

“For Fatherland, Führer, and Fortune: Forced Labor and the Internal Politics
of National Socialism”



A young Ostarbeiterin employed in a German factory, probably 1941.¹

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¹ Unknown Author. "Ostarbeiterin" in einem deutschen Betrieb" c. 1941/1945, © Deutsches Historisches Museum, accessed May 4, 2021, https://www.dhm.de/lemo/bestand/objekt/ba009673_1.

<u>Table of Contents</u>	1
Acknowledgement	2
Select Glossary & Abbreviations	3
Introduction: National Socialism, People, and Power	4
<i>Contexts of Forced Labor</i>	7
<i>German Industry & Forced Labor during the Second World War</i>	12
<i>The Historiography of Forced Labor Politics</i>	15
Chapter I: The collaborative dictatorship & forced labor (1933-1939)	21
<i>Slavery & politics in the early concentration camp system</i>	23
<i>The Four-Year Plan & Pre-war Industrial Collaboration</i>	27
Chapter II: Reorganization & Mass exploitation (1939-1944)	32
<i>Disaster & Ideological Extremity</i>	33
<i>The slave-industrial complex; SS-Economic enterprise & radical policy</i>	38
<i>Industrial Involvement in Slave Labor & the Armaments Ministry</i>	45
Chapter III: Divergent Interests in Collapse (1944–1945)	55
<i>Merging & Dividing: Interparty relationships & Private Industry</i>	57
Conclusion: The Legacy of forced labor & National Socialist Dictatorship	61
<i>The Lessons of Forced Labor Politics</i>	64
Bibliography	68

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Select Glossary & Abbreviations

SS: *Schutzstaffel* or “Protection Squadron,” the Nazi organization responsible for all internal security and implementing racialist policy. Highly conservative in orientation, but also the most extreme faction within the regime. Led by Heinrich Himmler.

SS-WVHA: *SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt* or “SS Economic and Main Administrative Office”, the SS sub-organization responsible for the management of SS businesses from 1938-1943. Operated in conjunction with industry and managed the slave labor system within the concentration camps. Dismantled through Albert Speer’s political alliance with Heinrich Himmler. Headed by Oswald Pohl.

NSDAP: *Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei* or “National Socialist German Workers Party”, the long-form name for the German Nazi party of 1920-1945. Specifically refers to the party organization for the purposes of this work. Consisted of “left” and “right” wings divided by economic and revolutionary orientation. Primarily conservative-oriented after 1934 and grew to encompass an extensive system of party bureaucracy. Major party figures involved with forced labor systems included Herman Göring, Fritz Sauckel, Fritz Todt, and Albert Speer. The NSDAP Party organization was led first by Rudolf Hess, but then by Martin Bormann after 1941.

SA: *Sturmabteilung*, or “Storm Detachment”, popularly referred to as “stormtroopers” or “brownshirts”. This Nazi sub-organization was the violent paramilitary arm of the NSDAP during much of the 1920s and early 1930s. Politically neutralized during the Night of the Long Knives in 1934 by a coalition of the right-leaning NSDAP, SS, Army, and Industrialist factions.

Wehrmacht: The collective German armed forces after 1935, including the *Heer* (army), *Luftwaffe* (airforce), and *Kriegsmarine* (navy). The leadership of the armed forces tended to be nationalist-authoritarian in nature but was a political ally to the regime after 1934. Increasingly Nazified after the Blomberg-Fritsch Affair of 1938. Involved with forced labor through the Armaments Ministry and wartime production centralization.

Organisation Todt: NSDAP sub-organization responsible for war and infrastructure construction. A major user of forced labor during the early war years. Named for and run by Fritz Todt until his death in 1942 and then by Albert Speer from 1942 onward.

Reichsministerium für Bewaffnung und Munition: “Reich Ministry for Armaments and Munitions”, or colloquially known as the Armaments Ministry. This organization was a primary driver of forced labor expansion. Highly Nazified in principle, but allied to the “outsiders” of heavy industry in practice. Grew to encompass all forced labor elements after 1943. The primary domain of Fritz Todt and Albert Speer.

Introduction: National Socialism, People, and Power

“In Essen, we worked for Krupp. There we worked in the ammunition factory. We made parts of tanks and we worked day shift and night shift. Part of the girls worked day shift and night shift. It was bitter cold.

The bombs were coming so it was open. We had a little fire, so occasionally we went to warm our hands there. The food was getting worse. Not as good there.

So when we found half of a potato, we put it in the oven and we baked it there and shared one potato for a few girls.

What happened to me in Essen, is a piece of iron fell on my wrist and it broke it.

Of course, if you cannot work any longer, the next day there were a few pregnant women and a few women who had heart condition that couldn't work anymore, so there was supposed to be a transport back to Auschwitz.”²

Judith Altmann was one of millions forced to work in German industry during the Second World War. What she describes is not the killing centers of Auschwitz, nor the political camp of Dachau, but industrial slave works of Friedrich Krupp AG. Some were Jews, enslaved in the KZ subcamps, some were Belarusians, deported during genocidal sweeps into the Belorussian countryside, some were Russian soldiers, captured, starved, and marched into the heart of the German Reich. All were unwilling; trapped in industrial and agricultural systems of forced labor in service of German war industry.

In a sense, such operations were a true expression of Nazi economic empire. For this was an assembly of supposed subhumans; here specifically Jews, ironically working to defend against Judeo-Bolshevism. Nevertheless, even in the Final Struggle, profit found a way. In Essen, the three locked rings of Friedrich Krupp AG remained overhead as the Jews toiled on. The slaves of Essen not only worked for a murderous regime, but for industrial concerns as well.

But in slavery also lay contradictions. Slavery was inefficient, but the war was profitable. The regime was coercive, but also cooperative. Private industry was non-ideological, but also and influential. Such notions defy traditional retellings of National Socialism as uniquely

² Dori Laub, *Altmann, Judith, Interview za570*, transcript of an oral history conducted October 16, 2005 by Dori Laub, Documentation of Forced Slave Labor during the Nazi Regime, Yale University, New Haven, The Interview Archive “Forced Labor 1939-1945“, accessed May 4, 2021, <https://archiv.zwangsarbeit-archiv.de>

repressive. After all, how could only marginally affiliated groups profit and even thrive in the climate of absolute political subordination?

While the importance of politics is obvious in a theoretical sense, it is also imperative for understanding the motivations of authoritarian regimes. Authoritarian rule has no counterpart by way of abundance; such power mechanisms are as old as written history itself. Despite this broadness, few instances of dictatorship receive as much attention as the German National Socialist dictatorship of 1933-1945.

For many reasons, politics has remained salient in studies of the Nazi period. In a political sense, the National Socialist regime functioned as both traditional autocracy and as a distinct, modernistic phenomenon. The duality of private industry within the regime is not an isolated phenomenon. Therefore, past explorations and theory have invoked unique ways of explaining this combination. Over the past 40 years, it has been the interpretation of several scholars that National Socialism represents a constantly changing character. Despite a superficial continuity, many allege that Hitler's dictatorship evolved based upon highly circumstantial internal power structures. In short, institutional Nazism resembled an informalized network of fiefdoms, essentially unified through Hitler's supreme authority as Führer and by Nazi ideology. This pattern has broadly been defined as "polyocracy", essentially meaning "rule by many".

This work will examine processes of unfree labor within Nazi Germany in a political context. Despite a lack of notoriety in popular discussion and memory, forced labor played a significant role in the Nazi domination of Europe. Several million people toiled under systems of slavery that perhaps only rivaled that of the 17th century at its height. It was a unique tragedy of a massive scale. Therefore, the creation and multitude of this system is of great importance to

historians not only for understanding the course of the Second World War, but in understanding its moral and human consequences.

Like every other aspect of the governmental apparatus in the Third Reich, systems of unfree labor were distinctly political in their creation and practical functioning. At its core, forced labor offered opportunity for those working in the confines of the Nazi dictatorship to work better towards the desires and wishes of Adolf Hitler. However, through forced labor, it is also possible to observe the relationship between different elements of society, specifically in the interactions of regime officials and certain politically enfranchised constituents. Through the process of polyocracy, the motivations of peripheral members of the Nazi regime contributed to policies of forced labor, demonstrated through a series of political relationships and alliances. From a minimized perspective, such motivations generally trended towards private collaboration in forced labor policy, but the course of the war and greater control sought by the regime reduced the ability of political outsiders to maneuver within the polycratic system.

Chapter I focuses on the origins of the polycratic system and forced labor. While heavy industry was not a major player in such systems before 1939, certain parallels immediately foreshadowed the functioning of forced labor system during the war. All the relevant institutional players including the SS, NSDAP, and industrial sector first established working relationships during the period before 1939. The relationship between Friedrich Krupp AG and Herman Göring's 4-Year Plan office is of particular note, as it mirrors the polycratic relationship that later evolved into the forced labor context.

Chapter II analyses the establishment and functioning of forced labor policy during wartime, specifically through the cooperation and disagreements of the SS-WVHA (SS-Economic and Main Office) with Krupp in the concentration camp system. As the party and the

SS began to work towards more extreme ideological goals, they entered the economic sector with similar objectives. These clashed with the Krupp's economic motivations, which translated into selective collaboration and disagreement with the SS over forced labor policy through polycratic functioning.

Chapter III follows in the reorganization of forced labor under the Armament's Ministry, the government agency responsible for the war economy after 1942-43. Such a shift represented the regime's desperation to increase wartime production, as the situation became increasingly dire and ideologically motivated. This translated into a greater attempt to control independents, as the system fought for its own survival. Krupp's motivations fell further into conflict, as forced labor was a liability on presumptions of the postwar situation. The resulting situation for more resembled traditional descriptions of totalitarianism than that of the pre-war period.

Contexts of Forced Labor

When seeking images of Nazi forced labor, there are few better places to start than its moral epicenter. This dubious award must go to the system of slavery perpetrated against the inmates of the concentration camps. The exact history of this system is also decidedly unpleasant. Forced labor had been feature of the camp system since the creation of Dachau in 1933 but had come into its own through the expansion of the camp system during the mid-war period (1941-1943). The camps themselves were products of the *Schutzstaffel*, the black-clad security service of the Nazi party. Since its inception as Hitler's bodyguard, the SS had been a lightning rod of Nazi radicalism, and its connection to slavery can be easily sketched to SS administration of the camps system. By 1944, slave labor was estimated to have sourced 5 per

cent of the industrial workforce, amounting to some 500,000 laborers.³ Why the moral and popular impact of camp slavery has left such a strong connection with the Holocaust is obvious. Evidence of explicit “destruction through labor” policies (*Vernichtung durch Arbeit*) implicitly lead to such genocidal connections.⁴ The moral implications of “freedom through work” (*Arbeit macht frei*) also reaches beyond a purely mechanical connection; the co-existence of such policies represents the relationship between the genocidally tinged Nazi political policy and economic policy, has frequently been understood through traditional conceptions of economics.

While to recognize slavery and its role in the Final Solution is critical for any understanding of Nazi forced labor policy, the group represents only one of several major classifications of “forced laborers” as a whole. By far, the largest group of forced labor victims were “eastern workers”; the so called *Ostarbeiter*. This was a hugely diverse group, ranging from Soviet prisoners of war to Polish civilians rounded up at gunpoint. Officially, the group can also be split between formerly military (Soviet prisoners of war) and civilian parts (*Zivilarbeiter*). Despite the apparent distinction, the treatment and internal management of the group as largely devoid of difference as racial classifications overtook most other considerations.⁵ Like the camp victims, the *Ostarbeiter* worked in conditions resembling slavery, but whose circumstances were different in several meaningful qualities.

First, the jurisdiction of the easterners largely fell outside of the SS⁶ and was instead subject to a growing internal labor bureaucracy within the NSDAP. This included the

³ Tooze, J. Adam. *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), 532.

⁴ Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 481, 531.

⁵ Ulrich Herbert, “Forced Laborers in the Third Reich: An Overview,” *International Labor and Working-Class History*, vol. 58 (2000): 145.

⁶ However, the internal security and administration of labor barracks was afforded to the SS. Such large populations of foreigners almost inevitably became a matter of internal security due to the revolt risk.

bureaucracy machinery was originally assembled by Herman Göring in his role as Reich Plenipotentiary to the Four-Year Plan (an economic tsar of sorts), but eventually came under the control of Fritz Sauckel, the General Plenipotentiary for Labour Deployment and Fritz Todt, the first Reichsminister for Armaments and War Production. While still subject to a harshly repressive system of apartheid from the remainder of German society, Göring, Sauckel, Todt, and later Speer precluded the group from the worst excesses of the SS-run camp system. Primarily, economic officials were motivated by the need to drastically increase war production; by 1942, Germany was competing against two continent-sized economies. Due to structural positioning within the regime, economic officials under Todt and Speer essentially acted as a link between government and private industry. They also used this relationship as leverage within the polycratic system, especially during internal disputes over political authority. Because of the need to increase production, the economic officials manifested limited support for the conditions of forced laborers themselves. For instance, Sauckel and Speer both implemented policies to keep the forced labor force above starvation rations (often generally cited in Speer's defense). This was not because either was sympathetic to the forced laborer's conditions but were instead motivated out by a clear economic logic. For the regime, the starving worker was an unproductive one.⁷

Second, the phenomenon of the *Ostarbeiter* dwarfs their counterparts in scale. In 1944 (the peak year in employment of forced labor), the *Ostarbeiter* alone comprised an estimated 4.2 million individuals consisting of 65% of all forced laborers in the entirety of the German economic system.⁸ Our stereotypical picture of a forced laborer in Nazi Germany is that of

⁷ Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 530.

