



German History in Documents and Images

Volume 7. Nazi Germany, 1933-1945

Fritz Sauckel's Labor Mobilization Program (April 20, 1942)

To remedy Germany's labor shortage, foreign workers were recruited for German industry and agriculture or drafted into forced labor as early as the start of the war. On March 21, 1942, Hitler appointed Fritz Sauckel Plenipotentiary-General for Labor Mobilization. Sauckel remained in this position until the end of the war and was responsible for the deportation and exploitation of approximately 5 million forced laborers from the occupied territories. In April 1942, Sauckel sent the following document, a description of his program of abduction and enslavement – which mainly targeted residents of Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union – to Alfred Rosenberg, who had been appointed Reich Minister for the Occupied Eastern Territories in 1941. After the war, both Sauckel and Rosenberg were found guilty at the Nuremberg Trials of the Major War Criminals. Both were executed.

Very esteemed and dear Party member Rosenberg!

Enclosed please find my program for the mobilization of labor. Please excuse the fact that this copy still contains a few corrections.

Heil Hitler!

Yours

[signed] Fritz Sauckel

To The "Reichminister"
for the Occupied Territories of the East
Party-Member Rosenberg
Berlin

[From] The Deputy for the Four-Year Plan
The Plenipotentiary for Labor Mobilization

20 April 1942

The Labor Mobilization Program

[. . .]

The aim of this new, gigantic labor mobilization is to use all the rich and tremendous sources, conquered and secured for us by our fighting Armed Forces under the leadership of Adolf Hitler, for the armament of the Armed Forces and also for the nutrition of the Homeland. The raw materials as well as the fertility of the conquered territories and their manpower are to be used completely and conscientiously to the profit of Germany and her allies.

In spite of the fact that most of the German people capable of doing so have already made a most commendable effort for the war economy, more considerable reserves must be found and made available under any circumstances.

The decisive measure to realize this is the uniformly regulated and directed labor mobilization of the nation at the war.

[. . .]

To reach the goal determined by the Fuehrer the simultaneous and quickest use of numerous different measures of unified purpose are absolutely necessary. As any one of those must not interfere with the others, but rather complement them, it is also absolutely necessary that all the offices [*Dienststellen*] in the Reich, its territories and communities, in party, state, and economy, participating in this decisive task act according to coordinated, synchronized directives.

Thus, the labor mobilization of the nation contributes extraordinarily to the quickest and victorious termination of the war. It requires every effort of the German people on the Home front. It is for that German people, for their preservation, their freedom, happiness and amelioration of their nutrition and standards of living that this war is being fought.

[. . .]

The Task and its Solution

(No figures are mentioned because of security reasons. I can assure you, nevertheless, that we are concerned with the greatest labor problem of all times, especially with regard to figures.)

A. The Task:

1. The conscription of new soldiers to the gigantic extent for all branches and services of the Armed Forces has been rendered necessary by the present war situation.

This means:

a. The removal of workers from all professional enterprises, especially of a great number of trained personnel from armament producing war industries.

b. Also the removal of especially non-essential personnel from the war nutrition industry.

2. The war situation necessitates the continuation of the tremendously increased and improved armament programs as ordered by the Fuehrer.

3. The most essential commodities for the German people must continue to be produced for minimum requirements.

4. The German housewife's health, particularly the health of those on farms, must not be endangered in their quality as mothers by the war. On the contrary, they must be relieved in every possible way.

B. The Solution

[. . .]

All prisoners of war, from the territories of the West as well as of the East, who are already situated in Germany, must be completely incorporated into the German armament and nutrition industries. Their production must be brought to the highest possible level.

It must be emphasized, however, that an additional tremendous quantity of foreign labor has to be found for the Reich. The greatest pool for that purpose are the occupied territories of the East.

Consequently, it is an immediate necessity to use the human resources of the conquered Soviet territory to the fullest extent. Should we not succeed in obtaining the necessary amount of labor on a voluntary basis, we must immediately institute conscription or forced labor.

Apart from the prisoners of war still in the occupied territories, we must, therefore, requisition skilled or unskilled male and female labor from the Soviet territory from the age of 15 up for the labor mobilization.

On the other hand, one quarter of the total need of foreign labor can be procured in Europe's occupied territories West of Germany, according to existing possibilities.

The procurement of labor from friendly and also neutral countries can only cover a small part of the total need. It can be applied mostly to skilled workers and specialists.

4. In order to provide considerable relief to the German housewife, especially the mother with many children and the extremely busy farm-woman and in order to avoid any further danger to their health, the Fuehrer also charged me with the procurement of 400,000 – 500,000 selected, healthy and strong girls from the territories of the East for Germany.

[. . .]

6. The labor mobilization of the German women is of very great importance.

Examining their very difficult problem and after getting thoroughly acquainted with the fundamental opinion of the Fuehrer as well as of the Reichsmarshal of the Greater German Reich and my own most careful inquiries and their results, I must absolutely reject the possibility of having an obligatory service decreed by the State for all German women and girls for the German War and Nutrition industry.

