

THE ENGLISH VERSION OF
PROJECT RINGELTAUBE

Grundlagen für eine Vortragsgestaltung
zur Geschichte der Untertageanlage
in der Welfen-Kaserne

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- 1. Introduction 3
- 2. Project Ringeltaube 4
- 3. The building at Landsberg..... 5
- 4. Extermination by labour..... 7
- 5. The Underground Installation after the War 8
- 6. Remembrance work..... 9
- Annex 1 References 11
- Annex 2 12
- Annex 3 Endnotes 13

1. Introduction

In 1980 WO Rudolf Schmidt was permitted to install a small exhibition with concern towards the history of the Underground Installation (UTA). It was and still is on display within the shop floor area of the unit.

The material collected was given to the Landsberg City-archive. Only the exhibition parts remained in the UTA. This material was used for lecturing purposes within the units based within the Barracks compound.

Scientifically based data for the area of Landsberg concerning the dimension of the situation while building the outer shell of the bunker from summer 1944 until April 1945 was not available with the own resources.

Nowadays the common library of the units contains the basic literature concerning the Project Ringeltaube and connected fields.

Technical Aspects naturally dominated the early lecturing. The total dimension of casualties on the building site during the construction phase was not known to the responsible lecturers until the midst of the 80th. The number of people killed while building the outer shell of the main building was corrected in accordance with the scientifically publicizes figures of local scientist from 1.500 in 1975 to 14500 in 1990.

Generally the Public is not permitted to the site.

2. The Ringeltaube Project

The planning and construction of the outer shell of the UTA within a barracks compound which is now called Welfen-Kaserne has its origins in the Second World War. Firstly the building site was called “Großbaustelle im Iglinger Forst” (Large Building site at the Igling Forests). It was part of an ambitious plan developed by Xaver Dorsch¹ to protect the aircraft production.

The plan was hastened with massive political pressure in 1943/44 in the face of the growing allied air superiority.

At this stage of the war, the decentralization of the 27 large aircraft factories to over 700 smaller production shops was no longer effective. Approximately 300 factories had been transferred to tunnels, mines and underpasses.

The prevailing confinement and humidity, not to mention the management of assembly and transport as well as organizational problems, led to the planning of the Bunker concept: Collocation of all necessary factories within sheltered sites.

Each bunker 400 meters long, as freestanding, semi cylindrical hall, with a base width of 86 meters and headroom of 26 Meters, were half of the building was to be underground.

The project run under the code name “Ringeltaube” and was carried out by the so called “Jägerstab” (fighter staff) under great secrecy. For the production of about 900 aircraft in total per month by those six planned underground factories, the operation of 3,000 personnel was anticipated, working under a three shift system.

Six bunkers were conceived, three in the area of Landsberg, one in Sudeten area (Diana I) one in the Rhineland (Walnuß I) area and one near Mühldorf at the river Inn. Those three bunkers near Landsberg were planned as final assembly line. After the completion of the factories it was planned to produce aircrafts, as part of the fighter program for the first time ever, by the method of the conveyer belt.

The aircraft types to be built were the FW 190², the Do 335³, and of course the ME 262⁴.

Because of the lack of resources only the sites at Landsberg and Mühldorf were started. Landsberg at the River Lech as well as Mühldorf at the River Inn were selected because of the extensive gravel layers from the glacial valleys offered ideal geological conditions. Not only the stable gravel bedding to be used as cost free supplement for the concrete and as mould, but also the groundwater-level (water-table) was and still is up to 20 yards underneath street level.

3. The building at Landsberg

Here in Landsberg the inside of a final assembly line bunker was to be divided into three main and further two sub levels. The top main level was constructed to serve as a sheltered runway at street level for the assembled aircrafts.

With a total ceiling thickness of up to six Meters of which were five Meters of concrete, reinforced with 38 Millimeters of shell steel and additional amour in a dash layer and a frangible layer of earth, for the local shelter construction, the necessary protection from a possible bombing was assured.

Referring to the different scientists with concern to the planned thickness of the shelter construction elements, there are slight discrepancies⁵. Documented are at least a minimum thickness of three Meters at the top of any shelter and 18 Meters for the side foundations.

