many had already spent years in "protective custody" ("Schutzhaft"), which for some had begun at the outset of the Nazi dictatorship. The prisoners lived in the foundry's windowless air raid shelters, which it was almost impossible to ventilate. They were so damp that the condensation dripped from the ceiling.

Divided into different work details, the prisoners had to carry out heavy construction work. Due to the inadequate construction equipment and the driving work pace imposed by the SS guards, there were numerous accidents at work. Armed SS men with guard dogs patrolled the construction site, which was surrounded by a wire mesh fence.

Albert Speer, the Armaments Minister, cancelled the construction of the foundry because of its lack of "urgency for the war economy", so that the SS closed down the "Work Village" concentration camp in October 1942 and sent all the prisoners to Sachsenhausen.



The light metals foundry after the concentration camp prisoners had been transported to Sachsenhausen in October 1942

Application No. 1a for permission to establish a "Foundry Prison Camp" ("Häftlingslager Gießerei"), February 16th, 1942

In February 1942, the management of Volkswagenwerk GmbH approved the budgeting of Reichsmark 210,000 for the construction of the "Foundry Prison Camp". Huts were to be built for 1,000 prisoners and 170 guards.

 Volkswagenwerk G.m.b.H. Bewilligungsantrag								
		Papier Nr. <u>1a</u> Datum: <u>16.2.42</u>						
1. Volkswagenwerk G.m.b.H.	2. Abteilung	3. Bewilligungsantrag						
<u>Sozialverwaltung</u>	<u>Sozialverwaltung</u>	<u>7</u>						
<p>1a <i>Bezeichnung des Projektes:</i> Häftlingslager Gießerei</p> <p>1b <i>Art und Zweck, Beschreibung des Projektes:</i> Unterkünfte für 1000 Häftlinge und 170 Wachmannschaften, einschl. der erforderlichen Aufenthalts-, Sanitär- und Verwalterräume für das Wachkommando. a) Aufstellung von 1000 Bettpritschen, Klusette und Nachversrichtungen RM 50.000.-- b) Bau von 5 Baracken für das Wachkommando c) Einrichtung der Baracken mit Betten, Schränke, usw. RM 150.000.-- d) RM 210.000.--</p> <p>Kostenhöhe in: <u>1. MRK 1942</u></p>								
<p>2. <i>Geplante Kosten des Projektes:</i></p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>a) Bau-Veranschlagung</td> <td style="text-align: right;">RM: 210.000.--</td> </tr> <tr> <td>b) Sonst. Anzüge</td> <td style="text-align: right;">" "</td> </tr> <tr> <td>c) Sonst. Anzüge</td> <td style="text-align: right;">RM: 210.000.--</td> </tr> </table>			a) Bau-Veranschlagung	RM: 210.000.--	b) Sonst. Anzüge	" "	c) Sonst. Anzüge	RM: 210.000.--
a) Bau-Veranschlagung	RM: 210.000.--							
b) Sonst. Anzüge	" "							
c) Sonst. Anzüge	RM: 210.000.--							
<p>3. <i>Maßnahmen für Beschäftigten:</i></p> <table style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td>Kosten der sonstigen Maßnahmen:</td> <td style="text-align: right;">RM: --</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Zusätzliche Aufwände</td> <td style="text-align: right;">RM: --</td> </tr> </table>			Kosten der sonstigen Maßnahmen:	RM: --	Zusätzliche Aufwände	RM: --		
Kosten der sonstigen Maßnahmen:	RM: --							
Zusätzliche Aufwände	RM: --							
<p>4. <i>Finanzielle Befähigung des Projektes:</i> Für die Durchführung des Neubaus der Leichtmetallgießerei erforderlich.</p>								

B. Bestätigung der gesamten Anlaufzeit

Zur Zeit	Beauftragter	Beauftragter	Beauftragter	Beauftragter
Dr.	Dr.	Dr.	Dr.	Dr.

A. Auftragsbestätigung

W. Besondere Angaben

- 1. Auftraggeber: Sozialverwaltung 15.2.48
- 2. Auftraggeber: Sozialverwaltung
- 3. Auftraggeber: Sozialverwaltung
- 4. Auftraggeber: Sozialverwaltung
- 5. Auftraggeber: Sozialverwaltung
- 6. Auftraggeber: Sozialverwaltung
- 7. Auftraggeber: Sozialverwaltung

8. Auftraggeber: Fr. Hoef 16.2.48

9. Auftraggeber: Sozialverwaltung 19.2

Jewish Skilled Metalworkers from Auschwitz: The Group of 300

The Volkswagen company of the era manufactured the Fi103 "flying bomb", the so-called V1, which went into series production at the beginning of 1944. In order to obtain workers for the production of the flying bomb, the VW plant engineer Arthur Schmiele traveled to the concentration camp Auschwitz in May 1944, where he selected skilled workers.

Schmiele assembled a group of 300 skilled metalworkers from the transports of Hungarian Jews that had recently arrived. They were given instruction on the flying bomb assembly line in the main plant. The men were intended to become the core workforce in the underground production and assembly plant in Tiercelet, which was referred to as a "concentration camp plant" ("KL-Betrieb"). There, they were supposed to train other prisoner-workers.

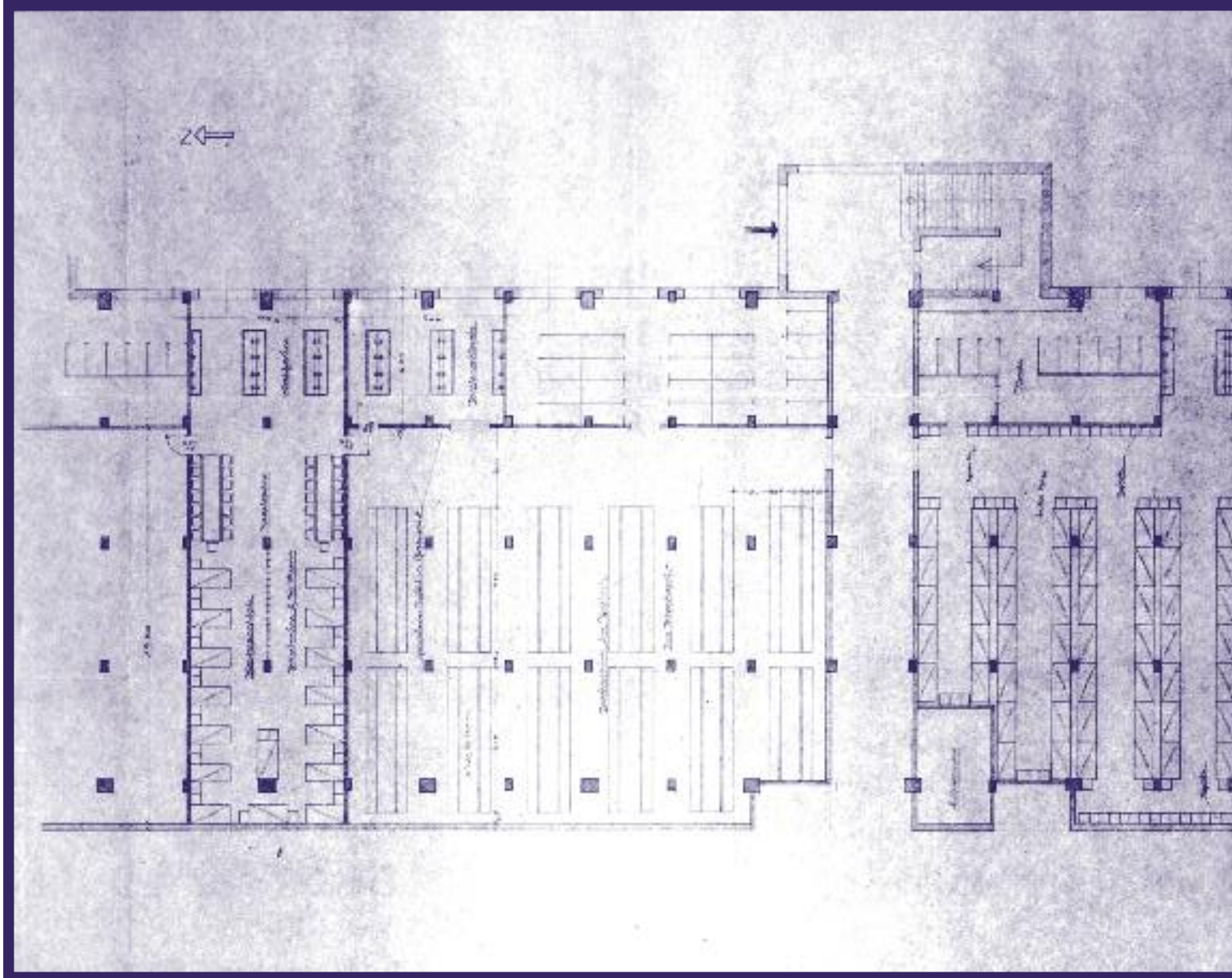
After their experiences in Auschwitz, the Volkswagen plant almost seemed like salvation to the prisoners. On their arrival at the plant, they found that they had their own beds and sheets as well as shower facilities in rooms close to the Hall 1 air-raid shelters. These skilled workers were regarded as difficult to replace for the series production of the Fi103. Acts of persecution for this reason remained an exception.

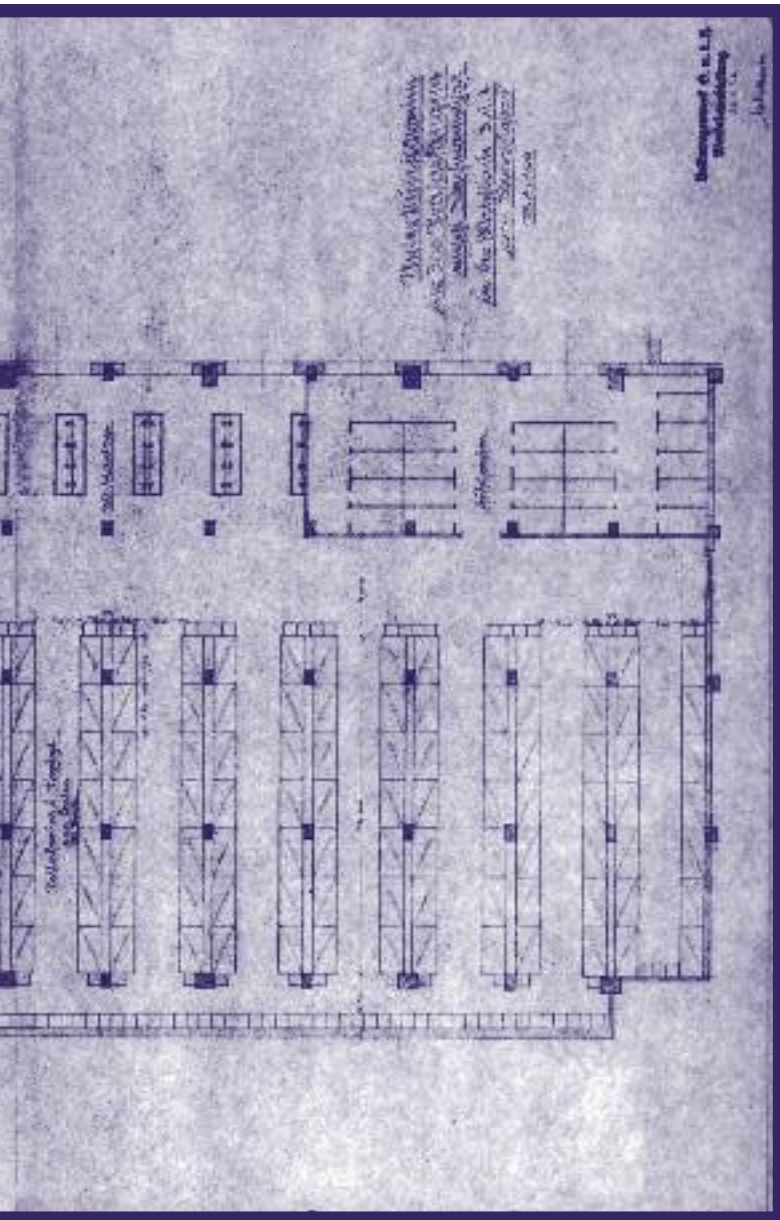
This changed after they were transported to the underground factory in Tiercelet at the end of June 1944, where they joined a second group of 500 Jewish prisoners, who had also been selected for Volkswagen in Auschwitz. The conditions in Tiercelet were much worse than at the main plant. After the principal contract for large-scale production of the Fi 103 had been transferred to Mittelwerk GmbH, a company dominated by the SS, these concentration camp prisoners left Volkswagenwerk GmbH and were transported to the concentration camp Mittelbau-Dora. There, many of them lost their lives.