⁸ Herbert. "Forced Laborers", 199.

slavery in the concentration camp, but statistics points to a Ukrainian teenager or Prisoner-of-war from the Soviet Union as a more representative of forced laborers collectively.

Framed on their own, both the slavery of the *Konzentrationslager* and that of the *Ostarbeiter* can be misleading. While camp slavery is certainly the best remembered, and the *Ostarbeiter* the most numerous, several other forced labor systems existed of varying maliciousness and scale. As Nazi Germany came to occupy and create a new European order, it subordinated the metropolitan economies of France, Belgium, Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, and Italy through a mixture of both carrots and sticks. In both France and the Low countries, this meant mandatory labor in military construction projects by local civilians. While also overseen by Speer's *Organisation Todt*, such projects fall outside of the industrialist-bureaucratic framework.

The occupation authorities also sought to restart the occupied western economies, with the ultimate goal of creating a pan-European economic order. While pursuing this arrangement, the regime sought and found cooperation in many sectors, ranging from construction companies in Denmark⁹ to carmakers in France. Such collaboration represented the complexity of coercion and cooperation, but forced labor remained a limited experience in most of Western Europe.¹⁰

While industrial and civilian coercion and accounted for major portions of the western forced labor practice, it was ultimately in mass recruitment of semi-skilled labor for use in Germany that holds bearing in industrial output. In some semblance, this arrangement was different in that it resembled traditional conceptions of international labor transfer outside of the

⁹ Joachim Lund, "Building Hitler's Europe: Forced Labor in the Danish Construction Business during World War II." *Business History Review*, vol. 84, no. 3 (2010): 479–99.

¹⁰ Herbert. "Forced Laborers", 199.

German forced labor phenomenon.¹¹ In a broad sense, the *Westarbeiter* were treated as guest workers, regardless of if they had only accepted such a posting by duress. The official German term for this class of workers - “*Gastarbeiter*” or “guest-workers”, somewhat reflects this reality. To complicate, western “guest workers” were often theoretically the result of agreements brokered between the occupation regimes (in a similar way that such agreements were created in the 1950s and 60s). For example, one transfer of French civilian forced laborers to Germany in 1940 was in exchange for the repatriation of French prisoners of war.¹² This was not entirely representative of *Westarbeiter* as a whole, but westerners often resembled indentured laborers in reality.

The most salient question posed by the western guest worker paradox is in their treatment. While it is certain that the treatment of camp laborers and *Ostarbeiter* constituted crimes against humanity, it has been more controversial to attempt the same in the western Europe.¹³ Forced labor systems employing French, Belgian, and Dutch nationals were certainly unjust and exploitative, but the treatment and of such groups by the regime lacked the distinctive racial and genocidal overtones so evident in official language towards their eastern counterparts. There was no state mandated apartheid that dominated the social relationships between German and Easterner, or political concerns made this impractical. Certain categories of *Westarbeiter* (Dutch and Flemings) could live within German society; they were eventually allowed to live

¹¹ *Westarbeiter* were officially entitled “in all cases, to the same wages, salaries and other working conditions” as German workers.

See Herbert, Ulrich. *Hitler's Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labor in Germany Under the Third Reich*. Translated by William Templer (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 99.

¹² Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 97.

¹³ Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 314-15.

outside the labor barracks by renting private quarters and eat in German factory canteens.¹⁴ They were foreigners ipso-facto, but to be a Western European in Nazi Germany was not an uncleanable sin as it was to be a Jew or a Slav. All such factors must be considered when totaling the condition and relationship of the *Westarbeiter* within the German economy. While the recruitment and coercive element of western forced labor is almost entirely conceivable as a function of Nazi criminality, the treatment and ideation of *Westarbeiter* as guest laborers contains small elements of truth.

Despite major differences in treatment, function, and origin of German forced labor systems, they remain unified in their foreignness. A vast majority of direct victims of Nazism were non-Germans; victims of forced labor are equally reflective in their foreignness. This also brings the contradiction of ideology to the forefront. The irony of a state built upon extreme racialized principles willingly “contaminating” itself was not lost upon Nazi policy makers.¹⁵ Internal debates within the security services who invented such systems reveals a certain ambivalence.¹⁶

German Industry & Forced Labor during the Second World War

Such repressive systems can certainly be understood from within party institutions, but no study of German forced labor during the National Socialist era is complete without a discussion of private industry. Responsibility for forced labor systems can be aimed at specific individuals, but

¹⁴ Initially, the party sought to reduce this equity by restricting the *Westarbeiter* movement and residence, but such policies took differing characteristics depending on official policy. For example, Dutch and Italian workers were given significant freedoms; one because of their “Germanic” qualities and the other through political concerns. See Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 100-101.

¹⁵ Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 58.

¹⁶ Homze, Edward L. *Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 74.

such figures were largely motivated by wartime labor shortages in German factories.¹⁷ For many reasons, the industrial sector possessed many parallel motivations for expansion of forced labor and was extremely complicit in why such systems were pursued.

By itself, the term “industry” left unqualified is unhelpful at best. Especially in the German economy of the 1930s and 1940s, industry and the industrialists that ran such operations made for a wildly diverse crowd. It would also be a mistake to label all enterprise as equally complicit in forced labor, as such usage varied by scale, sector, prominence, and connection to the regime. Simply put, any given firm’s involvement with forced labor was also conditional on a wide range of factors.

It is also a mistake to go too far in the other direction. By this, I cite a trend that emerges through looking at the specific industries and companies most involved with forced labor. During the height of forced labor systems from 1942-1945, the overwhelming majority of operations employing forced labor were in that of heavy industry, electronics, arms manufacturing, agriculture, mining, industrial resource generation, and the automotive and aerospace sectors.¹⁸ Such operations naturally favored dominant, large-scale industrial conglomerates; famous names like Siemens, Krupp, Daimler-Benz, Mercedes, BMW, and Volkswagen. There are also those companies that may be less familiar through postwar corporate mergers; names such as Messerschmitt, Junkers, Focke-Wulf (collectively Airbus) and IG Farben (Bayer). Together, such firms represented a relatively large swath of the German economy in the National Socialist era.

¹⁷ Buggeln, Marc. *Slave Labor in Nazi Concentration Camps*. Translated by Paul Cohen. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 32.

¹⁸ Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 516-518.

Such focus on this narrow group also calls for scrutiny of their owners. This industrialist class was in many ways, a product of the previous century, originating during mid-19th. Many men of this group were of the second, third, or fourth generation of private ownership and had extensive ties to both the Weimar and Nazi political systems. For focus, this work specifically looks at the actions of the owners and employees of Friedrich Krupp AG as indicative of the holistic experience within the industrial-political complex.

Tracing its lineage to the 1600s, Friedrich Krupp AG and its namesake ruling family had been involved in German industrialization for the better part of a century. It had been a global player in the steel and arms industry during Germany's initial industrialization during the 1850s-1900s and had a close association with German government during the run-up to the First World War. Krupp was known for steel, mostly produced in the Ruhr industrial corridor, but was also known for artillery, munitions, locomotives, machine tools, and other steel-based products.¹⁹ During the Second World War, the company was primarily owned by the Krupp family, as it had been since its rise during 1850s. Gustav Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach and his son Alfried were the dynastic inheritors of a long family tradition. The Krupps had long been one of Germany's most rich and influential families on economic matters. The family also had close links with government during both the Imperial and Republican eras, but had mostly aligned themselves with economically liberal politics abroad and government sponsorship at home.²⁰ Especially in light of this long family history, the preposition of abandoning the family business due to the policies of the Nazis was likely out of mind.

¹⁹ James, Harold. "Steel." In *Krupp: a History of the Legendary German Firm*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012. 25-88.

²⁰ James. *Krupp: a History*, 128-130.

The choice of Krupp for such a task makes sense in several ways. Not only was Krupp deeply involved with the Nazi regime and forced labor, but it was also the subject of a postwar tribunal through United State of America vs Alfried Krupp, one of the many cases of the Subsequent Nuremberg Trials. As a result, many of Krupp's internal workings have been made accessible, as well as the testimony of its staff through trial related interviews. The political experience and standing of the Krupp leadership through its dealings with the NSDAP labor bureaucracy also is insightful into the relationship of economically powerful individuals to political influential persons within the regime. To a large extent, such figures can be construed as representative of larger social groups; with Krupp standing in for the experience of the industrialist political class interacting with various regime factions such as the SS, NSDAP, and party labor bureaucracy.

The Historiography of Forced Labor Politics

One immediate question in forced labor scholarship was in the contradictions of importing large numbers of foreigners to an explicitly xenophobic system. Why would an administration so based upon racial chauvinism import considerable of its supposed enemies? The conventional line has followed the NSDAP interparty debate which concluded that mass employment of forced labor was a neither the preferred nor deliberate choice, but one made out of desperation. A brief reading of recent works such as Marc Buggeln's 2015 monograph, *Slave Labor in Nazi Concentration Camps* affirms the desperation concept. The regime felt itself compelled by labor shortages rather than out of any doctrinal choice. Other scholars working in line with Holocaust studies and the history of collaboration have analyzed the nature forced labor (particularly slavery) within the context of oppression between group relations such as historian Wolf Gruner in his book, *Jewish Forced Labor under the Nazis: Economic Needs and Racial Aims, 1938-*

1944. Up until the current moment, historiographical evidence suggests a wide variety of contexts shaped forced labor policy outside of pure economism.

However, much of the forced labor story has also been told through the lens of the German economy. Here, there have been a several important works detailing the economic history of the Nazi regime, most notably Adam Tooze's *The Wages of Destruction: The Making and Breaking of the Nazi Economy*. Tooze's contribution was comprehensive, detailing neigh-all aspects of economic policy that went before and after the war. Impressive in its own right, Tooze also intervenes in the Speer debate, arguing that Speer was almost entirely a political figure, and his supposed success was a product of the then-deceased Fritz Todt. The connection of Forced Labor with the overall German economy has also been studied in minute. One study with heavy emphasis on this approach is Ulrich Herbert's *Hitler's Foreign Workers: Enforced Forced Labor in Germany Under the Third Reich*. Whereas other studies of forced labor trace the ideology and statistics, Ulrich's monograph extensively focuses policy, the regime, and the realities of forced labor. By a large margin, it is the best work currently available on Nazi industrial forced labor practice. Given the gravity of the subject, both Tooze and Herbert's historiographic contributions make ample room for the precision that the topic requires.

Studies and memory of forced labor have also traditionally been influenced by the greater memory of the Second World War and Holocaust studies. In the western world, a special interest has been taken in with slavery's relationship with the Holocaust. It is an active and continually evolving part of the subfield, with recent works such as Michael Allen Thad's, *The Business of Genocide* and Marc Buggeln's *Slave Labor in Nazi Concentration Camps* contributing recent insights into the especially repressive and genocidal nature of slavery within the concentration camps. Some of the work explicitly regarding Nazi factionalism also has prior precedence. For

instance, Thad's study takes special focus on the economic linkage between private industry, the SS economic wing, and slave laborers.²¹

As a system infamous for excessive paperwork, the Nazi regime left behind a considerable assortment of files, correspondences, and documents. Following the Second World War's conclusion in 1945, the Allies powers vested in themselves the unilateral power to try members of the Nazi regime for different sets of crimes (including the use of forced labor). In the following years, each trial sought to convict different groups of high-ranking officials for their roles in the war, the Holocaust, and other associated atrocities. During this process, the occupiers translated a litany of evidence, not only in favor of the prosecution, but also to the benefit of the defense. Together with other collections of Nazi paperwork, the documentation acquired during the Nuremberg process has provided an essential window in the history of the regime. Due to its mixture of accessibility, variety, and expansiveness, the various Nuremberg archives are a cornerstone of our understanding into the Nazi regime.

The papers for the Nuremberg Krupp Trial and trials of major war criminals are dispersed in different locations, but exist in physical and digital forms in Harvard Law School's *Nuremberg Trials Project* and Vanderbilt University Law School's and Vanderbilt University Libraries' *Nuremberg Krupp Trial Papers Judge of Hu C. Anderson*. Harvard's archive consists of the papers for the Nuremberg Military Tribunal (NMT) dealing with top ranking Nazis, while Vanderbilt's collection specifically consists of the papers from the Krupp Trial. Both provide great insight into the operations of Speer, Pohl, and Krupp during the entire period of 1933-1945.

²¹ Allen, Michael Thad. *The Business of Genocide: the SS, Slave Labor, and the Concentration Camps*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 3

Outside of the *Bundesarchiv* (German Federal Archives), Friedrich Krupp AG's successor, ThyssenKrupp AG and the Krupp family retain a significant amount of documentation relating to their operations during the Second World War. However, these sources are generally closed to the public, and it has only been with explicit permission and oversight that some works have been produced (such as Harold James' recent, mostly deferential monograph: *Krupp: a History of the Legendary German Firm*). While some documentation on the firm's operations exists due to the proceedings of the Krupp Trial, the shut nature of the private Krupp archive makes it difficult to obtain the full picture.

