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POLISH WORKERS FROM REICHSGAU
DANZIG–WESTPREUßEN (THE GDAŃSK–WESTERN
PRUSSIA REGION) IN ORGANISATION TODT
IN FINLAND AND NORWAY (1942–1945)

Introduction

Up to this day, Polish historical literature has not examined the exploitation of the Polish work force by the Nazi paramilitary *Organisation Todt* (further as: *OT*). This problem was mentioned in fundamental works on the occupation by C. Łuczak¹ and C. Madajczyk². Certain comments on this subject are to be found in the article by K. Ciechanowski and the account by a Polish parachutist who landed in Yugoslavia³.

¹C. Łuczak, *Polityka ekonomiczna Trzeciej Rzeszy w latach II wojny światowej (The Policy of the Third Reich during the Second World War)*, Poznań 1982, p. 355, 372; *idem*, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna hitlerowskich Niemiec w okupowanej Polsce (The Population and Economic Policy of Nazi Germany in Occupied Poland)*, Poznań 1974, 88 pp.

²C. Madajczyk, *Faszyzm i okupacje 1938–1945. Wykonywane okupacji przez państwa Osi w Europie (Fascism and Occupations 1938–1945. The Execution of Occupation by Axis States in Europe)*, vol. 1. *Ukształtowanie się rządów okupacyjnych (The Shaping of Occupation Administration)*, Poznań 1983, 333 pp.; vol. 2. *Mechanizmy realizowania okupacji (Mechanisms of the Realisation of Occupation)*, Poznań 1984, p. 323, 594.

³K. Ciechanowski, *Pobór Polaków z Pomorza Gdańskiego do armii niemieckiej i zmilitaryzowanych oddziałów roboczych w latach II wojny światowej (The Recruitment of Poles from Danzig Pomerania into the German Army and Militarised Work Detachments during the Second World War)* "Zeszyty Muzeum Stutthof" 1985, fasc. 6, pp. 41–46; *ibidem*, S. Okęcki, *Na ziemi norweskiej (On Norwegian Soil)*, in: *Polacy w ruchu oporu narodów Europy 1939–1945 (Poles in the Resistance Movement of European Nations)*, Warszawa 1977, pp. 166–171; *ibidem*, A. Przemyski, *Sprawozdanie por. "Alfreda Linke" z pobytu w Jugosławii (Report by Colonel "Alfred Linke" from a Stay in Yugoslavia)*, "Wojskowy Przegląd Historyczny" 1991, no. 3–4, pp. 227–245.

Research into the construction activity conducted by OT in terrains occupied by the Wehrmacht was carried out by the German historian F. W. Seidler, whose studies⁴ comprise an excellent point of departure for further detailed investigations pertaining to particular occupied territories, especially those where the activity of OT was specially intensive. The privileged regions of OT undertakings included, i.a. Norway, Denmark and Finland. This fact was the outcome, on the one hand, of Hitler's strategic and defensive plans for northern Europe and, on the other hand, of the intention to include Scandinavian countries into the "Great German Reich". The capital of the northern region was to be the Norwegian town of Trondheim⁵. The targets of OT in its capacity as a semi-military construction organisation working for the needs of the Wehrmacht in Scandinavia were particularly complex and multi-directional.

Archive research conducted in Norway permits not only a wider view of the essence of OT activity, but also of the Polish aspect of this problem, of prime interest to us. The investigations were based on OT documentation gathered at the State Archive (*Riksarkivet* — RA) in Oslo. They are composed of archive collections of several OT administrative departments in Oslo from the years 1914–1945, chiefly: employment (*Abteilung Arbeitseinsatz*), railway construction (*Abteilung Bahnbau*), road construction (*Abteilung Strassenbau*) and the General Plenipotentiary for Construction (*Abteilung der Generalbeauftragte für das Bauwesen*; abbreviation: *G. B. Bau*). This article employs basically archival material from the employment department: files on the employment of Poles (*Arbeitseinsatzkartel* — *Polakker*), transport lists (*Transportlisten*), lists of workers on vacation and discharged (*Urlauber und Entpflichtungen*), as well as statistical reports and correspondence. Furthermore, use was made of the repatriation file (*Hjemsendelsekartotek*) prepared by the Allies in Norway during the summer and autumn of 1945. Equally important and

⁴F. W. Seidler, *Fritz Todt. Baumeister des Dritten Reichs*, München 1986; *idem*, *Die Organisation Todt, Bauen für Staat und Wehrmacht 1938–1945*, Koblenz 1987; *idem*, *Das Nationalsozialistische Kraftfahrerkorps und Organisation Todt im Zweiten Weltkrieg*, "Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte" 1984/4, pp. 625–636.

⁵A. S. Milward, *The Fascist Economy in Norway*, Oxford 1972, especially chapter III: *German Plans for Norway*, pp. 67–93; A. Speer, *Wspomnienia (Reminiscences)*, Warszawa 1973, pp. 253–254.

heretofore unknown documentation material included the *Handbook of the Organisation Todt*, a typescript published in London in 1945, and a smaller typescript prepared in London in 1945 by the Norwegian military chief command (*OT in Norway. Set Up and Main Activities*).

The discussed documents make it possible to estimate the number of Poles who worked in the far north within the OT framework. It is also feasible to present the work conditions, wages and course of the repatriation conducted after the war.

The intention of this article is to depict the fate of Polish workers from the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen*, employed by OT in northern Norway and Finland, from the moment of their recruitment and transport to the north, local work conditions and wages, up to repatriation or other events after the end of hostilities in Norway. Before we pass to the basic part of the article, a number of remarks is due to OT and the tasks which it was to perform in Norway and Finland.

The organiser and founder of OT was Dr. Fritz Todt, an engineer (1891–1942). The lineage of the organisation was connected with two of his famous projects and engineering ventures: the construction of a network of highways in the Third Reich (1933 to 1939) and the realization of a line of fortifications, the so-called Siegfried Line, along the border with France (1933 — 1939). Both enormous investments were completed at a relatively quick rate, under the supervision of a humble technical office, headed by Todt and located in the Ministry of the Railway of the Third Reich⁶. Such investments were ascribed great significance not only for German economy but also for military purposes. The contribution made by Todt was highly regarded by Hitler, who in this way accelerated his professional and party promotion. Already on 17 March 1940, Todt was nominated the head of the highest-ranking Ministry of Armament and Ammunition (*Reichministerium für Bewaffnung und Munition*), while the construction organisation, which he also supervised, was named after him⁷.

⁶The Todt office, known as the General Road Inspector (*Generallinspektor für das deutsche Strassenwesen*), supervised directly by Hitler, was composed of a group of engineers, heads of several construction firms and several officials of the German rail; see: *Riksarkivet*, Oslo (further as: RA), *Eske 42* (further as: *E. 42*), *Handbook of the Organisation Todt*, London, March 1945, IRS/MR — OT/5/45 (further as: *HOT*), pp. 1–2; also F. W. Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt*, p. 15.