Truck transport of camouflaged flying bombs in front of the southern perimeter buildings of the main plant, 1944

Due to the secrecy of the Fi 103 project, the concentration camp prisoners were subject to virtually complete isolation.

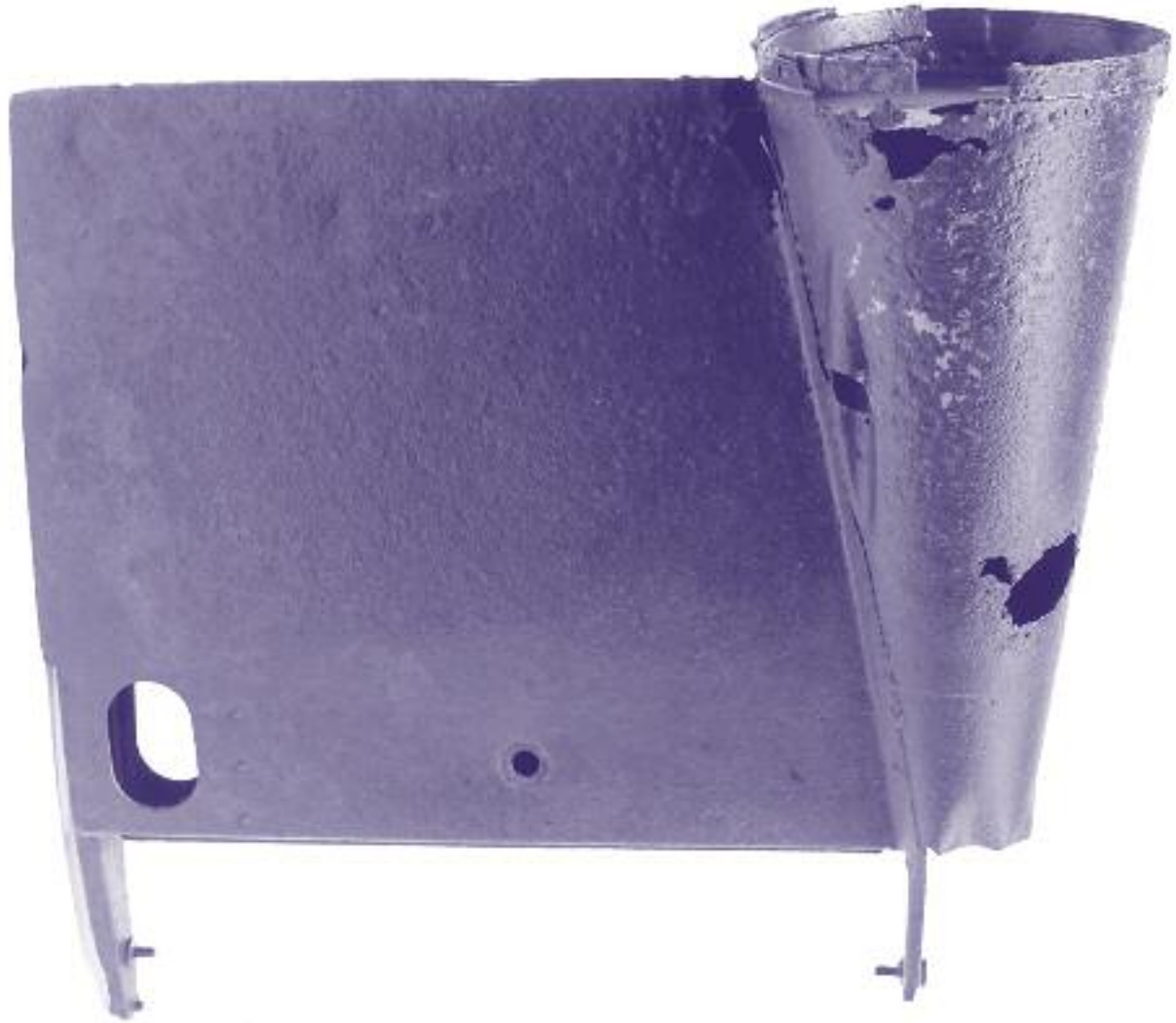




Plan of "Room to serve as quarters for 300 penal prisoners including their guard detachment in washrooms 3 and 4 of the tool and die shop", 1944

Washrooms on the ground floor of Hall 1 were converted to house prisoners. The production lines for the Fi 103 were situated one floor up at the factory hall level. In addition to 150 two-tiered beds, there were washing facilities, toilets, and a shower room.

Former prisoner Eliesar Farkas in 1989: "The factory was upstairs, the dormitory was downstairs."



Side rudder of a Fi 103 flying bomb



Nose cone of a Fi 103



Stencil for marking Fi 103 flying bombs



Fi 103 compressed air container with surrounding wire coil

Each flying bomb had two of these 75-liter compressed air containers.

The Laagberg Camp

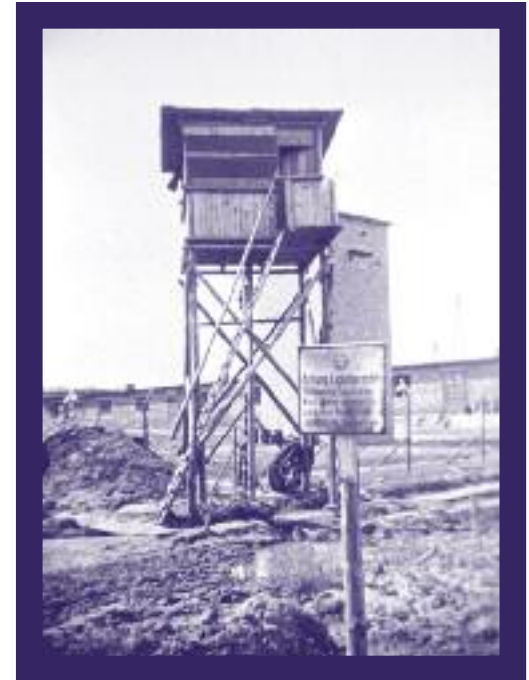
800 prisoners from the concentration camp Neuengamme arrived at the Laagberg facility on May 31st, 1944 to begin building a camp complex there. Initially, they were busy making their housing ready for use. In July 1944, there was still no running water, causing the prisoners to suffer from thirst and from the sanitary conditions. However, the greatest torment for the prisoners – the French contingent was 350 and the Dutch, Russian, and Polish contingents exceeded 100 each – came from the arbitrary acts of maltreatment by the SS. With their bullying behavior, the camp commandants, Johannes Pump and later the deputy commandant Anton Peter Callesen, aimed at breaking all will to resist and individual identity. Callesen's pedantic order and cleanliness rituals were infamous, and he used them as a pretext for maltreatment.

The concentration camp prisoners had to perform physically difficult excavation and construction work, unless they were employed on the plant grounds to remove rubble or for loading work. Although they were continually driven to work harder, the disastrous state of their health, the careless organization, and the shortages of materials prevented the prisoners from making more than very limited progress with the construction project. Productive work remained an exception.

Emaciation from the extreme work load, hunger, disease, and unpredictable tormenting by the SS were the salient features of the prisoners' situation. At least 30 men died before the camp was evacuated on April 7th, 1945, and at least 100 more died before the liberation in Wöbbelin in early May 1945.

Watch-tower of the Laagberg concentration camp, 1945

The Laagberg concentration camp, which was surrounded by an electric fence, had five, and later six, watch-towers for the unbroken surveillance of the perimeter. They were equipped with machine guns and searchlights.



Hut in the Laagberg concentration camp



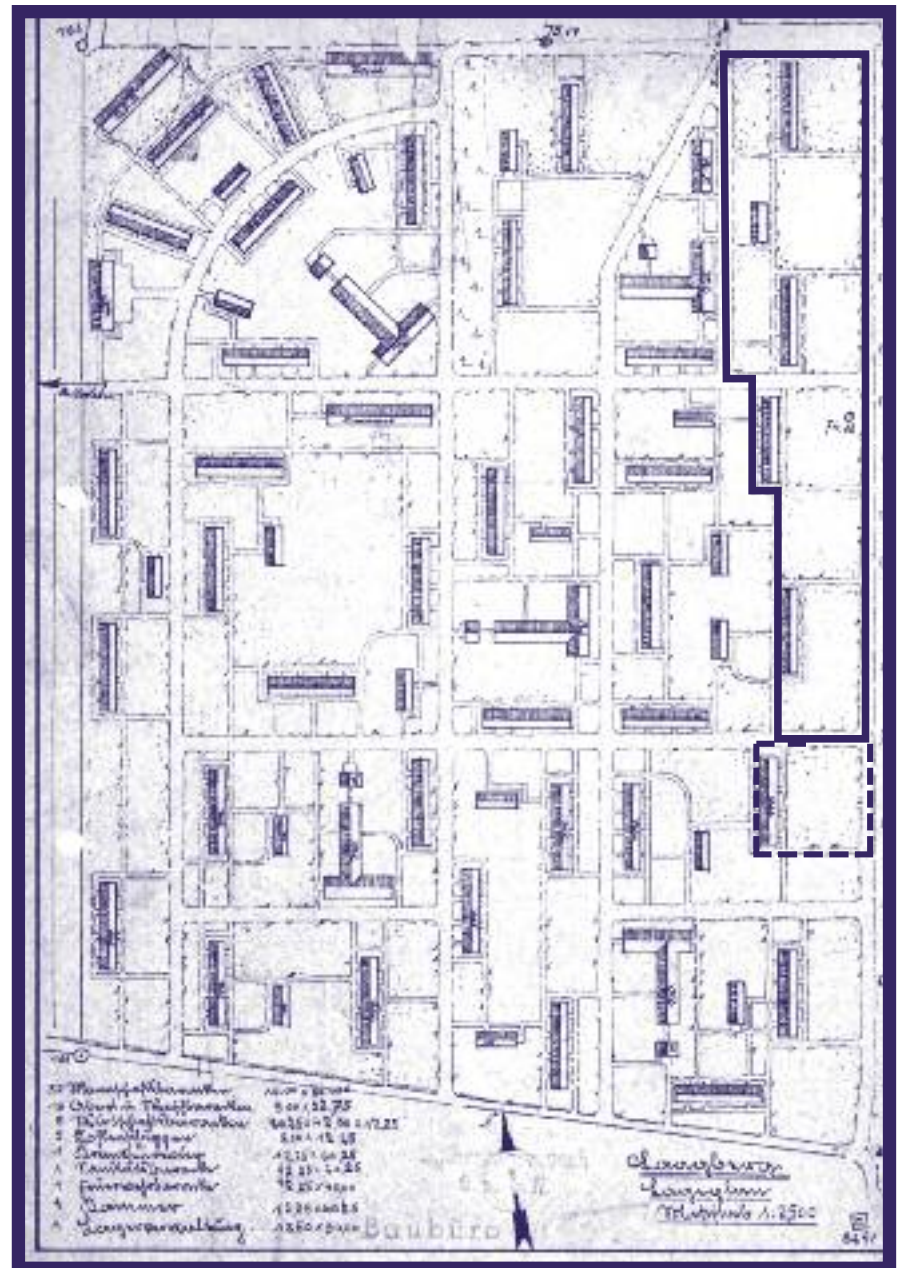


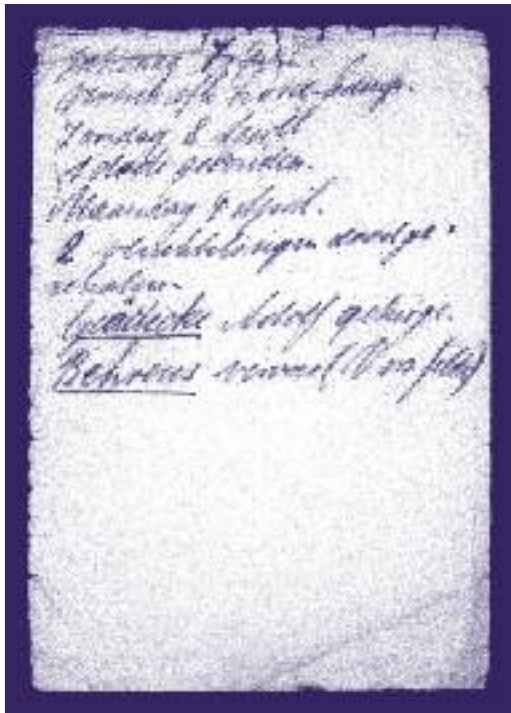
**Danish police photograph of the deputy camp
commandant Anton Peter Callesen**

Callesen, whom the prisoners called "swine" ("peau de vache"), was hated as a sadistic slave-driver. The prisoners developed a warning system among themselves in order to avoid his approaching them unawares.

