

"Kommando Elbe" Carrying Out Earth Moving Work



The prisoners had to distribute soil on the Dove Elbe's banks and reinforce both the banks and the dikes. The work process was strictly divided into different steps. Prisoners always carried out the same clearly defined tasks. This made it easier for the SS to guard hundreds of prisoners at work.

Foto: SS. (NIOD)

Work at the Dove Elbe



Between 1940 and 1943, prisoners on the "Kommando Elbe" had to make the Dove Elbe, a stagnant arm of the River Elbe, navigable and dig a canal that led to the new brickworks, so that bricks could be transported to Hamburg by barge. At times, over 1,000 prisoners worked on this commando. Construction work on the docks at the brickworks continued until 1945. Because of the particularly unbearable working conditions, the "Kommando Elbe" was regarded as a death commando.

Fotos: SS. (ANg)

Dredging of the Dove Elbe



Hamburg City Council tendered out the work to private construction companies. The soil was dug up by dredgers. If the dredger's arm could not reach all the way to the banks, the mud was loaded onto barges. From there, prisoners had to transport the wet soil ashore in wheelbarrows over unstable slippery planks. Prisoners who fell into the water during this work were forced to drag their wheelbarrow out of the water while being beaten by the SS men.
Foto: SS. (NIOD)