⁷RA, *E. 42*, *HOT*, pp. 2–3.

After the outbreak of the war and the expanding military efforts of the Wehrmacht in Europe, OT was entrusted with military construction tasks. On the one hand, they involved assorted reconstruction for the sake of Wehrmacht operational requirements (the repair of damaged bridges, railway lines, roads, etc.); on the other hand, they denoted work in the hinterland, intent on providing supplies and food for the army and OT personnel. It appears that the descriptions sometimes given to OT — the second German army, the militia or the entourage of the Wehrmacht (*Wehrmachtsgefolge*)⁸ — were quite correct. Nonetheless, from the administrative viewpoint OT remained a modest office, and responsibility was placed upon the directors of the construction firms employed by it. Such firms took upon themselves the realisation of assorted construction projects for the needs of the Wehrmacht, arranged and commissioned by OT. In 1940–1942, OT completed a system of defensive coastline installations in Western Europe, such as underwater bases for ships, underground storehouses, landing strips for aeroplanes, and similar military objects.

After the tragic death of Todt in an aeroplane accident on 8 February 1942, his functions and posts were assumed by Albert Speer, the personal architect of Hitler and plenipotentiary for military construction. Speer introduced a number of organisational changes, which led to a centralised system of running the organisation and, simultaneously, to an excessive expansion of particular administrative rungs. At the same time, this system encompassed all occupied territories. The OT administrative apparatus was headed by the OT Central Office in Berlin, which was set apart as an independent office in the Ministry for Armament and Ammunition. The OT Central Office supervised so-called operation groups (*Einsatzgruppen* — further as: EG) in particular occupied territories. There were seven such groups in 1942: four were connected with the Russian front, and the remaining three were distributed in the following way: one in Scandinavia (*Wiking*), one in Western Europe (*West*), and one in the Balkans (*Südost*)¹⁰. In 1944, the number of EG increased to

⁸RA, *Forsvardepartementet* (further as: FD), 1940–1945 London-arkivet. Regjeringsutvalget 1939–1945, E. 2897, sak 42 *Organisatton Todt* in Norway — copy no. 30/1 FD II 401/44, pp. 1–2.

⁹RA, E. 42, HOT, p. 5.

¹⁰F. W. Seidler, *Die Organisatton Todt*, pp. 18–19.

12. The accomplishments of Allied forces on the Western front led to the evacuation of the largest and oldest *EG West*. The territory of the Third Reich and the incorporated Polish lands were divided into eight operational groups. The General Gouvernement was the scene of activity conducted by *EG Brugmann*. In the autumn of 1943, *EG Italien* was set into motion. The two remaining operational groups were *EG Wiking* and *EG Südost*, which existed from the very beginning¹¹. Each of the operational groups was divided into construction regions, of various size and known as Chief Construction Offices (*Oberbauleitung* — further as *OBL*). Several subordinate administrative units were active on the spot¹², but the above two were regarded as the most important.

OT tasks in Scandinavian countries

Norway, Denmark and Finland constituted the area of activity conducted by *EG Wiking*, from which neutral Sweden was excluded. It must be explained that up to the middle of the summer of 1944, Finland remained an independent OT administrative unit, known as "Operation Finland" (*Einsatz Finnland*, abbreviated as: *E Finnland*). Only after the capitulation of Finland in the war against the Soviet Union was it included into *EG Wiking* (July 1944)¹³.

First OT construction detachments were sent to Scandinavia in the spring of 1940, prior to the June capitulation of Norway. Their task was to construct anti-bomb shelters for U-boats in Trondheim and Bergen along the coast of western Norway as well as a system of coastal fortifications in Denmark¹⁴.

This undertaking was entrusted to the most experienced construction firms from Essen and Köln, which in 1933–1938 were engaged in building highways. The whole venture was supervised by Oberbaurat Willy Henne, a close co-worker of Todt in the 1930s. The seat of *EG Wiking* was established in Oslo¹⁵.

¹¹*Ibidem*, pp. 120–121.

¹²One of them was *Einsatz*, an independent link between the *EG* and *OBL*. The following institutions were subordinated to the *OBL*: *Abschnittsbauleitung* = *ABL* and the *Bauleitung* = *BL*; see RA, E. 42, *HOT*, pp. 6, 25–33, cf. F. W. Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt*, p. 19.

¹³F. W. Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt*, pp. 86.

¹⁴*Ibidem*, pp. 54–55.

¹⁵Originally, the *EG Wiking* staff was located in the Oslo University student hostel in Blindern. In the autumn of 1942 it was transferred to 15 Kirkegat Street, see: RA, FD 1942, 45, E. 2897, *OT* in Norway, p. 4.

Originally, the activity pursued by *EG Wiking* was modest, and involved the defence of strategic points along the Norwegian and Danish coasts. Soon afterwards, owing to the breakdown of the *Blitzkrieg* in the East, the threat of the creation of a second front in the West and, above all, the conviction harboured by Hitler about the Allied invasion of Norway, the rank of *OT* as a construction organisation grew enormously. In an order addressed to Speer, known as the “Wiking Programme” and issued in May 1942, Hitler listed construction work to be carried out along the coast of Norway. Apart from a great number of permanent fortifications on the Norwegian coastline, which was supposed to turn the country into Hitler’s defensive fortress, the list contained a number of other ventures aiming at the expansion and improvement of the communication system in this country. This venture involved predominantly the securing the transience of the only artery, the so-called Third Reich route no. 50, leading from the south to the north. The most important and, simultaneously, the most difficult to maintain in winter conditions was the northern section. It was necessary to guarantee continuous military transport and supplies for the Lapland army in northern Finland. An equally significant goal of the “Wiking Programme” was the construction of a railway in northern Norway — a single track connection from Mo (in the region of Rana) to the small town of Kirkenes, a distance of several hundred kilometres. The range of the work partially foreseen for *OT* included the construction of airports and dry docks for larger vessels as well as participation in the production of aluminium and magnesium¹⁶.

A lesser rank was ascribed to *OT* construction enterprises in Finland, predominantly owing to the small number of erected objects. *OT* was directed to Finland in the autumn 1941 to service the German Lapland Army, which together with Finland battled against the Soviet Union. Similarly as the Norwegian Finmark, Finnish Lapland lacked a railroad which would render effective the transport of troops and equipment in this particular part of

¹⁶Die Okkupationspolitik des deutschen Faschismus in Dänemark und Norwegen (further as: *ODFDN*) (1940–1945), prep. by F. P e t r i c k, vol. 7 in the series: *Europa unterm Hakenkreuz. Die Okkupationspolitik des deutschen Faschismus (1938–1945)*, publ. by Bundesarchiv, Berlin 1992, doc. 58, *Befehl Hitlers für Albert Speer, Reichminister für Bewaffnung und Munition und Generalbevollmächtigter für das Bauwesen, vom 13 mai 1942 über Baumaßnahmen in Norwegen (Wiking-Programm)*, p. 136.

