

PREPARATION MODULE 3



Associative introduction
with historical documents
relating to Nazi forced
labour

OVERALL DURATION

45 minutes

AIMS

Participants will be introduced to photographs as an important source of information on Nazi forced labour. In the course of the workshop, basic information about Nazi forced labour will be learned and questions will be raised in a participatory dialogue. This will enable the participants to recognise and understand themes and content more easily when they visit a place of learning and remembrance. The questions raised can be explored in greater depth during the trip and the information can be expanded to include the specific history of the place.

MATERIALS

Pens, presentation cards, laptop, projector, mobile devices.

WORKING MATERIALS

- ① Poster: "Mercedes-Benz: Design, Performance, Slave Labor." October 1999
- ② Background information on Nazi forced labour
- ③ Cover of the Nazi propaganda brochure "Europe is working in Germany. Sauckel is mobilising the labour reserves", March 1943
- ④ Photo: Arrival of a group of women, children and men from the Soviet Union in a camp in Meinerzhagen in the Sauerland, 29 April 1944
- ⑤ Photo: Soviet prisoners of war on the construction site of the "Valentin" Bunker in Bremen-Farge, 1944
- ⑥ Photo: "Ostarbeiter" in a German household, January 1945.
- ⑦ [Website of the Education Platform Nazi Forced Labour](#)

COURSE

- Orientation – 5 minutes
- Introduction newspaper advertisement Mercedes-Benz "Slave Labor" – 10 minutes
- Deeper look at forced labour with historical photographs – 20 minutes
- Questions and research on the Place of Learning and Remembrance – 10 minutes

Orientation – 5 minutes

Begin your workshop with an orientation session, putting the work you'll be doing together into the context of the trip to a place of learning and remembrance. Give a short presentation of the place you and the participants are going to. State the aims of the preparatory workshop and begin the introduction.

Introduction newspaper advertisement Mercedes-Benz "Slave Labor" – 10 minutes

In Work Materials you can find the illustration of a newspaper advertisement which reads "Mercedes-Benz: Design, Performance, Slave Labour." ①

Give each small group a copy of figure ①, pens and presentation cards. You could also project the advertisement on the wall. Each small group can look at illustration ① for a few minutes and discuss what they can see or read. The participants can share their first impressions with the whole class. Write down words, ideas and thoughts in the form of a word cloud on the whiteboard. Gradually introduce input questions to the participants.

The exercise is intended to create an associative approach to the topic by establishing a link between Nazi forced labour and the everyday lives of the participants via the Mercedes-Benz brand. The newspaper advertisement from 1999 also makes it clear that forced labour did not "only" play a role in the Nazi era, which seems to be a long time ago, but also had social relevance beyond that time.

As a team leader, you can familiarise yourself with the working material (background information 1) so that you can use input questions to support participants' thinking and encourage them to share their own thoughts, ideas and perspectives.

Possible input questions include:

- What can you see or read?
- What symbol can be seen and what does it stand for?
- Who do you think made the newspaper advertisement?
- Who could the newspaper advertisement be aimed at?
- In which period could the newspaper advertisement have been used? Have you seen it before anywhere?
- What could the words "Design. Performance. Slave Labor" mean?
- In what context might the poster possibly be intended?

Deeper look at forced labour with historical photographs – 20 minutes

Stay in small groups and go into more detail with historical sources ② to ⑤. Give each group a photo. In a discussion phase, the participants can look more closely at the sources. Participants could write down their thoughts and questions on presentation cards.

Possible input questions include:

- What can you see?
- What period could this photo be from?
- What impact does this photo have on you?
- What impression do the people who are shown make?
- What could these people be doing?
- If there is any text, what could it mean?
- Who is the photographer? Who took the photograph?
- What connection could the people being photographed have with the person taking the photograph?
- Is anything not clear for you?

The historical photographs have been arranged to show different groups of forced labourers and the sectors in which they were employed. The aim of the exercise is to provide some initial information on the subject using the sources. Participants can develop theories and questions about the scale, scope and nature of Nazi forced labour.

