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Polish civilian forced labourers and prisoners of war in the Organization Todt – Einsatzgruppe Wiking, 1941–1945

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Introduction

The Organization Todt (OT) was a paramilitary construction company in the Third Reich, named after founder, engineer Fritz Todt, Ph.D. The organisation's genesis started with two large construction projects by Todt, supervised by him, namely: building of a network of modern motorways in the Third Reich in the years 1933–1938 and a system of fortifications on the French border in the years 1938–1940, called the Siegfried Line. With Hitler's permission, OT was independent from government administration from the beginning, being relatively free to carry out various construction projects. After the outbreak of the war, OT started to participate in works undertaken by the Wehrmacht, successfully competing with army engineers. With Hitler's expansion all over Europe, OT followed the Wehrmacht to occupied territories carrying out many tasks related not only to holding the front (construction of various defences, field railways etc.) but also connected with the operations of troops in occupied territories, especially maintaining efficient road and railway communication (repairing damaged roads and bridges, modernising the railway network or constructing new lines etc.).

OT was sent to Denmark and Norway in April 1940, and to Finland in Autumn 1941. Its building activity was different in each country. In Denmark OT built only fortifications, at first on a small scale and later, from mid-1942, on a larger scale. In Finland, OT's activities were more diversified, although a majority of works were of

an emergency character since they were performed for the needs of the 20 Mountain Army in its war with the Soviets. Apart from fortifications, OT undertook various road works, including maintaining road accessibility in winter. The OT received the greatest number of construction tasks, including permanent fortifications, in Norway. At the beginning, OT built the base of German submarines in Trondheim, but one year later was employed alongside the engineering troops of the Wehrmacht, as well as the building troops of the Marine and Luftwaffe, in constructing cannon posts for Coastal artillery.

After the announcement of the “Viking” programme in May 1942 and after the restructuring of management of the OT in mid-1942 by Albert Speer, the successor of Todt, after the latter’s tragic death in February 1942, the status of OT increased in Scandinavia and in other countries under Nazi occupation. In each country, so-called operation groups were created (*Einsatzgruppe*) which obtained many administrative rights, especially concerning the economic policy of the occupant. Denmark, Norway and Western Finland had fallen into the sphere of activity of the so-called “Viking” operation group (*Einsatzgruppe Wiking*, EG Wiking), with its seat in Oslo. Willy Henne, a close associate of Todt at the time, was chief of the Technical Department of the Third Reich in Norway. Strategic decisions on the economic policy-making in this country rested in his hands¹.

The operations of OT in Norway and Finland were initially based on labour power from Norway, Denmark, Finland and Germany. However, a scarcity of local labour power and skilled German workers lead the organisation to increase its usage of forcibly imported workers and prisoners of war (POW), primarily Russians, Poles, Czechs, Yugoslavs and other nationalities. Polish nationals soon became the largest group of foreign workers (despite Norwegians and Germans) affiliated to the EG Wiking.

How many Poles were hired in the EG Wiking and in which methods were used to recruit them? This article presents the main results from my archival studies in Norwegian archives (Riksarkivet in Oslo, Statsarkivet and NGU-arkivet in Trondheim) and German archives (Bundesarchiv in Aachen and Koblenz, and Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv in Freiburg). I have been able to determine the number of Polish civilian labourers and POWs that were affiliated to the EG Wiking and deployed in Norway and Finland by analysing OT-*Arbeitseinsatzkartei*, transportation lists and registration cards (repatriation register) not issued to aliens following the end of the war. Furthermore, I have investigated how civilian Poles were recruited and why the methods varied from region to region. Lastly, I have investigated how many Poles were hired to construct fortifications, *Nordlandsbanen* and roads, and which type of work assignments Polish labourers most often conducted.

1 For more information please see: Franz Wilhelm Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt. Bauen für Staat und Wehrmacht 1938–1945* (Koblenz: Bernard&Graefe Verlag, 1987).

The OTs' recruitment system in the Polish areas incorporated into the Third Reich, October 1941–July 1944

The Polish areas occupied by Germany were divided between the areas wholly incorporated into the Third Reich and the areas that constituted a Polish rump state under the German name *Das Generalgouvernement für die besetzten polnischen Gebiete*, often abbreviated to *Generalgouvernement* (GG). The Germans created two new regions (*Gau*) in the areas incorporated into the Third Reich: *Reichsgau Danzig–Westpreussen* in the north and *Reichsgau Wartheland* in the west. Moreover, the western part of the district of Kraków, the district of Katowice and the Tatra mountains in the south, were incorporated into the province of *Oberschlesien*. The northern parts of the Polish province of *Mazowien*, the dubbed *Regierungsbezirk Zichenau*, were later absorbed into the German region of *Ostpreussen*. The GG constituted the central and eastern territories of Poland, with Warsaw, Radom, Kraków and Lwów as its main cities (Lwów and its surrounding areas were incorporated into the GG following the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941). The twofold division of Poland would become important for the OT's recruitment of labour power.

The Polish areas incorporated into the Third Reich constituted an important stockpile of labour power for Hitler's Germany. Recruitment from this area was in general governed by the same rules as in the Third Reich.

The OT had three main methods for recruiting labour power. The first method was operational mainly between 1941 and 1942. It was a simple recruitment procedure which involved German construction companies that had contracts with the OT, entailing that the company hired its own workers. The companies that signed construction contracts with the OT were automatically considered a weapons manufacturing company. Company employees (*Firmenangehörige*) were given a service obligation document (*Dienstverpflichtungsschein*) issued by the local employment office. The document entailed that the employee was prohibited to seek employment with other companies. These employees were called permanent workers (*Stammarbeiter*)² and were required to follow their company. The companies received labourers from all territories occupied by the Third Reich. Companies that previously had undertaken work for the OT could be assigned labourers that had been recruited by other companies' recruitment offices in Germany, offices established in the incorporated areas of Poland, or by local employment offices. This was the most common path to employment in the OT – indirect and without concern for the preferences of the worker.

2 Riksarkivet (OT), Eske 42, Handbook of the Organisation Todt, London, March 1945, MIRS/MR – OT/5/45 (hereinafter: HOT), 168.

Map 1. Original German map from 1 March 1940



1. Oryginalna mapa niemiecka przedstawiająca podział administracyjny okupowanych ziem polskich z naniesionymi przez autora pasami niemieckiego osadnictwa planowanego na ziemiach wcielonych do Rzeszy

Source: Czesław Madajczyk, *Polityka III Rzeszy w okupowanej Polsce*, vol. 1 (Warszawa: Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1970), 64–65.

This recruitment method was terminated during the autumn of 1942. The OT-central gave new branches of employment offices (the so-called *Nebenstelle*) the task of undertaking a general registration of all labourers from the areas incorporated into the Third Reich and the GG, and to control documents issued to newly recruited personnel in the OT. This constituted the second recruitment method used by the OT, a method based on forced service obligation (*Dienstverpflichtung*). Each labourer was given a written order stating that he was required to visit the employment office. The OT established recruitment agencies (*OT-Werbstellen*) in larger employment offices to handle labour recruitment. These agencies were given authorisation to ship selected individuals to specific companies in all occupied areas. The agencies were furthermore authorised to ship employees to co-operate with the Wehrmacht for recruitment of soldiers³. The recruitment process was as such wholly integrated within the OT structure.

The OT-employment card contained essential personal information, such as the candidate's first name and surname, date of birth, residence, citizenship, and information on family matters (marital status and age of wife, number of children, their names and age). Moreover, the card contained information on the labourer's profession and employment position. Moreover, the candidate was medically examined to determine his ability to work. Each OT-recruit was given a service booklet (*Dienstbuch*) with a number corresponding to the number found on his employment card. Moreover, all newly registered candidates were given an identification number (*Erkennungsmarke Nr.*), which was registered on the employment card. This number was important as it remained the same throughout the duration of the labourer's service, whereas the number on the employee's service booklet changed when the labourer was moved from Finland to Norway, or vice versa. The last part of the registration entailed supplying the recruits with workwear or OT-uniforms and to distribute salaries based on OT-tariff.

It has been possible to estimate the total number of Polish nationals that were deployed for work in Norway and Finland by arranging all identification numbers in numerical order. The shipments to Norway amount to a total of 45 transportation lists. The lists mostly concern transportation from the GG, but also transportation from *Wartheland* and *Danzig-Westpreussen*. The OT-workers were required to carry their identification number around their necks in the same way as Wehrmacht soldiers⁴.

The German construction companies' role in recruitment of labour power was, thus, reduced to the bare minimum during the spring of 1942. This further entailed that it was only larger companies, which conducted important tasks for the war economy,

3 RA, E. 42, HOT, 168–169.

4 Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt*. 186 and 171–182; see also: RA, E. 42, HOT, 169. Clothing varied. Poles having proclaimed German nationality (*Volksdeutsche*) were given uniforms, whereas the rest, and particularly the lowest ranking (*Hilfsarbeiter*), were given civilian clothing with a brown armlet inscribed with "Org. Todt". These labourers also received the lowest salaries. Labourers of higher rank (*OT-Vorarbeiter* and *OT-Meister*) were usually uniformed.

that were allocated essential professional labour power. This development came as a result of the establishment of the OT–central in Berlin, the EG Wiking in Oslo, and by development of new organisational guidelines introduced under the new OT–management, headed by Albert Speer. The areas covered by EG Wiking required an increasing replenishment of labour power. This was an important reason as to why the OT forcibly recruited employees without regard to their age or professional qualifications.

The third recruitment method used by the OT in the Polish areas incorporated in the Third Reich was based on voluntary conscription to employment offices. The documents of the individuals recruited in this manner stated that the labourer was “voluntarily obliged for service” (*Freie–dienstverpflichtet*). However, there was only a total of 52 people that volunteered for service in the OT in this manner. It is plausible that the majority of them had signed the third or fourth *Deutsche Volksliste* (DVL) (more information below) and were included in the OT transportation lists of German nationals. The nationality of the volunteering labourers was revealed following the end of the war and the majority proclaimed Polish citizenship⁵.

It is reasonable that the first and third recruitment method entailed preferable working conditions and more “freedom” in comparison to the second method, which was arguably characterised by coercion and poor work conditions. Nonetheless, all labourers and companies affiliated to the OT were subject to coercion and compulsory labour⁶.

The first Poles from the Polish areas of the Third Reich arrived in Finland during the autumn of 1941. It was 17 workmen from *Oberschlesien* (Upper Silesia) who arrived alongside German companies and were stationed in Petsamo and Kuusamo (see table 1). Thirty Poles from *Riegerungsbezirk Zichenau* (Zichenau District), together with the German company, “Matthaus Hauck” from Würzburg, were stationed in Kuusamo in July 1942 (see table 2). All 30 workers were professional carpenters, locksmiths and machinists, and were permanent employees of the company from 1940 until 1941. The group was deployed as a *Vorkommando* to undertake essential preparations. The harsh climatic conditions in Finland meant that it was difficult to recruit skilled German labourers and the number of workers was, thus, insufficient. Instead, the Germans relied on the labour power of POWs. The analysis of the OTs *Arbeitseinsatzkartei* has revealed that several of the Poles deployed in Finland were tasked with supervising prisoners. All OT labourers, including Polish nationals, were transferred from Finland to Norway during the autumn of 1944 after the armistice between Soviet Union and Finland.