Finland, the main theatre of German operations against the Soviet Union. This is the reason why Hitler intended to build a narrow-gauge railway, some 500 kilometres long, between Rovaniemi, the site of the German army quarters, and the most northerly and strategically most important region of Petsamo (today: Russian Pechenga). Nevertheless, in view of the insistence by Todt, who stressed the unrealistic nature of the investment due to difficult climatic and geologic conditions, Hitler resigned from the original projects, and instead recommended building the so-called Arctic Sea road, stretching along a planned railway line. Furthermore, OT was entrusted with the expansion of several sections of both roads connecting the above mentioned route and the Third Reich highway in Norway¹⁷.

The OT tasks in Finland included the construction of a railway from Hyrynsalmi to Kuusamo, as well as a number of fortification tasks for the needs of the Wehrmacht¹⁸.

In Denmark, OT construction activity was concentrated exclusively on coastline fortifications and the building of anti-aircraft battery platforms. Denmark has been omitted in this article, because no Poles were employed there, since OT had at its disposal a sufficiently large local working force¹⁹.

The recruitment of Poles from lands incorporated into the Third Reich

Poles in territories incorporated into the Third Reich were obligated to observe the principles of recruitment into OT universally accepted in the Reich. Originally, up to the spring of 1942, the procedure of enlistment was not complicated, and was conducted exclusively through the intermediary of the construction firm in which the given worker was employed. The moment the given firm signed a contract with OT about particular construction work, it was automatically included into a group of enterprises working for the needs of the war industry. On the other hand, workers employed by this firm received a document about service duty (*Dienstverpflichtungsscheine*), issued by an appropriate *Arbeitsamt* in the region of their residence. This certificate made it impossible to seek work in any other enterprise. The worker

¹⁷F. W. Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt*, pp. 61–62.

¹⁸*Ibidem*, p. 67.

¹⁹RA, E. 40, sak 90, *Arbeitskraft oversikter, Arbeitseinsatz Statistik OT Wiking* — 25. 1. 1994, 25. 7. 1944, 25. 9. 1944.

employed by a firm connected with *OT* was described as a permanent employee (*Stammarbeiter*), similarly as the entire staff of the given firm. The *OT* enterprises were assigned tasks in territories occupied by the Third Reich. Those who worked for *OT* earlier, could additionally obtain new workers recruited by their own offices, both in Germany and in Polish incorporated lands, or with the assistance of local labour exchanges. Profitable and vigorous firms always had a great number of candidates, and frequently resorted to staff members dismissed by other firms, who in the opinion of the *Arbeitsamt* were unsuitable for the war policy. The binding principle was to transfer the staff associated with a given firm to new workplaces. Only workers who volunteered for *OT* as well as those who were summoned in writing by the *Arbeitsamt*, were first kept in *OT* chief introductory camps (*OT-Haupterfassungslager*) in Berlin, Frankfurt-Isenburg or Inowrocław near Tomaszów Mazowiecki in the General Gouvernement (further as: GG)²⁰.

During the second half of 1942, the above described methods of recruitment were recognised by new *OT* highest authorities as insufficiently uniform and haphazard, and were subsequently liquidated. New departments in the *Arbeitsamt* offices, known as *Nebenstellen*, were entrusted with the task of registering workers accepted by *OT* and controlling documents issued for the whole *OT* personnel. The registration of candidates to *OT* included, predominantly, the recording of personal data and the issuing of a military book (*Dienstbuch*) or the *OT* substitute card (*OT Ersatzkarte*) for foreigners. At the same time, the offices conducted initial medical examination, which classified for heavy or lighter labour, and determined professional specialization and wages according to the binding tariff. Each newly registered worker received an identity number (*Erkennungsmarke*). From that time on, he was obligated to wear around his neck a tablet displaying this number, similarly to soldiers of the Wehrmacht²¹. *OT* offices in the *Arbeitsamt* played the role of controllers and regulated the flow of *OT* employees. The numbers of new workers sent to firms were determined by the suggestions and directives of the *OT* Central Office and F. Sauckel, general plenipotentiary. Decisions about the allotment of the working force were made at the highest

²⁰RA. HOT, p. 168.

²¹*Ibidem*, p. 169.

levels of OT authorities, the Central Office and particular operational groups. The decisive factor was the priority of construction tasks. In this way, the role of firms in the employment of the workers was limited to a minimum. In practice, only large enterprises, which worked for the war economy, had chances for an allotment of a certain number of experts and workers.

The workers organised by the *Nebenstellen* were sent to camps in Wannsee or Eichkamp near Berlin. There, while waiting to further transport, they were divided into particular operational groups. All were examined by an OT physician and recorded on transport lists, which contained their name and surname, the date and place of birth, profession, the number of the military book and the identification number. Departure to the place of employment was preceded by routine delousing and the handing out of work clothes, underwear and table utensils. The special oil-green OT uniform was worn only by front workers. The majority of Poles were civilian OT workers, and were given dark civilian work clothes with an arm-band worn on the left arm and bearing the inscription "Org. Todt". The OT uniform was worn only by those who fulfilled supervisory functions, i.e. OT foremen or master workers²².

All told, there were three basic ways for Poles from the incorporated lands to join *Organisatlon Todt*:

1. Via a German construction firm, or its branch in the Polish lands, which signed an earlier agreement with OT. This was the most universal method of recruitment, especially in 1941–1942 — indirect and notwithstanding the will of the employee. Such a worker was presented by the *Arbeitsamt* with a service duty document, which linked him with the given firm once and for all (*Stammarbeiter*). In practice, an employee with such an annotation had no chances for seeking work in another enterprise.

2. Voluntary enlistment in the *Arbeitsamt*. Such an employee received the annotation "voluntary service duty" (*freie-dienst-verpflichtet*).

3. Compulsory "service duty" (*Dienstverpflichtung*), realised upon the basis of summons through the intermediary of the *Arbeitsamt* — a form applied from late autumn 1942, and on a larger scale in 1943–1944.

²²F. W. Seidler, *Die Organisatlon Todt*, pp. 171–182.

The first two methods created better work conditions and a certain freedom for the workers, but the third was a form of coercion, which denoted worse work conditions. Such compulsion was used not only in relation to employees, but also to whole firms²³.

Transports of Poles from the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen*

Poles from the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen*, similarly to those from the incorporated lands, were sent north already at the time of the initial organisation of work, i.e. from April 1942. They arrived together with German firms and a German staff, in which they comprised a decisive minority. Initially, they were older (b. 1890–1915) trained workers and experts representing assorted professions, who had German vocational education or at least several years of practice. The subsequent arrivals had lower qualifications and a short practice. The recruitment of Poles for OT undertakings facilitated the creation of branches of construction firms in the incorporated lands. This procedure was rather widespread in the *Reichsgau Wartheland*. Some of the firms in this region employed Poles from neighbouring incorporated lands and the GG; they included R. Sackmann from Jena/Rockau, whose branch was located in Posen. In Danzig Pomerania Poles were recruited more frequently by German firms from the Reich, i.a. from Berlin (Sager u. Woerner), Bremen (Siemer-Müller), Chemnitz (Arge Sachsen) and Western Pomerania (Arge Pommern from Bad Polzin, R. Menzel from Köslin) than by local firms. The sole exception was M. Märtings from Danzig²⁴.