Planning sketch of the Laagberg camp

The concentration camp included Huts 1, 2, 43, 6 and 7, as well as Hut 14 from March 1945 on. Of the 37 huts with related outbuildings which were supposed to be built, only two thirds were started during the entire construction period of just under one year. The prisoners completed only the SS camp guardroom, the transformer station for the electric fence, and one washing hut. Although the building project had become pointless after October 1944, abuse and harassment continued during the construction work.





Saturday, April 7th

March out of the concentration camp

Sunday, April 8th

A dead person is found

Monday, April 9th

Two prisoners shot while trying to escape

Grädicke, Adolf, witness

Behrens, Transport Dept. (Vorsfelde)

Slip of paper with short notes on events at the Laagberg site during the days when the concentration camp was being evacuated

Beginning in the second half of 1944, Dutch students were housed in Hut 8, situated outside the concentration camp. When no one was watching, prisoners passed messages to one of the Dutchmen assigned to help supervise the construction work.

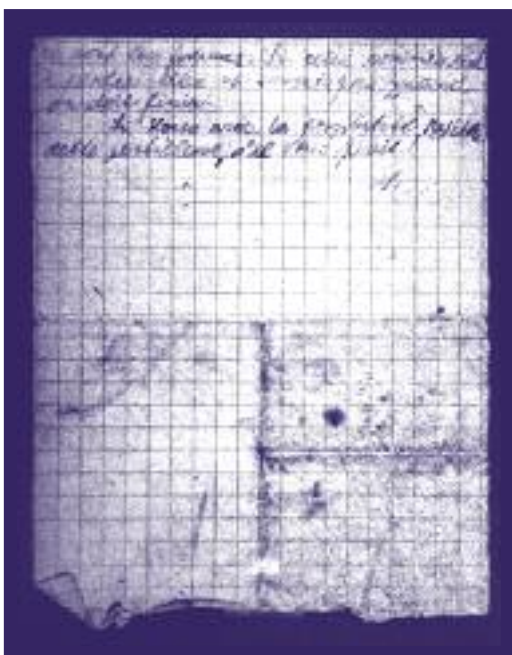
Women's Labor Detail in Hall 1

In late July 1944, a transport of Hungarian Jewish women arrived at the Volkswagen plant from Auschwitz. They were followed in November by a group of Jewish women from Bergen-Belsen. In January 1945, 100 more women were sent to the main plant. They had been deported from Yugoslavia as alleged partisans.

The satellite concentration camp was organizationally part of the concentration camp Neuengamme. In February 1945, it contained a total of 649 women. They worked for the most part on the production line for teller mines and bazookas, work which female "Eastern workers" had previously done. On occasion, the women were also used for loading work and for the removal of rubble. They were housed in the converted Hall 1 washrooms, where the Hungarian Jews had lived in June 1944. Although the rooms in which they slept are described as damp, they impressed the women as considerably better than the huts in Auschwitz. However, they only saw daylight while being marched to work in columns.

The women were guarded by female SS guards and war-disabled older Wehrmacht soldiers. Despite the deficient food and inadequate medical care, the death rate was below that in other concentration camp labor details. Documented are the deaths of five young women and an infant born in the camp and initially kept hidden.

The women's youth, the close and often friendly group cohesion, and the cultural and religious activities that they kept up helped the women to stand the crushing strain of the situation they were compelled to endure.



(...) I thank you with all my heart for your kindness. You do not know the darkness in which we have to live here; we know nothing about the outside world. You cannot imagine it because you are freer than I am. For example, we never get outside. Only when we go to the factory do we enjoy the pleasure of fresh air. And sometimes I regret that our building is only a 3 minutes' walk from the factory. We are not allowed into the corridor or the courtyard without being accompanied by a guard. So you can see that we are treated differently from you. That is why I have thought that, when the great day of peace has come, all the prisoners will return to their beloved homelands, but what is to become of us? But what I am saying? I wanted to thank you for your kindness, and now I am just complaining again. (...) If you have the opportunity again, please repeat your kind deed."

The first of a series of secret letters passed on by H el ene Slomovics, one of the female prisoners from Hungary, to the Belgian forced laborer Robert Hancke

"My dear friend,

It is Easter already, a festival not only for those who believe, since at the same time spring, rebirth, and the family are celebrated. And we, like many others, a long way from those who love us, will not have a proper celebration. Nevertheless, I wish you a happy Easter, I hope without sorrow for you. I also try to think of pleasant things, since today and tomorrow are a holiday for me as well. Just imagine that you are at home, forget your surroundings for a moment, and think of those whom you love. And if your thoughts turn towards your dear relatives and a little woman prisoner, do not regret it, for all your thoughts are reciprocated."

Hélène

**A further letter from Hélène Slomovics to the Belgian,
Easter 1945**





"Dear, good, brave Robert,
 We, too, wish you a happy Easter, and naturally the year to
 come in freedom. Your messages were wonderful, and we read
 them with reverence. All the girls say that we will be put on a
 transport, and I believe that, too. If the Americans are so near,
 they will take us somewhere else. "Nothing to do," the English
 say. Is it correct that our friends have reached Hanover? I hope
 that so very much. Dear lad, until the next letter or perhaps
 even a reunion in Holland,
 Affectionately, Mirjam ..."

**A secret letter from the Dutch woman Mirjam Blits to the
 Belgian forced laborer Robert Hancke, Easter 1945**

"Proof of claim" ("Forderungsnachweis") issued by the Neuengamme concentration camp for the use of prisoners from the women's labor detail in the Volkswagen plant for the month of January 1945

For each day worked by an unskilled female prisoner, the Volkswagenwerk paid the SS a flat fee of 4 Reichsmark. The women received no wages. They occasionally received canteen vouchers, which, however, were worthless because no goods were available.

Konzentrationslager Neuengamme
K. O. B. 40 100 100 100

den 12. 2. 1945

Dispositiv

Forderungsnachweis Nr. 101/45

über den Häftlingseinsatz

bei Volkswagenwerk, Fallnummer _____
für die Zeit vom 1. 1. 1945 bis 31. 1. 1945

Gemäss ansehnlicher Aufstellung sind zu entrichten:

für _____ Facharbeiter (Tagesbeschäftigung) à RM _____	RM	
für _____ Facharbeiter (Häftlingsbeschäftigung) à RM _____	RM	
für _____ Hilfsarbeiter (Tagesbeschäftigung) à RM 4,00	RM	59400,00
für _____ Hilfsarbeiter (Häftlingsbeschäftigung) à RM _____	RM	
Summe:		RM 59400,00

Abzgl. Verpflegung über Aufkündigung
18824 Port. d. 0,00 m

RM 42235,00
RM 17165,00

Der Betrag von RM 17165,00 ist bis 1. 2. 1945 auf das Konto des K. O. B. 40 100 100 100 bei der Reichsbank in Hamburg, Konto Nr. 2 1495, oder auf das Postcheckkonto zu überweisen. Die Nummer des Forderungsnachweises ist auf dem betreffenden Bank- bzw. Postabschein unbedingt anzugeben.

Sachlich richtig und festgestellt

Der Leiter der Verwaltung

- Unterschrift - *Leiter 28. 1. 45
17. 2. 45*

Übersicht ⁻⁶⁵

über die im Monat 28. J u n i 1945. abgestellten Häftlinge

Tag	Facharbeiter		Hilfsarbeiter		Insgesamt:	Verfügbarkeit Bemerkungen: Hftl. Nr.
	Gz. Tag	Hilf. Tag	Gz. Tag	Hilf. Tag		
1.			3		3	550
2.			512		512	550
3.			510		510	550
4.			509		509	550
5.			509		509	550
6.			501		501	549
7.			509		509	549
8.			509		509	549
9.			509		509	549
10.			507		507	549
11.			503		503	549
12.			503		503	549
13.			503		503	549
14.			--		--	549
15.			502		502	549
16.			500		500	549
17.			504		504	549
18.			500		500	549
19.			594		594	549
20.			500		500	549
21.			591		591	549
22.			649		649	549
23.			605		605	549
24.			603		603	549
25.			600		600	549
26.			597		597	549
27.			413		413	549
28.			156		156	549
29.			599		599	549
30.			590		590	549
31.			595		595	549
			14890		14356	10024

Für die Richtigkeit der Ausstellung:

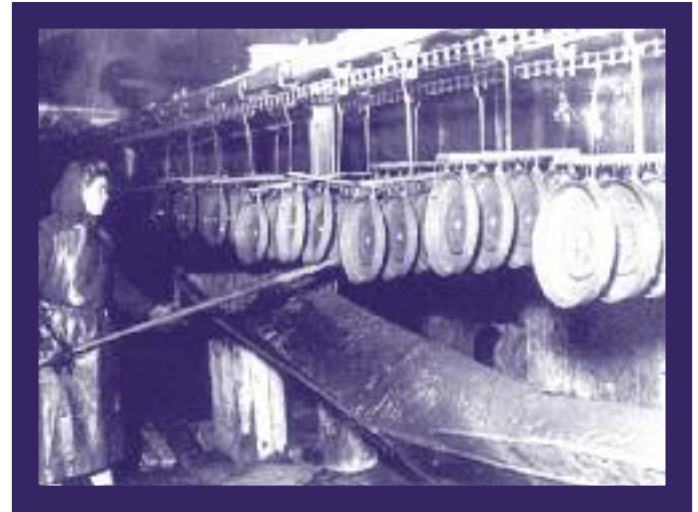
Der Lagerkommandant:

den 28. 6. 1945

145

Female forced laborers on the teller mine assembly line, 1944

The monotony of the work on the assembly line remained a terrible memory for many of the women.



The assembly line for teller mines in Hall 2, 1944

Instead of protective breathing equipment, the women who were exposed to harmful vapors during painting work were given small rations of milk to detoxify them. Various women suffered accidents at work due to the insufficient instructions and the lack of health and safety precautions.



"Nobody was used to being alone. That was the great tragedy. Whoever was there, was alone. That is the worst thing about it. (...)

[After the shooting of one of the female prisoners by an SS woman, presumably in March 1945:]

"We were in a state of shock. We didn't know what to believe. We thought we were already at a place, a safe place. Soon we would get back home from there. But safety was shattered by that minute, our safety. (...) The German women were really very nervous."

From an interview with Valerija Breiner, a concentration camp prisoner in the Hall 1 women's labor detail, 1989

"There was a first-aid station in the camp. One of our comrades had the index finger of her left hand cut off by the machine on the very first day, and she was given first aid by an Italian doctor, a fellow-prisoner. In general we intentionally didn't make use of the first-aid station's services, since we were afraid of being separated from our group, because such separation meant great uncertainty with regard to an individual's own further existence. Even if someone happened to have mumps (...), we tried to hide this within the group."

From a letter by Sofija Knežević, who had been deported via the Dachau and Bergen-Belsen concentration camps to Fallersleben and placed in the Hall 1 labor detail, 1993



Model 42 teller mine and type 60/100 bazooka

The SS and the Army Supreme Command ("Oberkommando des Heeres" - OKH) were the purchasers of these weapons.

"The following day, we had to get up at four o'clock. The others, who had already been working for four months, showed us that there was a large room with washing facilities on the opposite side of the hall. (...) Fixed washbasins with hot and cold water. (...) After we had enjoyed the wonderful luxury of being able to wash from head to foot, we had to return to our room. There we had to stand in an absolutely perfect line, one behind the other. Then bread was handed out to us, 450 grams, sliced, with a lump of butter and a piece of meat spread. What bliss! (...)

After a week, the time that had been so pleasant for us was over, because there were no more reserves of iron. Now, from half past six in the morning till half past six in the evening, in the December cold and without gloves, our group had to salvage pieces of iron from the bombed factory complexes. It was horrible. But I still kept up my optimism.

At the most critical moment of the war, when everything was at stake, there was no more iron, and it had to be gathered together from the piles of rubble.

It could not last much longer. (...)

We spent entire nights in the air-raid shelters. We spent hours and hours in the cramped holes, and we always sang. The shelter doors had to remain locked, and there was only a peep-hole for the SS, who now and then had to see that everything was all right.

That is why we were able to sing."

From the account of Mirjam Blits, who was deported to Fallersleben in November 1944 via Auschwitz and Bergen-Belsen. Published in book form in Holland, 1961



Small hand-made velvet bag with a strap made of hemp

One of the women in the Hall 1 concentration camp labor detail gave this small bag as a token of gratitude for her treatment in the infirmary. The recipient of the gift was Lea Bass, a Jewish woman who was working in the town hospital with Polish identity papers under the name of Maria Taracha together with her sister, in order to avoid death in an extermination camp.