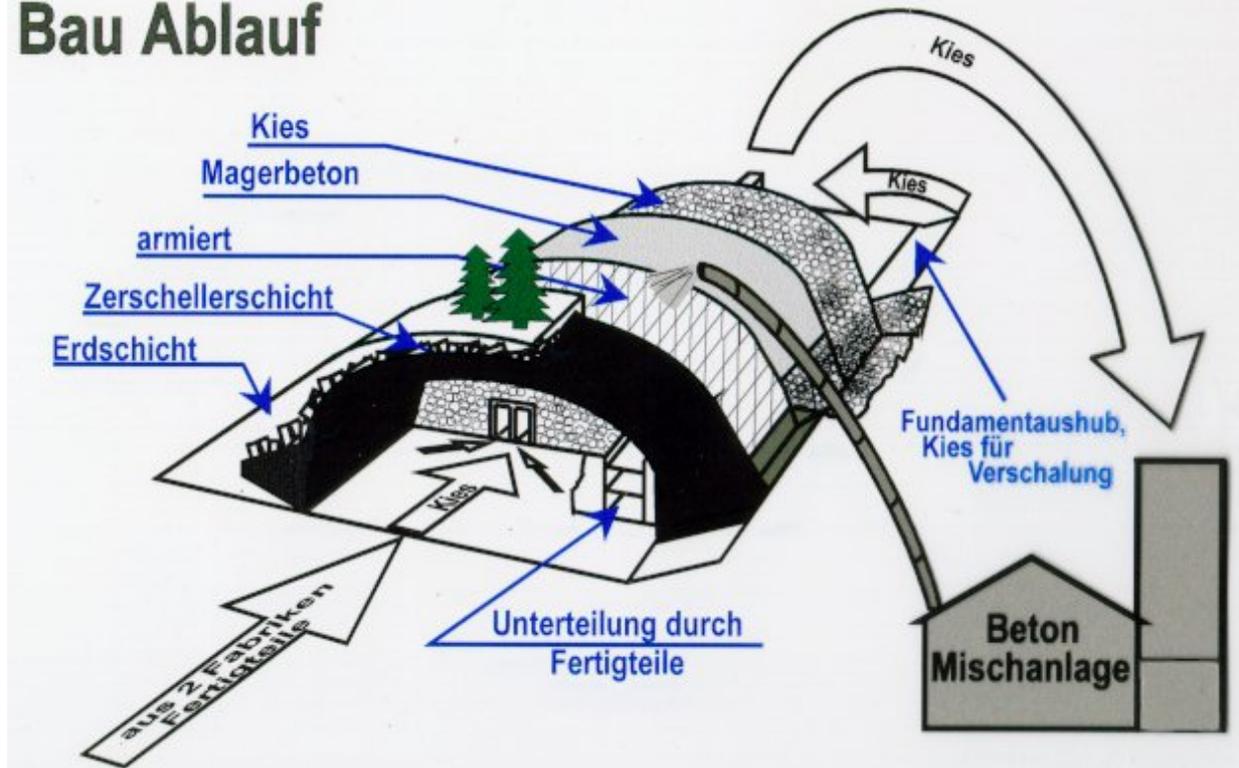
The running of this large construction site was organized by the Organization "Todt"⁶, which at that time was led by Albert Speer, already. The style of construction at the Landsberg site, slightly different than at Mühldorf⁷, according to the plans of Professor Dischinger from Berlin and the Architect Herrmann Giesler⁸, was -and still is- unique.

Here at Landsberg the gravel unearthed during the digging for the side foundations was deposited in the middle of the site and shaped in the form of an arch on top of two rectangular shaped concrete tubes. This mound was to serve as a mould. After this mould between the side foundations had been sprayed with a layer of thin concrete, a lattice of steel armor was constructed on top. Then the concrete was pumped through large flexible pipes from the mixing machines into form board sections, which were previously built into the steel armor. Then the concrete was to be compressed with large poles using elbow grease.

Once the concrete had hardened⁹, the gravel underneath the ceiling was dug out using mining equipment and driven to the concrete mixing machines by small wagons wheeled through the previously constructed tubes which then served as tunnels. In the beginning the wagons were pulled through these tunnels by small locomotives. After the tunnels had reached a certain length, this was not possible any longer, because of the exhaust fumes of the diesel engines, to the point that the KZ inmates had to wheel the wagons by hand.

By this method of construction the assembly of inside elements could be started immediately after a segment was emptied from the gravel mould. The prefabricated elements for the inside construction were brought by the means of rail transport from the concrete works located near Utting at the Ammer Lake and from Friedheim near Landsberg.

Bau Ablauf



For the anticipated large number of qualified workers, who became inevitably necessary for three aircraft factories, the adjustment of the local infrastructure in the bigger area of Landsberg had been planned. In 1945 the work for multi rail connections to Augsburg and Munich, additional housing estates for the expected increase of population from about 20,000 to a maximum of 90,000 people (engineers, workers and family dependents) as well as the improvement and enhancement of the common provision of public utilities had already started.