5 RA, OT–Abteilung Arbeitseinsatz (OT–Abt.Arb.), E. 19, Transportlisten no. 79, 81, 82. List no. 79, dated 26 March 1943, include 98 Reichsdeutsche labourers, and among them, 14 from Gdansk Pomerania (6 of which proclaimed Polish heritage). List no. 81, dated 30 March 1943, includes 288 Germans, of which 24 resided in the Polish areas incorporated in the Third Reich. Seven of these individuals were listed as travelling to Poland. List no. 82 includes 184 Germans, of which 14 people resided in the Polish areas of the Third Reich. Six of them returned to Poland.

6 Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt*, 133.

The onset of the EG Wiking-program in the latter part of April 1942 entailed a steadily increasing deployment of labourers in Norway. OT-labourers were transported by boat from Aalborg and Aarhus (Denmark), or from Szczecin (Poland) to Oslo as often as two to three times a month. Between April and December 1942, the OT deployed 6036 labourers in Norway⁷. These individuals were primarily of German, French, Belgian, Italian and Dutch nationality and arrived as employees of German and Austrian construction companies that had been hired by the OT to build fortifications⁸. The companies' employees included Poles from the Polish areas of the Third Reich. It is necessary to underline that German archival documents, inter alia the transportation lists, exclude the individual labourer's nationality meaning that they were all bulked together as German nationals. As such, the OT could easily ensure that the management of each company was German. Polish nationals from the incorporated areas could, if they spoke German and had a professional German education, be appointed to administrative positions in the construction companies. The analysis of the OTs' *Arbeitseinsatzkartei*, documents from the repatriation register and statements of nationality made by labourers, makes it possible to estimate the number of Poles from the areas incorporated into the Third Reich that were hired by German companies to undertake work in Norway and Finland. The documents show that 505 Poles were deployed in Norway between May and December 1942 (see table 1–3). They make up one-tenth of all OT employees.

Workers recruited from the Polish areas of the Third Reich were shipped to Norway and Finland alongside three types of German companies. The first type was German construction companies that, besides hiring Germans, primarily hired Poles from the incorporated areas. Companies of this type are: "Bernhard Frericks" from Berlin; "Curt Kallenbach" from Saarbrücken; "Sager und Woerner" from Berlin (all of which originally operated in Finland and subsequently in Norway); "Willy Jaeschke" from Duisburg (which mainly hired Poles from Oberschlesien); "Weidmann und Greatsch" from Emmerich/Duisburg (mainly Poles from Oberschlesien); "Willy Krenz" from Berlin; and "Karl Brant" from Brema. Three of these companies, "Karl Brandt", "Sager und Woerner", and "Curt Kallenbach" were also hired by the EG West⁹. It is not possible to determine how the Polish labourers were hired by these companies, but most of them were undoubtedly recruited by German employment offices. It is likely that

7 Bundesarchiv–Militarisches Archiv, Freiburg (BA–MA), Wehrmachtbefehlshaber Norwegen, RW: 39/88, Monatsbericht: April, May, June 1942; ibidem, RW 39/89, Monatsbericht: July, August, September 1942; ibidem, RW: 90, Monatsbericht: October, November, December 1942.

8 RA, E. 41, case 91a, OT–Einsatzgruppe West, Baustandsbericht v. 15.04.1942, Firmeneinsatz.

9 Ibidem, in April 1942 the Kallenbach corporation employed 627 labourers in EG West. 589 of these (93.9%) were foreign civilian labourers. The Brandt corporation employed 394 foreign labourers, amounting to 96.3% of its total work force of 409 individuals. "Sager und Woerner" employed 331 foreign labourers, which amounts to 95.3% of its work force of 347 persons.

the labourers were assigned to one of the above mentioned companies following their arrival in the OT camp, located in Wannsee near Berlin, in which they prepared for transportation to the EG Wiking.

The second group of German construction companies are companies that were established within the Polish areas incorporated into the Third Reich, particularly from two new *Reichsgau*: *Danzig–Westpreussen* and *Wartheland*, and the area of *Stettin Pomerania*. Four companies from *Danzig–Westpreussen* operated in Norway with Polish labour power: “Arge Pommern” from Bad Polzin (Połczyn); “Max Maertins” from Gdańsk; “Wilhelm Meister” from Elbing (Elbląg); and “Richard Menzel” from Köslin (Koszalin). All four companies employed Polish and German nationals from their respective local areas. The first company, “Arbeitsgemeinschaft Pommern”, was created following the merger of minor Pomeranian companies, inter alia “Wilhelm Sabban” and “Benicke” from Stettin, “Kobs” from Człuchów and “Arge Stargard” from Stargard. The merged company operated in Norway with 24 Polish and 12 German labourers (see table 1 and 2). Three of these companies were established in northern Norway to construct docks¹⁰, brought along 40 Polish labourers (see table 2 and 3).

The “Hans Krull” and “Franz Bodmann”, two independent German companies from the area of *Reichsgau Wartheland* (Kraj Warty), solely employed Polish labourers from the city of Łódź and its suburbs. “Hans Krull” arrived in the town of Alta with 57 Polish labourers in July 1942, and “Franz Bodmann” followed in the latter part of June 1942 until June 1943 with a total of 161 Polish workers (see table 4). Four smaller companies from *Reichsgau Wartheland* arrived in Norway during 1943. They were: “Kurt Bender” from Łódź and “Fritz Schneider” from Gniezno (these companies established one new entity, named “Arge Bender–Schneider” upon arrival in Norway), plus “Kurt Baum” from Łęczyca and “Adolf Frieztsche” from Jarocin, which merged under the name “Arge Baum” (see table 4).

The third group of German construction companies consists of corporations that established branches in the Polish areas incorporated into the Third Reich. The majority of these branch–companies were established in *Wartheland*. They differed from similar companies operating in the General Government (GG) by being responsible for covering their own costs. They operated their own employment positions within the EG Wiking. The “Franz Bodmann” company from Łódź (a branch of the same company from Getynga), and the “Herbert Sackmann” from Poznań (a branch of the same company from Jena) were two of the most active branch companies. The “Franz Bodmann” hired, as mentioned above, 161 Polish workers and “Herbert Sackmann” 18 people (see table 3 and 4).

10 RA, OT–Abt.Arb., E. 8/1140, Ref. Hafenbau, 097/V/Le, Vermerk v. 30.06.1942, Vermerk v. 5.08.1942, betr. Entwicklung des Firmeneinsatzes für Kaibauten.

Although the German companies hired their own labour power, they could be allocated employees by applying to an employment office (*Landsarbeitsamt*, LAA) or its local branches (*Nebenstellen*). These employment offices forcibly registered people and provided an important stockpile of labourers, regardless of educational background and age, that could be collected and shipped to a pre-defined construction site. The majority of mass transportations of labourers went to the northern parts of Norway and Finland. A total of 1320 Poles, of which 1000 came from *Reichsgau Wartheland* and 320 from *Reichsgau Danzig–Westpreussen*, were hired by the EG Wiking in this manner. All of them were transported to northern Finland in a total of three shipments. The first and largest shipment was undertaken on 31 October 1942 (see table 4) and involved between 800 and 1000 men that had been handled and registered by local employment offices in the eastern parts of *Wartheland* and shipped from the *Landsarbeitskontor* in Poznań to the northern part of Finland to construct an army railroad between Hyrynsalmi and Kuusamo¹¹. The labourers were divided between two large companies: “Matthaus Hauck” from Würzburg, and “Sager and Woerner” from Berlin. The two succeeding shipments in May and June 1943 contained an estimated 320 Poles originating from *Danzig–Westpreussen*. The majority of these labourers were employed by “Matthaus Hauck”.

The total number of Polish labourers from the incorporated Polish areas in the Third Reich thus amount to an estimated 2650 individuals. 1595 (59.8%) workers originated from *Reichsgau Wartheland*; 393 (15.3%) came from *Oberschlesien*; an estimated 572 (21.5%) from *Danzig–Westpreussen*; and approximately 90 (3.4%) from *Regierungsbezirk Zichenau*. The uneven dispersion of the labourer’s regional origin is peculiar but can be explained by the geographical variations in the Germanisation policies under the auspices of German district managers (*Gauleiter*). This is especially relevant in the areas of *Oberschlesien* and *Danzig–Westpreussen*, headed by Josef Wagner and Albert Forster, respectively. Both district managers Germanised their subordinated populations by forcing them to sign the *Deutsche Volksliste* (DVL), which was divided into four categories from number I to IV. The population could choose to either sign one of the four categories or to be shipped to concentration camps – meaning that many signed the list. The overbearing reason as to why the district managers conducted a forced Germanisation policy was an insufficient recruitment to the Wehrmacht. By enlisting Poles in the DVL, the Germans shipped an estimated 15,000 Poles to Norway as part

11 A report from 31 October 1942, in which Dr. Post, the person in charge of EG Wiking at the OT central in Berlin, describes the transport from Wartheland in the following manner: “LAA Wartheland has deployed 1000 Polish workers for operations in Kuusamo in Finland, which from November will undertake work for Baurat Gross from Poznan”, see RA, Abt. Arbeitseinsatz, E. 6/1100 Gesamteinsatz, Einsatz-Bericht der EG Wiking und Finnland für die Zeit von 20.09. – 31.10.1942. The Arbeitseinsatzkartei obtained from the Norwegian Riksarkivet shows that the Polish shipment was reduced by 200 individuals. It is, however, possible that there are 200 missing Arbeitseinsatzkartei, or that these individuals were deployed in a different “einsatz” group.

of the Wehrmacht (vast documentation of this practice is found in the Rustkammer-archive in Trondheim). I found, during my research, several examples of “Wehrmacht Poles” that chose to (when given the opportunity to do so) become employees of the OT instead of joining the German army. The Germanisation policy undertaken by Arthur Greiser, the district manager in the region of *Wartheland*, is a contrast in comparison to two of the aforementioned regions. *Wartheland* was Germanised by relocating Poles to the GG and replacing them with German nationals. By January 1944, there was only a total of 90,000 Poles, 2% of all Polish nationals in the region, that had signed lists III and IV of the DVL. The corresponding number in *Danzig-Westpreussen* was 44.3% and 38% in *Oberschlesien*.

