

Judgement : Speer

Mr BIDDLE:

Speer is indicted under all [Four Counts](#). Speer joined the Nazi Party in 1932. In 1934 he was made Hitler's architect and became a close personal confidant. Shortly thereafter he was made a Department Head in the German Labour Front and the official in charge of Capital Construction on the staff of the Deputy to the Fuehrer, positions which he held through 1941. On 15th February, 1942, after the death of Fritz Todt, Speer was appointed Chief of the Organisation Todt and Reich Minister for Armaments and Munitions (after 2nd September, 1943, for Armaments and War Production). The positions were supplemented by his appointments in March and April, 1942, as General Plenipotentiary for Armaments and as a member of the Central Planning Board, both within the Four Year Plan. Speer was a member of the Reichstag from 1941 until the end of the war.

Crimes against Peace

The Tribunal is of opinion that Speer's activities do not amount to initiating, planning, or preparing wars of aggression, or of conspiring to that end. He became the head of the armament industry well after all of the wars had been commenced and were under way. His activities in charge of German Armament Production were in aid of the war effort in the same way that other productive enterprises aid in the waging of war, but the Tribunal is not prepared to find that such activities involve engaging in the common plan to wage aggressive war as charged under [Count I](#) or waging aggressive war as charged under [Count II](#).

War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity

The evidence introduced against Speer under [Counts Three](#) and [Four](#) relates entirely to his participation in the slave labour programme. Speer himself had no direct administrative responsibility for this programme. Although he had advocated the appointment of a General Plenipotentiary for the Utilisation of Labour because he wanted one central authority with whom he could deal on labour matters, he did not obtain administrative control over Sauckel. Sauckel was appointed directly by Hitler under the decree of 21st March, 1942, which provided that he should be directly responsible to Goering, as Plenipotentiary of the Four-Year Plan.

As Reich Minister for Armaments and Munitions and General Plenipotentiary for Armaments under the Four-Year Plan, Speer had extensive authority over production. His original authority was over construction and production of arms for the OKH. This was progressively expanded to include naval armaments, civilian production and finally, on 1st August, 1944, air armament. As the dominant member of the Central Planning Board, which had supreme authority for the scheduling of German production and the allocation and development of raw materials, Speer took the position that the Board had authority to instruct Sauckel to provide labourers for industries under its control and succeeded in sustaining this position over the objection of Sauckel. The practice was developed under which Speer transmitted to Sauckel an estimate of the total number of workers needed. Sauckel obtained the labour and allocated it to the various industries in accordance with instructions supplied by Speer.

Speer knew when he made his demands on Sauckel that they would be supplied by foreign labourers serving under compulsion. He participated in conferences involving the extension of the slave labour programme for the purpose of satisfying his demands. He was present at a conference held during 10th August and 12th August, 1942, with Hitler and Sauckel at which it was agreed that Sauckel should bring labourers by force from occupied territories where this was necessary to satisfy the labour needs of the industries under Speer's control. Speer also attended a conference in Hitler's headquarters on 4th January, 1944, at which the decision was made that Sauckel should obtain " at least 4 million new workers from occupied territories " in order to satisfy the demands for labour made by Speer, although Sauckel indicated that he could do this only with help from Himmler.

Sauckel continually informed Speer and his representatives that foreign labourers were being obtained by force. At a meeting on 1st March, 1944, Speer's deputy questioned Sauckel very closely about his failure to live up to the obligation to supply four million workers from occupied territories. In some cases Speer demanded labourers from specific foreign countries. Thus, at the conference 10th-12th August, 1942, Sauckel was instructed to supply Speer with "a further million Russian labourers for the German armament industry up to and including October,

1942." At a meeting of the Central Planning Board on 22nd April, 1943, Speer discussed plans to obtain Russian labourers for use in the coal mines, and flatly vetoed the suggestion that this labour deficit should be made up by German labour.

Speer has argued that he advocated the reorganisation of the labour programme to place a greater emphasis on utilisation of German labour in war production in Germany and on the use of labour in occupied countries in local production of consumer goods formerly produced in Germany. Speer took steps in this direction by establishing the so-called " blocked industries " in the occupied territories which were used to produce goods to be shipped to Germany. Employees of these industries were immune from deportation to Germany as slave labourers and any worker who had been ordered to go to Germany could avoid deportation if he were to work for a blocked industry. This system, although somewhat less inhumane than deportation to Germany, was still illegal. The system of blocked industries played only a small part in the over-all slave labour programme knowing the way in which it was actually being administered. In an official sense, he was its principal beneficiary and he constantly urged its extension.

Speer was also directly involved in the utilisation of forced labour as Chief of the Organisation Todt. The Organisation Todt functioned principally in the occupied areas on such projects as the Atlantic Wall and the construction of military highways, and Speer has admitted that he relied on compulsory service to keep it adequately staffed. He also used concentration camp labour in the industries under his control. He originally arranged to tap this source of labour for use in small out of the way factories; and later, fearful of Himmler's jurisdictional ambitions, attempted to use as few concentration camp workers as possible.

Speer was also involved in the use of prisoners of war in armament industries but contends that he only utilised Soviet prisoners of war in industries covered by the Geneva Convention.

Speer's position was such that he was not directly concerned with the cruelty in the administration of the slave labour programme, although he was aware of its existence. For example, at meetings of the Central Planning Board he was informed that his demands for labour were so large as to necessitate violent methods in recruiting. At a meeting of the Central Planning Board on 30th October, 1942, Speer voiced his opinion that many slave labourers who claimed to be sick were malingerers and stated: " There is nothing to be said against SS and Police taking drastic steps and putting those known as slackers into concentration camps." Speer, however, insisted that the slave labourers be given adequate food and working conditions so that they could work efficiently.

In mitigation it must be recognised that Speer's establishment of blocked industries did keep many labourers in their homes and that in the closing stages of the war he was one of the few men who had the courage to tell Hitler that the war was lost and to take steps to prevent the senseless destruction of production facilities, both in occupied territories and in Germany. He carried out his opposition to Hitler's scorched earth programme in some of the Western countries and in Germany by deliberately sabotaging it at considerable personal risk.

Conclusion

1/10-1946: The Tribunal finds that Speer is not guilty on Counts One and Two, but is guilty under Counts Three and Four.

<https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/judspeer.asp>

"Defendant Albert Speer, on the Counts of the Indictment on which you have been convicted, the Tribunal sentences you to twenty years' imprisonment.

<https://avalon.law.yale.edu/imt/judsent.asp>