Of those three building sites in the Landsberg area, only the work at Weingut II (which is the outer shell of the UTA) was kept active until 24. April 1945. The work at the two other sites in the north (Walnuß II) and in the south (Diana II) ceased¹⁰ at the end of 1944, already.

From summer 1944 until April 1945, approximately 200 Meters of Weingut II was built and half of the gravel was removed.

4. Annihilation by labour

At the three plants near Landsberg, some 30,000 personnel were employed in two shifts. The majority of which did not work voluntarily at this locality. Approximately half of the workers were concentration camp prisoners of Jewish believe from eastern European countries. The first transport with prisoners entered the railway station Kaufering¹¹ in June 1944.

These men, women and youngsters of minor age were inhumanly kept in outer camps of the Dachau Concentration Camp. At the area of Landsberg and Kaufering eight outer camps¹² were established at the end. A great number of them, also Children at the age of 15 or even younger, were used, next to other heavy labour, to carry the 50 kg cement bags to the ramp at the mixer machines as long as there had been paper for the bags. The industrial production of paper for cement bags¹³ had come to a standstill at the end of 1944. The material was delivered now with goods trains, occasionally even with open wagons with canvas covering. Then the cement was distributed by wheelbarrows and by conveyor belt.

Despite illness, inadequate rations and insufficient clothing, the prisoners were forced¹⁴ to carry out this demanding work. As a result of this torture, the life expectancy of the prisoners was only of a few months, after they had started working at these building sites¹⁵.

Coincidentally with the advancing American armed forces via Stuttgart towards Munich, the order to evacuate the site and the camps at Landsberg and Kaufering was given.

The prisoners were either send eastward to the so called final solution, or they were to march towards the alp mountains, were they were liberated on the 1st and 2nd of May 1945.^{16,17} Scientific research in recent years has come to the conclusion that almost 15,000 of the prisoners and forced workers appointed to the project Ringeltaube at Landsberg did not survive their work¹⁸.

5. The Underground Installation today

One futile attempt in 1945 to blow up Weingut II was tried.

The occupying American forces used the remains of the bunker as air ammunition depot. The surrounding area was allowed to be cleared from useable material by the local building contractors. It was not permitted to enter the fenced bunker shell¹⁹.

From 1960 until 1966 the bunker was completed for it's nowadays purpose. The building was prepared to house the American intermediate range missile system Matador. Following the early decommission of this weapon system, the bunker was to be used by the German air force alone since 1964. So called nuclear warheads were never stored within this installation.

The bunker was modified to be used as storage and repair depot for operationally important materiel. Since then the bunker accommodates a maintenance unit for avionic equipment, an air force materiel depot and since 1980 an air force programming centre for airborne weapon systems.

The names of the units have been changed since, but their main task remained mainly the same.²⁰

6. Remembrance work

After the first visit of the survivors of the Ringeltaube project led by their president Uri Chanoch in Mai 1995, the members of the association regularly get the opportunity to visit the underground installation²¹. The Welfen-Kaserne personnel keep good relations to the survivors²² of the building measures in 1944/45.

After this visit a major change in the layout of the lecturing with concern to the history of the bunker was necessary. Because of the changes in the world's policies, it was possible to present an underground installation like that in the Welfen-Kaserne to the interested respectively concerned public.

We naturally differentiate for the general lecturing, which become necessary for the various units within the Welfen-Kaserne, between the different levels of interest of visitor or unit members. One element of the lecturing is obligatory, the presentation of the construction of the outer shell of our main building during the years 1944 and 1945.

Any visitor is informed about the connections of the building with the holocaust, even if only technical interests are the reason for his or her visit.

Readings from books of former workers of the building site enable an inside view into the fateful life of the working slaves on the building site. A video produced by the American troops in 1945 shows the horror or atrocity in the surrounding camps where the workers were kept.

Occasionally survivors are invited to lecture their fate personally.

The German media especially those from Bavaria take a broad interest in these events. Several measures of our remembrance work were broadcasted or published, even in more than regionally distributed print media.

Since 1999 when the then still operational LVR 3 was celebrating its 40th anniversary, we have an even better means to reveal the history. Until then only the a.m. exhibition of the maintenance unit with its deliberately small extent was available. Now an exhibition is on display, collected by a group of students and scientifically examined, which exemplarily explains the history of the bunker's outer shell.

Meanwhile several prizes were awarded for this exhibition. A learning program from a cooperation of a German TV-station and the BBC shows the work students to display the learning from history.