Table 1. Transport of Poles from Oberschlesien, Oct. 1941– July 1944

Name of German company or employment office	Company transport and date	Destination	Number of workers
Bernard Frericks (Berlin)	16 October 1941	Petsamo	5
	10 October 1942	Petsamo	3
	10 August 1943	Petsamo	4
	4 December 1943	Kirkenes	3
Jens Kluge (Alt Gleiwitz)	22 October 1941	Kuusamo	12
Willy Jaeschke (Duisburg)	20 May 1942	Trondheim/Åndalsnes	27
Arbeitsamt Sosnowiec	14 July 1942	Trondheim	10
Carl Brandt (Brema)	9 June 1942	Bergen	4
Beton Monierbau	11 June 1942	Narvik I	5
Weidmann u. Greatsch	3 July 1942	Åndalsnes	27
Emmerich (Duisburg)	8 July 1942	Åndalsnes	41
Arge Erbe	18 September 1942	Itto (Finland)	4
	26 September 1942	Itto (Finland)	2
Heinrich Butzer (Hamburg)	24 September 1942	Fauske	4
Zech und Voigt (Berlin)	8 April 1943, in transport with 77 German nationals	Alta	6
Unknown German company	5 April 1943, in transport with 134 German nationals	Narvik	6
Unknown companies	Unknown date, arrived in Norway with Wehrmacht	Kristiansand	3
		Miscellaneous	24
Unknown companies	Unknown date (insufficient source material)	Miscellaneous	203
Total			393

Source: RA, OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei, E. 30–35 (Poles); *Ibidem*, OT–Abt. Arbeitseinsatz, E. 15, 17, 19–22, Transportation lists; *Ibidem*, AEF DP Registration Card, i.e. Repatriation register.

However, the disproportional recruitment to the OT can also be explained by the Germanisation policy’s differentiation between labour duty and compulsory labour. Poles enlisted in the DVL were only subject to labour duty (*Arbeitspflicht*), not compulsory labour (*Arbeitszwang*), as people of other nationalities. This difference corresponds to the regional variation in Germanisation policies, and as such constitutes the

main reason as to why the majority of labourers in the OT originated from *Reichsgau Wartheland* and not from the other incorporated areas.

Table 2. Transport of Poles from Regierungsbezirk Zichenau, July 1942–July 1944

Name of German company or employment office	Company transport and dates	Destination (OT, OBL, BL)	Number of workers
Matthaus Hauck (Würzburg)	7 July 1942	Kuusamo	3
	28 July 1942	Kuusamo	2
	29 July 1942	Kuusamo	16
	30 July 1942	Kuusamo	7
	1 August 1942	Kuusamo	2
Arge I Sachsen (Chemnitz)	7 October 1942	Alta	3
	30 March 1943	Narvik	4
Heinrich Schäfer (Saarbrücken)			
Sager und Woerner (Berlin)	5 April 1943, in transport with German nationals	Narvik I	6
		Trondheim	3
Janso Feret, and other companies	July 1943	Janiskoski	4
	Wolfer und Goebel (Esslingen)	31 December 1943	Kirkenes
Mo i Rana			2
Fauske			1
Breidt and Daub (Berlin)	July 1944	Trondheim	5
Legion Speer and other companies	1943/44	Unknown destinations in Norway and Finland	Est. 30
Total			Est. 90

Source: RA, OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei, E. 30–35 (Polish nationals); *Ibidem*, OT–Abt. Arbeitseinsatz, E. 15, 17, 19–22, Transportation lists; *Ibidem*, AEF DP Registration Card, i.e. Repatriation register.

Table 3. Transport of Poles from Reichsgau Danzig–Westpreussen, April 1942–July 1944

Name of German company or employment office	Company transport and dates	Destination (OBL, BL)	Number of workers
Arge Pommern (Poczyzn)	April 1942	Trondheim	9
Richard Menzel (Koszalin)	July 1942	Kirkenes	11
Max Maertins (Gdańsk)	September 1942	Kirkenes	17
H. Sackmann (Poznań)	September 1942	Kirkenes	12
Sager and Woerner (Berlin)	19 September 1942	Unknown location in Finland	2
Arge I Sachsen (Chemnitz)	7 October 1942	Alta	22
Arge III Sachsen (Chemnitz)	31 December 1942	Kirkenes	12
Arge Bauvens–Siewers (Köln)	9 October 1942	Skiippagurra	14
M. Hauck (Günzburg)	31 October 1942	Unknown location in Finland	20
Bafag AG (Regensburg)	31 December 1942	Fauske	4
Simer and Müller (Brema)	15 March 1943	Kirkenes	3
Unknown company	26 March 1943, in transport with 84 German nationals	Kirkenes	14
		Kristiansand	
H. Schäfer (Saarbrücken)	30 March 1943	Tønsberg	
		Narvik I	7
		Fauske	2
Collective transport	27 May 1943	Bergen	1
		Kuusamo	Est. 220
		Mo i Rana	2
J. Kunz (Freiburg)	9 June 1943		
Collective transport	June 1943	Unknown location in Finland	Est. 100

Name of German company or employment office	Company transport and dates	Destination (OBL, BL)	Number of workers
Transport from the Ruhr district with: – Angerer (Dirschau) – Matrowitz (Berlin)	8 June 1944	Fauske Mo i Rana	8 10
Single people in transport from General Government)	Until July 1944	Miscellaneous	Est. 50
Deployed as part of Wehrmacht	1942–1944	Miscellaneous	32
Total			Est. 570

Source: RA, OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei, E. 30–35 (Polish nationals); *Ibidem*, OT–Abt. Arbeitseinsatz, E. 15, 17, 19–22, Transportation lists; *Ibidem*, AEF DP Registration Card, i.e. Repatriation Register.

Table 4. Transport of Poles from Wartheland, April 1942 until July 1944

Name of German company or employment office	Company transport and dates	Destination (OT, OBL, BL)	Number of workers
Curt Kallenbach (Saarbrücken)	4 April 1942	Kirkenes	18
Arge Pommern (Pocznyn)	April 1942	Trondheim	15
Willy Krenz (Berlin)	May 1942	Mo i Rana	22
Arge Nordmark (Hamburg)	May 1942	Mo i Rana	4
Herbert Sackmann (Poznań)	June 1942	Mo i Rana	6
Hans Krull (Łódź)	21 June 1942	Alta	57
Franz Bodmann (Łódź)	29 June 1942	Alta	55
	13 July 1942	Alta	73
	17 August 1942	Alta	30
	15 June 1943	Alta	3
Bernard Frericks (Berlin)	15 September 1942	Kirkenes	3
Max Maertins (Gdańsk)	15 September 1942	Kirkenes	2
Landesarbeitsamt Wartheland (Poznań)	31 October 1942	Kuusamo	800–1000
Bafag AG (Regensburg)	15 February 1943	Trondheim	3
Wilhelm Meister (Elbląg)	29 March 1943	Narvik	10
Zech und Voigt (Berlin)	8 April 1943	Alta	31
	8 May 1943	Alta	2
J. Kunz (Freiburg)	9 June 1943	Mo i Rana	12
Franz Bodmann (Łódź)	15 June 1943	Alta	3
Kurt Baum (Łęczycza)	20 August 1943	Mo i Rana	35
	19 September 1943	Mo i Rana	5
Selbach (Koblenz)	20 August 1943	Mo i Rana	1
Adolf Friezschke (Jarocin)	19 September 1943	Mo i Rana	41
	27 September 1943	Mo i Rana	1
Kurt Bender (Łódź)	19 September 1943	Narvik II	30
Fritz Schneider (Gniezno)	19 September 1943	Narvik II	36
Miscellaneous companies and NSKK	Until July 1944	Miscellaneous	est. 100
Total			Est 1595

Source: RA, OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei, E. 30–35 (Polish nationals); *Ibidem*, OT–Abt. Arbeitseinsatz, E. 15, 17, 19–22, Transportation lists; *Ibidem*, AEF DP Registration Card, i.e. Repatriation register.

The OTs' recruitment system in the General Government

The General Government (GG) was the Polish rest state created and occupied by the Germans. The GG was used as a source for labour power and constituted the main recruitment area of civilian Polish nationals that served in various German "einsatz" groups. In the initial phase of the occupation, the GG was an important area for Hitler's preparatory work for the invasion of the Soviet Union. It was, therefore, imperative to continuously improve the standard of the GG's infrastructure, and to construct passageways (*durchgangstrasser*) in areas occupied by the Germans. The OT, alongside the regions of EG Jacob, was given an array of construction tasks, primarily focused on maintenance or construction of new infrastructure needed by the Wehrmacht. It was imperative to create an operational recruitment system to obtain both professionally trained and regular workers to fulfil their construction assignments. The established system differed from and was more comprehensive than the above-mentioned system used in the incorporated areas.

The system used in the GG was also useful to fulfil the needs of EG Wiking. Recruitment of Polish nationals started as early as May 1941 and was planned by the German employment offices and companies hired by either the OT or the Wehrmacht. Polish language newspapers issued by the Germans, often dubbed "reptile-newspapers" by Poles, were filled with advertisements from German and Polish companies and from different recruitment and information offices¹². Information offices were established in all major GG cities after October 1941. Warsaw had three offices, whilst Kraków, Radom, Tarnów, Rzeszów, Lwów and Przemyśl had one office each. The office in Kraków established subbranches in the surrounding towns of Bochnia, Miechów, Wolbrom and Jarosław. Moreover, several German companies hired well-paid recruitment officers to trawl districts and villages to secure employment of labour power. The Polish resistance movement started a campaign to warn Polish nationals about the false and propagandist content of the "reptile newspapers" through their own underground press. It was warned that the advertisement entailed recruitment to the OT, shipment to the Third Reich and heavy manual labour under supervision of the German military¹³.

12 There were four "reptile newspapers": "Nowy Kurier Warszawski"; "Goniec Krakowski"; "Gazeta Lwowska"; and "Dziennik Radomski". For more information, please see: Władysława Wójcik, *Prasa gadzinowa Generalnego Gubernatorstwa (1939-1945)* (Kraków: Wydawnictwo Naukowe WSP, 1988); Grzegorz Hryciuk, *Gazeta Lwowska 1941-1944* (Wrocław: Uniwersytet Wrocławski, 1996); Krzysztof Woźniakowski, *Polskojęzyczna prasa gadzinowa czasów okupacji niemieckiej 1939-1945* (Opole: Wydawnictwo Naukowe Scriptorum 2014).

13 For more information on recruitment to the OT, please see: Emilia Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, *Polska siła robocza w Organizacji Todta w Norwegii i Finlandii w latach 1941-1945* (Gdańsk: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Gdańskiego, 2018), 73-77.

Recruitment of Poles from the GG to the EG Wiking was fully operation from the spring of 1943. This time-period saw the first large shipment of Polish labourers from the GG. The shipment included an estimated 700 forest workers recruited by different employment offices during January and February 1943 following a recommendation from the GG government. The labourers were told that they were to be stationed for work in Germany, and were gathered in 2–3 camps in Stettin Pomerania. Two of the camps are often seen in archival materials: the OT Lager Piepstock (present day Podlipce, near Stargard Szczeciński) and the OT Lager Wachlin (today known as Warchlin, near Stettin). The labourers were, upon arrival in the camps, formally inscribed into the OT and hired for construction work in the surrounding areas. Following two months of labour, the Poles were shipped by train to the OT-*Transportstelle* in Stettin where they learned that they were going to travel to Norway. They were transported by ship to Oslo alongside Wehrmacht soldiers on the 24th of April. However, the shipment only included 644 Polish labourers upon arrival in Oslo, and the remaining 32 might have managed to escape during the transportation. The Poles were hired by different OBLs in Norway (see table 5). It is necessary to point out that only 58 of the 644 labourers were over the age of 30 and that the remaining individuals were young boys between the ages of 16 and 20. Although some individuals had professional training as shoemakers, bakers, carpenters, tailors and bricklayers, the vast majority of them were forest workers without education – recruited from poor villages in the southern part of the GG¹⁴.