Doll made of black cloth

This doll was given as a present to the two sisters Lea and Sara Bass by a woman in the Hall 1 concentration camp labor detail.



Dispersal of the Volkswagen Plant to Underground and Decentralized Locations

In mid-1943, the German arms industry began responding to the increasing Allied bombing raids on industrial targets by dispersing various segments of its operations to provisional sites, some of which were located in quite remote areas. Beginning in the autumn of 1943, the air armaments operations of the Volkswagen plant were also included in the planned move to underground production sites, which was just starting at that time. After the bombing raids on the main plant in the summer of 1944, the additional motive arose of protecting the plant's heavy machinery, which was considered irreplaceable.

In March 1944, the Volkswagenwerk was assigned the Tiercelet iron mine in Lorraine, which was converted into an underground factory by forced laborers within six months. Other dispersal sites were also created in Dernau, Eschershausen, and Schönebeck.

In addition, the Volkswagenwerk relocated specific production operations and stocks to sites in the general vicinity of the main plant. Only the production of teller mines and bazookas and the assembly lines for the Kübelwagen were left in the main plant. These lines were protected by transferring them to the ground floor level.

A ruthless use of concentration camp prisoners and other forced laborers occurred above all during the hectic conversion of the underground sites. Chaotic conditions, a driving work pace, and systematically inadequate food, clothing, and shelter resulted in numerous fatalities.

Clearing away rubble after a raid by American bombers,
August 1944



Clearance work in front of the southern perimeter buildings,
August 1944





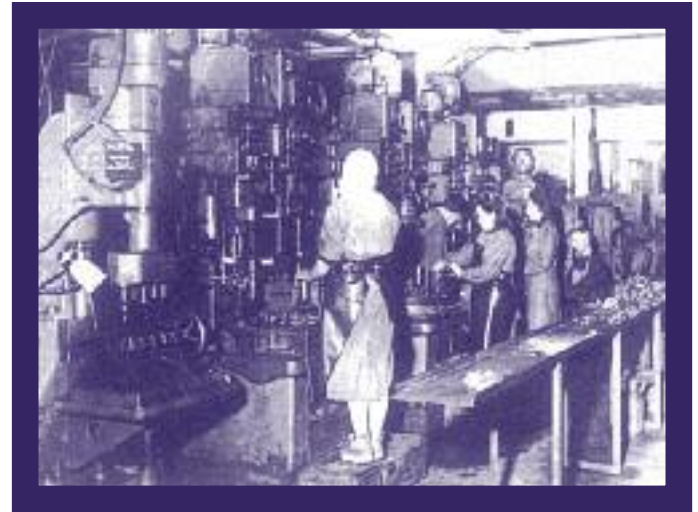
Destruction in Hall 3, August 1944



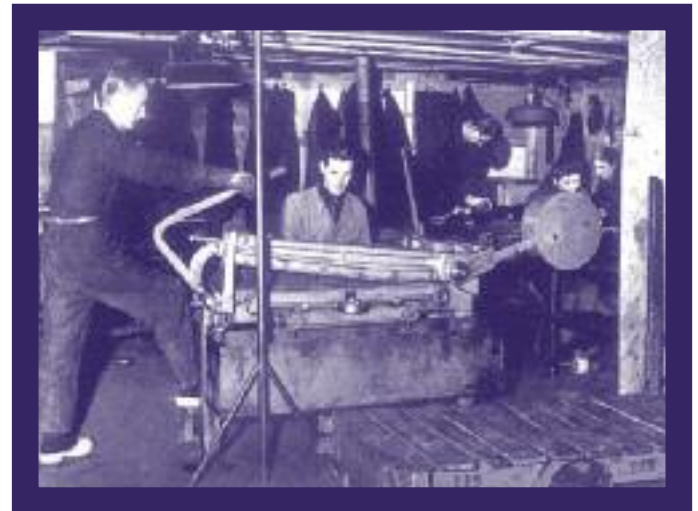
Italian military internees in a destroyed factory hall,
August 1944

Women forced laborers operating machine tools on the ground floor level of the mechanical workshop, 1944

After the bombing raids in June 1944, the plant management moved the production and assembly lines from the upper factory hall level to the ground-level base floor.



Sheet metal work on the ground floor level of the press shop, 1944





Workers operating machine tools on the ground floor level of the mechanical workshop, 1944



The continuous engine assembly line in the washroom of the mechanical workshop, 1944

Despite the drop in production due to the air raids and the transfer of production to dispersed locations, the monthly production figures for the Kübelwagen rapidly climbed again, reaching a final peak in December 1944 with 2,259 finished vehicles.



Makeshift protection against bomb fragments for the machinery in the power station, 1944

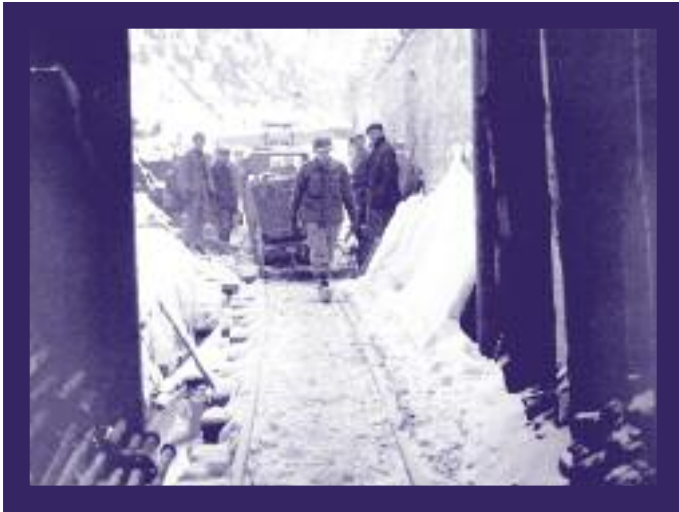
Bales of straw and sandbags were piled up to reduce the effects of bomb hits on the machines that were still in the plant.



Underground Relocation in the Tiercelet Iron Mine near Longwy in Lorraine

In early 1944, Volkswagenwerk GmbH obtained the right to use the Tiercelet iron ore mine near Longwy in Lorraine. To realize this grossly oversized project with its production surface area of 230,000 square meters, the Reichsführer SS, Heinrich Himmler, promised in March 1944 to provide 3,500 concentration camp prisoners. The construction work was under the control of the "Organisation Todt", which was also responsible for guarding the foreign workers used to extend the widely branching network of underground passages and galleries. In June 1944, 500 Hungarian Jews selected as skilled metalworkers at the concentration camp Auschwitz were also assigned to the underground project, which had the code name "Erz" (ore). At the end of June, they were followed by the 300 Jewish concentration camp prisoners who had previously been trained for the production of the Fi 103 flying bomb in the main plant.

In early September 1944, Tiercelet was precipitously abandoned because of the advance of the Allies, so that no armaments production ever took place there. The majority of the concentration camp prisoners were then transported to the Kochendorf salt mine, while the group of 300 skilled metalworkers was sent to the dispersal plant in Dernau. From there they went to the concentration camp Mittelbau-Dora in October 1944.



Entrance to the Tiercelet iron mines, 1944

In May 1944, Volkswagenwerk GmbH formed a subsidiary named Minette GmbH to operate the underground factory in Lorraine.



View into one of the production galleries after the concentration camp prisoners had been withdrawn, September 1944

Assignment notification
 ("Auftragsmeldung") issued by the Central
 Department for Sales, May 27th, 1944

On May 27th, 1944, the Reich Air Ministry
 ("Reichsluftfahrtministerium") ordered
 series production of the Fi 103 flying bomb
 to be moved to the Tiercelet mine.

Geheime Kostendruckerei

W. Alpers

Auftrags-Meldung
 Nr. 6138 von 27.5.1944 Projekt 5 (1114/77)

Auftraggeber: Der Reichsminister der Luftfahrt
 und Oberbefehlshaber der Luftwaffe
 GL-Planungsamt

B

Berlin W 8
 Leipziger-Strasse 7

Auftragszeichen: RM u. ObdL GL/C-B (II 3)
 Dringlichkeitsstufe: SS 494B/5900/0925/43

Auftrag:

W. Alpers
Bois de la Haye
in Dirj. 5 abliegen

Auf Antrag der Fachabteilung des Reichsluftfahrt-
 ministeriums GL/C-B 9 wird unter oben angegebenen
 Projekt die Verlagerung der Gesamtfertigung von
 Gerät 8/103, nach

Ortsbezeichnung: Tiercelet/Frankreich

angeordnet.

Für die Vorbereitungen, Planungsarbeiten, Vertrags-
 abschlüsse, Investitionsantrag usw. ist das Projekt
 5(1114/77) in allen Fällen anzuliefern, und hat die
 gesamte Abwicklung unter dieser Projekt-Nr. zu erfolgen.

Verkauf

W. Alpers *H. Alpers*

Verteiler:
 Siehe Quittungsbuch

Report for the period from July 30th to August 5th, 1944 from the work-camp "Ore" to the command of the Natzweiler concentration camp, dated August 6th, 1944

After six weeks of work, 29 of the prisoners in the satellite camp "Ore" (Erz) of the concentration camp Natzweiler were already sick, and 38 others were on a list of those "fit only for light work" ("schonungsbedürftig").

23 18

Arbeits-Lager
"a r z"

DU. 6.8.44

Waffen-ii
Kommando - i
Bismarck - 9 AUG 1944

Wetz. Bericht für die Zeit
von 30.7.44 bis 5.8.44

AM
die Kommandantur des Konz.-Lagers
N a t z w e i l e r .

Für die Zeit vom 30.7.44 bis 5.8.44 erstattet das aussenlde. Arbeits-
lager "a r z", folgenden Bericht:

1. Gesamtbestand am 30.7.44	660 Häftlinge
2. Rücküberstellung nach Natzw.	---
3. von Natzweiler	---
4. Abgang durch Tod	1
5. Gesamtbestand am 5.8.44	659 "
6. Postenstärke	42/66
7. Kranke nstl. 29 ,schonungsbed.-18-	
8. Arbeitseinsatz:	
in den Räumen der ra. Eisenröhre ar-	70 Häftl
beiteten in der Ferienzeit	
mit ra. Minette	172 "
" " A.G.G.	10 "
9. Besondere Vorkommnisse:	
a. Tod des ung. jüd. Häftlings-17698- Nowartz, Mandor, am 5.8.44.	
b. Verbrennung desselben innerhalb des Lagerbe- reiche.	
c. Vervollendung der Postenunterkunftbaracke.	
d. Der Bau einer Friseurstube wurde begonnen.	
Ein Plan des bis jetzt erstellten Lagers liegt bei.	

Arbeits-Lager "a r z"
der Ico. Führer
Bismarck
SS Oberscharführer

1003

"The first thing we did was move the machines into the mine: threading lathes, milling machines, and planes. We were treated a bit better by the Germans. Since we were starving, the work was very difficult for us, but we were able to catch our breath now and again. Then we cleaned parts of the machines with grease. It was really very simple work, but I still suffered from it as never before. It was the night shift. Exhausted and weak from lack of food, I fought with myself not to fall asleep, which could happen because of the monotonous work. I was afraid of the severe punishment if I were caught sleeping."

From the report by Zwi Hoenig, one of 500 prisoners selected in Auschwitz for work in the underground dispersal plant at Tiercelet, 1991

"Here we started working very hard. Our treatment likewise changed drastically. We had to carry stones, clear up the area. It seems to me that the purpose was to reconstruct the Fallersleben factory. I recognized some of the Germans here, who had been with us before in Fallersleben. In Thil [Tiercelet] we worked very long days, and the work had nothing to do with our trades. It was simply hard physical labor. Once we saw Smill again [Arthur Schmiele, the VW plant engineer who had selected the prisoners at Auschwitz]. (...) In Thil there were three to four musters each day. Sometimes we were taken to a nearby village for clearance work.

Each time, before leaving the camp and after returning, there was a muster. (...) While riding to the nearby village, we sometimes noticed civilian workers going past in the train. They called out something to us in French to express their solidarity. Once, in the street, we even saw a graffiti with the words: "Le jour de gloire va arriver" [the day of victory is coming]. In Thil we lived in bad huts and began to fall ill. In order to raise our spirits, we organized a cultural group. We got together every third or fourth evening to recite poems, to sing, and to talk. We even heard some BBC newscasts, how I don't remember any more."

Pál Arie, a former Hungarian prisoner from the group of 300 prisoners, on his time at Tiercelet, 1989



Map showing the regular locations and dispersal sites of the Volkswagenwerk in 1944

Underground Relocation to Asphalt Pits near Eschershausen

An American bombing raid on August 5th, 1944 provoked frantic efforts by the Volkswagenwerk to transport its large machinery to a safe place. Before the month was over, the asphalt pits near Eschershausen had been chosen for this purpose. An initial group of 200 workers at once started preparing the site for the transfer. The plan, code-named "Hecht" (pike), called for expanding the site to dimensions exceeding even those of the main plant. Even after cutting back to a tenth of this scale, the targets remained utterly unrealistic.