Come together and work out questions – 10 minutes

At the end of the discussion phase, participants can add their presentation cards mentioned above to the word cloud on the whiteboard and report to the whole class. Participants can decide which presentation cards they want to use. Not all thoughts and ideas need to be visible to everyone. Collect the questions that have been raised or develop them with the participants so that they can be asked or explored further during the visit to the place of learning and remembrance.

Tip: If you have more time, even better! Visit the Education Platform website and research the Place of Learning and Remembrance and the history of the site there.

Material

① Background information: newspaper advertisement “Mercedes-Benz: Design. Performance. Slave Labor.” October 1999

In early 1999, B'nai B'rith International, the Federation of Polish Slave Labourers during the Third Reich and other organisations protested against the slow pace of negotiations with representatives of the German government and industry over the amount of compensation offered. In a joint advertisement campaign in the New York Times, they put public pressure on companies such as Mercedes-Benz and Bayer, demanding higher payments.

The ad exposes the deep involvement of German industry in the crime of Nazi forced labour and the exploitation of concentration camp prisoners. At the same time, it is a snapshot of a moment in the decades-long struggle of former forced labourers for compensation, and testimony to the way in which German companies have dragged their feet in coming to terms with their Nazi past.

You can find more information about the newspaper ad in the working materials.

② Background information: dimension of Nazi forced labour and groups of forced labourers
Around 13 million people from all over Europe were forced to work in the Nazi Third Reich. The majority of these people worked in German industry and armaments production in the second half of the war. The exploitation of forced labour became a cornerstone of the German war economy. Forced labourers were also used in agriculture, private households and small businesses such as bakeries, as well as in churches and local municipal services. The vast majority of forced labourers were brought into the German Reich from the occupied territories. They included 8.4 million civilian forced labourers and 4.6 million prisoners of war. In addition, some 200,000 incarcerated people and about 1.1 million concentration camp prisoners were forced to work.

③ Cover of the Nazi propaganda brochure “Europe is working in Germany. Sauckel is mobilising the labour reserves”, March 1943

Figure ③ shows the cover of the Nazi propaganda pamphlet „Europe is working in Germany“ from 1943. The booklet presents the work of Fritz Sauckel, the General Plenipotentiary for the Deployment of Labour. He was responsible for the deportation of millions of people to the German Reich for forced labour from 1942. The booklet was intended to demonstrate to the German public the wisdom of the massive expansion of the use of foreign forced labour in the German Reich. It was also translated into several languages and used to recruit workers from the occupied territories and allied countries.

④ Photo: Arrival of a group of women, children and men from the Soviet Union in a camp in Meinerzhagen in the Sauerland, 29 April 1944

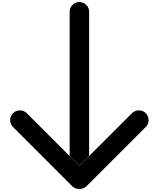
This photograph, one of a series of four, shows a group of people, mainly women and children, but also one or two older men, standing in front of a barrack hut. These are Soviet men, women and children who were taken from their homes by the German occupiers to work as forced labourers in the German Reich. They are probably all from the same village or region. In many places, after the German invasion of the Soviet Union, the Wehrmacht rounded up anyone they found on the streets, arrested them and deported them to the Reich. The people pictured here arrived in the Reich on one of the later transports in 1944.

They were forced to work for Otto-Fuchs-Werke in Meinerzhagen, a metalworking company with a long and rich tradition that still exists today.