During the open day 1999 more than 6,000 visitors were counted. Almost all of them visited the Exhibition: "We dig out a Concentration Camp" and about 500 visitors kept waiting at the plaque in shape of an open Torah²³ was unveiled at the main gate of "Moll" (this is the name the survivors gave to site). The town major of Landsberg was present at this very touching event, which was framed musically by the Zadikoff choir²⁴ from Tel Aviv.

As like as the materiel for the exhibition the expenses for the plaque were founded by briefing room to attend the lecturing with concern to the history of the bunker in groups of 50 to 60 persons. The visitors were presented eight lectures (three lecturers) about details concerning the fate of those killed or those who survived and about the history in general.

Hardly anyone left the briefing room without tears the eyes, in particular when survivors were present, personally.

Commander (GNY) ret. Odinius

A further remarkable action took place on the 27th of January 2000 in front of the UTA. To ensure, that the fate of the victims of the Holocaust will never be forgotten, a commemorative voluntarily donations of soldiers of any rank.

On the 25th of October 2000 the men of the LVR 3 as main unit of the Welfen-Kaserne were awarded the "Silver Menorah" by the executive Committee of Yad Vashem in Jerusalem to honour their work again the oblivion. The men and women based in the Welfen-Kaserne will continue the remembrance work concerning the Shoa (Hebrew word for Holocaust), although it was not to Germanys glory.

The guiding principle of this work is in accordance with the town ship of Landsberg: "Attentively but not obtrusively".

Haben Sie Fragen?

Annex 1 References

Literatur:

Edith Raim, Die Dachauer KZ-Außenkommandos Kaufering und Mühldorf - Rüstungsbauten und Zwangsarbeit im letzten Kriegsjahr 1944-45 (gedruckte Dissertation München 1991)

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Solly Ganor, Das andere Leben, Fischer Taschenbuchverlag 1996

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LwInstHGrp 13, Werftchronik, überarbeitete Version 2004

Sonstige Medien:

Uri Chanoch, Brief an Fregattenkapitän Fritz-Walter Odius vom 7.7.1997
Textkopie in Englisch und Übersetzung aus dem Englischen als Anhang 2,
Original im Privatbesitz

Video 1, Berichterstattung vom 24.4.1945 Nr. Amerikanische Streitkräfte in Landsberg

Video 2, Enthüllung der Gedenktafel vor dem Haupteingang der UTA, 27.1.2000

Commander (GNY) ret. Odinius

Annex 2

Brief Uri Chanoch an Fregattenkapitän Odinius vom 07.07.1997

Association of Survivors Landsberg/Kaufering outer Camps of Dachau

Colonel Fritz Odinius,

Thank you Colonel Odinius, your fellow officers and men for welcoming our Delegation with dignity, sensitivity and honor on the 6.5.1997 at the former Bunker Moll.

Those who were skeleton slaves while building the bunker, trying to survive by searching potato peels. Those who lost their dear ones and friends in the concrete mix while building the bunker, were hosted by you and were invited to the officers mess for lunch.

How more symbolic could it be that some of us left some food on the plate.....

If someone would have told us in those sad dark days that one day we will be sitting in a German officer's mess and even leave some food on the plate, we would never have believed him.

Thank you for turning an impossible dream into reality.

On behalf of all the survivors and members of the Association we thank you.

With best regards

Uri Chanoch

President of the Association

Übersetzung:

Vereinigung der Überlebenden Landsberg / Kaufering Außenlager von Dachau

Werter Herr Kapitän,

Dank an Sie Kapitän Odinius, und an ihre Offiziere, dass Sie am 6.Mai 1997 unsere Delegation mit Würde, Taktgefühl und Ehre am ehemaligen Bunker Moll in Empfang genommen haben.

Jene, die als abgemagerte Sklaven den Bunker bauen mussten, jene, die versuchten zu überleben und dafür nach Kartoffelschalen suchten, jene die ihre Nächsten und auch ihre besten Freunde im Beton verloren, wurden von Ihnen betreut und eingeladen, im der Offizier-Kasino zu Essen.

Hätte irgendetwas symbolhafter sein können, als dass einige von uns sogar Speisen auf den Tellern übrig ließen.....

Falls in jenen traurigen dunklen Tagen jemand uns vorhergesagt hätte, dass wir eines Tages in einem deutschen Offizier-Kasino sitzen würden und sogar Essen übrig lassen könnten, wir hätten es nie geglaubt.