Nevertheless, a satellite camp of the concentration camp Buchenwald was established in September 1944. The 250 prisoners lived in tents until they had constructed their own huts. Due to the catastrophic conditions, a plague of lice soon erupted. In November, 235 more prisoners arrived at the satellite camp from Buchenwald, of whom 35 were "replacements for numbers struck from the list", i.e. for those who had died. Prisoners who were no longer able to work were sent back to Buchenwald.

Even though there was no longer any prospect of commencing production, almost 1,000 skilled workers were selected at the Buchenwald concentration camp as late as February and March 1945 and placed in an additional satellite concentration camp with the code name "Stein" (stone). On March 4th, 1945 the dual command "Hecht/Stein" numbered 1,103 prisoners. Only Germany's defeat in the war brought the prisoners' suffering to an end.

Entrance to the asphalt pits in Eschershausen, June 1945



Volkswagenwerk, telephone message for Mr. Bär,
March 21st, 1945

Prisoners who were working in the branch at Schönebeck ("Elbe") were "released" for work at Eschershausen ("Stein") by Dr. Georg Tyrolt, the head of the "Gefolgschaftsleitung" (Workforce Management).



Abteilungsstelle
Kgl. Postamt

So., den 2.3.45.

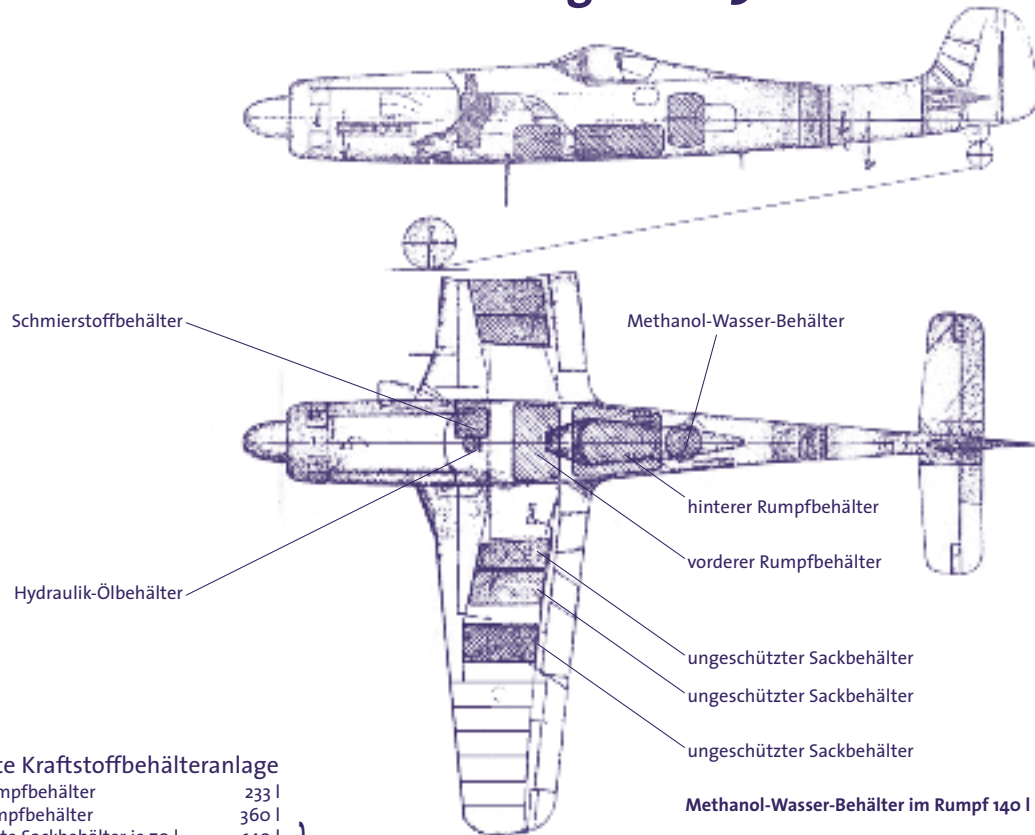
Berichting B U e l a II, vom 1.3.45.

Gemeldet wurden		413
fällig aus: gemeldet f. Pa Stein I (17,276)	2	
gemeldet f. Forts (52,33,26,25,26,26, 185,389)	8	= 10
	-----	405
davon sind bzw	390	
+ nicht unterstellt: (9,20,78,120,191,278,383, 285,350,369,411)	11	
provokaten (42,352,377,406)	4	
	-----	405
+ Fuchsstelll am 2.3.45.		

Work statistics of the Buchenwald concentration camp, the examination of prisoners for Eschershausen, March 2nd, 1945

Between October 1st, 1944 and March 3rd, 1945, at least 135 people died in the dual command "Hecht/Stein".

Behälteranlage Ta 152 C



Ta 152 C

Vergrößerte Kraftstoffbehälteranlage

1 vorderer Rumpfbehälter	233 l
1 hinterer Rumpfbehälter	360 l
2 Ungeschützte Sackbehälter je 70 l	140 l
2 Ungeschützte Sackbehälter je 80 l	160 l
2 Ungeschützte Sackbehälter je 77 l	154 l

} Garantierter
Mindestinhalt

Gesamter Kraftstoffvorrat 1047 l ~1050 l (C3)

Methanol-Wasser-Behälter im Rumpf 140 l

Der Schmierstoffbehälter mit 61 l Füllmenge (72 l Gesamtvolumen) ist ausreichend für vorgesehenen Kraftstoffvorrat bei Verzicht auf Kaltstartbetrieb.

Construction drawing of the Ta 152 C fighter aircraft
(graphically reworked version of original)

Not a single wing for this plane was ever built at Eschershausen.

List drawn up for the "Stein" project in Eschershausen by the Dispersal Coordinator ("Verlagerungs-Beauftragter"), Mr. Rudolf Stephan, September 14th, 1944

To accommodate the press shop, the machining shop, and the production of the Fi 103, Volkswagenwerk planners wanted to construct 100,000 square meters of underground floor space in Eschershausen. They requested an additional 100,000 square meters for air armament's programs such as the production of parts for the Ta 152 C.

<u>Im Neuvorhaben Stein benötigte m²</u>	
Für Fi-190 und Ta 152	69.600 m ²
Unterbringung eines Versuchsplanes sowie Fertigung der stationären Motore einschl. Montage und Einlauf	12.500 m ²
Fertigung des Klein-Getriebes (Zusammenbau)	5.000 m ²
Errichtung einer Klein-Presserei (unterirdisch)	1.500 m ²
Errichtung eines Gross-Presswerkes	20.000 m ²
Ausbau eines Betriebes für spannabhobende Bearbeitung (unterirdisch)	26.000 m ²
<u>Produktion IIIA</u>	
Fertigung	8.790 m ²
Vorbereitung	6.540 m ²
Schleisserei	6.560 m ²
Flichebau	6.050 m ²
Lagerfläche	14.750 m ²
Wartungsbau	14.480 m ²
Weissenteile	7.450 m ²
	- 64.100 m ²

Den 14.9.44
RS/OS.

Liberation

Due to the lack of materials and power, work stopped at the main plant in early April 1945. The situation of the forced laborers had come to a head since virtually no food was being provided. Moreover, the Volkswagen plant was used as a transit stop for transports evacuated from other satellite concentration camps. Both the Hall 1 quarters and those in the Laagberg camp were completely overcrowded after 460 prisoners from the Kassel region and hundreds of Dutch and French prisoners had been "transferred" from the satellite camp Porta Westfalica.

On April 7th, 1945, the SS issued orders to evacuate the concentration camps. The women from Hall 1 were taken to Salzwedel in freight cars, where they were freed by American troops one week later. The prisoners from the Laagberg camp marched by way of Salzwedel to the Wöbbelin satellite camp near Ludwigslust. Many of them died there of disease, general physical deterioration, and hunger before the rest were liberated by American troops on May 2nd, 1945.

The other main plant forced laborers had remained in the Town of the KdF Car and were liberated by American troops on April 11th, 1945.

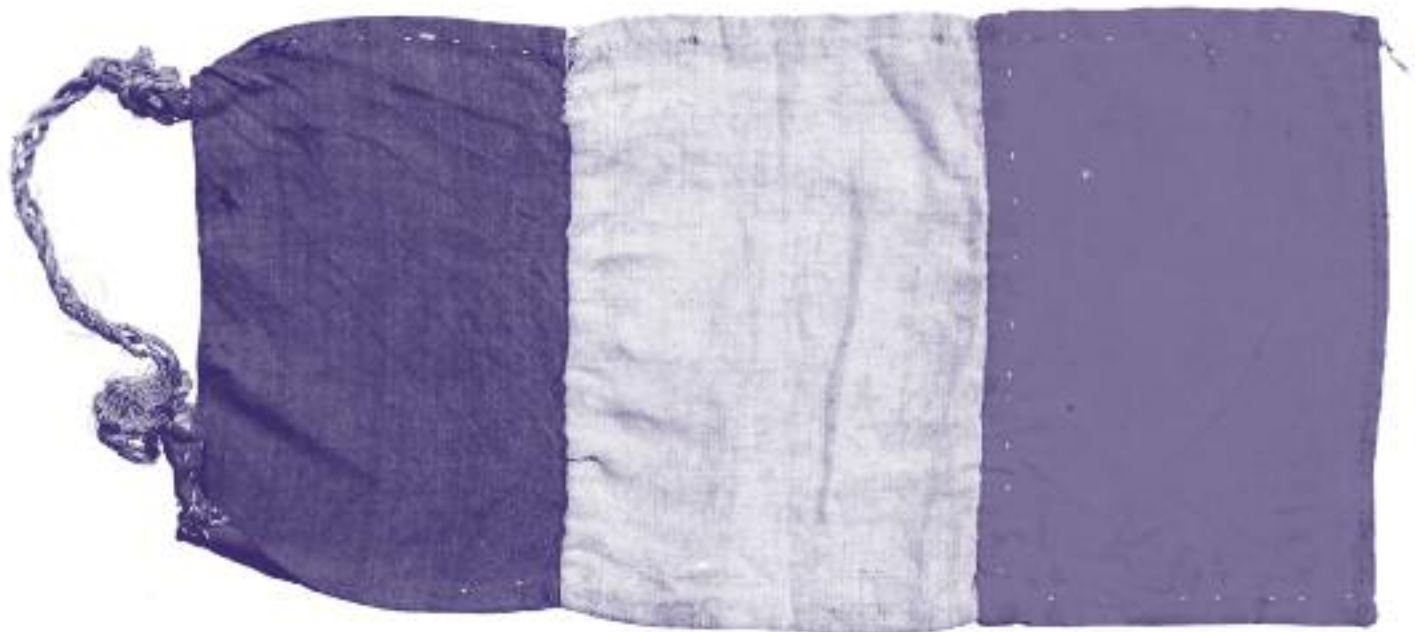


Soviet forced laborers after their liberation, April 15th, 1945



Liberation of concentration camp prisoners from the Laagberg camp at Wöbbelin near Ludwigslust in early May 1945

Home-made French tricolor and photographs taken after the liberation. Kept by Jean Baudet, a former French forced laborer, who made them available to the Place of Remembrance.





Avril 45

La 7/1 au grand colport

AB



Avril 45

Dernier jour à Kaffee. On est assez fatigué de la présence avec aux nigros.

AB



14 avil 1945

Kaffa

g. d. d. Olga, Maria, Paula, Nadia, Nissa,
Zuia

Paula

~~V. d. F. St~~
Kaffee
14 avril 1945
Départ vers V. d. F.
au 4^e jour
de la libération

Baudet





Avril 65

Soirée au salon de la 7/2

16

h



30 mai 65

Promenade dans le parc du
château de Wolfsburg.

17



3 Mai 65
 Mme Station... Vers la gare, et la
 France -

~~Henri~~ 19/4
 Baudet



6 Mai 65
 Liège... Qui attendez vous pour
 partir ?

Baudet



Jean d'ice bild isch anderken
 für alle artiste für Stadt Hilt
 du muss wissen wie isch 3 meteren
 mit werke isch gesonnen.

von R. D. F. Wagens.

31. 5. 15.

H. Gey.

Das gendesen
 konzert für französisch
 Stadt Hilt.
 in 25. mai



Zum Andenken
 für meine lieben Schatz
 werde ich leben ein Jahr
 und nie vergessen 100 Jahre
 von diesem geliebten
 Graubündlerin Serina Stastler
 und meine net Freundin
 Olga. 11. 6. 45 Jahre

Wenn liebe den hat diese
 Foto für die, - wenn nicht
 liebe den diese Foto kaputt
 waschen.