The second large-scale transportation from the GG was shipped during May 1943 to *Einsatz Finland* (Operation Finland). This shipment was part of a major enlistment scheme that had been arranged during the spring and summer of 1943, which had intended to collect 10,000 Polish workers for distribution amongst different *Einsatz* groups. The enlistment scheme was arranged by high-ranking authorities within the OT in co-operation with the OT-central and the GG government. All employment offices were, during March 1943, given two direct orders from the GG government. Firstly, they were informed about the order's purpose, i.e. to recruit 10,000 Polish labourers. Secondly, all offices were obliged to only co-operate with companies that the OT-central's Eastern Transition Office (OT-*Zentrale, Durchgangsstelle Ost*), located in the town of Tomaszow Mazowiecki, had specifically given the task of recruiting labourers (*Anwerbeauftrag*). The practical result of this scheme meant that only a few and well-performing companies were given the task of recruiting labourers. Sixteen German construction companies with company branches or recruitment offices in

14 Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, *Polska siła robocza*, 79–82; Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt*, 133. The education background of the labourers are confirmed by information from each OT-EG Wiking worker's *Arbeitseinsatzkartei* found in the OT register (card file). This register is situated in Riksarkivet in Oslo; for further information, please see RA, *Arbeitseinsatzkartei – Poles*, box: 30–35.

Warszawa, Lwów, Radom and Kraków were selected for this enlistment scheme. One of these construction companies, "Feret" from Berlin, operated in the territories of Hungary, Austria and the GG through its Hungarian branch, "Janso Feret". Examples of other companies that partook in the scheme and operated through branches or recruitment offices are: "Sanitas"; "Gottlieb Gunther"; "Gerhard Hunger"; "Gnom-Zygmunt Knabe"; "Heinrich Stickel"; "Johannes Kellner". Three of the 16 companies operated through information agencies as they did not have any company branches in the GG. Each company was given a specific number of labourers they were expected to recruit. The above mentioned "Janso Feret" was given the task of recruiting 3414 labourers – amounting to 1/3 of the total recruitment target. The labourers obtained by "Janso Feret" were distributed in the following manner: 1114 were shipped to Finland, 1300 to the Soviet Union, 750 to the Balkans, and 250 to the EG West¹⁵.

The autumn of 1943 saw a sharp increase in demand for labour power, and the OT consequently started to independently recruit labourers from the GG by issuing advertisements under their full organisational name and by establishing their own recruitment offices (*OT-Werbestelle*). This method had not been used in other areas controlled by Germany. The OT established three recruitment offices in the city centre of Warsaw and published advertisements two times a week in the "reptile newspaper", "Nowy Kurier Warszawski". The advertisement stated that the OT organisation was in need of an array of skilled workers for their associated construction companies and proclaimed that workers would receive a free and nutritious diet, a free work uniform, free accommodation, paid holiday, and a good salary. The city of Radom had a recruitment office as early as May 1943, and the city of Lwów had two offices from August 1943. The cities in which the OT did not establish recruitment offices were covered by information offices, which gained the role as the OTs local representative, responsible for hiring employees.

The third recruitment method was based on direct recruitment of labourers by companies that had contracts with the OT and mirrored the above mentioned method that was used in the Polish areas incorporated into the Third Reich. These companies had their own independent methods and standards for labour recruitment but chose to open recruitment offices in the GG following the increased demand for labour power during the spring of 1944. Examples of these companies are: "Breidt und Daub" (Berlin) with a branch in Warsaw (additional branches in Darmstad and Trondheim); "Arkitekt Johannes Kellner" from Warsaw which operated in Tømmernes (construction of the polar railroad); and "Erich Pixberg" from Lwów which operated in the northern parts of Finland.

15 For more information on procedures on employee registration, please see: Denkwicz-Szczepaniak, *Polska siła robocza*, 79–81.

There were two companies operating in the GG that solely focused on labour recruitment. The companies received a pre-defined payment per recruited labourer. The two companies were: “Gnom – Zygmunt Knabe” and “Richard Plihal”. Both entities had Warsaw as its main base and depended on assistance from recruitment agencies in other cities. An estimated 1000 Poles were recruited by the “Gnom” company. The labourers had been deployed in Norway and Finland by March 1944, ca. 500 in each country. The second company, “R. Plihal”, recruited a total of 315 people – all deployed to Norway (see table 5).

The OT was in constant need of labour power. This gave a basis for recruitment agencies operating from private apartments, often without any official names. There was an estimated 30 of these small-scale recruitment agencies in Warsaw. This system was at the height of its operation during the spring and summer of 1944, a period which saw an ever-increasing demand for labour power combined with limited possibilities to attain people. This resulted in the OT-EG Wiking radically changing its employment practices. The leader of the EG Wiking and the General Plenipotentiary for construction (*Generalbevollmächtigte für die Bauwirtschaft*) in the Norwegian *Reichskommissar*, Willi Henne, issued on 20 May 1944 a decree which gave OT-officials authorisation to regulate the dispersion of OT labourers within the EG Wiking¹⁶. This meant that companies were required to transfer parts of their employees to other companies in need of labour power. The companies were, therefore, no longer operating as fully independent entities. The practice was clearly characterised by coercion for both the companies and their employees, which lost their company affiliation and, as such, became subject to involuntary relocation.

Table 5. Transportation of Poles from GG, April 1943–August 1944

Recruitment period	Recruiting company/ OT	Destination in Norway (OBL)	No. of workers	Destination in Finland (OBL)	No. of workers	Name of hiring company
First period: April–June 1943	Transport no. 86, organised by German Arbeitsamt in southern GG	Alta	90			Arge I Sachsen Wolfer und Goebel Arge Stallmann Willy Jaeschke Sager und Woerner Hitzbleck
		Kirkenes	91			
		Mo i Rana	108			
		Åndalsnes	110			
		Trondheim	53			
		Kristiansand	92			
		Narvik I	50			
	Fauske	50				
	J. Feret, special recruitment operation			Janiskoski	1114	Feret (Berlin) and other companies
		Total	644		1114	

¹⁶ RA, OT-Abteilung Generalbevollmächtigter für die Bauwirtschaft (OT – Abt.G.B.Bau), E. 47–51, 53, Merkblatt v. 20.05.1944, Tgb. Nr L1c/8747/44, Verfügungsrecht über betriebsgebundene und Zuge-wiesene Arbeitskräfte deutsche Baufirmen in Norwegen; For more information on recruitment system in the GG, please see: Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, *Polska siła robocza*, 73–96.

Recruitment period	Recruiting company/ OT	Destination in Norway (OBL)	No. of workers	Destination in Finland (OBL)	No. of workers	Name of hiring company
Second period: September 1943 – March 31 1944	Gnom-Z. Knabe, Warszawa	Mo i Rana Fauske Trondheim	Est. 500	Petsamo	Est. 500	Arge Preusse Bauvens–Sivers Pollensky und Zollner Conrad, Sackmann, Funke, Breidt und Daub
	E. Pixberg (Lwow) Hofmeister (Brema) Legion Speer K. Hitz (Klagenfurt) Breidt und Daub	Kristiansand	8	Lapland	Est. 500	E. Pixberg, Hofmeister
	OTs recruitment	Oslo, Mo i Rana, Trondheim	12 295	Rovaniemi	Est. 50	K. Hitz, Breidt und Daub, Sager und Woerner Miscellaneous companies
		Miscellaneous OBL	21 women			
Total			Est. 840		Est. 1050	
Third period: April–August 1944	Breidt und Daub (Berlin/Warszawa) Gnom–Z. Knabe (Warszawa) Richard Plihal (Warszawa)	Trondheim	124			Breidt und Daub, and other companies NSKK, Funke, Sackmann
		Oslo	40			
	Trondheim	112	Johannes Kellner NSKK			
	Oslo	164				Johannes Kellner Fr. Preusse
	Tømmernes	7	Miscellaneous Companies			
	Mo i Rana	32				Miscellaneous Companies
	Tømmernes	54	Miscellaneous Companies			
	Narvik	34				NSKK – Høvik
J. Kellner (Warszawa) Fr. Preusse (Braunschweig) OTs recruitment	Miscellaneous OBL	12 women				
Information offices recruitment	Oslo	144				
	Varous OBL	Est. 30				
Total			Est. 753			
Total Norway			Est. 2237	Total Finland	Est. 2164	

Source: RA, OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei, E. 30–35 (Polish nationals); *Ibidem*, OT–Abt. Arbeitseinsatz, E. 15, 17, 19–22, Transportation lists; *Ibidem*, AEF DP Registration Card, i.e. Repatriation register.

Polish prisoners of war in the EG Wiking

A total of 1711 Polish POWs were deployed in Norway¹⁷. They were organised in three construction battalions, no. 28, 30 and 41, and shipped from Hamburg to Norway between April and May 1942¹⁸. The manager of fortification construction in Norway

¹⁷ BA–MA, RW 6 Bestand an Kriegsgefangenen 01.09.1941–31.12.1944, 450–453.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, RW 38/88, Monatsbericht (hereinafter: MB), April 1942, 3; *ibidem*, MB, May 1942, 111.

distributed the battalions to Elsfjord near Mo i Rana, Åndalsnes and Egersund¹⁹. Some of the deployment locations within the EG–Wiking are unknown, but they were, in general, distributed as small groups all over Norway. I have managed to pinpoint the following locations: Lødingen near the city of Bodø, Ylvingen, Drevja, Hemnesberget, Sandnessjøen, the Gossen airfield and Lista. The Polish POW Kazimierz Srokowski, estimates that there were a total of 100 POWs stationed in the village of Lødingen to construct bunkers for the Luftwaffe. Fifteen of them were transferred to Ylvingen near the town of Mosjøen during the autumn of 1942 for tunnel construction and railroad transport of rocks and gravel for construction of an artillery battery.

Three hundred Polish prisoners worked in the nearby town of Sandnessjøen from July 1943 until November 1944, where they constructed tunnels. These workers were moved to the town of Rognan during November 1944 for railroad construction²⁰. In 1943, a total of 120 Polish prisoners were deployed to construct an airfield in Lista for the German construction company, “F. Diehl” (Essen)²¹. Two hundred prisoners had been deployed to Lista during May 1942 and accommodated in the POW camps in Skeime and Vanse. All of the prisoners were officers and were, therefore, not tasked with manual labour. They were transported to Denmark during October 1944²².

Troublesome recruitment of labour power to the construction of the *Nordlandsbanen* (railroad) during the summer of 1943 resulted in the OBL *Nordlandsbanen* in Mo i Rana receiving a shipment of 1041 Polish POWs. The prisoners were divided into two groups. Five hundred and fifty individuals were made available to construction section no. 13 (NSB–13. Avdeling) and settled in Rotelva camp, while the remaining 491 were allocated to construction section no. 15 and settled in Saltnes camp²³ (table 7). The same number of Polish POWs were registered in both construction sections in June 1944 (table 8)²⁴. OBL Fauske was constantly short of labour power, and, therefore, received a shipment of 240 Polish POWs, all hired by “Rose–Exner” (table 10). In August 1944, a total of 1281 Polish POWs were affiliated to the construction of the Nordlandsbanen, and an estimated 320 were constructing fortifications.