Following political philosopher Hannah Arendt, an oft repeated form of understanding National Socialism has been through the "totalitarian" thesis: this explanation explains Nazi dictatorship as an extreme authoritarianism seeking control over all of life's aspects. Totalitarian regimes are ones that regulate daily life not only a perverse level, but to an inescapable one. Through the body of political philosophy starting in the 1950s and 1960s, it was increasingly well-defined and popular to explain Nazi extremity as evidence of totalitarianism. The intellectual economy of discourses discussing totalitarianism reflects this; Orwell's *Newspeak* may have been inspired by Stalin's *Diamat*, but it easily applies interchangeably with the authoritarian and domineering sentiments espoused in *Mein Kampf*. Newer studies continue to expand our understanding of Nazi authoritarianism in new methods such as in Timothy Snyder's *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*. In his monumental book, Snyder redefines German mass killing as product of geography, state destruction, and authoritarian interaction rather than emphasizing traditional explanations of anti-Semitism or genocidal intentionalism.

New approaches have had novel effect elsewhere. In a more widespread doctrinal shift, social history continues to influence political thinking into Nazi Germany. Where previous

conceptualizations were concerned by important individuals and events, social history focused on people, as opposed with figures of exceptional significance. This quickly emerged in studies of National Socialism. During the 1960s, German historian Martin Broszat published *The Hitler State* (1969), in which, he argues against the application of the totalitarian model set forth by historians of the immediate postwar. By its inheritance of broader German society and overlapping fields of authority within the regime, Broszat argues that Nazi dictatorship more resembled a collection of preexisting dominant social groups as opposed to a totalitarian monolith. This further evolved into what English historian Ian Kershaw would later describe as "Working towards the Führer"; that the groups and individuals were held together by the unique role and authority of Hitler himself. Thus, both theses seek to describe Nazi Germany as a contradiction. In Kershaw's contribution, "Working towards the Führer" is very much a reflection of the doctrine of "*Führerprinzip*" or the "Leader-principle"; that Hitler's word and decisions (and ability to negotiate between and against cliques) produced law and central authority. To Broszat and Kershaw, the cooperation and functioning of preexisting political groups alongside the Nazi Party indicate political decentralization, which is inherently contradictory to totalitarianism.

It is under these pretenses that this work defines and characterizes the Nazi system. While there is ample evidence of the totalitarian model, it critically fails to explain the strength of factionalism that was absent in other period examples of totalitarianism (most often that of Stalinism or Maoism). The coalition explanation, that Nazi Germany was governed by several allied cliques including the armed forces, the SS and police, the industrialists, former conservatives, and Nazi party apparatus, explains this gap, but also does not explain the unique and exclusive level repressiveness missing in traditional authoritarianism. Henceforth, a

synthesis of both totalitarian and coalition-oriented explanations, each not quite satisfactory on their own, permits us to account with greater clarity the patterns of change within Nazi political functioning.

The multipolar approach continues to endure since its emergence in the late 1980s, with recent scholarship including Thomas Schaarschmidt's 2017 article, *Multi-Level Governance in Hitler's Germany: Reassessing the Political Structure of the National Socialist State*.

Compilations of important works also continue to address the issue of totalitarianism through discussions of the polycratic conceptualization. For example, Neil Gregor's collection, simply titled *Nazism* saw fit to include Peter Hüttenberger's *National Socialist Polycracy*. Even as other areas of Nazi scholarship have moved away from the intentionalist/functionalist debate of the 1980s, the concept of multilateral functioning continues to exert a notable influence onto political thought about Nazi Germany.

Through understanding and applying this concept of polyocracy and coalition politics, I will expand understanding of forced labor as more than a tool of repression or economics, but also that of Nazi political economy. In the political process of forced labor, we see not only Nazi infighting, but weaknesses in the ultimate authority of the National Socialist regime. Private industry, specifically well-connected industrialist barons and their firms exercised a degree of political independence. In a system otherwise dominated by authoritarianism, that is unusual. To function within such confines, industry operated within a unique system characterized by collaboration and defiance. To what extent each value expanded and contracted depended on both political circumstances and the holistic situation of Germany itself.

When combined with the framing of forced labor as a radical or desperate solution, it is also equally as indicative of "totalitarian" tendencies; essentially the trend for the regime to gain

greater control over more aspects of society. In this, the interaction of private industry with the regime is invocative of totalitarian policy, specifically in the regime's absolute dedication to the so-called final victory. This impulse: defined as absolutism, totalitarianism, and extremism was a creation of the regime's precarious situation during the climax of Second World War.

Totalitarianism and repression existed on a scale, were it reached its height just before the final year of the regime's existence. The interaction of the late-war Nazi labor bureaucracy with German industry is symptomatic; where industrial polycratic freedom began to slim in the face of the regime's defeat and extinction.

Chapter I: The collaborative dictatorship & forced labor (1933-1939)

Although the causes of Nazi dictatorship and its path to forced labor are controversial, the success of National Socialism is more clearly rooted in the late politics of the Weimar system. Despite a poor reputation, the Republic underwent an extended period of political stability from 1925-1929. Prior to the financial crash of 1929, groups like the NSDAP and KPD²² represented a marginal section of society.²³ Outside of the extremes, German politics existed on a broad spectrum. The Republic was a true mass democracy, composed of diverse political parties and constituencies. While this system changed fundamentally with Nazi dictatorship, it is more correct to say that the early Nazi regime retained several significant elements. The NSDAP immediately began to crack down on the independent political parties, but much of the right either acquiesced or was absorbed into the dictatorship.²⁴ Some, such as far-right leader Alfred

²² *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands*, the German communist party of 1918 to 1946.

²³ Broszat, Martin. *The Hitler State: Foundation and the Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich*. (New York: Longman House, 1981), 5-6.

²⁴ This was because Hitler sought a return to the political atmosphere of 1914; a state of political unity and mobilization, but in peacetime. See Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 22.

Hugenberg were pressured into retirement, but a large body of soldiers, government bureaucrats, and industrial figureheads, maintained limited political influence.

On the eve of March 1933, this subset of the political right was divided into two major factions. The older was that of the “traditionalist” right; consisting of professional soldiers, former aristocrats, eastern peasantry, protestant clergy, and government bureaucrats. United under Bismarck’s coalition during the Imperial period, these “National Conservatives” were also marginalized by the equal franchise and liberal-democratic orientation of the Weimar establishment. The platforms of the national-conservative party, the *Deutschnationale Volkspartei* (DNVP) called for the establishment or restoration of the old authoritarian order, and when politically opportune, there was a general sense of disrespect and disregard for the republican system.²⁵ The national-conservative movement was deeply anachronistic; perpetuating itself through Wilhelmime nostalgia and advocating for German revanchism.

The other important and well-connected group on the political right was that of German heavy industry. As the primary drivers of the largest industrial economy in Western Europe, industrial conglomerates held major sway over German politics both during the Republican and Imperial periods. During both eras, the industrial lobby voiced its opinion through economically liberal organizations, such as the *Nationale liberale Partei* of the Imperial period and the *Deutsche Volkspartei* of the Weimar Republic. While both parties were what is now deemed classically liberal on economic philosophy, each had a history of working with the right.²⁶ This conservative-right liberal coalition placed the industrialists in a familiar entanglement with Nazis, albeit with directly authoritarian properties. Therefore, when the political center lurched

²⁵ Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 11-12

²⁶ Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 4-5.

to the extreme right in the immediate establishment of Nazi dictatorship, it is hardly surprising that the industrial wing followed suit.

This is however, not to say that the industrialist-Nazi relationship was determined at its birth in 1933. The relationship was subject to constant pressure and thereby change, but it did formulate the basic interaction between the two. Industry was ideologically subservient but held limited independence because of their relative entrenchment and that Nazi ideology had very little to offer on economic views.²⁷ The internal structure of this coalition also interfaced an interlocking system of relationships that established collective support for the larger Nazi project.

Collectively, both the national conservatives and industrialists made up the bulk of the Weimar right that was directly incorporated into the Nazi political sphere.²⁸ This cooperation not only allowed the regime to decimate the political left and center but began the process of mobilizing the nation towards the extremes that would make forced labor a destructive necessity.

Slavery & politics in the early concentration camp system

In a sense, the last pillar needed to complete the prehistory of forced labor politics came from expansion and splintering within the NSDAP itself. The pre-1933 party was most divided along territorial fault-lines because of centralization around the *Gau* system.²⁹ Hitler sought to replicate his political style at the local level, where local party members coalesced around a layer of local NSDAP party bosses (the *Gauleiters*). Especially in the pre-war period and that from 1933-1934,

²⁷ Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 305.

²⁸ Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 87.

²⁹ Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 44.

conflicts within the NSDAP often centered around controversy between the local and national levels.

In 1934, this environment collapsed due to politicking with the party. In the late 1920s, an anti-capitalist strain manifested itself with Ernst Röhm's *Sturmabteilung*³⁰ and several of the *Gauleiters*. This left-leaning faction was also anti-establishment in that it sought to replace or subsume the old *Reichswehr*³¹ and dispose with right-wing industrial cliques. Such anti-establishment radicalism proved to be an anathema for Hitler, particularly because it stood in the way of incorporating the right-wing establishment and how the *Gauleiters* sought to amass power for themselves.³²

The solution was found in Hitler favoring the SA's enemies; the right-leaning faction of the NSDAP. This group consisted of Heinrich Himmler's SS, as well as top Nazis such as *Reichsmarschall* Herman Göring, Propaganda Minister Josef Goebbels, and Deputy Führer Rudolf Hess.³³ In the following power struggle, the NSDAP-right made overtures to the senior elements of the establishment conservatives (such as Minister of War Werner von Blomberg) in exchange for the neutralization of the SA.³⁴ The resulting purge, the *Night of the Long Knives* saw much of the SA leadership dead, alongside elements of the old conservative leadership and former Weimar elites that had continued to criticize the regime from within.

The success and emboldening of Heinrich Himmler's SS over the left-leaning SA faction facilitated the creation of an SS security apparatus separate from the NSDAP. This was a major

³⁰ Meaning "Storm Detachment", these were the thuggish "Brownshirts" who became infamous for political violence during the Weimar era.

³¹ The armed forces of the Weimar Republic, a mostly unreformed bastion of Wilhelmine monarchism and ultra-conservatism.

³² Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 196-198.

³³ Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 204.

³⁴ Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 212.

turning point towards the creation of the forced labor system. Especially in its early pre-war context, the forced labor was a function of the burgeoning concentration camp network. It is important to note that this early system was not designed patently for genocidal extermination, but rather aimed to imprison, repress, and kill small numbers of political prisoners and other “undesireables” perceived as a threat to Nazi power.

Even in its earliest stages, the prehistory of the forced labor system carried the forbearance of political conflict that would dominate the system in its later stages. While the need for forced labor might have arisen independently though wartime labor shortages, the growing independence and importance of Himmler’s SS fiefdom gave it significant dealmaking power during the period directly preceding the war. This growth in presence and importance of the SS clique entwined with its later genocidal mission made later systems of slavery.³⁵

A reading of early documentary evidence shows how the political nature of this system came to be. In the period from 1936-1939, labor cooperation between Herman Göring, (personifying the NSDAP and industrialists) Himmler, (standing for the SS) and the Justice Ministry reveals a concessionary relationship. For example, in one document 1936 authored by Göring’s Prussian office, the document details the supremacy of the Gestapo over the Judicial Ministry.³⁶ This was a formalization of sorts, as Göring already had conceded the power of the police to Himmler in the wake of the Night of Long Knives, but the document also displays the early ascendancy of the security state. Other documents originating from the Justice Ministry detail the supremacy of the SS authority for early forced labor matters, such as the transfer of

³⁵ Buggeln, *Slave Labor*, 20-21.

³⁶ Preußische Staatsamt. "Decree Specifying the Powers Granted to the Secret State Police, Including Administration of the Concentration Camps", 1936, Pohl-4, No. 4907, *Nuremberg Trials Project*, Harvard Law School Library.

certain prisoners to the camp system for forced labor³⁷ and the usage of slave laborers in the growing armaments.³⁸

It is also important to note the disposition of the Justice Ministry. The Minister for Justice at the time, Franz Gürtner, had been a conservative prior to the seizure of power. As was common for many of the preexisting institutions of Nazi Germany, the bureaucracy suffered with the empowerment of the various organizations of the NSDAP. Prior to the emplacing of SS institutional power and the National Socialist dictatorship, it was the Justice Ministry that held the oversight role for incarceration. Thus, the Justice Ministry's subordination to the security state illustrated a significant transfer of political power; precisely through the transferring of responsibilities (through control of slave labor).

A statistical expansion of slave labor is also appears in surviving documentation, confirming a growing importance within the SS bureaucracy. In January 1939, *Deutsche Erde und Steinwerke* operating at the Mauthausen concentration camp reported 3,215 slave laborers working in the camp granite quarry. By November 1940, this number had increased to 7,480 slave laborers.³⁹ Even within the pre-Barbarossa days of SS economic empire, slavery rapidly became the norm, foreshadowing the much later mass-scale systems that would dominate the practice during the war.