The number of Poles arriving from Danzig Pomerania is presented in Table 1. Apparently, in the course of three years (1942–1944) more than 570 persons from this region came to Norway and Finland. During the first year (from April 1942 to the end of March 1943) recruitment conducted for the needs of EG *Wiking* was conducted by the above mentioned firms, which obtained a total of 150 persons. The recruitment campaign during the following year increased thanks to the mediation of the *Arbeitsamt* offices. This time, it encompassed two group transports (about 320 persons), sent to Finland, and a single transport of Germans, which included 14 Polish volunteers. In the spring

²³*Ibidem*, p. 133.

²⁴RA, OT-Arbeitsseinsatzkartel, E. 30–35.

of 1944, when all possibilities of further recruitment in the incorporated lands came to an end, the OT authorities began transferring workers from liquidated operation groups in the east and west. In this way, *EG West* sent to Norway a transport of some 1,000 persons. They included about 100 Poles, among whom 18 came from the above mentioned region²⁵.

Table 1. Transports of Poles from the Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen for OT work in Norway and Finland from April 1942 to July 1944

Date of transport or OT registration	No. of transport list	Place of worker's residence	Place of worker's residence Name of construction firm or group transport	Dest.	Name of OBL or BL	No. of empl.
04.42	Unk.	various	Arge Pommern Bad Polzin	N	Trøndheim	9
07.42	Unk.	Bromberg	R. Menzel Köslin	N	Kirkenes	11
09.42	Unk.	Karthaus	M. Martins Danzig	N	Kirkenes	17
09.42	Unk.	Bromberg	H. Sackmann Posen	N	Kirkenes	12
19.09.42	Unk.	Bromberg Schwetz /Wechsel	Sager-Woerner Berlin	F	Unk.	2
07.10.42	Unk.	Rypin region Karthaus region	ArgelSachsen Chemnitz	N	Alta	22
09.10.42	Unk.		Arge Bauvens-Sievers Köln	N	Skjapagurra	14
31.10.42	Unk.	Graudenz	Günzburg M. Hauck	F	Unk.	20
31.12.42	Unk.	Rypin region	ArgellSachsen Chemnitz	N	Kirkenes	12
31.12.42	71	Graudenz	Bafag AG Regensburg	N	Fauske	4
15.03.43	Unk.	Karthaus region	Semer-Müller Brema	N	Kirkenes	3
26.03.43	79	various	transport with 84 Germans	N	Kirkenes Tønsberg Kristiansand	14
30.03.43	81	Rypin region	H. Schäfer Saarbrücken	N	Narvik I Fauske Bergen	7 2 1
27.05.43	Unk.	various	group transport	F	Kuusamo	ca 220
09.06.43	Unk.	Rypin region	J. Kunz Freiburg	N	Mo and Rana	2
06.43	Unk.	various	group transport	N	Unk.	ca 100

²⁵RA, OT-Abteilung Arbeitseinsatz (further as: OT-Abt. Arb.), E. 20, Transportliste no. 114.

08.06.44	114	various	transport from Ruhr Basin - f. Angerer Dirschau - Matrowitz Berlin	N	Fauske Mo and Rana	8 10
to 07.44	Unk.	various	individual persons in transports from GG (no full data)	N		ca 50
42-44	Unk.	various	arrived with Wehrmacht (no full data)	N		32

Sources: RA, OT-Arbeitseinsatzkartei, E. 30-35 (Pollaker); idem OT-Abt. Arb., E. 15, 17, 19-22, Transportlisten, idem, AEF DP Registration Card, so-called Hjemsendelse files.

Abbreviations: N — Norway; F — Finland; Unk. — unknown; Dest. — destination.

Transport Routes

Poles recruited by OT were transported by railway in organised groups to a group camp in Berlin-Wannsee. There, they awaited further transport, and in the mean-time were employed in construction projects in Berlin²⁶.

After the arrangement of group transport lists, the workers were forwarded to assorted OT operating groups. The transports heading for Norway and Finland took two routes:

1. from Stettin or Aarhus (Denmark) to Oslo (for *EG Wiking*),
2. from Tallin (Rewel) and Helsinki to Rovaniemi (for E Finland).

The first route started with a railway journey from Berlin to Stettin or Aarhus in Denmark. There, after several or more than ten days of waiting, particular groups boarded ships, which sailed for 3-4 days. Upon arrival in Oslo, the travellers were taken over by the OT Command Office (*OT-Leitstelle*), situated in one of the primary schools in the eastern part of Oslo (Grønner-lokka skolen)²⁷. Its task was to divide the workers among particular OBL in Norway (persons recruited by a firm were sent to the OBL, for which the given firm worked). While waiting for the further stage of the journey, the workers stayed in an OT camp in 34 Kristian Krogh Street. As a rule, in the course of 2-3 days, they were taken by rail to the north, to the end station of Mo, and from here by automobiles or fishing boats, across the fiords, to the most northerly localities²⁸. It must be added that the regions of

²⁶RA, E. 42, HOT, p. 168.

²⁷OT-Abt. Aeb., E. 19, 20, 21 *Transport — und Nachschubangelegenheiten. Transportlisten.*

Kirkenes and Skipaggurra, located closest to the frontier with Finland, were served by transports which took the second route.

The absence of transport lists poses certain difficulties for recreating a detailed description of the second route, which can be outlined by resorting to partially preserved correspondence. It is known that the transports left Berlin by rail, headed for Stettin, and from here were shipped via Tallin to Helsinki. The workers were transported from Helsinki to Rovaniemi by lorry²⁹. We can assume with a great dose of probability that the ships carrying the workers also reached Finnish ports, located further to the north³⁰.

Due to the mining of the territorial waters of Norway, the journey lasted five days. For this period of time, each worker received food supplies composed of three loaves of bread, 375 grams of butter, 540 grams of sausage, 2 tins of meat — 450 grams, and tinned fish — 185 grams, 250 grams of goats, 50 grams of sugar, 45 grams of coffee and 15 cigarettes³¹.

Work and wage conditions, accommodation and food Undoubtedly, the most important issue for the workers were the wages. Up to 1 January 1943, not only wages but also other benefits connected with remuneration were calculated in assorted ways. In certain operation groups, they were estimated according to the number of work hours, while others applied lump sums. Furthermore, wages were the domain of both the firms and the Central OT Wages Office in Berlin. Frequently, the system of accounts based on a number of work hours, applied in the case of the construction of the Siegfried Line, was transferred to other operation groups³².