19 Ibidem, RW 39–163 TB O. Qu 2–Qu 2, August 1942, 93.

20 Ingvar Andersen, “Krigsfangenskap”, *Årbok for Helgeland* vol. XXI (1990): 88–89.

21 RA, OT–Abt. Arb., E. 7–1110, Written report from OT–Wiking, OBL Süd v. 8.03.1943 to OT–EG Wiking in Oslo.

22 For more information on Polish POWs in Skeime, please see: Torbjørn Larsson–Fedde, *Russiske og polske krigsfanger i Farsund–området 1940–45* (Vanse: Lista Museums Venner, 2013), 77–78, 82–89, 94–103.

23 RA, OT–Abt. Bahnbau, E. 9, OBL Nordlandbahn, Streckenbesetzung v. 03.12.1943.

24 RA, Mjr Leiv Kreyberg–archive, Office for former prisoners of war in Bodø, Box 2, Lists of Polish prisoners of war in Nordland country.

The Poles' role in realisation of OTs' construction tasks in the EG Wiking

a) Fortifications

The vast majority were hired for construction of fortifications along the Norwegian coastline. They were registered at 49 different locations – often islands in Norwegian fjords. Examples include the islands of Storfosna, Tarva, Hitra and Frøya – all located in the Trondheim fjord, the airfield in Ørlandet, and Orkanger and Melland. The town of Narvik was an important location for workers that constructed artillery batteries on the nearby islands of Trondenes and Engeløy. Islands in proximity to the area of Mo i Rana, for instance Sjona, Nesna, Donnes, Hemnes, Ylvingen and Vikan, were also important locations for labourers. The Poles were further deployed far north in Norway in the town of Kirkenes and the nearby town of Vadsø and villages of Elvenes, Skiippagurra, Smalfjord, and Ekkerøy²⁵. An estimated total of 3200 forced civilian labourers (see table 6) and 320 POWs from Poland were hired for construction of fortifications in Norway from 1942 until 1945. The work locations for prisoners of war are in comparison to the locations of the forced labourers, difficult to determine.

Table 6. Polish civilian labourers in the construction of fortifications in Norway, 1942–1945

Destination (OBL)	Name of German company	Period of employment	Number of Polish workers from:		
			Polish areas incorporated in the Third Reich	General Government	Total
Kirkenes	M. Maertins (Danzig) R. Menzel (Köslin) G. Hallinger (Gelsenkirchen) Arge III Sachsen (Chemnitz) C. Kallenbach (Saarbrücken) W. Scheumann (Magdeburg) B. Frericks (Berlin) Wolfer&Goebel (Esslingen)	from September 1942 to May 1943	104	97	201
Moen	Badische Baugesellschaft (Freiburg)	1943/1944	5	–	5
Narvik	W. Meister (Elbing) Arge Preusse (Braunschweig) Beton und Monierbau (Kassel) H. Schäfer (<i>Saarbrücken</i>)	May 1942–1944	29	87	116
Mo i Rana	Arge Stallmann (Gelsenkirchen) Siemer und Müller (Brema) Arge Nordmark (Hamburg) Arge Krenz (Berlin) Breidt und Daub (Warszawa)	May 1942–1944	23	152	175

²⁵ For more information on Polish nationals hired to construct fortifications in Norway, please see Denkwicz-Szczepaniak, *Polska siła robocza*, 113–131.

Destination (OBL)	Name of German company	Period of employment	Number of Polish workers from:		
			Polish areas incorporated in the Third Reich	General Government	Total
Drontheim	Arge Pommern (Połczyn) Muller–Altwatter (Stuttgard) Sager und Woerner (Berlin) Breidt und Daub (Warszawa)	May 1942 July 1942 1943–1944 1944	33	595	628
Åndalsnes	Weidmann und Greatsch (Emmerich) W. Jaeschke (Duisburg) Chr. Unmack (Berlin) E. Zimmerman (Köln)	from May 1942 to May 1943	95	49	144
Bergen	A. Stapf (Berlin) C. Brandt (Brema)	1942–1944	11	3	14
Kristiansand	Hitzbleck (Duisburg) Massenberg (Essen) Hofmeister, A. Diehl (Essen)	from April 1943	1	95	96
Tønsberg	Siemens–Bau (Berlin) Richard Plihal and other companies from Warszawa	from December 1942 to March 1945	2	151	153
Oslo	K. Hitz (Klagenfurt) and other companies	from April 1943 to 1945	–	72	72
Total			303	1301	1604

Source: RA, OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei (Polish nationals), E. 30–35; OT–Abt. Arbeitseinsatz E. 15, 19, 20, 21 Transportlister.

b) Nordlandsbanen

Nordlandsbanen was the largest and most expensive construction project undertaken by the Third Reich in Norway and constituted the second largest work location for Polish OT employees in Norway. Hitler was convinced that a railroad between Trondheim, Narvik and Kirkenes would secure transportation of supplies to the North Front and the Third Reich's access to ore from the Swedish town of Kiruna²⁶. However, the scale of the project was reduced, mainly due to scarcity of labour power. Hitler, thus, agreed that the town of Drag, near Tysfjord, should become the railroad's end station. The period between the outbreak of the war and 15 March 1942 saw the opening of the line between Mosjøen and Mo i Rana. The second stretch between Mo and Drag was open from 15 March 1942. The line was divided into two construction sections: the first section from Mo to Fauske (177 km), and the second from Fauske to Drag (147 km).

26 For more information on Third Reich plans for Nordlandsbanen please see: Emilia Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, "Bygging av polarjernbanen sør for Mo i Rana", *Årbok for Rana* vol. XXXII (1999): 33–37.

The first section was directed by OT *Oberbauleitung* (OBL) Nordlandsbanen, located in Mo i Rana. It was divided into six construction sections (*bauolos*) with numbers between 11–16. The manager of each section was a Norwegian engineer, and the labourers were divided between the OT and the Norwegian State Railway (NSB). A total of 9654 people were employed by December 1943, of which 5232 were prisoners of war (1041 from Poland and 4191 from Russia), 2831 Norwegians, 550 foreigners, 206 legionaries from the National Socialist Motor Corps (*Nationalsozialistisches Kraftfahrerkorps*, NSKK), and 885 Germans. Polish labourers amounted to 56% of the foreign civilian labourers (280 Poles and 220 others). The 550 Polish prisoners of war from Rotelva camp were hired by NSB in construction section 13, and the remaining 491, from Saltnes camp, by “Looft und Wibb” in construction section 15 (table 7). 14,666 workers were affiliated to the first construction section during June 1944, and the number of Polish civilian labourers increased from 280 to 414 (56.2% of all civilian foreigners, with the exception of Norwegians and Germans). The number of Polish POWs remained the same – 1041. 134 Polish labourers were shipped from the GG between January and August 1944 and distributed among five of the above mentioned companies: “Bauvens”, “Funke”, “Haase”, “Conrad” and “Breidt u. Daub” (table 8). The labourers had primarily been recruited by the German recruitment company “Gnom”. Moreover, the construction company “Breidt und Daub” had its own independent recruitment office in Warsaw, which also shipped labourers to assist the company’s construction projects in Norway. Lastly, there were 8668 Russian POWs and 265 legionaries from the NSKK, of which 67 were Polish nationals that had been enlisted by German recruitment companies (table 8).

Table 7. Poles in the construction of Nordlandsbanen, OBL Mo i Rana, 3 December 1943

NSB sections number	Name of German company or OBL/BL and Norwegian companies, too NSB-sections	Number of workers and OT-personnel				Prisoners of war		NSKK legionary		Total
		Germans	Norwegians	Poles	Other nationalities	Poles	Russian	Poles	other	
Mo i Rana-stab	Hauptkolonne	20	72	–	–	–	–	–	10	102
	Kabza	10	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	10
	OBL Mo i Rana	125	17	3	14	–	558	–	–	717
	NSB sentralen	–	510	–	–	–	–	–	–	510
11	Siemer u. Müller	16	–	1	–	–	–	–	–	17
	BL Nævernes	14	2	–	–	–	285	–	–	301
	NSKK – 15., 23. kompani	45	–	–	–	–	252	–	116	413
	NSB – 11. section	–	702	–	–	–	–	–	–	702
	Arge Bauvens–Sievers	123	–	4	6	–	1465	–	–	1598

NSB sections number	Name of German company or OBL/BL and Norwegian companies, too NSB-sections	Number of workers and OT-personnel				Prisoners of war		NSKK legionary		Total
		Germans	Norwegians	Poles	Other nationalities	Poles	Russian	Poles	other	
12	Funke	90	–	12	81	–	243	–	–	426
	NSB – 12. section	–	146	–	–	–	–	–	–	146
	Selmer (Norwegian)	–	56	–	–	–	–	–	–	56
	Haase	24	–	–	13	–	437	–	–	474
	Lenhard	135	–	–	40	–	571	–	–	746
13	Selbach	38	–	1	42	–	380	–	–	461
	NSKK – 6. kompani	43	–	–	–	–	–	–	30	73
	Kunz	20	–	15	5	–	–	–	–	40
	Conrad	15	–	15	–	–	–	–	–	30
	NSB-13. section	–	180	–	–	550	–	–	–	730
	Winterdienst	20	50	–	–	–	–	–	–	70
14	Sackmann	18	–	8	3	–	–	–	–	29
	Breidt u. Daub	2	–	133	–	–	–	–	–	135
	NSB – 14. section	–	340	–	–	–	–	–	–	340
15	Gehlen	10	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	10
	NSKK – 13. kompani	18	–	–	–	–	–	–	50	68
	Looft u. Wibb	10	–	–	–	491	–	–	–	501
	Arge Baum (Jarocin)	1	–	83	–	–	–	–	–	84
	NSB – 15. section	–	237	–	–	–	–	–	–	237
	BL Rognan	18	4	–	–	–	–	–	–	22
Röllinger	50	–	–	13	–	–	–	–	63	
16	Wolfer u. Goebel	40	–	5	3	–	–	–	–	48
	Strand (Norwegian)	–	53	–	–	–	–	–	–	53
	Henriksen (Norwegian)	–	308	–	–	–	–	–	–	308
	NSB – 16. section	–	207	–	–	–	–	–	–	207
Total	905	2884	280	220	1041	4191	–	206	9727	

Source: RA, OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei Polish nationals), E. 30–35, OT–Abt. Bahnbau, E. 9, OBL Nordlandbahnen, Streckenbesetzung, state of 3 December 1943.