Deine liebe H. C. C.
 Knochlin



Remembrance

Our knowledge of the history of forced labor at the Volkswagen factory would be incomplete were it to rely solely on the documents and photographs which have come down to us. In the archive materials, the forced laborers, prisoners of war, and concentration camp prisoners almost invariably appear merely as a cost factor or a required quantity. These individuals' own perspective is generally lacking.

For this reason, more than 200 interviews with men and women who formerly worked as forced laborers were an essential component of the research that went into the book "The Volkswagen Factory and its Workers in the Third Reich" ("Das Volkswagenwerk und seine Arbeiter im Dritten Reich"), which was published in German in 1996. In preparing this exhibition, an effort was also made to speak with the individuals themselves.

Accounts by eyewitnesses of the time convey an impression of their personal experience, permitting one to guess at the dimensions and the intensity of what each lived through and what impact it must have had on the individual. Memory is manifold. From the accounts, one realizes that the experience of forced labor has accompanied those subjected to it throughout their lives down to the present day.

In order for memories to be recounted, there must also be a listener. In Germany, it took more than 40 years for the fate of the forced laborers to attract public attention. Those recounting their experiences must summon the courage to confront their own past. The personal motivations of those willing to provide information is just as varied as the means by which individuals cope with what they have lived through. One common feature is the witness they bear against discrimination.

"It is an unpleasant matter to return in one's memories to a time of human humiliation in which persons were treated as objects. This is probably the reason why I have only now decided to describe my experiences during the time I spent in Wolfsburg."

Julian Banaś, former Polish forced laborer, 1988

"Considering the 48 years which have gone by since 1945 and my physical condition, illness, and general weakness at that time, my only remaining memories of the time spent at Fallersleben are fragmentary, blurred, and disconnected, so that I am not able to give you accurate replies to the questions you have asked."

||| **Ivanka Varičak, arrested in Yugoslavia and deported via the concentration camps Dachau and Bergen-Belsen to the Volkswagen plant, letter of 1993**

"As far as the time I worked in the KdF car factory is concerned, I can remember neither an important occurrence nor the other women I worked with."

|| Sofija Knežević, arrested in Yugoslavia and deported via
|| the concentration camps Dachau and Bergen-Belsen to the
Volkswagen plant, letter of 1993

"At the sight of the factory, I felt pains in my heart, and I had to sit down. Memories welled up. (...) Thus I live one day with all the memories, and the next day I want to forget it all. So you can imagine what a deep impact the war made on me, lasting to this very day."

||| **Carlo van Troostenberghe, a former Belgian forced laborer, upon first revisiting Wolfsburg in 1992**

"I spent roughly 23 months in captivity in Germany. All the days, all the hours of these months have importance for me, and I have forgotten nothing. I could write much more about various events and facts that happened to me apart from those which I have already recounted. Today I can say that out of all this suffering a human being was born again to a new life."

||| Cesare Pilesi, a former Italian military internee, who had been deported from the stalag at Fallingbostal to the Volkswagen plant and finally to the concentration camp Mittelbau-Dora. His report appeared as a book in Italy in 1984.

"You will find (...) some pages in my account on my time in the 'Town of the KdF Car' during the years from 1943 until 1945. I have given preference to the anecdotal side of my experiences, (...) because I would prefer to remember those moments that were least terrible."

⋮ Jacques Le Franc, a former French forced laborer
⋮ at the Volkswagen plant, 1998

"I shall not describe the camp regulations, my colleagues have already done this accurately and at length. I would only like to say that our 'P', which was mandatory, was a reason for our being laughed at and humiliated everywhere in the factory and in the camp. For the other nationalities, this was not so extreme. (...) I returned ill and exhausted. To this day I suffer from the consequences of the past years, years of annihilation, cold, and fear. Today I suffer from diseases of the motor system, from heart disease, and from many others. That which I have described reminds me of the pain from the years of my youth gone by."

⋮ Katarzyna Morzydusza, a former Polish former
⋮ forced laborer, in her account from memory, 1991

"I was maltreated, and today I still bear the visible signs of it."

⋮ **Jean-Louis Devillard, a former French concentration camp
prisoner in the Laagberg camp, 1986**

"I was very (...) proud of myself for being capable of noticing beauty under these conditions, and I resolved that – provided I stayed alive and had the opportunity – I would want to revisit these places where I was in captivity, that is, where I was imprisoned, and to see them with the eyes of a free human being. And this is also what I have done."

Zwi Hoenig, one of 500 concentration camp prisoners selected in Auschwitz for work in the underground dispersal site at Tiercelet, 1988

"After my return the wound in my wrist became inflamed, where tuberculosis of the bone later developed. This prevented me from getting a permanent work, so I only worked for five and a half years, for which after much effort I was classified in Group 3 for an invalidity pension, which is a low pension calculation basis. All this placed me in a difficult situation in my life, and today I am still suffering the consequences of not having been able to work normally. (...)

One of my wishes is to describe the places. As a free man, I would like to look once again upon Wolfsburg, the Town of the KdF Car, and at the Volkswagen plant, and also at whatever that place was called – Ruhen [Rühen]. While today there is no money for the things which it would be pleasant to do, back then the great fear was that one wouldn't even survive."

⋮
Stefan Żurawicz, a former Polish forced laborer, 1986

"It really hurts me when I have to recount all this."

"After the liberation it was like this. I was sent to Gardelegen. I got to know the young men and women who were left behind from the camps. (...) And if they are left over, so alone, and have rendered an accounting. What was the point of it? Why did I have to stay alive, and everybody's gone? There was just a – there was something so empty about it. (...) What actually was the point of fighting to stay alive there?"

⋮ Sara Frenkel, a Jewish woman who worked as a nurse
with Polish identity papers and thus managed to survive,
interviews 1988 and 1991



Confronting the History of the Volkswagen Factory in the Third Reich

During the Second World War, the Volkswagen company of the era employed almost 20,000 women and men as forced laborers. It had completed the transition to armaments manufacturing by 1941 at the latest.

This integration into the National Socialist system later posed the challenge for the company of confronting its past. In 1986, on the initiative of the Works Council headed by Walter Hiller, then Chairman of the Central Works Council, the Board of Management of Volkswagen AG commissioned a team of scholars under the direction of Prof. Dr. Hans Mommsen to prepare an independent research study on the history of the company. This was published in German in 1996 under the title "The Volkswagen Factory and its Workers in the Third Reich" ("Das Volkswagenwerk und seine Arbeiter im Dritten Reich").

In 1991, Volkswagen AG provided DM 12 million for welfare activities and activities to bring different nationalities closer together. These funds were used to support hospitals and facilities for the psycho-social care of Nazi victims in the former forced laborers' countries of origin and in Israel. In addition, the Board of Curators charged with allocating the funds promoted projects for young people, especially the German-Polish youth exchange program.

A memorial stone on the grounds of the Wolfsburg plant is a reminder of the use of forced labor in the Volkswagen factory.

In 1998, Volkswagen AG decided to provide individual humanitarian aid to former forced laborers who had been required to work for Volkswagenwerk GmbH during the war years.

Visit by former forced laborers to Wolfsburg with financial support from the German-Polish Society and the Wolfsburg Church Circle ("Kirchenkreis")



Group of former concentration camp prisoners from Auschwitz and their wives visit what used to be the air-raid shelters, September 1990



Visit of former forced laborers in the Volkswagen plant, 1990

Since 1986, Volkswagen AG has organized exchanges between Polish and German young people in the International Youth Meeting Center in Auschwitz/Oświęcim. Dr. Peter Hartz, Member of the Board of Management of Volkswagen AG (Human Resources), and Klaus Volkert, the Chairman of the Volkswagen AG Central and Group Works Councils, paid tribute to the activities in a joint message of greeting on the tenth anniversary of the center's establishment:

"In recent years, no other exchange has linked young people's heads, hearts, and hands so directly, promoted their sense of responsibility to such an extent, or stimulated their imagination and sense of commitment to such a degree as the exchanges with Polish youth in the International Meeting Center."



Besides seminars and lectures, the upkeep of the former camp is also part of the program.

"(...) an experience which changed our lives and will remain part of us when we view the world and the prejudices which surround us" (comments of a VW trainee after attending a program at the Oświęcim center).



VW trainees doing renovation work on the grounds of the former concentration camp Auschwitz-Birkenau (Oświęcim Memorial Site).



 Polish and German young people on their way to lay a wreath at the former extermination camp Auschwitz-Birkenau, 1993



 On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the founding of the exchange program, the workforce and the company donated a minibus for the work of the Oświęcim International Youth Meeting Center. The photo shows Faustin Plizko, the Director of the Meeting Center, receiving the key from Hans-Jürgen Uhl, General Manager of the Volkswagen AG Central and Group Works Councils, and Dr. Peter Hartz, Member of the Board of Management of Volkswagen AG (Human Resources).

Volkswagen AG remembers the fate of forced laborers, prisoners of war, and concentration camp prisoners who were forced to work in the Volkswagen factory during the Second World War.



 The memorial stone at the entrance to Sector 2 on the southern perimeter of the Wolfsburg plant was solemnly dedicated on October 9th, 1991.



 Dr. Peter Frerk, Member of the Board of Management of Volkswagen AG, Walter Hiller, Minister for Social Affairs in Lower Saxony, and Klaus Volkert, Chairman of the Volkswagen AG Central and Group Works Councils, at the dedication of the memorial stone.



 1995 opening of the exhibition organized by Volkswagen factory trainees in the Hall 1 rooms formerly used as air-raid shelters. The young people documented their commitment and the impressions they had gathered while doing maintenance work on the Oświęcim Memorial Site.



 Construction in 1999 of the Place of Remembrance of the history of forced labor in the Volkswagen factory. The project was jointly realized by the Volkswagen AG Corporate Archives, Volkswagen Coaching Ltd., the Central Works Council, and youth representatives. VW trainees took part in the construction of the Place of Remembrance.



A scholarly appraisal of the history of the Volkswagen company in the Third Reich by Prof. Dr. Hans Mommsen and his team



 In October 1991, Volkswagen AG held a symposium in Wolfsburg where the research results of the group of scholars were presented and discussed.

From right to left: Hans-Jürgen Uhl from the Central and Group Works Councils, Dr. Peter Frerk, Member of the Board of Management of Volkswagen AG, Hans Mommsen, Gaby Rüttgers, Therkel Straede, and Manfred Grieger.

 Professor Dr. Hans Mommsen at the 1991 Symposium on the History of Forced Labor for the Volkswagen Factory



The book authored by Prof. Dr. Hans Mommsen and Dr. Manfred Grieger was published by the Econ publishing company in 1996 and immediately recognized as a landmark study of the interrelationship of big business and the Nazi system.

In 1992/93, Volkswagen AG supported various social and charitable projects in Israel. The five-man Board of Curators – Prof. Dr. Dietrich Goldschmidt, former Chairman of the Aktion Sühnezeichen/Friedensdienste, Hans Koschnik, Member of the German Federal Parliament and former Mayor of the City of Bremen, Prof. Dr. Hans Mommsen, Ruhr University of Bochum, Klaus Volkert, Chairman of the Central and Group Works Councils of Volkswagen AG, and Dr. Peter Frerk, Member of the Board of Management of Volkswagen AG – decided to focus support on Israeli institutions serving Nazi victims who are now elderly.

With the funds received, the Jewish Claims Conference provided assistance to a number of institutions in Israel which care for the aged. These include the following:

- Byer Home for the Aged, Jerusalem
- Hailpern Home for the Aged, Ashkelon
- Home for the Aged Jacques H. Asseoff, Rishon le Zion
- Kibbuz Afek, Doar Afek
- Kibbuz Ein-Gev, Ein Gev
- Kibbuz Matzuva, Western Galilee
- Kibbuz Shaa Hagolan, Jordan Valley
- Kibbuz Yavne, B'nei B'rak
- Regional Home for the Aged – Sukat Shalom, Safed Re'uth Women's Services, Tel Aviv
- Shalva Convalescent Home, Givatayim
- Tiferet Banim Citizen's Home, Tel Aviv



 The Givat Haviva facility in Tel Aviv, which is dedicated to promoting equality and understanding between Jews and Arabs, also received financial support.



 The Aktion Sühnezeichen/Friedensdienste received funds to renovate and modernize the International Youth Encounter Center "House Pax" in Jerusalem.

Considerable sums were sent to Poland, Belarus, and the Ukraine to support aid projects. In particular, medical and psycho-social facilities received grants.



