

Women from the Soviet Union are Transported to Germany to Perform Forced Labor (1942)

Abstract

Although the demand for labor increased as the war continued, Hitler and other Nazi leaders rejected labor conscription for women on the grounds of ideology and Nazi population policy (they feared it would affect women's health and lead to a decline in birthrates). As a way around this problem, the regime made greater use of forced labor carried out by prisoners of war and civilians transported from the occupied territories. On March 21, 1942, Fritz Sauckel, Gauleiter of Thuringia, was appointed Plenipotentiary-General for Labor Mobilization and tasked with centralizing and coordinating policies on forced laborers. Forced laborers were subject to a racist hierarchy that determined their treatment, e.g. their nourishment, accommodations, working conditions, and punishment. Workers from Western Europe (France, Belgium, and Holland) were accorded the best status, while Soviet laborers and so-called *Ostarbeiter* (workers from the East) received the worst treatment. Starting in the summer of 1943, they were joined by the Italians, who were seen as traitors. Concentration camp prisoners who were deployed as forced laborers were below or outside of this hierarchy. Inadequate food supplies, illness, corporal punishment, and executions were the norm, particularly for the *Ostarbeiter*. According to official figures, more than 7.61 million foreign laborers worked in Germany in August 1944; 2.76 million came from the Soviet Union.

Source



Source: Kyiv Central Station – Deportation of so-called “Eastern Workers” (in this case, a group of women) to Germany. Unknown photographer.

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