Table 8. Poles in the constructions of Nordlandsbanen, OBL Mo i Rana, June 1944

NSB – sections number	Name of company or OBL/BL and Norwegian institution, too NSB-sections	Number of workers and OT-personnel I				Prisoners of war		NSKK legionary		total
		Germans	Norwegians	Poles	Other nationalities	Poles	Other nationalities	Poles	Other	
OBL Mo i Rana	OBLs stab	151	–	–	63	–	–	–	–	214
	District office in Mo	–	43	15	–	–	–	–	–	58
	Siemer u. Müller	13	–	–	–	70	–	–	–	83
	NSB – 10b.section	–	25	–	–	–	–	–	–	25
	NSB – railroad station Mo	–	114	–	–	–	–	–	–	114

NSB – sections number	Name of company or OBL/BL and Norwegian institution, too NSB–sections	Number of workers and OT–personnel I				Prisoners of war		NSKK legionary		total
		Germans	Norwegians	Poles	Other nationalities	Poles	Other nationalities	Poles	Other	
OBL Mo i Rana	Dunderlandsbahn	–	165	–	–	–	–	–	–	165
	Transportabteilung	–	198	–	–	–	–	45	–	243
	Entreprenør Mo (Norwegian)	–	66	–	–	–	–	–	–	66
	Zygmunt Kabza	11	–	–	7	–	–	–	–	18
	Rheinkies	21	–	–	3	–	70	22	–	116
	Ranabygningen(Norwegian)	–	70	–	–	–	–	–	–	70
	Strassenbau	–	141	–	–	–	–	–	–	141
	Rognan Winterdienst Wegwesen (Norwegian)	15 –	75 36	– –	– –	– –	– –	– –	– –	– –
11	Hasse	44	–	28	–	–	250	–	–	322
	Bauvens	177	–	48	–	–	1242	–	–	1467
	NSB – 11. section	–	704	–	–	–	–	–	–	704
12	Funke	132	–	61	53	–	1200	–	–	1446
	Lehnard	185	–	–	17	–	1501	–	–	1703
	Selbach	76	–	1	37	–	1000	–	–	1114
	Selmer (Norwegian)	–	85	–	–	–	–	–	–	85
	NSB – 12. section	–	111	–	–	–	–	–	–	111
13	Siemer u. Müller	51	–	3	–	–	498	–	–	552
	Lenz	109	–	–	4	–	500	–	–	613
	Conrad	80	–	49	–	–	435	–	–	564
	Kunz	29	–	16	23	–	30	–	–	98
	NSB – 13. section	–	122	–	–	–	–	–	–	122
	Bauleitung Nævernes	22	–	–	10	550	291	–	–	873
14	Sackmann	27	–	8	14	–	393	–	–	442
	Gehlen	29	–	–	3	–	687	–	–	719
	NSB – 14. section	–	281	–	–	–	–	–	–	281
15	Röllinger	26	–	–	11	–	36	–	–	73
	Wolfer u. Goebel	80	–	10	25	491	–	–	–	606
	NSB – 15. section	–	125	–	–	–	–	–	–	125
16	Strand (Norwegian)	–	71	–	–	–	–	–	–	71
	NSB – 16. section	–	95	–	–	–	–	–	–	95
	Henriksen (Norwegian)	–	305	–	–	–	–	–	–	305
	Looft u. Wibb	10	–	–	5	–	15	–	–	30
	Breidt u. Daub	3	–	96	–	–	–	–	–	99
	Arge Baum	1	–	79	–	–	–	–	–	80
	Impregnerbygging (Norwegian)	–	–	–	30	–	–	–	–	30
BL Rognan	30	–	–	17	–	450	–	–	497	
Total:		1322	2634	414	322	1041	8668	67	198	14666

Source: RA, OT–Abt. Bahnbau, E. 9, Tabell "June 1944/H"; OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei (Polish nationals), E. 30–35.

The second construction section, from Fauske to Drag, was managed by German and Austrian companies. The section was divided into two OBLs: Fauske and Tømmernes. Tables 9, 10 and 11 illustrate the rate of employment in both OBLs.

Six construction companies were affiliated to OBL Fauske in October 1943, and seven more in the succeeding year (tables 9 and 10). Some companies operated simultaneously in two or more construction sites, but were hindered by scarcity of labour power. The companies, therefore, often applied to be granted permission to relocate labourers from closed down projects in the Eastern Front during the spring of 1944²⁷. 4437 labourers, of which 3580 were POWs, were hired in October 1943. Only 44 Poles were among the OTs foreign labourers (table 9). But this number had increased four-fold in 1944. The number of Polish labourers had increased to 171 in June 1944 (table 10), and to 202 in the succeeding month, meaning that the Poles amounted to 57.5% of the foreign workers in August 1944 (with the exception of Norwegians and Germans). The labourers were mainly recruited from Warsaw and the surrounding areas, and had been enlisted by Plihal and Gnom. OBL Fauske had, in addition to 5000 Russian and Serbian POWs, 240 Polish POWs²⁸.

The work progressed slower in the Tømmernes OBL. Albeit the workforce composed 2694 men during February 1944, half of the construction sites were unmanned. Four companies were responsible for railroad construction: three from Vienna (“Mayreder-Kraus”, “Universale” and “Staug”) and one from Hamburg (“Ph. Holtzmann”)²⁹. The companies were occupied with preparatory work during the spring of 1944, inter alia geological investigations, drainage and construction of barracks. The OT searched for new companies to staff the unmanned construction sites. Two companies which solely employed Polish labourers were hired during late spring. The first company, “Arge Bender-Schneider” was a merged entity of two German companies from *Wartheland* (“Knut Bender” from Łódź and “Fritz Schneider” from Gniezno), which signed a contract with the OT on 31 May 1944. It mostly constructed barracks³⁰. The second company, “Arch-Johannes Kellner”, started working in the nearby area of Tømmernes during late spring of 1944, and recruited its labourers from Warsaw and its suburbs from between May and July. It mostly conducted tasks affiliated with installation and electricity. The company’s manager, engineer Tschernischoff, wanted to take over

27 RA, OT–Abt. Arb., E. 35–2000, correspondence between the following companies: Rose, Hochtief, Pollensky und Zöllner; *Ibidem*, Aufstellung über die Umsetzung von Firmensplitterern u. Anzahl der bisher in Oslo durchgeschesteten Gfm, stand 28.01.1944 und 11.04.1944.

28 Statsarkivet Trondheim (SAT), Norske Statsbaner (NSB), E. 1, 1.001–1.004. OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei, Einsatz OBL Fauske, stand 25.08.1944.

29 RA, OT–Abt. Bahnbau, E. 8, folder B1/A–1 Umlaufe, Arbeitskräfte im Bahnbau 25.02.1944, *Ibidem*, E. 49, folder 4 Gesamt. Streckenbereisung im Bereich der OBL Tømmernes v. 22–24.03.1944; Linienführung

30 RA, OT–Abt. Bahnbau, E. 12, Contracts 1943–45, Contract no. 119.

control of the labourers affiliated to the “Plihal” company and, therefore, suggested a merger. The operations of “Plihal” in OBL Fauske was from July 1944, managed by the German engineer L. Scheitzow. However, his company did not have a designated work location and the employees were, thus, spread across different locations, affiliated to OBL Fauske and made available to other companies. The two engineers, therefore, worked to merge their entities. An agreement stipulating the merger and establishment of “Arge Plihal–Kellner” was signed on 25 August 1944. The agreement stated that the companies would pool their labour resources to construct 10 minor power stations for the OBL Tømmernes³¹. The merger was never accomplished due to redistribution of Polish labourers affiliated to Warsaw companies. The OTs’ headquarter in Berlin had, in co-operation with the largest German company in Berlin, “Breidt und Daub”, and the OTs management in Oslo, decided to allocate the Polish labourers recruited by “Plihal” and “Gnom” to “Breidt und Daub”³². The real reason was that Richard Plihal, the manager of “Plihal”, had embezzled 30,000 RM from the OT in Berlin and left for Vienna. The company was dissolved and the employees were hired by “Breidt und Daub”. This company lent its employees to other construction sites in the areas surrounding Trondheim and to construction of railroads³³ (compare table 10). The staffing in the construction sites of OBL Tømmernes increased during late 1944 following the evacuation of all German companies (38) from Finland and northern Norway. Seven companies took up work in OBL Tømmernes³⁴. Two of these companies, “C.Kallenbach” and “B.Frericks” employed Polish labourers³⁵ (table 11).

31 RA, OT-pakke Plihal, I-40, Schriftwechsel des Baubüros Fauske der Fa. Plihal (Handakte Scheitzow), Arbeitsgemeinschaftsvertrag zwischen den Firmen Plihal und Kellner v. 25.08.1944 and Scheitzow letter to attorney E. Wäsch, dated 17 September 1944.

32 RA, OT-pakke Plihal, 1-7 Firma Plihal Abrechnung, letter from Reichminister für Rüstung und Kriegsproduktion, Amt Bau, OT, Abt.Arbeitseinsatz A 17 PO-RRKr-He, dated 19 August 1944, to EG Wiking Oslo, furthermore, a letter from OT EG-Wiking, dated 28 August 1944 no. VA (2)-1093-44 an sämtliche Einsätze und OBL der OT EG Wiking.

33 Ibidem, Scheitzow letter to Eugen, manager of OBL-Fauske, dated 19 October 1944.

34 RA, OT-Abt. Bahnbau., E. 48, mappe 1 Ebk, Vermerk v. 04.12.1944 betr.: Weiterverwendung der aus dem Einsatz Finnland und bei der OBL Alta freiwerdenden Firmen.

35 The Poles recruited by C. Kallenbach were shipped from the employment offices in Galicja and Podbeskdzie to Norway on 17 May 1943. They were originally employed by “Wolfer und Goebel” in OBL Kirkenes. They constructed the road in Skogsanvære from Lakselv to Kirkenes (between May 1943 and August 1943) and were most likely hired for similar work in OBL Moen. This information is based on the labourers’ employment cards.

Table 9. Poles affiliated to the construction of Nordlandsbanen, OBL Fauske, 1 October 1943

Name of German company or OBL/BL and Norwegian institution, too NSB-sections	Number of workers and OT-personnel			Prisoners of war			Total
	Germans	Norwegians	Poles	Other nationalities	Poles	Russian, Serbian	
OBL Fauske stab	150	–		–	–	–	150
Hospital OBL Fauske	20	–		–	–	–	20
M. Fanghängel	20	–	–	–		–	20
C. Rose	50	–	1	–		500	551
Grün u. Bilfinger	108	47	10	–		730	895
Pollensky u. Zöllner	64	–	3	–		600	667
H. Butzer	53	52	–	–		700	805
Hochtief	65	144	30	–		1050	1289
NSKK	40						40
Total:	570	243	44			3580	4437

Source: RA, OT–Abt. Bahnbau, E. 46, mappe 2 OBL Fauske, tab. Arbeitseinsatz Fauske stand 1.10.1943, RA, OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei (Polish nationals), E. 30–35.