The Children's Surgical Clinic in Minsk/Belarus received a donation to build a new operating theatre, improve postoperative care, and modernize its medical equipment.



Doctors at the Children's Surgical Clinic in Minsk received training in the use of modern medical technology at University Hospital in Düsseldorf.

In July 1998, Volkswagen AG announced its intention to provide humanitarian assistance to individuals forced to work for the Volkswagen company in existence during World War II. Volkswagen AG considered itself morally challenged to provide assistance in addition to the compensation paid by the Federal Republic of Germany so as to help improve the quality of the lives of individuals who had by now reached an advanced age. An Humanitarian Fund was established in September 1998 and provided with DM 20 million. Assistance payments are made in accordance with guidelines established by its Board of Curators, whose members include Simon Peres, Dr. Franz Vranitzky, and Dr. Richard von Weizsäcker. KPMG Deutsche Treuhand-Gesellschaft was engaged to receive applications and administer the fund. KPMG has published notices in newspapers in many countries to establish contact with former forced laborers. Requests are handled quickly and unbureaucratically in accordance with the instructions of the Board of Curators. Disbursements began in late 1998.



 A self-help organization of former forced laborers and concentration camp prisoners in Zgorzelec/Poland received support through the "Doctor for Poland" initiative. Its club-house was renovated, improved to permit winter use, and also extended by the addition of a treatment room with modern medical equipment.



 A rehabilitation center for handicapped children was built as a result of cooperation between the Bavarian Ministry for Social Affairs and Ukraine. Volkswagen AG provided DM 2 million for an interdisciplinary facility for social pediatrics.



Appendix

Corridor

Air-Raid Shelters and Bombing of the Volkswagen Factory – the Place of Remembrance at an Historic Location

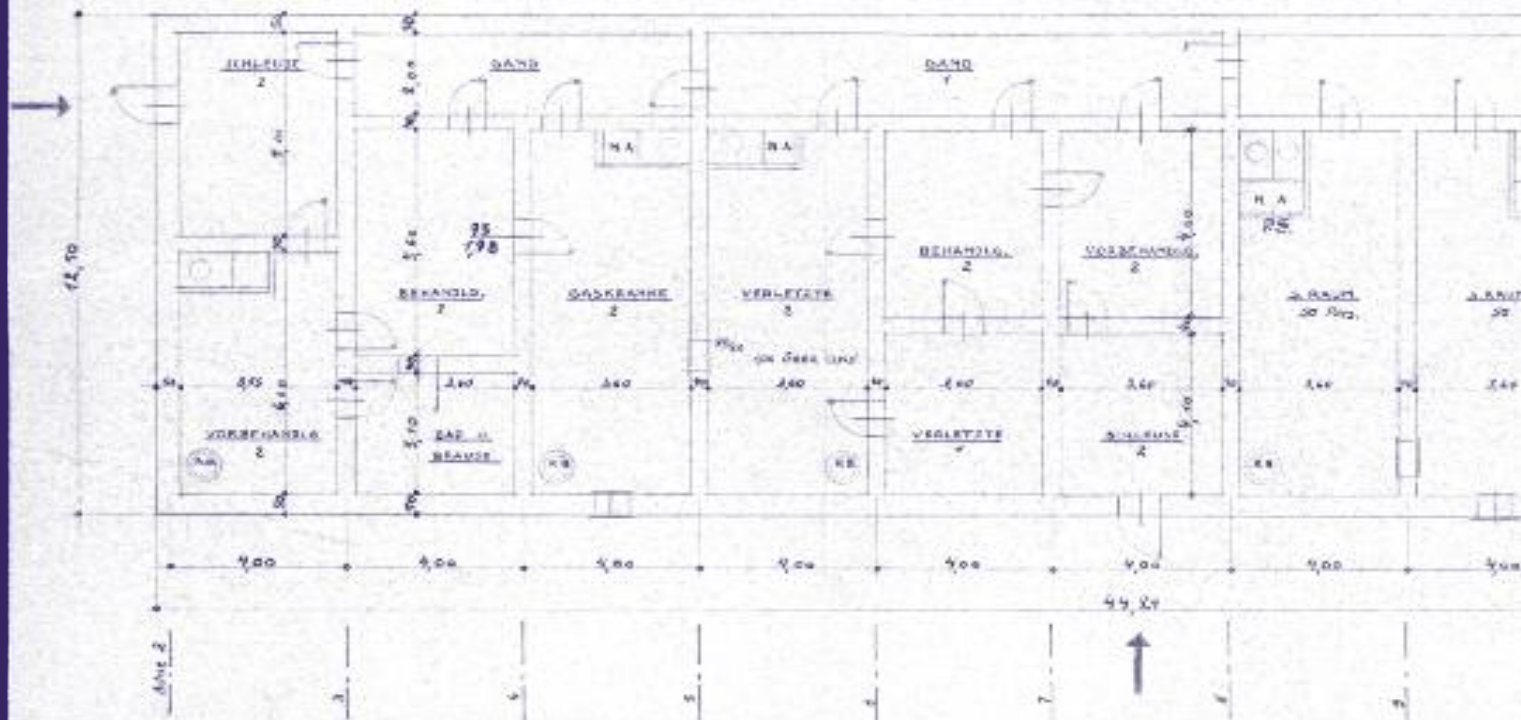


Signs posted in air-raid shelters in the Volkswagen plant

V.W. WERKE

WERKZEUGBAU

VORENTWURF 1:100.

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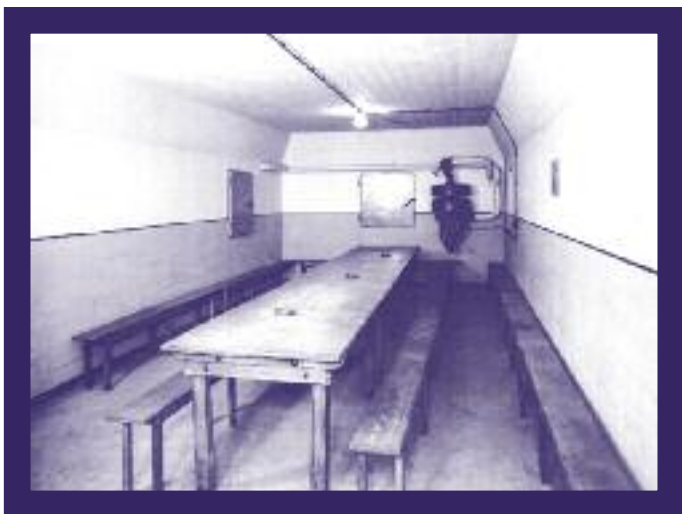
"Air-raid command post"

This photo, like the two which follow, is from the album, "The Development of the Volkswagen Factory Since the Beginning of the War in 1939", compiled by F. Kuhlmann, a plant engineer, in 1944.



"Rooms for fire brigade when on call"





"Air-raid shelters"



Clearance work after the crash of an American bomber on Hall 1, April 29th, 1944

"When we worked at the factory, whenever there was an air-raid alert we had to go to the shelters that were located beneath it, separated according to nationality. The shelters held 40–50 people. The roofs were made of steel-reinforced concrete, 2.5 meters thick, and after we had been herded in there we were locked in behind steel doors coated with rubber. One light bulb and one ventilator. Locked in with a padlock, we looked at the ceiling to see if it was still in one piece when the planes flew by; I noticed [that we were guarded] from outside by the fire brigade, the factory security service or factory police."

From the report by the former Polish forced laborer
Stefan Żurawicz, 1986

"Because of the numerous air-raid alerts, we suffered from a chronic lack of sleep. When at work, we had to stay at our work station even when an air-raid alert sounded. On the other hand, if there was an air-raid alert during our rest period, we were woken up and driven into the shelter – sometimes three or four times a night."

From the report by Júlia Kértész, a prisoner in the Hall 1
concentration camp labor detail, published in 1992

Photographs

Jean Baudet:	p. 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141
Pierre Bernard:	p. 79 bottom
Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv, Freiburg/Br.:	p. 89
Gesamtbetriebsrat der Volkswagen AG (Ed.), Geschichte des Volkswagenwerkes während der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus, undated [1991]:	p. 161
Henk 't Hoen:	p. 59, 60, 97
Innenministerium des Landes Nordrhein-Westfalen (Ed.), Kinderklinik Minsk, undated:	p. 168
Musée de la Résistance et de la Déportation, Besançon:	p.133
Public Record Office, London:	p. 53 top
Krystyna Redłowska:	p. 28
Stanisława Spalińska:	p. 27
Studenten onder de Bezetting, Uitgeverij Kirchner Amsterdam, 1946:	p. 63
Eugenia Kazimiera Sudol:	p. 29
Volkswagen AG, Corporate Archives, Wolfsburg:	p. 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 24, 25, 32, 33, 34, 36, 37, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 56, 74, 79 top, 85, 92, 93, 94, 106, 108, 110, 111, 114, 115, 116, 117, 120, 122, 128, 133, 134, 158, 162 right, 163, 165, 167, 169, 171, 172/173, 174, 175
Volkswagen Coaching Gesellschaft mbH, Wolfsburg:	p. 159, 160, 162 left
Piet Albert Wit:	p. 96
Wolfsburger Nachrichten:	p. 164

Documentation

Bundesarchiv, Berlin:	p. 62
Central'nyi Archiv Ministerstva Oboronyj Rossijskoj Federacii (CAMO) [Central Archives of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation], Podol'sk:	p. 38, 39, 40, 41
Deutsche Dienststelle (WASt) für die Benachrichtigung der nächsten Angehörigen von Gefallenen der ehemaligen deutschen Wehrmacht, Berlin:	p. 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71
Deutsches Museum, Munich:	p. 130
Robert Hancke:	p. 101, 102, 103
Henk 't Hoen:	p. 99
Johan Rotman:	p. 61, 75, 76, 77, 78
Hans Schuckenböhmer:	p. 33
Staatsarchiv Nuremberg:	p. 42, 43, 44
Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv, Weimar:	p. 129
Volkswagen AG, Corporate Archives, Wolfsburg:	p. 13, 86, 87, 90/91, 98, 104/105, 118, 119, 123, 128
Zentrale Stelle der Landesjustizverwaltungen zur Aufklärung von NS-Verbrechen, Ludwigsburg:	p. 124