Specifically in these two contexts, forced labor policies expanded alongside the growth of the SS security state, serving as a bridge between party rivals (Himmler and Göring) and at the

³⁷ Reichskanzlei. "Letters to Dr. Gürtner And Dr. Lammers on the transfer of Detained Persons (In "Security Detention") to the Concentration Camps for Work", 1939, NG-340, No. 5237, *Nuremberg Trials Project*, Harvard Law School Library.

³⁸ Reichsjustizministerium. "Executive Decree for the use of Inmate Labor on Urgent Public and War-Economy Projects", 1939, Sommer 29, No. 5080, *Nuremberg Trials Project*, Harvard Law School Library.

³⁹ Deutsche Erde und Steinwerke, "Statistical Report on Production and Workers of the German Earth and Stone Works (DEST) in 1939-1941", 1942, NO-541, Item 5521, *Nuremberg Trials Project*, Harvard Law School Library.

expense of disenfranchised members of the Hitler coalition (former national conservative bureaucrats). This political back-and-forth may have not been as deeply entrenched as later war-time divisions of forced labor would prove to be but was indicative of a larger dynamic. Even in its earlier stages, forced labor carried political implications for the actors within the Nazi system.

While it is particularly useful to examine the origins of the slave labor system especially as to the expansion of the SS security apparatus, it is important to remember that most forced laborers did not originate or work within the SS-run camp system. Instead, the largest component of forced laborers worked within private industry coordinated through NSDAP labor organs, agricultural work in the German countryside, and NSDAP bureaucrat-affiliated *Arbeitsinsatze* (labor deployment actions).⁴⁰ During this first period, forced labor outside of concentration camp slavery was primarily relegated to war-construction and by the capture large numbers of prisoners of war.

Despite the scale of such schemes, the massed foreign labor deployments in German private industry did not come into prominence until after the campaigns in Poland and France. This presents a conundrum of analyzing forced labor in its prewar contexts: what can be said about industrial politics with forced labor before such programs existed? The answer is in prewar political dialogue between industry and the state, where political relationships formed during rearmaments programs expedited the dynamics of later wartime forced labor deployments.

The Four-Year Plan & Pre-war Industrial Collaboration

By comparison to the political relationships of the SS, the situation of private industry and NSDAP is more direct. Prior to 1936, the major industrialists had an ambiguous relationship with

⁴⁰ Herbert. "Forced Laborers", 193.

the regime. Elements of heavy industry had supported the initial seizure of power as a means of clamping down on left wing radicalism⁴¹, but the NSDAP had a significant left wing within the SA. With the decapitation of groups outside of the Hitler-coalition, the major industrialist powers found themselves as one of a few independent actors with access to political capital; for all the ruckus the NSDAP had made about predatory business, it was the pro-industry “conservative” wing (NSDAP-right and SS) that had carried Hitler’s favor during the Night of the Long Knives.⁴²

It was through this wake of the regime’s entrenchment, that the industrialist-party relationship began to take form. While early dealings with the economic sector had been consumed mostly by monetary policy, remilitarization necessitated cooperation with the industrial conglomerates.⁴³ With German foreign policy increasingly moving towards armed confrontation, this made rearmament through the Four-Year Plan a top priority from 1936 onwards. Thus, when combined with the NSDAP penchant for bureaucratic centralization, the resulting relationship was a state-capitalist Frankenstein; a mixed economic model designed to tie the industrialists to the regime while simultaneously respecting their nominal independence. The dynamic would encapsulate the industrialist-party relationship: ideologically separate but entwined through shared interests and limited enfranchisement. The Four-Year Plan’s office was to be the bridge that industrial targets would be met.

The leadership of such an eminent role was naturally a great political prize, and it was through typical Hitlerite politicking that Herman Göring was selected as Reich Plenipotentiary of the Four-Year Plan. The *Reichsmarschall* was a distinctly unqualified choice, having no

⁴¹ Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 103.

⁴² Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 67.

⁴³ Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 209-210.

substantial economic management qualification or experience. Instead, the decision to select Göring was political; Hitler's intention was to reign in a potentially unreliable segment of his coalition.⁴⁴ Unlike, the SA or the purged conservative politicians, the industrialists could be brought in without bloodshed or brute force.

Göring's appointment also represented Hitler's position on a bipartite policy spat between the NSDAP and government bureaucrats. With his militarist mindset and party background, Göring's chief objectives as Plenipotentiary of the Four-Year Plan was the development of economic autarky, or economic self-reliance.⁴⁵ By contrast, influential economists (who consisted of national conservatives and industrialists) advocated spending rollbacks and a free-trade policy.⁴⁶ Again, the supremacy of the party prevailed over the marginal elements of the Hitler coalition, who found themselves outmaneuvered in the face of a momentarily unified NSDAP; united by conservative objectives in opposing Hitler's policy of breakneck rearmament.

As such, archival evidence surrounding the Four-Year Plan points to two central conclusions. First, that the industrialists sought ways to maintain their position within the regime, out of economic and political logic. Internal documents detailing conversations inside Krupp AG during 1936 indicate the need for "approaching the program as much as possible" while also determining that "no short-sighted decisions shall be made, which might save us 6-7 million RM (Reichsmarks)".⁴⁷ Another meeting in 1937 emphasized requirements allowing coal and steels

⁴⁴ Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 210, 220.

⁴⁵ Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 210.

⁴⁶ Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 214, 217.

⁴⁷ Friedrich Krupp AG. "Memorandum of Meeting of Krupp Personnel", 1936, Box 17, Book 9C, No. 13109, *Nuremberg Krupp Trial Papers Judge of Hu C. Anderson*, Vanderbilt University Law School and Vanderbilt University Libraries.

exports only in exchange for reserves of foreign capital, effectively raising export barriers and their economic choices.⁴⁸ With such restrictions, the political motivation of industry to reclaim control is understandable. Through cooperation and output that industry could retain both profitability, independence, and political inclusion.

Second, the regime clearly struggled to reconcile its codependency with industry. The presence of both carrots and sticks seeks to incentivize cooperation but betrays a failure to achieve the unity demanded by National Socialist ideology. For example, a decree dated to November of 1936 proclaims, “anyone who contravenes the orders (of the Four-Year Plan) and prohibitions contained in such degrees, will be punished by imprisonment and a fine, the extent of the latter being unlimited.”⁴⁹ In another, more conciliatory speech, Göring attempts to use his own political position to pro-industry policies to buy favor in a meeting with industry leaders. Categorically, Göring claims that such restrictions to be “nonsense” and that “should urgent constructions be necessary somewhere, then the Gauleiters (a competitor to the industrialists) responsible to me that workers and material are available in sufficient quantity.” thereby implying that he would use his political sway to help the position of his industrialist allies.⁵⁰ Such discrepancies between strong positive and negative incentives demonstrate tension within the party line.

⁴⁸ Vierjahresplanbehörde. "Minutes of Conference on Steel production between Hermann Göring and Representatives of Iron and Steel Industry", 1937, Box 18, Book 16A, No. D-14- NI-084, *Nuremberg Krupp Trial Papers Judge of Hu C. Anderson*, Vanderbilt University Law School and Vanderbilt University Libraries.

⁴⁹ Reichskanzlei. "Second Decree for the Execution of the Four-Year Plan", 5 November 1936, Box 26, Book 1, No. 519, *Nuremberg Krupp Trial Papers Judge of Hu C. Anderson*, Vanderbilt University Law School and Vanderbilt University Libraries.

⁵⁰ Vierjahresplanbehörde. "Speech by Göring on Execution of the "Four Year Plan", 17 December 1936, Box 16, Book 9A, No. 51, *Nuremberg Krupp Trial Papers Judge of Hu C. Anderson*, Vanderbilt University Law School and Vanderbilt University Libraries.

The structure of the economic system would not radically change through the war years. The exact composition of the model changed significantly, but fundamental principles underlining party-industrialist cooperation remained constant. The struggle of industry as second-class member of the political system and insecurity of party's position led to new controls (and industrial motivation to be free of such). This was the groundwork for how German industry would use forced labor during the war; as a tool to leverage their own ideological independence while keeping the benefits of cooperation within the Nazi-coalition. Such a system proved receptive to complicity in human rights abuses and would offer the industrialists one of the few ways to enjoy the privileges of separation from the regime while also working for the dictatorship's purposes.

Chapter II: Reorganization & Mass exploitation (1939-1944)

The period from 1941 to 1944 best represents the process of political change within the Third Reich. Within the short span of 11 months, Hitler and the party leadership made a series of crucial decisions that, perhaps unknowingly, determined the course of the remainder of the war. Within such a frame, the political implications of such decisions are of a special insightfulness. To understand this most critical portion of the European war is to also understand the rationale behind such important choices.

What about the practical effects? Systems such as massed forced labor deployment provide important factual evidence, but the ramifications go much deeper. These choices not only had distinct bearing on forced labor systems, but on the changing political framework underlining Nazi Germany during the critical mid-war period. The understanding of such a structure is consequential because changes in forced labor and individual political relationships illustrates a trend of hard change in the overall political arrangement. Such transformations were heavily predicated towards extremist and party-centralist elements. It is this anatomy that can be reliably described towards greater levels of Nazi political absolutism and less tolerance for outside interest groups.

While the terms “centralist” and “radical” are mildly intuitive with a complete picture of National Socialist politics, it is important to define them precisely for the purposes of this work. The terms follow from the idea of the party and regime at the core of the overarching political structure. Thus, “centralism” refers to a tendency to reduce political independence for groups existing outside of the party structure. During the seizure of power, groups outside the NSDAP ranged from organized political opposition to loosely defined social identities, such as the industrialist class. Nor was the group necessarily well defined, as the level of distance from the

regime differed on a case-by-case basis. It will be argued so forth that from 1941, this group of “outsiders” narrowed in number and in space for political maneuver, as the pressures of the war increased the fervor of the regime.

By contrast, “radicalism” is more straightforward. With the increasing desperation of the war situation, it is still easier to identify major upticks in its manifestations of violence and extremism, especially over time (such as the Holocaust, the Wehrmacht’s conduct and outlook, or in the progression of forced labor systems). Greater radicalism during the war period somewhat difficult to disagree with, but it is far more controversial when making claims about the origins of specific extremist policies. While it is not in the scope of this argument to discuss the precise origin of various policies, a radical mindset contributed towards the regime’s motivation to win the war at any cost, (including through forced labor deployment).

Disaster & Ideological Extremity

The essence of the turn towards less autonomy lies, again, in the situation of 1941. With the defeat of the French army and subsequent allied retreat from the continent in 1940, Hitler and the Wehrmacht leadership spent the remainder of that year weighing its options for dealing with an isolated, but belligerent Great Britain. While the destructive conduct of the air war and German bombing campaign over Britain in 1940 represented an escalation in enmity, such actions did not contribute to the significantly to the totalitarian spiral. Instead, the regime considered partial demobilization instead of intensifying the war economy.⁵¹ However, such decisions precipitated later Allied bombing efforts in 1943-45, which almost certainly contributed to the general atmosphere of desperation.

⁵¹ Tooze, “Preparing for Two Wars at Once.” In *Wages of Destruction*, 429-460.

In many ways, the decision to turn eastwards towards the Soviet Union in 1941 represents a seismic shift in both thinking and attitude. A war against Soviet “Judeo-Bolshevism” and an ethnically cleansed Eastern Europe had been Hitler’s ultimate ambition, but that was not the war he had received in 1939. Stalemate with Britain and the looming specter of American intervention turned the Nazi regime eastward. This was a gamble, but not particularly surprising one given predispositions in the German leadership towards risk and the overall strategic situation.⁵² The Soviet campaign was also fundamentally different by mentality. It was the German’s conduct in the east where the shift towards totalitarianism became most apparent.

During the early war, the *Gastarbeiter* and *Ostarbeiter* systems emerged within the specific pressures and contexts of labor shortage. Initially, this was a mixture of prewar labor shortage, as well as the need to conscript German workers into the armed services. In order end this cascading effect, the regime turned to a limited forced labor program in 1940 and 1941, primarily filled by Poles and French prisoners of war.⁵³ That labor shortages were filled by large surpluses of captured prisoners of war certainly represented a new foray into expanding repression. Yet in some respects, early forced labor was a continuation of a broader history of migratory workers (made unfree through the logic of Nazi authoritarianism and German imperialism).⁵⁴

It was the repressive approach to dealing with occupied Poland that would foreshadow the event horizons of Barbarossa and Wannsee where German policy shifted from conditionally murderous to explicitly genocidal and apocalyptic. The seven months between June 22nd, 1941 and January 20th, 1942 personified National Socialism at an inversion; one where its

⁵² Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 373.

⁵³ Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 418.

⁵⁴ Herbert, *Hitler’s Foreign Workers*, 59.

Weltanschauung was most came to the fore without the accompanying crisis that characterized it during the later years of the regime's existence.