The absence of legal regulations in this particular field led to the establishment of the Special Labour Trustee Office (*Der Sondertreuhänder der Arbeit für die OT*). This post was entrusted to Dr. F. Schmelter, the heretofore plenipotentiary of the Reich for labour in the Hessian region, who dealt with this problem

²⁹RA, OT-Abt. Arb., E. 49, Vermerk v. 26.5. 1942 / A 20J, also OT-Abt. Arb., E. 7 / 1120-Eisenbahn 1942-45.

³⁰One of them was the port in Jakobstad, where ships carrying equipment and construction material called, see: RA, OT-Abt. Arb., E. 7, Vermerk v. dr. J. Luers, Einsatz Polarbereich, 7.1.1944, no. 6417 / 44.

³¹RA, OT-Abt. Arb., E. 20, Transportliste v. 25. 6. 1943, OT-Transportstelle Stettin, 21.6.1943.

³²F. W. Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt*, p. 160.

already during the construction of fieldwork along the frontier with France in 1938–1939. In October 1942, Dr. Schmelter devised a new table of wages for front-line OT workers (*Tariffordnung für Frontarbeiter der OT*), which came into force on 1 January 1943. The table contained new hour rates, 10% higher than those from 1938–1939, referring to workers of the construction and metallurgy branches. The level of the wages depended on the degree of the worker's qualifications, and oscillated between 0.65 RM for auxiliary workers (*Hilfsarbeiter*) to 0.96 RM for a helper of a junior master worker (*Hilfsspoller*) or the helper of a shaft master worker (*Hilfsschaftmeister*). The intermediate levels of the wage table included a worker with vocational training (*angelernte Arbeiter*) — 0.72 RM, a qualified worker (*Facharbeiter*) — 0.80 RM, a qualified specialist (*Spezialfacharbeiter*) — 0.85 RM and a foreman (*Fachvorarbeiter*) — 0.92 RM³³.

Apart from the basic wages, the front-line worker, similarly to the Wehrmacht soldier, received payment for his personal expenses. From 1 January 1943, this sum equalled the one paid to the soldiers, and differentiated according to the wage group to which the worker was classified³⁴.

The OT wage tariff pertained to men older than 16 years of age. Minors and women were paid 80% of the established wages. In accordance with the binding construction law of the Third Reich, passed on 1 November 1941, permanent workers of firms enjoyed steady additional wages, totalling 5 pfennigs an hour. Furthermore, front-line workers received all sorts of additional wages: 50% for working on free days (Sundays) and 100% for the first days of Christmas, Easter and Whitsuntide, for work in extremely difficult conditions, etc.

The above discussed wages and additional remuneration pertained predominantly to German workers and persons who signed *Deutsche Volksliste*. Nonetheless, preserved documents mention that Poles from lands incorporated into the Reich, and not necessarily those who signed this list, were employed according to the same conditions as their German counterparts. The Norwegian State Archive contains, i.a. several score contracts

³³*Ibidem*, p. 161.

³⁴It follows from the employment cards that with an hourly rate equal to 0.72 and 0.65 RM, soldier's payment totalled 96 NOK, while with rates equalling to 0.80 and 0.92 — to 111 NOK.

with workers from Upper Silesia, which include identical wage rates as those in the above presented tariff³⁵. On the other hand, in the case of Poles from the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen* we can find handwritten notes concerning the level of the wage rate, which confirm the above proposed ascertainments. This fact would indicate that in this respect Poles from lands incorporated into the Third Reich, and certainly those who signed the *Deutsche Volksliste*, were treated on par with the Germans.

Almost simultaneously with the discussed wage tariff for the Germans, on 11 January 1943 the authorities issued a construction tariff for Poles working outside Germany and the GG (*Polen-Auslands-Bautarif*). At first glance, it did not vary from its German counterpart, the sole difference being that it deprived Poles of all additional remuneration. In return, married men received the so-called *Einsatzgeld*, intended for the family at home. This payment was calculated every month and totalled 1 RM per work day. Unmarried men were excluded from this benefit³⁶.

In a short period of time, the Polish tariff was lowered in relation to the German one by 15%. A special decree issued in March 1943 introduced numerous changes, i.e. the so-called compensatory social tax (*Sozialausgleichsabgabe*), which totalled 15% of the hourly wage, and was deduced as a form of compensation for food and accommodation. At the same time, the decree contained a rather significant exception: the tax in question was not paid by qualified workers who could prove their German education and professional training³⁷. Many Poles, especially older ones from lands incorporated into the Reich, were capable of producing suitable documents. More than one-fifth of workers from the region of interest to us, taken to the far north, were experts in professions for which OT had the greatest need: locksmiths, masons, machine attendants, welders, carpenters,

³⁵RA, OT-Abt. Arb., E. 61 / 2200 *Anwerbebestättigungen 1942-44*, OBL Aandalsnes, Kontrakter no. 1012, 1359-1375, 1379, 1393-1396, 1304-1316.

³⁶RA, OT-Abt. Arb., E. 13, *Lohnsätze nach dem Polen-Ausland-Tarif von 11.1.1943*, in: *Geschäftsanweisung über die Anwerbung polnischer Bauarbeiter aus dem GG v. 10.5.1943*, Az. 12 Dr H / Be.

³⁷RA, OT-Abteilung *Bahnbau* (further as: OT-Abt. Bahn), E. 38, *Vertragsgrundlagen — 1942 / 43*, EG *Wiking*, XI-1354 / 43 (the explanation offered by W. Henne concerning the Polish wage tariff addressed to all *Einsatz* offices and OBL in EG *Wiking*), also OT-Abt. Arb., E. 62, *Abschrift der Sondertreuhänder der Arbeit für das deutsche Baugewerbe im Ausland und der Sondertreuhänder der Arbeit für die OT*, Dr. Schmelter (no no.).

etc. Additionally, some of them were steady employees of German firms for which they worked long before the war. This fact was ascribed even greater importance, considering that Polish workers as well as those of other nationalities (with the exception of Russians) were paid directly by the firm and not by OT³⁸. In this way, the given firm decided whether its experienced and tested workers received full wages according to German or Polish rates. In practice, the "compensatory social tax" was collected most frequently among workers from the GG.

The question of vacations constituted a special difficulty for OT authorities and firms connected with the *Organisation*. The above mentioned tariff for Poles determined the duration of leave as 6 days annually. The decree from March 1943 described this issue more extensively and in greater detail. In it, the maximum number of days free from work was 18, of which 6 were paid. Furthermore, the decree mentioned that owing to particularly unfavourable communication conditions and great distances from the place of residence of the employee, leave would be calculated from the day of crossing the frontier of the Third Reich. Furthermore, *Einsatzgeld* was to be received only for the paid days. The trip both ways was free, and the worker was given food supplies for the road (*Marschverpflegung*). The granting of leave was associated with considerable risks for the OT authorities, since quite a number of workers never returned or prolonged the duration of their stay at home. This is the reason why the March decree included a note mentioning that the vacationer was deprived of two-week's wages, which he could receive only after a punctual return to work. Otherwise, the money was handed over to the *Arbeitsamt* in Berlin; the same holds true for those workers who returned late. Moreover, the decree foresaw so-called special leave, a maximum of 7 day annually in the case of the death or grave illness of a member of the closest family³⁹. The above regulations probably improved labour discipline, since only 1.7% Poles from the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen* decided not to return from vacations. Many of them even spent their leave at home twice, and then returned to work without any delay⁴⁰.

