



original Reichsautobahn literature and memorabilia

Offered in this category is original Third Reich literature and memorabilia about the Reichsautobahn, as well as from Organisation Todt (OT) and DDAC (Nazi automobile club).

Many people think that it was Hitler who planned and built the Reichsautobahn. In reality, the first section of the later legendary German Autobahn network was constructed and built before Hitler came to power. The construction on the 20 kilometer (12 miles) long Autobahn section Köln-Bonn began in 1929 and was finished in August of 1932. During the opening ceremonies on August 6, 1932, Oberbürgermeister (Mayor) of Cologne Konrad Adenauer (he became West Germany's first Bundeskanzler / Chancellor from 1949 to 1963) proclaimed: "So werden die Straßen der Zukunft aussehen" (This is how the roads of the future will look like"). It is true that about a quarter of Germany's current 11,000 kilometer (6830 miles) long Autobahn network was originally built during the Third Reich but the early planning and design work was done before. In 1924 the "Studiengesellschaft für den Automobilstraßenbau" (Stufa) was founded and began planning a German highway system. The Stufa published an ambitious plan for a 22,500 km German superhighway network in 1926. The work of the Stufa was later taken over by an agency named HaFraBa. In 1933, shortly after the National Socialist seizure of power, Hitler and his chief civil engineer Dr. Fritz Todt adopted and expanded the HaFraBa plans and proceeded with the Autobahn (then called Reichsautobahn) construction the same year. On June 27, 1933 a law was passed which regulated the construction (and maintenance of the finished sections) of the Reichsautobahn and a corporation was founded, the "Gesellschaft Reichsautobahnen". This corporation was a branch of the Reichsbahn, the Reich railway corporation. The Gesellschaft Reichsautobahnen had the exclusive rights to build the highways, gas stations and repair shops along the tracks. Overseeing the corporation for the Reich was Dr. Fritz Todt who became "Generalinspekteur für das deutsche Strassenwesen" (General Inspector of the German Roads). He was responsible for the routes and design of the Reichsautobahn and accepted (or denied) the construction blueprints. The Nazis quickly realized the propaganda value they could get from promoting the Autobahn. Even though others did the earlier work, the Nazis made it seem that the entire Reichsautobahn project was all the Führer's own idea. The term Autobahn was first coined by the HaFraBa's chief of the public relations office, Kurt Kaftan, in 1928 and the organization published a periodical with the same title. The Nazi propaganda promised that Hitler's Reichsautobahn would employ 600,000 people but in reality there were never more than 125,000 people involved with the construction of the Reichautobahn at any one time. There were also many forced laborers who worked on the construction sites, first political opponents, then, after the outbreak of the war, also prisoners of war and forced labor from the conquered territories. Before the war forced the Nazis to abandon all Autobahn construction in late 1941, Russian prisoners of war were doing much of the work. By mid-1942 there were approximately 3,800 kilometers of Reichsautobahn finished and in service and another 3,000 kilometers under construction. Planned at that time was a total network length of 14,000 kilometers in all parts of the Reich territory at that time.