Although, at the beginning, I myself, and probably the majority of the leading men of the party as well as the Women's League, believed that for certain reasons an obligatory service for women should be decreed, I am of the opinion that all responsible men and women in party, state and economy should accept with the greatest veneration and gratitude the judgment of our Fuehrer Adolf Hitler, whose greatest concern has always been the health of the German women and girls; in other words, the present and future mothers of our nation.

I cannot enumerate all the reasons which made me come to that decision. I only ask for confidence in me as an old fanatical district chief of the National Socialist party and to believe that this could be the only possible decision.

We all agree that this decision might appear unjust towards millions of women who are engaged in defense and nutrition industries under the most strenuous conditions but we also realize that an evil cannot be remedied by spreading it to the utmost.

The only possible way to eliminate the existing injustices and hardships consists in winning the war in order to enable us to remove all women and girls engaged from jobs unsuitable for women, namely endangering their health, the birth-rate of our nation, and family and national life.

We must also consider the difference, whether a woman or girl has been used to work in the field or in a factory because of her young age, and whether already she has proved to be able to stand this kind of work.

Aside from physical harm, the German women and girls under any circumstances must be protected from moral and mental harm according to the wish of the Fuehrer.

It is doubtful that these conditions could be fulfilled in the case of mass-conscription and employment. It is impossible to compare the German Woman with the German soldier in this case, because of the existing fundamental natural and racial differences between man and woman.

We cannot accept the responsibility for the dangers threatening the life of the nation resulting from such a measure in the field of women labor mobilization, in view of the countless men on the fighting front—our dead soldiers.

The many millions of women, however, faithfully and industriously engaged in the German economy, and especially now, in war time, rendering valuable services, deserve the best possible care and consideration. They, as well as the soldiers and work-men, deserve the greatest gratitude of our nation. [. . .]

The severest measures must be used against loafers, as we can not allow those parasites to shunt their duties in this decisive struggle of our people at the cost of the others.

[. . .]

Prisoners of War and Foreign Workers

The complete employment of all prisoners of war as well as the use of a gigantic number of new foreign civilian workers, men and women, has become an indisputable necessity for the solution of the mobilization of labor program in this war.

All the men must be fed, sheltered and treated in such a way as to exploit them to the highest possible extent at the lowest conceivable degree of expenditure.

It has always been natural for us Germans to refrain from cruelty and mean chicaneries towards the beaten enemy, even if he had proven himself the most bestial and most implacable adversary, and to treat him correctly and humanly, even when we expect useful work of him.

As long as the German defense industry did not make it absolutely necessary, we refrained under any circumstances from the use of Soviet prisoners of war as well as of civilian workers, men or women, from the Soviet territories. This has now become impossible and the labor power of these people must now be exploited to the greatest possible extent.

Consequently, I arranged my first measures concerning the food, shelter and treatment of these foreign laborers with the highest competent Reich authorities and with the consent of the Fuehrer and the Reichsmarshal of the Greater German Reich in such a way that a top performance will be demanded and will be obtained.

It must be remembered, though, that even the effort of a machine is conditioned by the amount of fuel, skill and care given to it. How many more conditions must be considered in the case of men, even of low kind and race, than in the case of a machine!

I could not accept the responsibility towards the German people, if after having brought such a tremendous number of men to Germany these men would one day become a burden for the

German people or even endanger their health, instead of doing very necessary and useful work, because of mistakes made in their nutrition, shelter and treatment.

The principles of German cleanliness, order and hygiene must therefore also be carefully applied to Russian camps.

Only in such a way will it be possible to exploit that labor to the highest benefit of arms production for the fighting front and for the war nutrition program, without any trace of false sentimentalism.

[. . .]

All action making the stay and work in Germany more difficult and unnecessarily unbearable for the foreign workers and exceeding the restrictions and hardships imposed by the war must be avoided. We depend to a large extent upon their good will and their production.

It is therefore only logical to make their stay and work in Germany as bearable as possible—without denying anything to ourselves.

[. . .] Therefore, I want to cordially yet insistently commit all German men and women whose labor during war time will be decisive to comply with all those necessities, decisions and measures, according to the old National Socialist principle:

Nothing for us, everything for the Fuehrer and his work, that is, for the future of our Nation!

[signed]: Fritz Sauckel

Source of English translation: United States Chief Counsel for the Prosecution of Axis Criminality, *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*, Volume III: Documents 001-PS through 1406-PS. Washington, DC: United States Government Printing Office, 1946, Document 016-PS, pp. 46-59.

Source of original German text: Sauckels Programm vom 20. April 1942 für den Einsatz ausländischer Arbeiter und Kriegsgefangener in die deutsche Kriegsindustrie; Erklärung seiner Absicht, eine halbe Million gesunder Mädchen gemäss Hitlers Anordnung aus dem Ausland nach Deutschland einzuführen (Beweisstück US-168), in *Der Prozess gegen die Hauptkriegsverbrecher vor dem Internationalen Militärgerichtshof. Nürnberg 14. November 1945 - 1. Oktober 1946*. Volume XXV, Amtlicher Text – Deutsche Ausgabe, Urkunden und anderes Beweismaterial. Nuremberg 1947. Reprint: Munich, Delphin Verlag, 1989. Document 016-PS, pp. 55-71.