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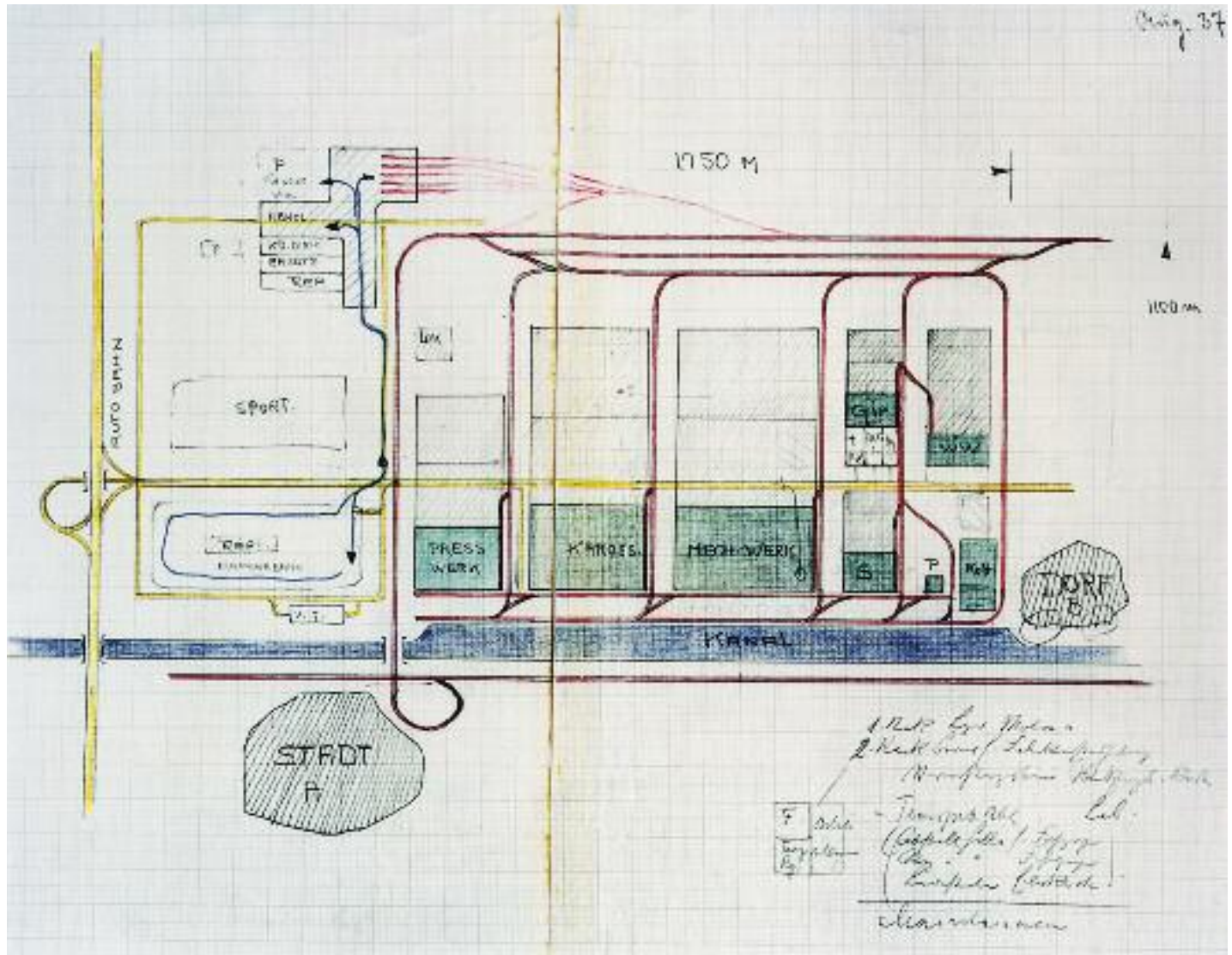
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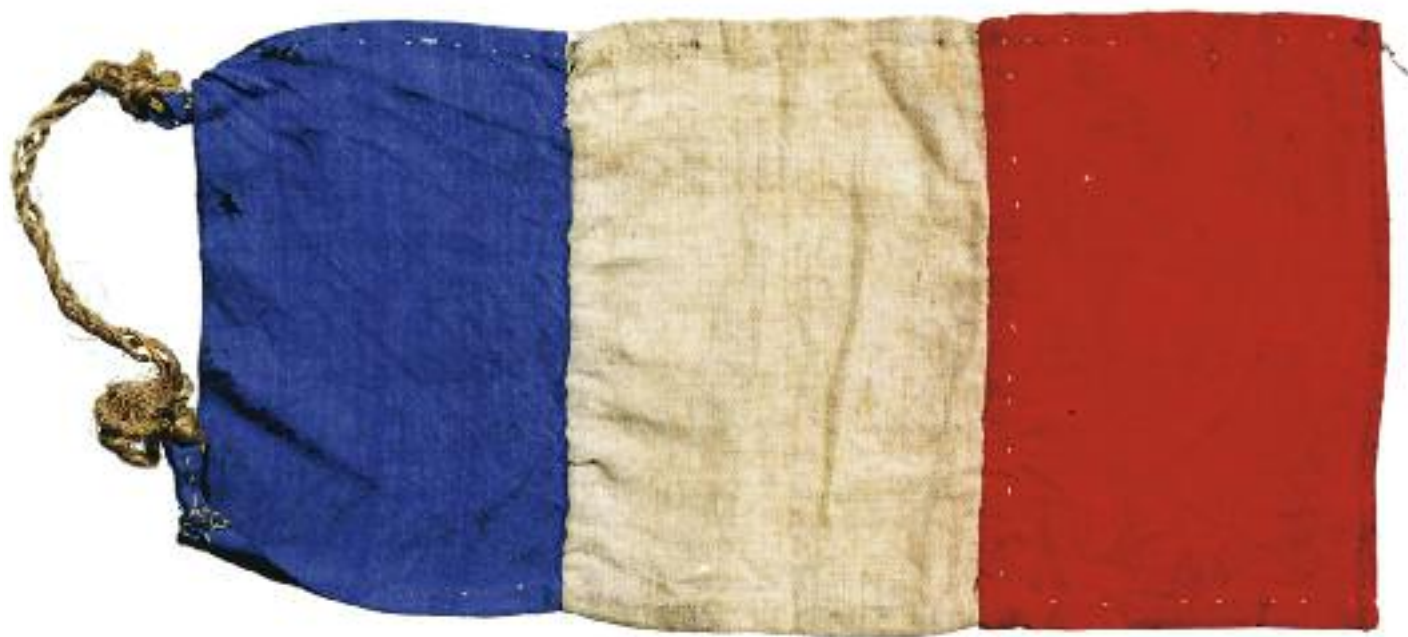




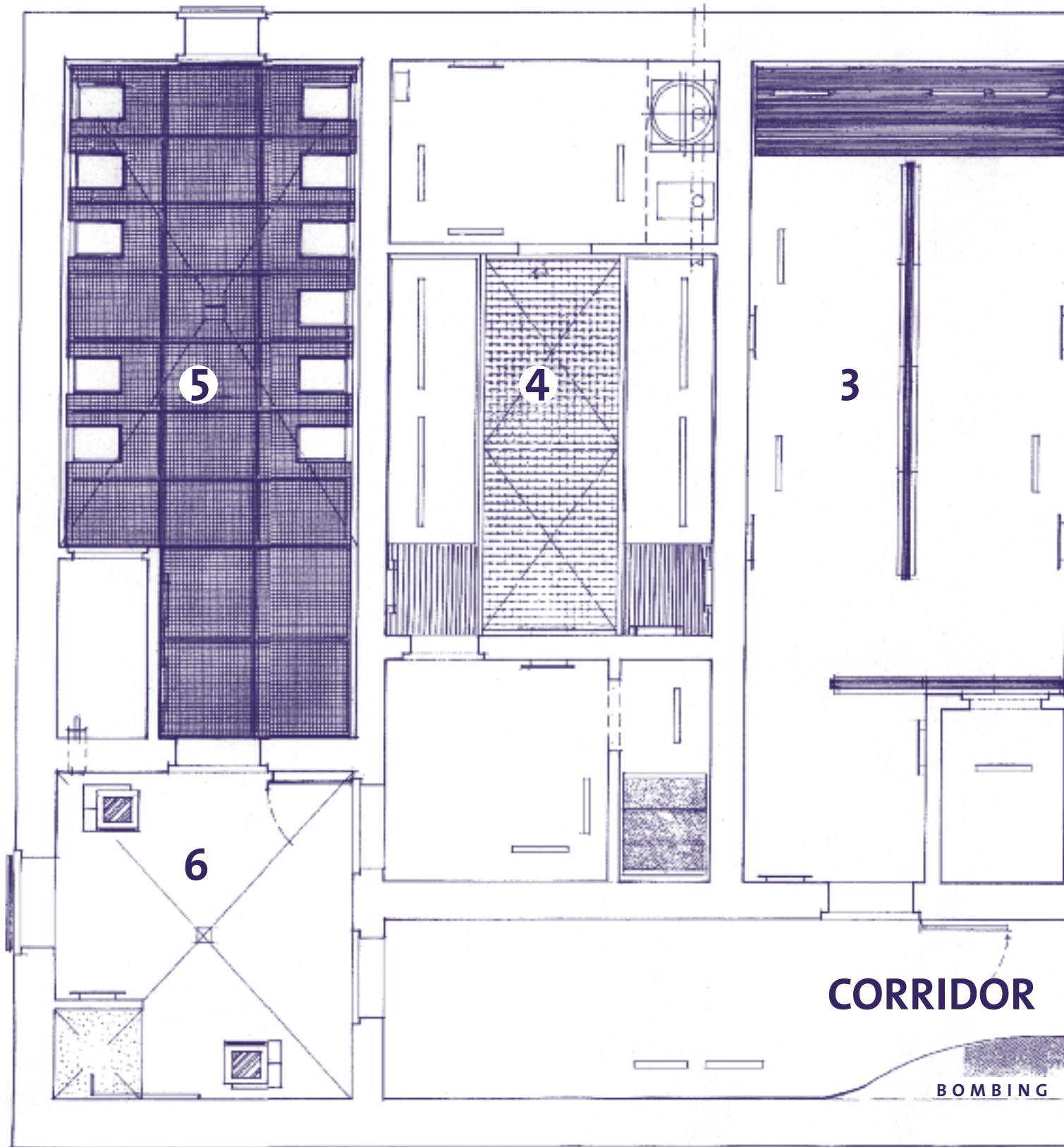
"Eastern workers", women and men, attending a sporting event. Photograph taken in 1943

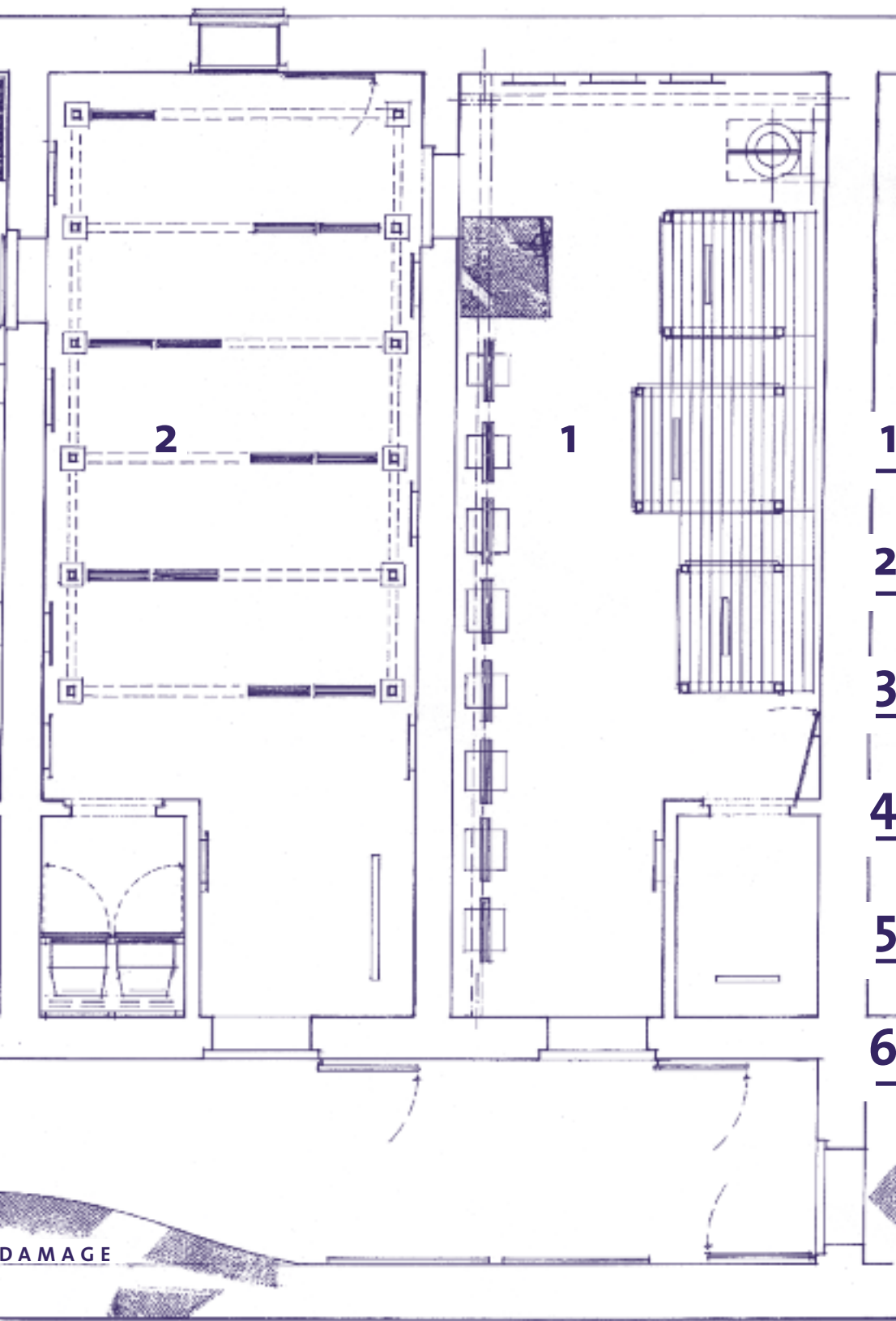


Small hand-made velvet bag with a strap made of hemp



Home-made French tricolor. Kept by Jean Baudet, a former French forced laborer, who made it available to the Place of Remembrance.





Sketch – Overall planning

- 1** THE "VOLKSWAGEN" PROJECT
- 2** THE EXPANSION OF ARMAMENTS PRODUCTION AND SYSTEMATIC DEVELOPMENT OF FORCED LABOR
- 3** CONCENTRATION CAMP PRISONERS
- 4** DISPERSAL OF THE VOLKSWAGEN PLANT TO UNDERGROUND AND DECENTRALIZED LOCATIONS
- 5** REMEMBRANCE
- 6** CONFRONTING THE HISTORY OF THE VOLKSWAGEN FACTORY IN THE THIRD REICH

NORTH ENTRANCE (main entrance)

Historical Notes

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