³⁸F. W. Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt*, p. 243.

³⁹RA, OT-Abt. Bahn., E. 38, *Vertragsgrundlagen*, XIa-1354 / 43.

⁴⁰RA, OT-Abt. Arb., E. 15, *Schiff-Listen. Abgang (Reich), Urlauber und Entpflichtungen*.

Work conditions in the far north were severe, primarily as a result of the local climate. More than 60% of men from the region of interest to us found themselves in northern Finland, where the majority was employed for building a railway from Hyrynsalmi to Kuusamo; others felled trees, built roads and roadside snow barriers.

Work in Finnish Lapland, in Arctic winter conditions and extremely low temperature (from 30° to 40°) required great effort. It suffices to say that vehicles supplying petrol, coal and building material froze along the routes, and all sorts of digs were rendered additionally difficult by the fact that the permafrost was 1–2 metres deep. For all practical purposes, soil had to be first crumbled with the help of pneumatic drills and detonation material. Nonetheless, sawmills, barracks and garages were built in the forests of Lapland. All building material, machinery and tools were shipped from the Reich and the occupied terrains, and then reloaded onto trains and taken further, into the recesses of the country⁴¹.

Slightly milder climatic conditions prevailed in northern Norway, where about 30% of Polish workers from the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen* found themselves. The wintertime temperature was not low, and the main problem was posed by excessive snowfalls. This held true particularly for the region stretching between the Kvaenangen and Porsangen fiords, with a centre in the vicinity of the town of Alta. Here, continental and maritime masses of air met, and strong, constant winds created snow drifts 15 metres high, producing enormous hindrances for preserving the availability of the only route along the coastline, known as the Third Reich highway. This route was very important for securing continuous supplies and army transport to northern Finland. In the region of the greatest snowfalls the most modern solution was the construction of wooden tunnels, 5 and 8,5 kms. long, enabling efficient two-way traffic. The tunnel entrances were additionally protected by wooden snow barriers, 8 metres high. Strong winds demanded that the constructions be firmly anchored⁴². The above work was carried out by some of the Poles from the Rypin and Karthaus counties, who came here in the

⁴¹F. W. Seidler, *Die Organisation Todt*, p. 61ff.

⁴²RA, OT-Abteilung Strassenbau (further as: OT-Abt. Strass.), E. 79, D. Winterdienst, D. II Sondereinsätze des Winterdienstes. Planungsgruppe für den winter-sicheren Ausbau an Strassen im Nord-Norwegen. Bericht no. 10, pp. 1–2, 4–5.

autumn of 1942. The remaining Polish employees built the port in Kirkenes and reinforced the coast in Bjerkvik near Narvik.

The OT workers lived in wooden, rather solid barracks whose size depended on local conditions. Barracks erected in highland forests were small, 6.50 m long and 3.80 wide, and accommodated 8 workers. Slightly larger buildings (8.70 × 3.80 m) were intended for road construction workers. The most frequently used barracks of the larger variety were those for 22 persons, 33 × 14 × 8 m large (the so-called type 88). As a rule, building sites were accompanied by two camps: one for OT workers, and the other — for prisoners of war. Depending on current needs, OT camps were planned for 120–300 inmates and those for the prisoners of war — for 500 persons. The latter type was composed of two types of barracks, known as Swedish and Finnish tents, i.e. temporary constructions made of stained wood-like panels. The larger Swedish tents, in the shape of a tunnel, were usually adequate for 40 inmates, while the smaller, Finnish variety were built in the shape of an octagon, with a diameter of 5.5 m and walls 2 m high, and accommodated 10–12 men. Finnish tents were also built from boards, a version which was widely used for employees of construction firms during the first, organisational stage of work.

All types of barracks and tents were usually heated by iron stoves, with a flue pipe on the outside. The sleeping quarters were outfitted with wooden beds, which were either single or bunk, depending on the needs⁴³.

Polish workers were fed according to generally accepted OT norms for foreigners. Only those who signed the volksdeutsch lists received German food rations. Differences between the food rations of both groups are illustrated by Table 2.

Table 2. 10-day food rations for German and foreign workers in Norway in November 1943 (in grams)

Type of article	Rations for workers Germans from the Reich	Rations for workers Foreigners from outside the Reich
DINNER RATIONS		
fresh meat	800	360
potatoes	6,000	6,000
fresh vegetables	2,160	2,160
peas	180	–

⁴³RA, OT-Abt. Bahn, E. 46, Baracken.

barley groats	120	120
oat groats	-	60
porridge	-	-
noodles	180	-
dried fruit	90	-
instant pudding	40	-
salt	172.5	202.5
SUPPER AND BREAKFAST		
fresh meat	60	80
fresh sausage	300	160
processed cheese	250	125
fresh tinned food	115	-
sardines in oil	115	115
fish paste	-	230
barley groats	100	200
porridge	-	50
noodles	75	150
butter	700	400
artificial honey	200	400
marmalade	200	-
boiled sweets	120	-
sugar	440	300
bread	5,600	7,000
Dauerbrott	600	-
rusks	375	-
1. BEVERAGE SERVING		
coffee substitute	72	45
German tea	3	20
2. BEVERAGE SERVING		
coffee substitute	54	36
German tea	16	24
TOBACCO PRODUCTS		
cigarettes	36	18
cigars	4	2
snuff	17	8.5
ALCOHOL	0.401	-
ADDITIONAL ARTICLES TO BE EVENTUALLY DIVIDED		
frying fat	20	30
baking powder	140	160

Source: RA, OT-Abt. Arb., E. 13, *Lebensmittelzuweisung für deutsche und ausländische Arbeiter gem. V. O. B1. der Wehrmachtsbefehlshaber in Norwegen* no. 11.

It follows from the table that German workers were privileged as regards rations of high-protein and caloric articles, such as fresh meat, sausages, butter, and sugar, which they received in portions twice or three times larger. Furthermore, German workers enjoyed "luxury" articles, such as dried fruit, pudding, artificial honey, marmalade and boiled sweets, absent in the rations of foreign employees.

The application of the principle of replacing better articles by worse ones meant that foreigners received oat groats and porridge instead of noodles, and fish paste instead of fresh tinned fish. The coffee, tea, tobacco products and alcohol rations are best examples of the privileged situation of the German workers. It must be added that such articles were also handed out upon special occasions as a form of payment in return for well performed work or as a type of incitement⁴⁴.

The daily calorific value of food for German workers and signatories of *volksdeutsch* lists totalled 3,600–3,800 calories, and for the non-German workers — 3,000–3,300 calories. Those were very high norms considering that foreign *OT* workers received food rations, whose value equalled the ones granted to Germans living in the incorporated lands⁴⁵. In comparison with to norms foreseen for Poles in the incorporated lands, who worked hard or extremely hard — 2,000–2,200 calories or below 2,000 calories in the *GG*⁴⁶, the daily food rations of their compatriots employed in *OT* were 1,000 calories higher.