At this point, German policy reached a distinctly terrible low. In the days and months following June 22nd, 1941, Nazi Germany made impressive inroads into the Soviet Union. Up to five million Soviet soldiers were taken as prisoners of war, while German tanks reached European Russia (they had started on the westernmost portion of the Belarussian and Ukrainian borders). As the Nazi moved deeper into the Soviet Union, the Germans attempted to destroy its people by both starvation and mass shooting actions. The effect was predictability horrific; many of the newly occupied areas had already seen the destruction of the interwar Polish and Baltic states; the effect of dual-state destruction amplified the effects of *SS-Einsatzgruppen* shooting actions.⁵⁵

Despite the destruction and chaos, the Soviet Union endured. Even in its wholesale destruction, the Red Army showed incredible resilience despite the loss of most of its pre-war equipment and personnel. By December 1941, the German drive towards Moscow had stalled, and a counteroffensive pushed the Wehrmacht back towards the Russo-Belarussian border. Not only had Operation Barbarossa failed, but Hitler had gambled the entire economic effort on the possibility of swift victory.⁵⁶ As such, the state was woefully unprepared for, at the very least, another year of resource intensive warfare.

⁵⁵ Timothy Snyder makes a good point about this: the initial wave of mass shooting was made much deadlier due to geography. The Soviet Union had invaded the territories between itself and Germany in 1939-40, and destruction of interwar Poland, the Baltic states, and farm collectivization had massive consequences for German killing. See Snyder, Timothy. "Final Solution." In *Bloodlands: Europe Between Hitler and Stalin*. (New York: Basic Books, 2010). 187-224.

⁵⁶ Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 506-507.

If totalitarianism is the complete domination of a system, it is not far from the mark to describe Nazi occupational policy in Eastern Europe as totalitarianism for the conquered. Yet, the attitude within the system and the Reich did not fully reflect such extremism. While elements of totalitarianism hinted at a program of coercion towards ordinary Germans, such measures were deemed unnecessary. The regime instead found solace in persisting as a popular dictatorship and found the populace willing and supportive.⁵⁷

As something of a contradiction, it is very possible that the discrepancy would have made full totalitarianism inevitable without the war's declining fortunes. The situation of 1942 and 1943 obviated this dilemma. Strategic failure around Moscow (Winter 1941) and disaster at Stalingrad (winter 1942-1943) created a newfound sense of catastrophe that would only expedite extremist policy.

Partly, this was problem with the situation on the ground. In the east, the regime increasingly found itself backed into a corner of its own making. For example, by 1943, failures in Moscow and Stalingrad doomed efforts in the German rear to stabilize Belarus and Ukraine respectively,⁵⁸ but German occupation policy had already suffered from a bipolar oscillation between extremes of genocide and cooperation.⁵⁹ In a system that had pegged its entire future to such results, disaster became of enormous consequence. These impulses were manifested in a new, more ideologically poignant policies and actions, such as the *Generalplan Ost* or the Final Solution. Because such policies were only possible through "totalitarian" functioning, such a

⁵⁷ Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 346-347.

⁵⁸ Snyder, *Bloodlands*, 250.

⁵⁹ Referring to the Hunger Plan and subsequent efforts to encourage collaboration after it was realized that the plan was unfeasible during the stresses of the war. See Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 480-483.

marked shift toward distinctly Nazi solution hastened the erosion of the multipolar system that had prevailed before.

Understood in this light, the almost-wholesale radicalization and centralization of the NSDAP is perhaps an inevitable reaction to 1941's reversal in fortunes and worsening strategic situation. In its growing desperation, the regime began to prepare for the worst, chiefly by narrowing the room for dissent and through implementation of radical solutions.

And yet, the processes of centralization and radicalization proved to have an inescapable synergy. Here, we can see the classic application of Kershaw's "Working towards the Führer" at play. For example, the conscious decision to exterminate European Jewry in 1941-1942 can be studied through both political and totalitarian functions. Political in the sense of minor officials using the ambiguity of their office to work towards Hitler's directives (thus increasing their own importance)⁶⁰ and totalitarian by virtue of broadening the scope of overall repression and control that the regime held through the creation of genocidal processes.⁶¹

As Kershaw and this work argues, "charismatic dictatorship" can and should serve as an entry point for understanding the unique political system within the National Socialist dictatorship. The model's flexibility combined with nuance might preclude a sense of uniformity across different policies. When differences in effect are removed (such as killing versus production), a theory working with, for example two similar inputs might produce consistent outcomes regardless of what the policies are. This is initially appealing; that Führerprinzip only led to greater decentralization no matter what the policy was or who the officials were. However,

⁶⁰ Ian Kershaw, "Improvised Genocide? The Emergence of the 'Final Solution' in the 'Warthegau'" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 2 1992, pp. 74-76.

⁶¹ Ian Kershaw, "'Working Towards the Führer.' Reflections on the Nature of the Hitler Dictatorship." *Contemporary European History*, vol. 2, no. 2, July 1993, pp. 110-114.

the reality is that decentralization led to different outcomes. In applying Führerprinzip, “who”, “when”, and “why” tended to vary exactly because such answers tended to rely on inputs; what the policy was being applied made a significant difference in effect. However, what is hard to deny is how the effect and direction of time creates a pattern towards radicalism, whether such characteristics are fundamental or are functions of war is debatable. How Nazi Germany represents both totalitarianism and more traditional understanding of politics within the changing circumstances of radicalization must be explored through the relationships that colors this understanding.

The slave-industrial complex; SS-Economic enterprise & radical policy

The story of slave labor within Nazi Germany is very much one of the SS and its accompanying “security clique”. The SS of 1942 and its conjoined bureaucracy evolved out of inter-party conflict during the Night of the Long Knives. Heinrich Himmler, an early Hitler associate who led the organization as *Reichsführer-SS*, spent much of the late 1930s acquiring power over the police and internal security state. Under Himmler’s leadership, the SS was the regime sub-faction most driven through ideological rationale. Due to its perceived sympathies during the early 1930’s it’s membership was both conservative in its approach on the economic praxis, while more revolutionary in terms of upholding and promoting racialist theory.

As previously alluded in the internal dynamics between the SS and government agencies, the late 1930’s was a period of accumulation. While it is often causally assumed that SS repression was a creation of Himmler and his security chief, Reinhard Heydrich, the organs compromising the various police agencies were much older than the Nazi system. For example, the infamous Gestapo was the product of merging the Prussian and Bavarian political police; both of which

emerged out of the Prussian and Bavarian *Staatsschutzabteilungen*.⁶² As a result, there is an interesting conundrum when considering the genocidal conventions these organizations would later take on. That right-wing authoritarians would mobilize the police against their political enemies is not necessarily surprising or unique, but it is the complete success of “Nazification” that is most striking. By the beginning of the Second World War, the entire system of police and security was singularly centralized under Himmler’s office as *Chef der Deutschen Polizei*.⁶³ Especially compared to the system of “organized chaos” dominating the political order of comparable organizations inside the Third Reich; this achievement is remarkable. In a certain sense, such exceptions represent the value of Himmler’s office and duties to Hitler. That they were exempt from the organizational chaos that plagued rival institutions should not be underestimated.

Despite disparate origins of the SS security state, it is undeniable that Himmler and the security machinery are most remembered for their role in the *Konzentrationslager* and extermination policy. It has been long debated about the origins or evolution of such a policy, but the basic road-signs of extermination have remained consistent during the evolution of Holocaust scholarship. A significant factor during this mid-war period was the Wannsee Conference of January 1942, in which, Heydrich set in motion the basic plan for a more formalized Holocaust (as opposed to mass shootings). The Conference marked the beginning of industrial genocide but was also the continuation of genocidal planning set forward at the start of the invasion of the Soviet Union (June 1941). While not necessarily more deadly or violent than the shooting program, it did represent a step toward a purer manifestation of Nazi ideological aims. Through the lens of

⁶² State Security Department (of the regional level criminal police). See Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 211.

⁶³ Chief of German Police; notice the how this title represents a centralization of power previously distributed (previously in the hands of the state governments).

totalitarianism, this was also a policy that can be considered as especially “ideologically extreme”, perhaps even as one of the better examples of such.

While it is easy to think of the KZ as merely a stepping-stone towards the gas chamber, a great deal of this work explains that the camps were integral to the overall ecosystem of forced labor. This economic aspect was present at forced labor’s proverbial daybreak; when the camps were primarily concerned with political prisoners. Though the move towards increased political control increased the proximity of the security state to the center of politics, Hitler’s innate distrust of concentrated power allowed for other players to move in and out of prominence, despite the overall reduction in opportunities for outside actors. Here the relationship between the SS and its competitors took a markedly different form.

First, the ability to generate revenue represented a certain degree of independence outside of the larger party bureaucracy. While Himmler and the SS greatly saw their power and importance grow through Hitler’s warmongering, the security clique was still subject to the confines of the system. Undoubtedly, the SS and security clique was both entirely entrenched and enfranchised but was “mortal” in that it was restricted by Hitler’s role as kingmaker; for all of Himmler’s privileged access to Hitler, he was forever stuck on the second-most rung of the political ladder.

There is a certain dualism the situation, where clearly the SS was more influential than its peers yet found itself unable to completely transcend them. In this way, the relative independence of the SS in economic matters has a strange confluence; it was both motivated as through the system of organizational chaos (because Himmler could never overtake Hitler as a subordinate) but remained uniquely aligned with the Hitler’s specific policy aims and directions (towards war

and genocide).⁶⁴ In one of the few addresses to explicitly mention the policies of killing, Himmler speech to SS personal October 4th, 1943 in the city of Posen directly echo's his alignment to Hitler in extermination policy: "I am talking about the evacuation of the Jews, the extermination of the Jewish people. It is one of those things that is easily said. "The Jewish people is being exterminated", every Party member will tell you, perfectly clear, it's part of our plans, we're eliminating the Jews, exterminating them, a small matter".⁶⁵ Here the point about political closeness is particularly acute; not only is it the SS man who is subordinate to the SS run extermination policy, but it is every man in the NSDAP itself. In certain respects, the statement may have been rhetorical, but that he frames the situation in this way is indicative of the SS's unique two-side political relationship itself.

Despite differences in the situational circumstances, this ideological alignment is of far-reaching consequence when drawing conclusions about the actions and motivations of the SS during the mid-war period. Especially regarding the economics and decisions of the camp apparatus, the hardline ideological approach encapsulated at Posen informs much of the motivations that informed slavery in the Nazi system. Such fundamentalism also seeps deep into bondage as a mechanism of both extermination and economic benefit.

Around this point, the major players in forced labor systems also materialized into a steady, more predictable pattern. From 1941 onward, mass forced labor deployments centered around not

⁶⁴ For a good instance of the specific way the SS-party relationship unfolded outside of the forced labor context, Michael Allen's *The Business of Genocide* contains a great exploration in the situation surrounding the construction of KZ Majdanek/Lublin.

See Allen, Michael, *Business of Genocide*, 209

⁶⁵ Himmler, Heinrich. Speech to SS-Gruppenführer at Posen, Poland, October 4th, 1943. Document 242.256, reel 2 of 3, U.S. National Archives.

only private industry, the party, and the SS, but particularly around the *SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt* or “SS Economic and Main Administrative Office”.

Although having humble origins as a small SA bodyguard detachment for Hitler, the SS eventually grew to be a diverse organization. Outside of administering the camps, there existed separate wings for a full militarized component (Waffen-SS), a race and settlement office (SS-RuSHA), as well as authority over most police and security matters (SS-RSHA). However, it was in the camp economic administration that the individuals most associated with slave labor came to prominence. With the institutionalized practice of stealing from Holocaust victims and the need to manage large amounts of land, machinery, and property, the SS found it necessary to create a separate financial office. Therefore, it was the *SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt* or “SS Economic and Main Administrative Office” that oversaw the independent and significant financial structure underscoring the camp system.

At a glimpse, the unremarkable profile of Oswald Pohl would not strike an observer as the type of the CEO or financial executive, yet a brief overlook reveals the personality more akin to an administrator or an accountant. Born in Duisberg, Pohl was like many other early Nazis in that he personified mediocrity. Before the joining the party in 1926, his only notable qualifications were his service as a navy paymaster before and after a brief stint studying law in the coastal city of Kiel. Like several of Himmler’s other protégées, Pohl was an *Alte Kämpfer*,⁶⁶ with a low party number of 30,402 and had a history of involvement with the far-right prior to joining the NSDAP.⁶⁷ After joining the SS in 1934, Pohl was then appointed to run the SS central administrative office; the forerunner to the SS-WVHA.

⁶⁶ An “Old Fighter”; those who joined the party before the elections of September 1930.

⁶⁷ Allen, Michael, *Business of Genocide*, 25.

With the expansion of the SS and the camps within the 1930's, Pohl and the economic office ballooned in importance. Simultaneously, Himmler had also begun to amass a separate SS commercial empire inside the early camp system. Impressed by Pohl's bookkeeping skills and penchant for administration, the economic office quickly subsumed all major SS-owned businesses. Through early operations such as DEST, this also included a significant portion of slave laborers and the responsibility for the construction of SS facilities (including the camps themselves). On paper, Pohl's office during this time appeared budgetary, but really encompassed a growing and pseudo-legal⁶⁸ complex, independent of the formal NSDAP.

It is not a coincidence, then, that Pohl's office was formally reorganized to include all aforementioned duties de-jure following the debacle of 1941. Pohl's importance in slave labor would only grow over the following year as the SS attempted to ramp up production in accordance with the imposition of long war. This new praxis then created a unique collaborative dynamic between industry, the SS, and the Armaments Ministry.