Table 10. Poles affiliated to the construction of Nordlandsbanen OBL Fauske, 25 July–25 August 1944

Name of German company	Number of workers and OT-personnel				Prisoners of war		Total
	Germans	Norwegians	Poles	Other nationalities	Poles – state of 25 Aug. 1944	Russian, Serbian	
OTs own recruitment	197	32	–	57	–	78	364
Lohnbetreute	49	–	–	56	–	154	259
M. Fanghängel	7	–	2	–	–	66	75
Arge C. Rose–Exner	14	9	25	31	–	195	274
Grün und Bilfinger	82	36	43	–	–	959	1120
Pollensky und Zöllner	87	48	15	27	–	782	959
H. Butzer	94	16	35	31	–	711	887
Funke und Co	42	1	15	–	240	491	789
Hochtief	105	106	27	–	–	1608	1846
H. Grubba	19	–	–	8	–	–	27
Th. Goodson	20	–	–	1	–	–	21
K. Stein	7	–	5	–	–	–	12
Niedergessäs	2	4	4	–	–	–	10
Menk	5	–	–	–	–	–	5
E. Zublin	39	11	–	–	–	120	170
little companies	19	–	–	–	–	–	19
Transportflotte Sperr	2	–		4			6
NSKK	32	70					102
Total:	822	333	171	215	240	5155	6936

Source: RA, OT–Abt. Bahnbau, E. 46, mappe 2 OBL Fauske, tabell: Arbeitseinsatz–stand am 25.7.1944, RA, OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei (Polish nationals), E. 30–35; SAT–avd Dora, NSB, E.1. 1.001–1.004, 1.001 OT–Arbeitseinsatz, OBL Fauske, state of 25 August 1944.

Table 11. Poles affiliated to the construction of Nordlandsbanen, OBL Tømmernes, 10 December 1944–1 March 1945

Name of German company	Number of workers and OT–personnel			Prisoners of war Russian, Serbian	Total
	Germans	Poles	Other nationalities		
Arge Bender–Schneider (Łódź)	–	66	–	total: 9453	9519
J. Kellner (Warszawa)	–	54	–		54
C. Kallenbach (Saarbrücken)	176	90	76		342
Mayreder–Kraus (Wien)	104	–	18		122
Masch. Fabr., Ruckon	1	–	–		1
Ph. Holzmann (Hamburg)	50	1	11		62
Universale (Wien)	93	–	36		129
Staug (Wien)	35	–	100		135
B. Frericks (Berlin)	47	21	–		68
G. Günther (Warszawa)	–	4	–		4
Total:	506	236	241		9453

Source: RA, OT–Abt. Bahnbau, E. 49, mappe 3 Allgemein, Firmeneinsatz, stand v. 10.12.1944; Ibidem, OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei (Polish nationals), E. 30–35.

The tables above indicate that civilian Polish nationals worked on both construction sections. The employment level peaked during the summer of 1944 and the Poles amounted to an estimated 50–57% of all civilian foreign labourers (with the exception of Norwegians and Germans). They undertook work assignments that are normal in the opening phase of a construction site, for example building of barracks, quays and power plants to secure electricity supplies. Poles hired by “Breidt und Daub” and “Arge Baum–Fritzsche” were primarily tasked with constructing barracks in the Rognan–region. Some of the Poles affiliated to “Plihal” undertook similar work. The same work assignments were carried out in OBL Tømmernes. A total of six bridges were under construction or planning. The most pressing project was construction of transshipment quays on different sections of the railroad line (construction section). Polish workers participated in the constructions of the quays in Torkilseng, Gyltvik, Apsfjord, Medgård and Engan³⁶ Tunnel construction was also an important task, and it was needed to build a total of 81 tunnels on the railroad line between Mo i Rana and Drag (36 from Mo i Rana to Fauske, and 45 between Fauske and Drag). Some of these tunnels, inter alia the one in Apsfjord, were constructed with participation from Polish labourers. This is at the present time a road tunnel on the European Route E6. The result of the efforts taken to construct the Nordlandsbanen railroad was disappointing when considering the initial targets, and the construction had halted near Dunderland at the end of the war. NSB took up construction after the war, and the stretch to Fauske was finished in 1958, whereas the stretch to Bodø, four years later. Although 50 km of railroad was finished north of Fauske, nearing the end of 1944, this stretch was never opened. All construction sites north of Torkilseng were abandoned during October

36 RA, Pakke OT–Wiking, concern specially Plihal company, I–40, 1–7.

1944, following the capitulation of Finland, and only one-third of the work on the line from Fauske to Drag was completed³⁷. Polish labourers were the largest group of foreign workers on the aforementioned stretch. An imperative reason for this is that many of the Polish labourers attempted to flee to Sweden upon arrival to their work locations – regardless of the distance to the Swedish border. Many Poles succeeded in entering Sweden and were often assisted or accompanied by Norwegians. The Germans, therefore, started to ship Polish labourers to the northernmost construction section, where the potential for a successful escape was limited by the local nature. This also constitutes the most plausible explanation as to why it was mostly Polish nationals, although not that many in number, that were deployed north of Fauske, inter alia to Tømmernes, Drag, Engan and other locations.

c) Construction, modernisation and maintenance of roads

Riksvei 50 (present day E6) was the most important road system for the Wehrmacht. It was the most prioritised link for shipment of military supplies from Germany to the *Armee-Oberkommando Norwegen* (AOK Norwegen) and the Lapland army, which was stationed in Finland, and the Murmansk front in the Soviet Union. Utilisation of the road was difficult during the winter months, particularly in the north where heavy snow and strong winds were normal. This was especially challenging in the areas between Kvænangen, Alta and the Porsanger fjord, where strong winds can result in snowdrifts as high as 15 metres. This made it difficult to keep the road open for traffic. The Germans intended to hinder the Allies by cutting off Riksvei 50 near Laksefjorden, Repparfjorden, Revsbotn or Kvænangen³⁸. It was, therefore, important that the Wehrmacht kept Riksvei 50 open, especially the stretch to Alta, and the continuing road to Lakselv and Karasjok. The three following stretches were of particular importance:

- I. Kvænangen – and Badderer mountain pass;
- II. Repparfjord – Kistrand – Karasjok, further divided into two sections: Repparfjord–Skaidi–Kistrand and Kistrand–Karasjok;
- III. Alta – Repparfjord.

The three stretches incorporated in total an estimated 250 km³⁹. The Germans planned to construct wooden snow sheds and wooden snow fences to help keep the road open during wintertime. Construction on stretch I (Kvænangen – Badderer mountain pass) was allocated to two German and four Norwegian companies. The largest of the German companies, “Franz Bodmann” from the Polish city of Łódź (*Litzmannstadt*), was hired to construct snow sheds and snow fences on the Kvænangen

37 Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt*, 58–59.

38 Thorbein Gamst, *Finnmark under Hakenkorset: Festung Finnmark* (Arendal: Agdin Forlag, 1984), 115.

39 RA, OT–Abt. Strassenbau, E. 4, B. Strassenbauten I Allgemeines 1942–43, Vermerk v. 11.05.1942 betr. Besprechung beim Wehrmachtbefehlshaber am 09.05.1942.

mountain, and, additionally, to modernise the bypass road which stretched around the Kvænangen fjord. Preparatory work was undertaken from 10 July until 31 October 1942. The company constructed a 5.4 km long snow shed extended with 17 meeting points, every 900 metres. The shed was 3.8-metres-tall and 3.8-metres-wide. The shed's entrance was secured with two 8-metre-tall snow fences, both with solid foundations. A total of 7.4 km of snow fences was constructed on parts of the road less exposed to tall snowdrifts. The construction included 50–60 Poles from the town and suburbs of Łódź, all of which had been recruited by “Franz Bodmann” and forcibly stationed with OBL Alta. Moreover, the company employed an estimated 70 Poles for modernisation of the 9 km bypass road around the Kvænangen fjord. A total of 120–130 Poles worked for “Bodmann”⁴⁰. The second German company was “Arge Sachsen” from Chemnitz. The company worked during the summer on the Baddern mountain pass, and undertook the same assignments as mentioned above, albeit on a smaller scale. The labourers amounted to a group of 23 Polish nationals that had been shipped from Danzig–Westpreussen to Norway. They worked alongside 160 political prisoners from Norway. The work resulted in the construction of an 806m snow shed, 3.5 km of snow fences and the maintenance of 2 km of existing fences⁴¹.

The German company “Hans Krull” from Łódź was hired to work on stretch II from Lakselv to Karasjok. The company mainly undertook winter security measures on the 83 km road. The company had 50 Polish nationals among their employees – all from the Łódź region. The work was conducted between July and November 1942, but its outcome is unknown due to missing documents. The two companies from Łódź, “Franz Bodmann” and “Hans Krull”, were transferred to the area surrounding the Porsanger fjord during the 1943 work season for road construction. The former company was presumably given the road section between Kistrand and Lakselv, whilst the latter company was allocated the section between Skaidi and Kistrand. The latter section involved construction of snow fences⁴².

Stretch III, from Alta to Repparfjord, had a total length of 110 km and was an important part of Riksvei 50 for the Wehrmacht. Six German and four Norwegian construction companies had contracts on this part of the road. Three of the German companies had hired a total of 78 Polish labourers. They were dispersed in the following manner: “Hans Krull” from Łódź (35 individuals); “B. Frericks” from Berlin (10 individuals); and “Zech und Voigt” (33 individuals). The Polish labourers were few in comparison to the 789 men from other nationalities and amounted to only 10% of

40 RA, OT–Abt. Strassenbau, E. 79, D. Winterdienst, D.II Sondereinsätze des Winterdienstes. Planungsgruppe für den wintersicheren Ausbau an Strassen im Nord–Norwegen. Bericht nr 10, 1–2, 4–5.

41 Ibidem, 3.

42 RA, OT–Abt. Strassenbau, E.1 Allgemeine Angelegenheiten, Vermerk v. 11.11.1942 betr. Neueinteilung der OBL–ungen im Bereich nordlich Narvik, 4.

the total work force. The labourers were monitored by only 128 Germans⁴³. The work mostly involved the same construction tasks that were undertaken on the mountain passes of Kvænangen and Badderen – but were comparatively more comprehensive. Two snow sheds with a total length of 13.596 m were constructed. The snow tunnel on the Reppar mountain was 8235 m and was constructed by the Norwegian company “Larsen”. The Hattern tunnel was built by “Frericks” and “Krull”, 5300 m and 60 m respectively. Moreover, some of the companies constructed German bases and workshops throughout the stretch.

A total of 327 forced labourers from Poland were hired for road construction in northern Norway. The majority of them (221) were recruited from Łódź and its surrounding region, and the rest from the Polish areas incorporated in the Third Reich. The Poles amounted to 23.9% of the foreign workers (with the exception of Germans and POWs)⁴⁴.

Brief outline of work conditions, salaries, housing and diets

Polish labourers working for the OT up until January 1943 received salaries from their respective employing construction company. This mostly concerned Poles originating from the incorporated areas. The OT, thus, had no official tariff prior to 1943 and salaries were organised by the construction companies, with varying practices. This system was changed on 1 February 1943 when Dr. Fritz Schmelter, who was responsible for recruitment of labour power in the OT–central in Berlin, created the so–called Poland–foreign–construction–tariff (*Polen–Ausland–Bautariff*), dated 11 January 1943. It concerned all Polish workers hired by German companies in all occupied Polish territories, with the exception of the GG and the Third Reich. This tariff was the only one of its kind and exclusively applied for Polish nationals. Three other tariffs were issued in January 1943 and applied to all foreigners with the exception of Poles in three different regions. They were Bautariff–Nord (Scandinavia), West (France, Belgium and the Netherlands), and East (Soviet).