⑤ Photo: Soviet prisoners of war on the construction site of the “Valentin” Bunker in Bremen-Farge, 1944
Figure ⑤ shows Soviet prisoners of war in a work detail at the construction site of the “Valentin” bunker, aligning and securing for transport a prestressed concrete beam for the roof. The bunker construction site was an important armaments project for the German Navy and the Organisation Todt. The scene was photographed by NSDAP member and district film reporter Johann Seubert from Bremen-Blumenthal, who had been commissioned to document the site with photographs and films. Around 1,000 photographs from the perspective of the perpetrators have survived. (Image rights: Denkort Bunker Valentin/LzpB)

⑥ Photo: “Ostarbeiterin” in a German household, January 1945.
Figure ⑥ shows a propaganda photograph of an “Ostarbeiterin”, as forced labourers from the Soviet Union were called, in a German household in January 1945. The photograph was probably taken for the Reich Ministry for Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. The following information about the photograph has survived: “Germany 1945. How is Helena B. from Kiev doing in Germany? ... then she sets the table for breakfast with special love and attention”. The clean surroundings, the context in which the photo was taken, and Helena B.’s uniform suggest that the working conditions of the “Ostarbeiterin” Helena B. have been white-washed. The photo gives no indication of her living conditions.

APPENDIX



Material for printing out



Mercedes-Benz

DESIGN. PERFORMANCE. SLAVE LABOR.

"I was 15 when Daimler-Benz selected me from a concentration camp to work in its factory. My father, mother, two brothers and sister had all already been murdered."

Irving Kempler

When Daimler-Benz purchased Chrysler in 1998 for \$36 billion, the company could point to a long history of efficient craftsmanship. What the company does not want to talk about is its equally efficient exploitation of tens of thousands of forced and slave laborers during World War II. Leased from the Nazis, these concentration camp inmates and abductees have never been

compensated by Daimler-Benz for their labor, suffering and inhuman treatment.

Daimler-Benz owned or supervised factories throughout occupied Europe, including motor vehicle and tank facilities for the Nazi army, with many of the plants relying on slave labor for at least half their labor force, sometimes more.

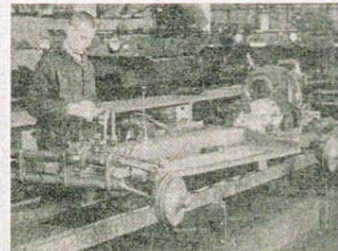
German companies were not required to use these people. They chose to use them. And to obtain workers from concentration camps, companies had to initiate formal bids. Many companies declined. But Daimler-Benz aggressively sought and received as much "disposable" forced and slave labor as possible. Daimler-Benz supervisors, in league with members of the SS, committed ongoing atrocities against these people, including imprisonment, torture and murder. Many were put to

work digging out tunnels for underground facilities designed to protect Daimler-Benz equipment from Allied bombs. The death rate at Daimler-Benz was staggering.

Today, survivors of slave or forced labor at such companies as Daimler-Benz, BMW, Ford and Bayer await compensation for their work and suffering. Meanwhile, Nazi overseers received, and continue to receive, their salaries and pensions. Even some convicted war criminals collect their payments in prison.

No meaningful proposal to compensate these victims has yet been put forward. Time is running out. The survivors are dying. On October 6, negotiations between German companies and representatives of their victims will take place in Washington, D.C. Germany and those companies that used slave labor have a moral and legal obligation to pay these victims for their work, suffering and inhuman treatment. Surely, DaimlerChrysler, with \$143 billion in assets, can afford to pay its debt to those it so brutally exploited.

From the makers of Mercedes-Benz, that's the level of performance we expect.



JUSTICE. COMPENSATION. NOW.

EUROPA *arbeitet* *in Deutschland*



**SAUCKEL MOBILISIERT
DIE LEISTUNGSRESERVEN**

③ Cover of the Nazi propaganda brochure "Europe is working in Germany. Sauckel is mobilising the labour reserves", March 1943



④ Photo: Arrival of a group of women, children and men from the Soviet Union in a camp in Meinerzhagen in the Sauerland, 29 April 1944



⑤ Photo: Soviet prisoners of war on the construction site of the "Valentin" Bunker in Bremen-Farge, 1944



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-2007-0618-500
Foto: Bogner | Januar 1945

⑥ Photo: "Ostarbeiterin" in a German household, January 1945.