In SS slave policy, Pohl's and Himmler's immediate objectives appear to have converged with Hitler's extremism. In this respect, it is particularly important to note that Pohl was an exemplar of SS ideology. Take for example, his replacement of roughly one-third of the KZ commandants with men from the SS-WVHA during Summer 1942.⁶⁹ This was ostensibly because those being replaced were scandal prone,⁷⁰ but such shifts over the larger camp machinery also

⁶⁸ The SS Business complex existed in a strange space, as the businesses were technically state owned, but really tools of Himmler and Pohl's immediate and long-term goals. This was remained avenue for potential legal trouble. In 1935-1936, Pohl's predecessor had made a series of highly questionable investments; both Himmler and Pohl were wary of audit by the central government. See Allen, Michael, *Business of Genocide*, 84.

⁶⁹ Allen, Michael, *Business of Genocide*, 178.

⁷⁰ Specifically, "Behavior unbecoming of SS men" See Allen, Michael, *Business of Genocide*, 178.

represented a major coup for Pohl's own importance. Yet when Pohl's negotiations with the Generalgouvernement in Poland failed out of factional infighting over railway availability,⁷¹ Himmler still managed to arm-twist the local authorities by appealing directly to his mandate to execute the Führer's extermination policy.⁷² As has been discussed extensively by other historians, this accompanied an economic component that was also especially potent in occupied Poland.⁷³ Regardless of the particular intent, Himmler and Pohl's aims matched those of Hitler's in a way that rival bureaucrats found hard pressed to contest.

However, this aligning had limits. As much as Pohl's office found opportunity to add to increase production, slave labor policies within the SS were not congruent with extermination (which contradicted with principles of ideological fundamentalism). Richard Glück's⁷⁴ report on January 20th, 1943, mentions the need to increase rations and that increasing the number of slave laborers is not possible due to the high mortality rate.⁷⁵ Such instances of SS policy show significant contradiction in being stuck between mutually conflicting Führer directives (the Final Solution and utilization of all resources for total war). In the interpolitical relationships between the SS and occupation agencies, the schizophrenic and haphazard relationship between practicality, ideology, and the effect of Nazi fundamentalism took an especially visible form.

⁷¹ SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt. "Report to Oswald Pohl on negotiations for contracts to produce armaments at concentration camps", 16 May 1942, NO-1215, No. 5697, *Nuremberg Trials Project*, Harvard Law School Library.

⁷² Ian Kershaw, "'Improvised Genocide? The Emergence of the 'Final Solution' in the 'Warthegau'" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. 2 (1992): 72-74.

⁷³ Idit Gil, "Intrigues and Conflicts of Interest as to the Exploitation of Jewish Labor in Radom, 1942-1943." *Lessons and Legacies*, vol. XII, (2017): 394.

⁷⁴ One of Pohl's men as a part of the SS-WVHA

⁷⁵ SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt. "Instructions to concentration camp commandants to lower the death rate and increase the strength of inmate workers", 20 January 1943, NO-1523, No. 5850, *Nuremberg Trials Project*, Harvard Law School Library.

Industrial Involvement in Slave Labor & the Armaments Ministry

As sketched out previously, several large firms were involved in forced labor systems. There were immediate parallels between systems of forced labor and industrial actors in both world wars, and the interwar period,⁷⁶ but the decision to participate in the slavery of the camps should not be assumed. While elements of the broad economic system in Nazi Germany were coercive and regulated beyond the scope of other capitalist systems of the time, historians have broadly defined Nazi economic model as a mixed or state capitalist model where private industry co-existed alongside state-owned entities.

It has generally been the argument of industry since 1945 that the decision to use forced labor originated from within the regime. While this is neither a new or innovative argument by any standard, the bullyish stance and tactics favored by the NSDAP might suggest a kernel of truth. As evidenced by the immediate pre-war period, the regime did pursue a variety of methods when dealing with the parts of its support base that were perceived as potentially problematic. Nor were the solutions to outside elements uniform, as the role of Nazi adjacent groups varied depending on political circumstance. In light of the crisis of 1941, the treatment of industry from the regime did not fundamentally change. Instead, bureaucracy moved to reflect new political realities. Chiefly, the operations and centralization of the Armament's Ministry under Albert Speer also provide a convincing target if taken for a de-facto labor ministry. However, during the postwar tribunals against various industrialists, the defense generally claimed that their involvement in forced labor

⁷⁶ Ulrich Herbert's *Hitler's Foreign Workers: Enforced Foreign Labor in Germany Under the Third Reich* contains a detailed discussion of forced labor by POWs in Germany during the First World War. See Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 13-26.

was exclusively or mostly coerced.⁷⁷ In the Krupp case, an American judge found such arguments unconvincing.

With this point being clarified, it is my view that the coercion argument carries with it, a certain level of irresponsibility and dishonesty. As should be clear from this analysis, the individual segments consisting of the National Socialist coalition predominately operated within a multipolar system. Despite fundamentalist or political aspirations, neither the NSDAP, the SS, nor any of the government ministries had the ability to control private enterprise to the level that German industry (specific Krupp) has sought to claim. Questions of motivations within a multipolar system also have distinct bearing on the actions of such participants. Factional elements “within” the regime, along with “outsiders” such as national conservatives and large business owners did not consistently align with the interests or ideology of the dictatorship.⁷⁸

Therefore, the decisions and choices of industrialists are interesting in that they were affected by changes both in policy and circumstance. For example, the charge made and later validated statistically by the industrialist class was that it was not desirable to use forced labor instead of German workers. But as explored in earlier, war held the potential of both promise and pitfall in terms of profitability and stability, affecting the political motivations to cooperate with the rearmament plans of the late 1930s. The decision to use slave labor was both analogous yet disparate.

First, the internal structure of the regime changed under the duress of the war. The machinery characterizing the early forced labor system was ad-hoc, with early parallels in both

⁷⁷ James. *Krupp: a History*, 223-225.

⁷⁸ Broszat, *The Hitler State*, 87-90.

the concentration camps and rearmament processes. The evolving nature of the labor situation changed this by straining the preconceived notions of what would be necessary during wartime.

At the outbreak of war, its labor shortages caused by rearmament and conscription were expected to be short term; the visualization of the war as a short conflict colored the imaginations at all levels.⁷⁹ Furthermore, the problem was expected to be confined to unskilled labor, such as agriculture and mining where the impacts of conscription would be felt greatest. In the period between 1939 - 1942, foreign labor deployments prototyped the mass system of forced labor by using Polish/French POWs and civilians.

It was specifically in the methodology of gathering foreigners that became problematic. In itself, these methods can be divided into two broad categories: deportation and recruitment/collaboration. For example, following the defeat and disintegration of Poland in late 1939, the Germany Army released some 213,115 polish POWs, all to assist in agriculture.⁸⁰ Such measures were roughly analogous to German agriculture during the First World War. The deportation of civilians began shortly afterwards. By that March, the *Generalgouvernement* had in fact, only met around half of its quota for some 500,000 Poles.⁸¹ The shortage was rectified by fiat, especially through a series of incidents where the authorities rounded up groups of the abled bodied.

⁷⁹ Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 59-60.

⁸⁰ Specifically, 89.9% employed in agriculture, with the remainder spread out through mining, construction, and other ventures.

See Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 62.

⁸¹ Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 82.

After 1940, French (and British) prisoners of war met a similar fate. By October 1940, some 1.2 million were employed in the German economy.⁸² The situation of the Vichy government made deportation unnecessary, but cooperation across western Europe would set the stage for labor policy towards French, Belgian, Dutch, and Italian laborers, where the lines between guest and forced labor remained myopic.⁸³ In this way, the *Westarbeiter* were differentiated from the *Ostarbeiter* and camp laborers, ranging from racially alien (French, Italians, Walloons), to co-ethnic (Dutch, Danes, Norwegians, Flemings).⁸⁴ All were united in that their treatment lacked vulgarity of the anti-Slavic racism exemplified in the Nazi's language towards the Poles.

The basic silhouette of this system stayed somewhat consistent even with the introduction of Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians, Lithuanians, Latvians, and Estonians under the same assumptions that had governed labor policy towards the Poles. The system saw its greatest expansion in the wake of Barbarossa, whereafter Soviet POWs and civilians quickly assumed a plurality. For example, out of a total of 24,791 foreigners employed at Krupp's Cast Steel Works on January 1st, 1943, some 8,509 were Soviet *Ostarbeiter*.⁸⁵ The discrepancy would only continue to grow. To illustrate sheer scale, by Summer 1944, the number of female *Ostarbeiter* alone outnumbered all *Westarbeiter* of both genders and all nationalities.⁸⁶

By 1942, it had become apparent that war had moved beyond its quick, initial stages. Quagmire in the east therefore, required drastic action in the form of Total War. The declaration

⁸² Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 95.

⁸³ Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 97-98.

⁸⁴ Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 103.

⁸⁵ Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 206.

⁸⁶ Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 297.

was a turning point within the Nazi regime, but forced labor policy had skewed towards mass exploitation naturally through the success of each conquest. It had not been intentional nor desirable in 1939, but had become essential by 1943-44, where the number of foreigners had stabilized at roughly 25 percent.⁸⁷

To manage such an important and massive undertaking, a separate Ministry of Armaments and War Production was established in 1940. The ministry quickly became grounds for major turf battles, in between the NSDAP⁸⁸, the SS-WHA, the three Military procurement offices, and as proxy for the Industrialist clique itself. By 1944, the Ministry would become the sole conduit for all major decisions on forced labor policy.

Over the span of its five years of existence, it was headed by only two figures, both of whom were products of the party. In many ways, both Fritz Todt and Albert Speer were the obvious choices for labor czars. Both had career in various aspects of the construction industry. Todt had extensive experience as a civil engineer and was a talented administrator, while Speer was a trained architect and had served General Building Inspector for Berlin. At the onset of the Armaments Ministry's creation in 1940, Todt was anointed as its head, but then died suddenly in 1942 in a plane accident. Afterward, Speer took his mantle for the remainder of the war.

In a mantra of fashions, the two serve as particularly useful examples of the polycratic dictatorship. Both had risen in the party by different currencies: Todt as an efficient administrator and Speer through his close relationship to Hitler.⁸⁹ While both were products of Nazi system itself, both would stake out a space in the political order between their rivals and the

⁸⁷ Herbert, *Hitler's Foreign Workers*, 296.

⁸⁸ At this point in the war, this was mostly represented through Bormann's command over the regional *Gauleiters*.

⁸⁹ Martin Kitchen. *Speer: Hitler's Architect*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 121.

industrialists. Speer was far more prolific in this sense, where his major success was as a political middleman between the impulses of the Hitler state and the private sector. This required balancing their relationship to the party and to that of industry.

Speer's actions during this period reveal that the dualistic relationship between ideology and enterprise remained unchanged; that industry sought independence while cooperating whenever profitable or beneficial for their own influence. Immediately after rising to prominence, Speer issued decrees continuing Göring's "carrot and stick" policy. In two specific instances dating to April and May of 1942, Speer explicitly directs that all industrial activity should be solely dedicated towards the victory. "Our sole purpose today must be to obtain victory, and direct all efforts towards this goal."⁹⁰ A month later, Speer also reaffirmed his own leadership of the industrial sector as a whole, but not without pledging his full support in supporting industrial activity in the process. "They (the industrialists) will have my full support." he positively concluded.⁹¹ This was exactly the same policy that Göring had decreed in 1936-37, but unlike Göring. Speer was in political competition against more powerful elements. These facts seeped into the relationship between industry and the state. While Speer and the regime could not absolutely control industry, they remained aligned through political practicality.

In this way, both Speer and industrialists profited by this sort of antagonistic mutualism. The case of Göring's office is highly insightful into the practical effects of such. With the industrialists' support, Speer was able to immediately edge Göring out of economic affairs. A

⁹⁰ Reichsministerium für Bewaffnung und Munition. "Decree by Speer dated April 1942", April 1942, Box 26, Book 1, No. 204, *Nuremberg Krupp Trial Papers Judge of Hu C. Anderson*, Vanderbilt University Law School and Vanderbilt University Libraries.

⁹¹ Reichsministerium für Bewaffnung und Munition. "Decree by Speer dated 6 May 1942", 6 May 1942, Box 1, Book 1, No. 243, *Nuremberg Krupp Trial Papers Judge of Hu C. Anderson*, Vanderbilt University Law School and Vanderbilt University Libraries.

meeting of the interparty labor board reveals Speer moving decisively on such matters with the minutes reporting “The Fuhrer wishes, that these questions (those of industrial output) be dealt with more actively, and for this purpose will invest in Minister Speer now with authority (referring to economic matters).⁹² With Speer’s alignment with the needs of industry apparent, such victories represent the wielding of industry’s political weight within the regime.

While such major breakthroughs in political influence and industrial alignment with the regime were abstractly important, they also directly contributed to the expansion of forced labor and self-serving goals exclusive to private industry. For example, internal documents between Krupp and the Armaments Ministry reveals instances of Krupp explicitly lobbying for fuel in order to expand forced labor housing at the Krupp Cast Steel Works, the aforementioned plant employing some 8,000 *Ostarbeiter* at the time of the letter’s writing.⁹³ In such instances, the intersection of forced labor, ideology, and enterprise represented an especially foul mixture. Through forced toil of the oppressed, enterprise found a way to truly work towards the Führer and become one with National Socialist absolutism.