The main reasons as to why the Polish tariff differed from other tariffs was the so–called *Sozialausgleichabgabe* (SAA) – a 15% social equalisation tax. Moreover, the tariff differed depending on from which area of Poland the labourer originated. Poles from the incorporated areas that had signed the DVL were exempt from the SAA, and Poles that had not signed the DVL – with the exception of those originating from the

43 RA, OT–Abt. Strassenbau, E. 82, D. III Winterdienstbauten, a.3. Repparfjell, Leistungübersicht der Bauleistungen Mai–Oktober 1943, OBL Alta, Abschnitt – Repparfjord v. 11.11.1943, 1.

44 For more information, please see: Emilia Denkiewicz–Szczepaniak, “Polske tvangsarbeidere på veibygging i Nord–Norge under den andre verdenskrig”, *Årbok for Rana* vol. XXXVII (2004): 59–65.

GG, had to pay the tax. Qualified labourers that had signed the DVL earned 0.80RM per hour, whilst labourers with the same qualifications that had not signed the DVL and the workers from the GG, earned 0.68RM per hour. Assistant workers were paid 0.65R, and 0.56RM per hour. Furthermore, they were (with the exception of Poles having signed the DVL) deprived of all secondary payments and the *Einsatzgeld* (a soldier salary – the equivalent of 1RM per day – given to all married Polish nationals). This entails that their salaries were 30% less of that received by other foreign workers and workers that had signed the DVL.

The Polish tariff, thus, represents a clear categorisation of Poles, meaning that the OT could exploit them to the fullest. The situation for Poles in the GG worsened following the Warsaw uprising when the Soviet army entered the GG. This made it impossible to easily transfer the labourers' money to the GG. The largest German recruitment company in Warsaw, "Breidt und Daub", established an office in the OTs headquarters in Oslo in Kirkegata 15. This company was ordered by the EG Wiking and the OT-central to coordinate the Poles' salaries and to wire them to the Deutsche Bank in Berlin. This meant that every Polish labourer had to travel to Berlin to withdraw their salaries. This was impossible for many Poles, and it is likely that many of them did not receive their salaries during the last months of the war⁴⁵.

The Polish POWs in Norway received salaries based on the OT-tariffs – the equivalent of 0.50RM per day. They received up to 0.90RM per day and 15–27 RM per month. It was possible to wire the salary to family members. The POWs could, due to the 1929 Geneva convention, signed by the Polish government, receive food parcels from the International Red Cross. Their social conditions were, thus, good⁴⁶.

OTs' Polish labourers and POWs were housed as other foreigners, and the Polish tariff states that the labourers received free accommodation. There were two types of wooden barracks: a sturdier option for civilian labourers and temporary solutions for prisoners. The barracks were of varying sizes depending on the surrounding landscape. The smallest barracks, the so-called forest cabins, were 6.5 x 4.8 metres and accommodated 8 workers. A road-barrack was a medium-sized housing option encompassing 8.7 x 3.8 metres, intended to accommodate 12 men. The most used option was a barracks of 33.14 x 8.71 metres, which housed 22 individuals⁴⁷. Cast iron ovens were used for heating. The most important inventory of the barracks was the beds, often wooden bunkbeds, but mostly simple benches. The POWs were housed in tents

45 More information on work conditions, please see: Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, *Polska siła robocza*, 174–187.

46 Polish Institute and Sikorski Museum (PIASM), London, A XII 47–74, Prints from reports issued by delegates of the International Red Cross visiting camps for Polish POWs, London, 2–5 December 1944.

47 RA, OT-Abt.Bahn, E. 46, Baracken.

(so-called Swedish and Finnish tents) made from plywood and heated using the same method as in the barracks⁴⁸.

OT-documents provide insight in the diet provided to the workers, which varied depending on the labourer's nationality and year of the war. The diet of a German labourer varied between 3600–3800 calories a day, whilst foreign workers received between 3000–3300 calories daily⁴⁹. The amount of calories was, on average, 500–800 calories more than what was received by labourers who did not do physically demanding labour.

Conclusions

The largest group of civilian Poles affiliated to the OT-EG Wiking were civilians, amounting to an estimated 7100 labourers. Polish POWs amounted to 1711 and constituted a small fraction in comparison to the number of Russian prisoners affiliated to the EG-Wiking.

The analysis of the OT-archive provides a detailed illustration of how Polish nationals were recruited to the EG-Wiking and why this process was complicated. Labourers were recruited from the incorporated areas until 1942 in a systematic and well-organised manner by German construction companies contractually obliged to the OT. The initial recruitment method in which construction companies bore the main responsibility was altered during the spring of 1942, and all labourers originating from the incorporated areas were registered to retain control over eligible employees of the OT. This registration was undertaken by state employment offices (*Landesarbeitsamt*) and the local sub-offices (*Nebenstellen*), which summoned Polish nationals. All employment offices had a special division named OT-*Werbstellen*, which registered labourers and distributed them on construction companies in need of labour power.

The recruitment method used in the GG was more comprehensive as the region was considered occupied territory functioning as a stockpile for cheap labour power. Polish industry had been destroyed by the Germans, Polish corporations had been forced out of the GG, and equipment and machinery were shipped to the Third Reich. The Polish industry was replaced by German companies producing goods needed by the military. The major consequence of this upheaval was increasing rates of unemployment, *inter alia* in the cities of Warsaw, Łódź, Kraków, Radom and Rzeszów.

Unemployment, poverty and deprivation led many Polish nationals to accept any employment position they were offered. The spring of 1943 saw a large-scale transportation of Poles arranged by the OT-central in co-operation with the government of the

48 For more information please see: Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, *Polska siła robocza*, 190–200.

49 See table no. 41 in: Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, *Polska siła robocza*, 205–206.

GG and local employment offices. The recruited Poles had been convinced that they were to undertake work in Germany and were not aware that they were employed by the OT. Recruitment was also outsourced to larger companies with good results from former recruitment assignments. When the methods could no longer fulfil the labour power needs of the OT, the organisation launched a propaganda campaign in the GG by utilising the *Werbstellen* and issuing advertisements in Polish-language newspapers. The spring of 1944 saw the establishment of OT recruitment offices and information agencies in the GG. Many Poles volunteered to the OT to avoid apprehension for resistance work in the Polish Home Army (*Armia Krajowa*, AK). They intended to escape to Sweden and from there travel to the Polish Army, stationed in England.

The EG-Wiking's increasing demand for labour power led the OT to forcibly recruit labourers without concern for age and qualifications. The coercion became especially visible in May 1944, when Willi Henne issued a decree giving the OT administration full authority over the labourers. This provides an explanation as to why many Poles often were transferred between work locations, for instance between Finland and Norway, or vice versa. All Poles deployed in Finland were transferred to assist the construction of the *Nordlansbanen* during the autumn of 1944. *Nordlansbanen* was the main workplace for Poles, and an estimated 870 civilian labourers and 1281 POWs were affiliated to this project during the summer of 1944. The Poles amounted to the largest nationality, an estimated 50–57% of all foreign workers (with the exception of Norwegians and Germans). Frequent rotations and transferrals of labour power meant that individuals from all Polish territories participated in the construction of the *Nordlansbanen*. The Polish labourers' speciality was wood construction, for example construction of barracks, snowsheds and fences, and wooden constructions for railway viaducts, bridges, etc.

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English version: Mark Atkinson

SUMMARY

Over 8800 Poles (ca. 7100 civilian forced workers and 1711 prisoners of war) were sent to Norway and Finnish Lapland to work for the Organisation Todt – *Einsatzgruppe Wiking* (EW). The first and second sections present the recruitment of the civilian forced labour within Poland and the sites to which they were transferred in Norway and north Finland. Until the spring of 1943, the majority were recruited from the Polish areas included in the *Reich*. The recruitment operated through construction firms with help of German recruitment offices. From spring 1943, recruitment increasingly originated from the *General Gouvernement*, the east part of Poland occupied by Germany. This change coincided with targeted actions to recruit for the EW, and in the autumn the OT started its own recruitment campaigns. The third section presents the number of Polish prisoners of war (POW) which were sent to Norway from Hamburg in April–May 1942. They were divided into three working battalions and spread on various building sites around the country, until 1041 of them were gathered in December 1943 to work on the expansion of the railway line in northern Norway. The fourth section elaborates the kind of building labour, mainly building of fortifications, roads and the north railway in Norway. The final section presents the living and working conditions of the Poles who were discriminated against both in terms of pay and liberties. Discrimination was also applied to the Poles working for EW. In January 1943, the OT adopted a specific *Polen–Ausland–Bautarif*, which sustained discrimination for Polish civilian workers. For Polish POWs norms of social conditions were higher than for Soviet and Yugoslavian POWs.

Polscy cywilni robotnicy przymusowi i jeńcy wojenni w Organizacji Todta – Einsatzgruppe Wiking, 1941–1945

Słowa kluczowe: Organizacja Todta – Norwegia – Finlandia – polska siła robocza – II wojna światowa

STRESZCZENIE

Ponad 8800 Polaków (ca 7100 cywilnych robotników przymusowych i 1711 jeńców wojennych) zostało wysłanych do Norwegii i północnej Finlandii do robót budowlanych prowadzonych przez Organizację Todta – Grupę Operacyjną Wiking (*Einsatzgruppe Wiking*, EW). W pierwszej i drugiej części przedstawiono system rekrutacji polskich robotników i miejsca, do których byli transportowani na terenie Norwegii i północnej Finlandii. Do wiosny 1943 r. większość rekrutowanych pochodziła z ziem polskich włączonych do III Rzeszy. Rekrutacja prowadzona była przez firmy budowlane z pomocą niemieckich urzędów pracy. Od wiosny 1943 r. rekrutacja coraz częściej odbywała się w Generalnym Gubernatorstwie (*General Gouvernement*), wschodniej części Polski, okupowanej przez Niemcy. Ta zmiana zbiegła się z zaawansowaną akcją rekrutacji na potrzeby EW, stąd jesienią 1943 r. OT wystartowała z własną kampanią rekrutacyjną. Trzecia część prezentuje problemy polskich jeńców wojennych (POW), którzy zostali wysłani z Hamburga do Norwegii w kwietniu–maju 1942 r. Zostali tam podzieleni na trzy bataliony robocze i rozesłani na różne place budowlane na

terenie całej Norwegii, po czym 1041 z nich zostało skierowanych w grudniu 1943 r. do prac w rozbudowie północnej części linii kolejowej w Norwegii. W czwartej części przedstawiono rodzaje prac budowlanych, głównie budowę fortyfikacji, dróg oraz linii kolejowej na północy Norwegii. W ostatniej części opisano warunki życia i pracy Polaków, którzy byli dyskryminowani zarówno pod względem płac, jak i swobód obywatelskich. Dyskryminacja ta była stosowana także wobec Polaków zatrudnionych przez EW. W styczniu 1943 r. OT przyjęła specjalną taryfę budowlaną (*Polen-Ausland-Bautarif*), która podtrzymywała dyskryminację polskich robotników cywilnych. Dla polskich jeńców wojennych stosowano normy warunków socjalnych na wyższym poziomie niż dla sowieckich i jugosłowiańskich.

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