Further fate

In the summer of 1944 the situation on the northern front changed radically. The Red Army occupied northern Finland, and the German 20th Mountain Army, supporting the Fins, retreated to Norway, to the south of Lyngen (some 140 kms. to the north of Narvik). The evacuation encompassed also *OT* construction units.

German statistical data show that in August 1944 the number of Poles in northern Finland totalled 1,452. This was the most numerous national group, followed by Norwegians (140), Czechs (85) and Danes (3)⁴⁷. Poles from Danzig Pomerania, who arrived

⁴⁴RA, *OT-Abt. Strass., E. 82, D. III Winterdienstbauten, a. 3 Repparfjell (1942–1944)*, *Vermerk* no. 8301 v. 25m 11. 1943, telegram from 1 December 1943

⁴⁵C. Łuczak, *Polityka ludnościowa i ekonomiczna*, p. 500.

⁴⁶*Ibidem*, pp. 540–543.

to Finland in 1941–1943 (342 men — see Table 1), comprised about 24% of the entire Polish group. In September 1944, the construction enterprises working in Finland and Finmark, the polar region of Norway, were withdrawn to build the northern railway in Norway or perform other work in different operational groups, chiefly in the Reich⁴⁸. The majority, however, were entrusted, together with their firms, with building two sections of the Mo and Rana — Fauske and Fauske — Drag railway line. Only a few men were employed for road and coastal construction. It is difficult to say exactly how many Poles from the *Reichsgau Danzig–Westpreußen* were engaged in building the Arctic railway line after OT “moved” from northern Finland and Norway. Many Polish workers benefited from the general confusion produced by the evacuation and escaped to Sweden. Not all such cases were recorded in employment cards. Annotations of this sort occurred in the case of 3.3% of Poles from the region of interest to us (Table 3), mentioned among persons who fled in August and at the beginning of September 1945, i.e. already prior to the evacuation⁴⁹. There is no information about the further fate of 22% of Poles from the region in question (Table 3), which could testify to the fact that a certain number were also escapees who managed to cross the frontier during the evacuation, but whose escape was not noted down in documents simply because the OT administration no longer functioned. Three persons were captured during attempted escapes in the spring and summer of 1944, and interned in a camp for political prisoners in Falstad, near Trondheim; one of the men was subsequently transferred to a larger Norwegian camp in Grini near Oslo⁵⁰. Furthermore, 76 persons left *Baustelle OT* prior to the end of the war for reasons other than escape (Table 3); of the 24 men (2.4%) who were transferred, together with their firms, to another *EG* in the Reich, 8 moved with the M. Martins firm from Danzig to *EG Italte*. Records

⁴⁸RA, OT-Abt. Bahn., E. 49, Vermerk v. 30. 11. 1944, U-10144-N/L2, *Neueinsatz von Baufirmen aus dem Einsatz Finnland bei der OBL Fauske*, also Vermerk v. 4. 12. 1944, N-Fd-Nr 9280, *Weiterverwendung der aus dem Einsatz Finnland und bei der OBL Alta freiverwendenden Firmen*.

⁴⁹On 13 August 1933 nine Poles escaped from OBL Itto on the Finnish–Swedish frontier; on 21 August — the number of escapees was three and on 8 and 9 September — four Poles (annotations on escapes are found on employment cards — OT-Arbeitseinsatzkartei, Polakker, E. 30–35).

⁵⁰*Rustkammeret* (further as: RK), Trondheim, *Liste over polske fanger i konsentrasjonslager Falstad*.

mention 10 cases of non-return from vacation, although this phenomenon was much more frequent among Poles from the GG than those from the incorporated lands. In Arctic winter conditions over 10 men, mainly older workers, fell victim to chronic illnesses (bronchitis, asthma and tuberculosis) or had accidents at work. For those reasons, 19 persons were sent home after a formal verdict issued by a military physician. Not a single death was registered. In July 1945, a single person committed suicide, for reasons unknown. An important cause of dismissal was summons to the Wehrmacht. In 1943–1944, so-called special actions entailed the transference of 32 (5.6%) men from the *Reichsgau Danzig–Westpreußen* from *EG Wiking* to the army⁵¹.

Table 3. Fate of Poles from the Reichsgau Danzig–Westpreußen employed in Norway and Finland to 6 May 1945 (no. of persons and percentage in relation to total no. of employees)

Total	transferred	camps	escape	non-return from vacation	Wehrmacht	died	fate unknown	dismissed	Total	Others
ca 572	14	3	19	10	32	1	123	19	221	351
100	2.4	0.5	3.3	1.7	5.6	0.2	21.5	3.3	36.6	61.4

Sources:

1. RA, *OT–Arbeitseinsatzkartei* (Polakker), E. 30–35.
2. RA, *OT, OT–Abt. Arb., E. 47–58/2200, Ausländer ausgestellte Papiere, Entpflichtungen; ibidem, E. 32–33/Kartei. Urfälle nur Verletzungen.*
3. RK, *Trondheim, Liste over polske fanger i konsentrasjonslager Falstad.*
4. RA, *KUD, Krigsgravstjenesten, Diverse nasjoner 1945–1946, Mappe.*

A total of 221 Poles (more than 38%) from Danzig Pomerania found themselves outside Norway after the end of the war, while 351 (more than 61%) of the Pomeranians continued to stay in that country. They comprised 9.2% of the general number of Poles registered in the summer of 1945 in OT camps throughout the whole of Norway⁵². At this time, 12,384 Poles served in the German Wehrmacht. Separate records were made of the 1,037 residents of Danzig⁵³. The third, smallest group of Poles were

⁵¹RA, *OT–Abt. Arb., 2200 Entpflichtungen 1942–45, E. 49–58.*

⁵²In the summer of 1945 a total of 3,826 Poles–civilians (DPs) was registered in the camps, see: RA, *Repatrieringskontoret, Nokkelarkiv, E. 1, 4. 01 DP Alm. SPM* (further as: RA, *Repk., E. 1*), J. no. R. 9663/ 45, *Sostaldepartementets notat av 3. 10. 1945.* The above cited figures should not be identified with the actual number of Poles working in OT during the war in Norway and Finland. They comprised merely 54% of the original total.

⁵³*Ibidem, Sostaldepartementets notat av 3. 10. 1945.*

prisoners of war (1,039 men), concentrated in the Saltdal and Rotelva camps in the region of Nordland⁵⁴. All told, at the end of the war there were more than 18,000 Polish citizens in Norway. Among the 454,000 registered foreigners, including about 325,000 German soldiers and civilians, the Poles comprised the largest nationality group among the non-German Wehrmacht soldiers and foreign OT workers⁵⁵.