This is only one part of the proverbial puzzle. While the usage of *Ost* and *Westarbeiter* clearly show the intersection of enterprise and the regime, industrial independence and the conditionality of this intersection also presents itself in the situation of KZ Markstädt, a subcamp of the Gross-Rosen concentration camp employing Jewish slave labor and involving Krupp, Speer, and Pohl alike.

⁹² Reichsministerium für Bewaffnung und Munition. "Memorandum by General Thomas dated 3 March 1942", 3 March 1942, Box 25, Book 1, No 641, *Nuremberg Krupp Trial Papers Judge of Hu C. Anderson*, Vanderbilt University Law School and Vanderbilt University Libraries.

⁹³ Friedrich Krupp AG, "Letter dated 19 January 1943, addressed to Reichsminister Speer", 19 January 1943, Box 31, Book 2A, No. 40, *Nuremberg Krupp Trial Papers Judge of Hu C. Anderson*, Vanderbilt University Law School and Vanderbilt University Libraries.

Even as the SS was establishing its own economic orbit in 1939-40, Pohl and Himmler made the choice to contract slave labor out to private industry. Through their dealings with Fritz Todt and the *Westarbeiter*, Krupp became involved in similar schemes eastward.⁹⁴ The plan, which utilized slave labor, would have established an SS-run fuse production facility using slave labor from Gross-Rosen and Auschwitz. Due to the familiar factors of internal politics, influence, and incentives, the initiative failed, but in a way that demonstrates the misalignment of industry and ideological extremism.

Specifically, the effort to align the industrialists with the SS ran into several practical problems. Industry, with its profit motivation, found the construction of new institutions expensive and costly. Such prerogatives directly play into Pohl's slave cost negotiations with industry, wherein his office advises to reimburse the industrialists at the same rates received outside of the slave labor system.⁹⁵ That Pohl's instinct was to reach for carrots instead of sticks is rather telling of his own political situation. Later that year, Speer's office would swallow the SS economic wing wholesale, completely cutting out Pohl out of any SS-Krupp deal.⁹⁶ It also did not help that the camp system was extremely deadly, evidenced by high mortality rates even

⁹⁴ Allen, Michael, *Business of Genocide*, 199.

⁹⁵ Reichsministerium für Bewaffnung und Munition. "Letter to Hans Baier concerning the rates to be charged to armaments firms for the use of inmate labor", 9 March 1944, NO-518, No. 5504, *Nuremberg Trials Project*, Harvard Law School Library.

⁹⁶ Due to a longstanding political alliance between Himmler and Speer. SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt. "Instructions to armaments and labor officials concerning the procedure for requesting concentration camp workers", October 9th, 1944, NI-638, No. 5277, *Nuremberg Trials Project*, Harvard Law School Library.

amongst Pohl's economic office (who had split motivations to keep such prisoners alive and work towards extermination policies).⁹⁷

Thus, Krupp's situation in with the SS-WVHA represents the inverse to the Cast Steel Works, where the ideological extremism of the regime in extermination through forced labor did not overlap in a way that the firm found productive or profitable. Instead, Krupp found it much more profitable to rent slave labor in its preexisting facilities or build new factories farther from SS killing sites.⁹⁸ When Krupp did eventually see it useful to build a factory to make use of slavery, they would follow this exact logic when selecting Markstädt's location (a site some 240 kilometers from Auschwitz and 93 kilometers from Gross-Rossen). Yet, when sections of Speer's own office proposed cancelling the construction of Markstädt due to perceived inefficiency, Krupp held onto the project despite political pressure from Speer.⁹⁹ Direct evidence of Krupp's political machinations is not present among English sources, but Speer's failure to shut down the subcamp reveals a degree of impotence. Such conflict existed parallel to the Speer-Sauckel power struggle, where Speer was having issues obtaining laborers from General Plenipotentiary for Labour Deployment Fritz Sauckel.¹⁰⁰ Even with sticks, Speer found himself lacking the necessary political strength without the backing of the industrialists, especially in the circumstances of internal party rivalry. Not only was forced labor a point of mutual benefit between the state and private enterprise, it also represented a political tool that could be molded to the exclusive benefit of one party.

⁹⁷ SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt. "Instructions to concentration camp commandants to lower the death rate and increase the strength of inmate workers", 20 January 1943, NO-1523, No. 5850, *Nuremberg Trials Project*, Harvard Law School Library.

⁹⁸ Allen, Michael, *Business of Genocide*, 200.

⁹⁹ Friedrich Krupp AG. "Memorandum on the Meeting with the Armaments Ministry of 5 July 1942", 5 July 1942, Box 21, Book 41A, No. NIK-7445, *Nuremberg Krupp Trial Papers Judge of Hu C. Anderson*, Vanderbilt University Law School and Vanderbilt University Libraries.

¹⁰⁰ Homze, "The Sauckel-Speer Controversy." In *Foreign Labor in Nazi Germany*, 204-29.

The internal power struggles of 1941-1944 have been well documented from within the regime, but industry found itself in a unique position in this context. Through the SS, Krupp found a collaborative partner in slave labor. However, the insistence and conflict of genocidal policy with the motivations of Krupp only spelt conflict between the two partners. It was not enough to completely split the two, and a pragmatic alliance between the SS-WVHA and the industrialists persisted until the former's takeover by the Speer Ministry. Even in conflict on the particulars of genocide, here Krupp could work toward the Führer; not necessarily out of ideology, but through political and economic logic.

Chapter III: Divergent Interests in Collapse (1944–1945)

In a regime desperate for victory at any cost, the worsening situation of 1944 and 1945 amounted to something resembling complete failure. The strategic disasters of 1942 and 1943 had been distortions as Germany still held vast swaths of both Western and Eastern Europe. Many of the same officials and bureaucracies they headed continued operating, veiled from the destruction of the German army on the battlefield.

By mid-1944 this was to change. Massive offensives in both east and west decisively collapsed the illusion of German competitiveness. No longer could belief or delusion could ignore reality. During the campaigning seasons of Summer 1943 to Fall 1944, the German Army lost control of 1,000km of territory on the eastern front, including all of occupied Russia and most of Ukraine. Completely drained of both men and material, the Ostheer was nothing but a shell of its former self. The German Army and Waffen SS had entered the Soviet Union as body of young men; by 1944 it was filled with the elderly, the infirm, adolescents, and foreigners. They were supplied with machine guns assembled by former Jewish professionals, bullets produced by Ukrainian schoolgirls, and foodstuffs harvested by deported Polish peasants, all working in mainland Germany under constant threat of British and American bombers. Desperation can only begin to describe an unfolding nightmare.

By June 1944, Allied landings in France made the two front scenario a reality. It was one that could only spell German defeat. Whatever straws could be grasped through territorial buffers were crushed over the course of the next year. By August the Soviets had reached Warsaw; the Americans, Paris. The Germany Army, ever so eager for the reassertion of German might, ceased to exist as a quasi-independent institution. On July 20th of 1944, several army officers and former national conservatives lead an assassination/coup attempt against Hitler and the SS. It was a revolt

of the colonels rather than the generals; the disenfranchised rather than the loyalists. Within the military, Hitler had long since removed any real impediments to his ability to make military decisions. Elements perceived as defeatist were removed during the war in the east, where the many senior officers increasingly saw what path laid ahead. What army leadership remained was thoroughly nazified, and the lines separating the Party from the Army essentially disappeared.

For those in the regime, and especially the SS, reality had troublesome consequences. The location and evidence of the eastern death became a foremost concern. There was an incredible amount of blood several thousand individual's hands; such a heuristic is as a useful into understanding the rationale of the late-regime's millenarianism. The radicalization of National Socialism simply made it impossible for it to exist outside of some sort of German victory; such binary thinking fueled Hitler's thinking within the final months.

But much like how the colonels had foresaw a Reich without Hitler, many forethinking Germans also imagined a time without National Socialism. Through the bombs, the fighting, and the slaughter, the realities of defeat loomed eerily on the horizon. It would follow different rules and different moralities, and almost certainly devoid of those that dominated Nazi ideology. Thus, from the perspective of German industry, slavery was quickly morphing into a liability.

This situation that began to unfold in 1944 and 1945 resembled a new, more chaotic period in the dictatorship. It was one of declining fortune and reduced ability for political maneuver. As the system began to unravel, whatever sympathies industrial outsiders possessed disappeared. Former intersections such as profit motivation and desire to influence the regime fell away as the state buttoned down all hatches. Inter-party fault lines in systems of forced labor molted and then centralized under Speer's Armaments Ministry, as the regime attempted to improve efficiency in the face of impossible odds. The result was the separation of society into ideological and realist

subsets, with the regime attempting to enforce notions of the final victory through fiat and the body of society moving away from such apocalyptic assumptions.

Merging & Dividing: Interparty relationships & Private Industry

The critical crossroads for the politics of forced labor proved to be in Albert Speer and the Armament's Ministry. As a reaction to war pressures and the growing crisis at the front, Speer first began through consolidating several adjacent jurisdictions. The process began with control over the Army economic office dating back to 1942.¹⁰¹ He was ruthlessly effective at such a task. By 1945, Speer had gained effective control over all military production on land, air, and sea. This road towards centralization was, however, not straightforward. Particularly, Speer found considerable resistance emanating from Martin Bormann, the *Gauleiters*, and General Plenipotentiary for Labor Deployment Fritz Sauckel. These figures resented Speer's involvement largely because of the intrusion centralization had on their local operations. Bormann and Sauckel, who essentially acted as the *Gauleiter's* representatives in Berlin, had an analogous relationship that Speer and private industry enjoyed: the *Gauleiter's* agreed to support and cooperate with Bormann in exchange for representation in Berlin.

The deterioration of the military situation and beginning of the Final Solution (particularly in the context of Posen¹⁰²) marks a second decisive moment; one where Speer formed the one of two parts towards the drive towards victory. Specifically, this took the form of Speer's growing centrality in the regime. Speer may have not been involved with the formulation of the Holocaust,

¹⁰¹ Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 558.

¹⁰² Tooze's *Wages of Destruction* has an excellent reading of this incident. Therein he theorizes that Posen and similar incidents are indicative of a "Himmler-Speer Axis" formed due to declining fortunes in the war. See Tooze, *Wages of Destruction*, 610-611.

but that Himmler was now Minister of the Interior and Speer Minister of Armaments presented a facsimile of a power concentration. In this instance, their coordination projected the absolute dedication the regime demanded. In-fact, Speer had long standing connections with the SS dating back to the late 1930s that premeditated such a relationship.¹⁰³ The ultimate and most important aspect of the connection was in the settlement of Himmler's position to Speer's. Briefly, the presence of Pohl's independent SS economic enterprise might suggest a rivalry over shared turf. Speer's behavior might even suggest so, as he moved quickly to acquire jurisdiction over more and more of the economy.

Surprisingly, this was not the case. Instead, the ideological alignment of both Speer and Himmler and that the two shared political enemies within the party motivated both to forge a political alliance.¹⁰⁴ Himmler was also weary of Bormann's access to Hitler, specifically the ascendancy of the *Gauleiters* with the formal system of government was worrying. For instance, Bormann's Directive 55/43 of September 29, 1943 speaks directly to the relationship between Party and Führer proclaiming: "Every Party comrade must, especially now, feel himself to be a confidant of the Führer and a go-between between leadership and people. The Party must now in these testing times take the leadership of the people particularly firmly in hand. Our compatriots want to know that their opinions are being safely and reliably formed."¹⁰⁵ Such a statement is theoretically applicable to all NSDAP members (including the SS), but when contextualized within Speer's, Himmler's, and Bormann's simultaneous political machinations, such statements take on

¹⁰³ Kitchen, *Speer: Hitler's Architect*, 190.

¹⁰⁴ Allen, Michael, *Business of Genocide*, 201.

¹⁰⁵ Anordnung Nr. 55/43, "Generalmitgliederappelle zum verstärkten Führungseinsatz der gesamten Parteigenossenschaft", 29 September 1943, NS 6/167. Bundesarchiv, Berlin.

a slightly less inclusionary tone; one where Bormann is asserting a lack of need for any organizations in between party (controlled by him) and the Führer.

The logic of such a political alliance also made sense within war constraints; Speer (and the industrialists) would inherit Pohl's authority¹⁰⁶ over slave labor in order to centralize war production (as a matter of efficiency). While abandoning Pohl's position may seem counterintuitive, the political dimension made the agreement an easy sell for both parties. In exchange for political support, Himmler would be insulated from Speer's own machinations, while Speer could depend on Himmler's support in his struggle against Sauckel and Bormann.

It is important to remember that all parties within this frame did so to move towards the extremization of policy. Through Speer's centralization, Himmler's role in the Final Solution, and Bormann's directives, all took on the form of radical policy towards victory at any cost. As a result of Speer strongarming the various armaments agencies, the Armament's Ministry effectively gained singular control over the major aspects of the economy.

