Albert Speer studied at the technical schools in Karlsruhe, Munich, and Berlin, and acquired an architectural license in 1927. After hearing Hitler speak at a Berlin rally in late 1930, he joined the Nazi Party in January 1931. He impressed the Führer so much with his efficiency and talent that, soon after Hitler became chancellor, Speer became his personal architect. He was rewarded with many important commissions, including the design of the spectacular Nuremberg party congress of 1934, filmed by Leni Riefenstahl (q.v.) in Triumph of the Will. A highly efficient organizer, Speer in 1942 became minister for armaments, succeeding engineer Fritz Todt (q.v.). In 1943 he also took over part of Hermann Göring’s responsibilities as planner of the German war economy. From Todt, Speer also inherited the Organisation Todt (q.v.). Under Speer’s direction, economic production reached its peak in 1944, despite Allied bombardment. In the last months of the war, Speer did much to thwart Hitler's scorched-earth policy, which would have devastated Germany. However, Speer is said to have prolonged the war for at least a year, with the consequent death of hundreds of thousands and widespread ruin. Speer’s efforts also gave the Nazis more time to pursue their mass murder of Jews, Russians, Gypsies and others deemed not fit to live. On the stand at Nuremberg, Speer stood out amid other prominent accused Nazis, as he was the only one who admitted his guilt and expressed regret for his acts. This probably saved his head. Speer was condemned to 20 years imprisonment. After his release he wrote his memoirs, and until his death in 1981 he worked hard at being a penitent, presenting himself as someone who should have known what was being done but did not want to know. In some ways, Albert Speer offered himself as the scapegoat for Germany’s collective guilt.