OT employees were included into a group of displaced persons over whom control and care for the duration of their temporary stay in Norway (up to repatriation) was assumed by the Norwegian Ministry of Social Affairs. The two remaining groups — ex-Wehrmacht soldiers and prisoners of war, received orders from the headquarters of the Alliance Land Forces in Norway (ALFN).

The most important task of the Norwegian and Allied authorities was the quickest possible registration of foreigners in camps throughout the country. The next step was to create group camps for particular nationalities, with regard for the three above mentioned groups: civilians (DPs), ex-Wehrmacht soldiers and prisoners of war⁵⁶.

Former OT workers, including those from the *Reichsgau Danzig-Westpreußen* region, remained in camps in the whole of Norway, and particularly in three large group camps in Narvik, Bodø and Mosjøen, in the northern part of the country. The majority of Poles from Danzig Pomerania were inmates of Bodø. In central Norway, Poles were concentrated in the Strinda camp near Trondheim, while in southern Norway they stayed in the Slettebø camp near Egersund (the region of Stavanger) and several camps in the environs of Oslo (Mysen, Ystehede, Moss, Våler, and Ørje). In September, northern camps were evacuated to the south in view of the approaching autumn and wintertime cold weather. Poles from the camp in Bodø were moved to Slettebø, near Egersund, where about 1,400 Polish citizens,

⁵⁴RA, Professor mjr. Leiv Kreyberg — arkiv, Kontoret for eks-krigsfanger, Bodø, E. 2, Lister over polske krigsfanger i Nordland fylke.

⁵⁵RA, Repk., E. 1. J. no. R. 9663 / 45, fortroligt notat frå Repatrieringskontoret av 17. 10. 1945; also note (no no.) frå konferansen av 8. 8. 1945 hos gen. A. Thorne angående DP).

⁵⁶This topic is examined in greater detail by E. Denkiewicz-Szczepaniak, *Przygotowania rządu norweskiego na emigracji do repatriacji obcokrajowców z Norwegii (1941–1945) (Preparations of the Norwegian Government-in-Exile for the Repatriation of Foreigners from Norway (1941–1945))*, "Czasy Nowożytnie" vol. II/1997, pp. 137–147.

chiefly from lands incorporated into the Reich, were concentrated. In turn, civilian workers from the Strinda camp were transported to camps in the region of Oslo⁵⁷.

The repatriation of foreigners from Norway was one of the most difficult tasks faced by the Alliance Land Forces in Norway, primarily due to the extremely large number of persons (almost half a million) and the lack of transportation, namely ships. This is why the undertaking was spaced out in time, with the retention of a certain order: the first to go were the German forces, followed by the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia, and only then the Poles, Yugoslavs and Czechs⁵⁸. Since the final term of the departure of the Land Forces from Norway was to be 15 December 1945, the Norwegian authorities pressed to evacuate the greatest possible number of foreigners by that date. Repatriation of the Poles was inaugurated at the end of October, and lasted throughout the whole of November 1945: two October transports (26 and 29 October) and a single November transport (1 November) set off from Trondheim; further ones left from four south Norwegian ports: Egersund, Agnefest, Moss and Larvik, through all of November (altogether 11 transports). A total of 11,770 Polish citizens were repatriated, from 600 to 1,000 persons on a ship; 2,008 chose to stay as emigres⁵⁹. Among the 351 Poles from Danzig Pomerania, 233 repatriates sailed in four November transports: 79 persons left Moss on 16 November, 5 persons sailed from Larvik on 20 November, and 98 persons — from Egersund on 26 November, followed by 49 persons on 28 November. Furthermore, two persons joined a transport of 92 patients, who travelled to Sweden in a hospital train⁶⁰.

After the completion of the repatriation, 118 Poles from Danzig Pomerania, i.e. more than 20% of all workers from this region who arrived in wartime Scandinavia, remained in camps in the south of Norway (Table 4). Many did not want to return home owing to the new postwar system in Poland; they comprised

⁵⁷RA, Repk., E. 1, Raport R-kontorets representant ved D.K.N. av 25. 5. 1945, J. no. R 2173 / 45, also Raport R-kontorets representant ved Tromsø av 11. 6. 1945, J. no. R 2465 / 45; also Dalande Tidende no. 53, 19 September 1945.

⁵⁸RA, Repk., E. 1, Notat frå konferansen av 8. 8. 1945 hos gen. A. Thorne, angående DP.

⁵⁹Archives of Modern Records (AAN), General Plenipotentiary, 378, Transports from Norway, p. 45.

⁶⁰RA, AEF Assembly Center Registration Card (små kort-polakker).

6% of all Polish emigres (a total of 2,006 persons). Almost every third emigre (38 persons) married Norwegian women.

Table 4. Poles from the Reichsgau Danzig–Westpreußen in Norwegian camps after the repatriation of October–November 1945

Name of repatr. camp	State in December 1945 total	State in December 1945 married to Norwegian women
Mysen	81	24
Ystehede	17	13
Others	20	1
	118	38

Source: RA, AEF, Assembly Center Registration Card (Mysen, Ystehede, Våler, Ørje, Moss).

Closing remarks

An analysis of *OT* archival material makes it possible to become acquainted with the essence of the functioning of this organisation; on the other hand, it demonstrates the exploitation of the Polish labour force for construction work conducted by this organisation in terrains occupied by the Third Reich.

OT employees did not belong to a category of workers provided by street round ups. In the incorporated lands they were recruited in assorted ways, usually with the participation of an *Arbeitsamt* (written summons), and in the *GG* through various recruitment offices and firms, which displayed their offers in the local *Reptillenpress* and street showcases. Since the work conditions and wages in firms associated with *OT*, active outside Polish territory, were better than in firms which did not belong to the organisation, some of the workers, at least at the outset, volunteered to join *OT*, whose remuneration guaranteed improved living conditions for families at home.

In the autumn of 1942, when the lack of a sufficient labour force became a serious problem, *OT* began using untrained workers brought in group transports, organised by the labour offices. Methods of recruitment in the incorporated lands became more ruthless, and the rights of the workers, mainly as regards vacations, were limited, i.a. owing to increasingly frequent escapes to Sweden. For those reasons, Polish workers were employed usually in the far north, beyond the sub-polar circle. The Poles were used for assorted jobs, but most readily those connected with timber processing: boarding for gun platforms and

the erection of bunkers, bridges, and coastal reinforcement. The task most frequently performed by Polish workers was the construction of barracks and tents.

An essential remark concerns the morbidity and death rate of *OT* workers. Taking into consideration difficult climatic conditions, the percentage of the sick was relatively small. Only 3% of Poles from Danzig Pomerania were dismissed due to an illness. It is characteristic that no fatal accident took place during work. This fact reinforces the view that, contrary to appearances, the living conditions of *OT* workers in Scandinavia were relatively satisfactory, and the food was even better than that of the local population. *OT* workers received Wehrmacht supplies and were fed according to nutrition norms coordinated with military authorities.

(Translated by Aleksandra Rodzińska-Chojnowska)