Unsurprisingly, it was at this moment that industrial aims began to diverge from the regime. As the it became more and more preoccupied with the final struggle, private industry began moving towards the post-war transition as early as January 1945. This included removing forced laborers from existing plants and prolonged negotiations with the regime to subsequently deport them to their home countries.¹⁰⁷ In the case of Krupp's Ruhr plants, this began in March of 1945, shortly after the Allied crossing of the Rhine River. In practical terms, this devolved into deportation from

¹⁰⁶ Pohl put up a considerable amount of opposition, but Himmler ultimately was more interested in his settlement projects than the SS sub-economy.

See Allen, Michael, *Business of Genocide*, 200.

¹⁰⁷ Buggeln, Marc. *Slave Labor in Nazi Concentration Camps*, 263.

the Krupp Cast Iron Works to concentration camps such as Buchenwald.¹⁰⁸ At this stage, the difference between the forced labor camp and concentration camp proper was perhaps somewhat trivial, as the collapse of order made conditions mutually horrific. Such promises to remove forced laborers from private enterprise were never fulfilled entirely, but it is notable that the WVHA (now only in charge of guarding the camps) accepted Krupp's rationale and agreed to hold many of the forced laborers until liberation. Even within the SS itself, a certain acceptance of the situation existed alongside the regime's final victory mythology.

However, even in the circumstance of the separation of industry to the fanaticism of the regime, collaboration continued in curious fashions. For reasons perhaps influenced both by reality and post-war concerns, Krupp found mutual ground with the SS to evacuate Markstädt in February 1945. In a letter between Krupp manager Hans Girod to Alfred Krupp, Girod reveals concerns the retention of the foreign forced laborers and wage payment for the newly displaced staff; both of which stem from economic concerns.¹⁰⁹ However, Girod also highlights the need to retain staff in order to prevent their conscription, as unemployed or redundant staff members would immediately be conscripted per regulation. This is particularly curious because this dual situation represents a certain core of Krupp's motivations; there is a desire to protect staff from becoming casualties (1945 was the bloodiest year for Germany), but this also translates in prolonging the ordeal its forced laborers. Especially in moral terms, the decision to evacuate and resume production is microcosmic of the situation of industry itself; forced labor is a means to an end, but that end is entirely self-motivated. It should also not be lost that Markstädt's evacuation landed Krupp's

¹⁰⁸ Krupp Main Camp Administration. "Concerning Contacts between SS guard of the female camp dated March 15th", 15 March 1945, Box 20, Book 38, No. NIK-7014, *Nuremberg Krupp Trial Papers Judge of Hu C. Anderson*, Vanderbilt University Law School and Vanderbilt University Libraries

¹⁰⁹ Hans Girod. "Letter, dated 11 February 1945 written by Girod", 11 February 1945, Box 41B, Book 41B, No. NIK-9038, *Nuremberg Krupp Trial Papers Judge of Hu C. Anderson*, Vanderbilt University Law School and Vanderbilt University Libraries.

investment back in Essen, firmly in the path of the British and Americans rather than the Red Army.

Conclusion: The Legacy of forced labor & National Socialist Dictatorship

The Germany of 1945 was one of complete chaos. Under assault in all practically all meanings of the word, the dictatorship lost its ability to resist. Within a mere five months, the prospect of occupation became reality, with unconditional surrender arriving on May 7th, 1945. The regime had gone out fighting; it was a pointless and hopeless endeavor by a callously fanatical regime unable to comprehend nothing outside of the final victory.

The conclusion and occupation of Germany proper in the months and years following May 1945 left millions of forced laborers in a legal limbo. The line between refugee, forced laborer, and concentration camp inmate blurred as the Allied powers faced the prospect of caring for millions of foreign nationals. In a time before widespread consciousness on human rights, it was a situation that was both volatile and completely unprecedented for the occupiers the immediate postwar era.

Quickly, the solutions and legacies of forced labor took on shapes dominated by politics and geography. In the collapse of mid-1945, for a huge variety of reasons, millions of Germans and foreign nationals fled westward. While it is true that the Western allies encountered and liberated KZs and forced labor camps, the location of the death centers in Poland somewhat obfuscated the malevolent nature of Nazi eastern policy, including the full barbarity of slave labor. Instead, Germany's geography dictated that the western allies would encounter forced laborers employed by private enterprise. Often, entire industrial areas (most notably in the Ruhr basin) were completely dysfunctional and abandoned in the pandemonium of the collapse. The occupants of forced labor barracks had largely fled or had been evacuated to concentration camps during the breakdown of central order over the previous five months, only magnifying a general sense of lawlessness and chaos. When combined with fleeing refugees, shattered

Wehrmacht formations, and hapless civilians, the number of the wandering and dislocated in western Germany numbered in the millions. On top failures in preparation for dealing with such a large quantity of people, almost all German infrastructure was reduced to rubble. For the remainder of 1945, the situation had the makings of humanitarian failure, and remained on the verge of crisis.

In response, the western alliance created a network of camps for “displaced persons” (DP Camps). Over the course of three years, displaced people were housed, identified, and repatriated to their countries of origin. This may have seemed like the commonsense action to take, but this policy had several insidious results.

As a part of the agreement at Yalta, the western alliance agreed to a speedy repatriation of all nationals once in allied control. Because of the westward direction of the refugee crisis, this included several million Soviet citizens. However, due extremely loose definitions of collaboration, Soviet policy quickly moved to label any Soviet citizen in Germany as a traitor or implicitly engaged in collaboration. To illustrate just how far this ideological net was cast, the mere act of surrendering was considered treasonous (this included some 5 million Soviet soldiers). Thus, by agreeing to quickly repatriating Soviet nationals from the west, this practically meant condemning many repatriees to yet another system of repression. The stories and documents of surviving Soviet *Ostarbeiter* remains an underresearched field, but sparse documentary and anecdotal evidence suggests that many simply exchanged one labor camp for another.

Yet, if treatment of the *Ostarbeiter* seems morally unjust, the unequal punishments of various actors within the system is also equally troubling. Considering the chaos of May 1945, it should be unsurprising that justice was uneven. As possibly the most egregious examples, those

most tied to the camp system and slavery met death the quickest. Himmler committed suicide after being captured by British troops in May 1945; Pohl was hung in 1951. In the circumstances of such malevolence and with so much blood on their hands, the outcome was never in doubt.

Speer and many of the mid-level party bureaucrats in the Armaments Ministry survived the war with varying degrees of sanction. For his part in forced labor and other unpleasanties, Speer was sentenced to a 20-year sentence in Spandau. After decades of falsely denying knowledge or personal involvement with the Holocaust, he died in London in 1981. Thousands died working in camps in a system he had helped design.

Many of the corporations and their staff stood trial in court for charges including forced labor. For its part, several Krupp managers and Krupp family scion, Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach were pronounced guilty of preparing for aggressive war and in the usage of forced labor. Sentenced to 12 years, Alfried Krupp would be released only three years later in the context of American reproachment. In its inheritance, the new West German state fought vigorously to free the former industrialists; such companies and figures would later become the bedrock of the German *Wirtschaftswunder* of the 1950s and 1960s. Alfried Krupp would go on to create the Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Foundation, which today maintains 20% ownership over Friedrich Krupp AG's successor, ThyssenKrupp AG. After suffering from lung cancer, he died age 59 in 1967. His foundation continues to support historical research refuting his capability in the regime's actions.¹¹⁰

¹¹⁰ This is generally the argument of Harold James' monograph on Krupp; that Alfried was an unwilling participant in the regime's institutions without denying their happenstance. It also claims that his 1948 war-crimes conviction had political motivations. It is a separate, but ongoing debate. The book was also produced with funding from the Alfried Krupp Stiftung.
James, *Krupp: a History*, 224-225.

The Lessons of Forced Labor Politics

From between 1939 to 1945, an estimated 13,480,000 foreigners¹¹¹ found themselves in employed the German economy, with an overwhelming majority resulting from coercion. By virtue of sheer scale alone, the deployment is a historical anomaly in contemporary economic and labor history. Only in the Pacific War of 1937-1945 have forced labor systems existed in a comparable context and extent, and that does not even account for the complex interplay between ideology, the state, and private enterprise that characterizes the particularity of the National Socialist Dictatorship.

As authoritarianism and dictatorship continue as political systems into 21st century, it is essential that scholars study how such systems function. What a dictatorship projects onto its outward image is telling, but it is only through action that real structures of power and influence expose themselves. Such analysis is rarely clear-cut, but so are virtually all other aspects of the political process. When reduced to a core function, political decisions are inherently complex; it is always a complex interplay of social, economic, conditional relationships that determine how decisions are made. Dictatorship is not exempt by any standard.

However, the imposition of dictatorship also presents challenges to the polycratic model. Dictatorship remains a model motivated by the prospect of unipolarity; while NSDAP did not achieve a relative absolutism until the circumstances permitted, it remained a constant objective. The singlemindedness and ability of the regime to enact policies that may have created backlash such as radical anti-Semitism, must be reconciled. How applicable is the model of multipolarity

¹¹¹ Mark Spoerer and Jochen Fleischhacker. "Forced Laborers in Nazi Germany: Categories, Numbers, and Survivors." *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, vol. 33, no. 2 (2002): 199.

if the dictatorship can simply impose its will by fiat? That answer is in selectivity. That dictatorship can enforce its will is part of the definition, but it is in selectivity and constraints that dictatorship can coexist with multipolarity. In Nazi Germany and Nazi forced labor policy, this constraint was in the ideology of race and commitment to victory at all costs. The regime believed absolutely in such, but the motivations of society (including the industrialists) did not always match the NSDAP's fervor.

Especially in discussions of Nazi Germany, the extremism of the regime comes to the forefront; it is one people, one Reich, and one Führer that dominates the popular conception of how Nazism was able to enforce its ideological will. In the past 30 years, the historical discipline has moved past this. While it has become well understood that the National Socialists did not resemble a monolith, our understanding of the way in this process works has been uneven.

It is only through their specific political circumstances that such levels of absolute ideological control over policy could unilaterally make decisions, but those circumstances also changed the perspectives on those on the outskirts of the dictatorship. This is the context that forced labor should be understood through. Throughout the Nazi dictatorship, the ideological extremity of the regime could only be underscored by the events surrounding it, but it is the intersection of marginal elements that allowed for greater levels of complicity, deeper than those found solely in the party. For all the necessity of forced labor, Krupp found ways to embrace *Führerprinzip* from non-ideological standpoints, and in ways that contradicted the desires of the NSDAP to create a truly unipolar society.

That is the true lesson of the politics of forced labor; ideological extremists are uniquely dangerous through their worldviews, but it is the complex intersection of political realpolitik with extremism that can have truly disastrous consequences. That 6 million Jews were murdered

by National Socialism is outstanding, but one can only imagine what may have happened if more of society had been aligned with the NSDAP on extermination policy.

In many ways, the narrowing of maneuver in National Socialism, represents the inverse of this trend. Through the same mechanism, the intersection of industrial aims with the those of the regime diverged. To the non-believer, once the final victory disappeared, the motivations for force labor coordination with the regime followed suit.

This is a complex dynamic that requires detail and attention. What started as a method of describing the Final Solution can describe many solutions. But lest we forget, the brutal grindstones of repression will continue to spin onward. Modern authoritarians continue to operate on principles of dictatorship that may change in method, but not in process. The nature of politics is one of continuity; dictatorships will continue to institutionalize and work through the structures of society to perpetuate their self-existence. What can be learned about other dictatorial systems within the polycratic model will be important as we continue to understand how complex societies function.

This work has focused solely on Krupp and Krupp related asides, but other major forced labor triangulations also existed in different contexts. For example, how the relationships between Speer, Himmler, and German aviation companies provides another separate case into studying the phenomenon described here.

While this work has sought to expand the political understanding of Nazi Germany, it would be foolish to consider such an endeavor all encompassing. There remain other underexplored avenues to understand *Führerprinzip*; what might the evidence say about the politics of gender, of economics, of social hierarchies from the particular workings of the Führer

state? When Kershaw expanded “Working Towards the Führer” to include the doctor, the lawyer, the small-businessman, and the ordinary citizen,¹¹² it was in these contexts and those aforementioned that remain open for exploration. Even after 30 years, multipolarity can be at forefront of how we understand National Socialism.

We should also not forget about the survivors, so many of whom are advanced in age. As has much Holocaust scholarship before it, the scholarship following the *Ostarbeiter* lies in eastern Europe. With the fall of the Iron Curtain, and the claims for corporate restitution in the 1990s some of this work has already been undertaken in the *Forced Labor Archive* published by the Freie Universität Berlin and an accompanying consortium. However, due to the legacies of the Cold War in archival access and as well as in public interest, English language scholarship regarding the *Ostarbeiter* has been sparse. More should be done to tell the human element, especially in that of individual stories in the decades following the war.

Finally, we must become better cognizant of our own capabilities. The story of Nazi Germany is difficult because, for many, it is either too abstract or too familiar. That millions toiled in modern forced labor systems is unique, but the forced laborers of Nazi Germany were infinitely more than a statistic. Each led an individual life before slavery, and many did not live to see the regime’s end. In some respects, the totality and lessons of Nazi forced labor are distinctly human. We must remain vigilant. No matter the power of institutions, or politics, the social; our reaction is always contextual. It is our own.

¹¹² Ian Kershaw, “‘Working Towards the Führer.’ Reflections on the Nature of the Hitler Dictatorship.” *Contemporary European History*, vol. 2, no. 2, (July 1993): 117.

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