Im Namen aller Überlebenden danken wir Ihnen,

Mit besten Wünschen

Uri Chanoch

President of the Association

Commander (GNY) ret. Odinius
Annex 3 Endnotes

¹ Successor of Dr. Fritz Todt as chief executive for the building policies within the IIIrd Reich. The position is an equivalent to a permanent secretary in a ministry of state.

² Comp. LwInstHGrp 13, a.m.R. Kap. Bunkergeschichte, Abs. Das Konzept der unterirdischen Produktionsstätten.
Translation: Because of an RLM-Ausschreibung (invitation of tender) by the Ministry for Aviation, Focke-Wulf started the development of the FW 190 for the German Air force from summer of 1938 to have an other iron in the fire. Aircrafts from the first series came to a successful action at the Channel coast. Driven by a BMW twin star engine of the 801 series speeding up to 600 km/h the aircraft was modified permanently to the needs of the troops. Until 1945 about 20.000 aircraft had been produced.

³ Comp. LwInstHGrp 13, a.m.R. Kap. Bunkergeschichte, Abs. Das Konzept der unterirdischen Produktionsstätten.

Translation: With a top speed of more than 750km/h the double engine, the DO335 was the fastest propeller driven fighter during world war two. This aircraft equipped with two DB 603 engines with a weight of more than 9 tons never came into service for the German Air force. There were single and double seated versions.

⁴ Comp. LwInstHGrp 13, a.m.R. Kap. Bunkergeschichte, Abs. Das Konzept der unterirdischen Produktionsstätten.
After The maiden flight of the ME 262 on the 18th of July 1942, 1433 aircraft were built.
Comp. Peter Müller, a.m.R. Endnote 4

⁵ Comp. Raim, a.m.R. P.177

⁶ The organization Todt, named after their leading founder Constructions engineer and PhD Fritz Todt (killed in an accident in 1942), who was responsible for the construction/building of war important projects(Western barrier, Atlantic barrier, air bases and fortifications/bunkers) since 1940, mainly in the occupied areas.

⁷ Comp. Müller, a.m.R. P. 20, At Mühldorf only one bigger tube/tunnel was in action (headroom app. 5 Meters) to transport the gravel. Standard engines were used.

⁸ Comp. Müller, a.m.R., Endnote 6, Giesler's brother Paul was Gauleiter in Bavaria.

⁹ To harden the concrete of this dimension it took app. 20 days.

¹⁰ The lack of necessary material and geological as well as organizational problems were the reasons to cease the work at the mentioned sites.

¹¹ Any Camp was named after the terminal at Kaufering. The camp to firstly house the works management was located at the junction of Kaufering to Landsberg. When the management was transferred, the camp became number three.

¹² Comp. Raim a.m.R. Chap..2,
In total 11 out camps are mentioned. Maximum of eight were located near Landsberg and Kaufering. Two were close to Utting (9 & 10) and one near Türkheim (5).

¹³ This situation had positive and negative aspects for the prisoners. On the one hand it was no longer necessary to carry the heavy cement bags; on the

Commander (GNY) ret. Odinius

other hand the paper was dearly missing as protection against the cold and as fuel.

¹⁴ Comp. Müller, a.m.R. P. 66 Translation: Written order by Sergeant Haussmann hitherto number 7: Orderthe Capo has to ensure the highest possible performance of any prisoner at his workplace, if necessary with the force of a stick.

¹⁵ Comp. Bresler, a.m.R. P.132 ff

¹⁶ The prisoners were led through the valley of the river Würm passing Bad Tölz up to Waarkirchen. They were possibly held hostage to extort better conditions for a surrender.

¹⁷ Vgl. Ganor, a.m.R. P.213 ff

¹⁸ Vgl. Video 1, a.m.R. Minute 3 ff

¹⁹ The Bunker was nicknamed „The Kaufering Hedgehog“by passengers on the train from Munich towards Lake Konstanz.

²⁰ LwInsthGrp 13, a.m.R. Chap. Namensgebung der Einheit Werft etc.

23.10.1963 The initial command of the electronics maintenance unit arrives at Landsberg..

1965 The unit is renamed 5./Luftwaffenparkregiment

01.10.1969 The unit is renamed in LwWerft 15

01.10.1973 The Regiment - is renamed in Luftwaffenversorgungsregiment 3 (Air Force Support Regiment 3)

1978 The unit is renamed to LwWerft 31

1980 The Air Force Programming Centre for airborne Weapon Systems is established.

01.04.2002 Dispersal of the LVR 3

01.04.2002 The Weapon System Support Centre is established

01.07.2002 The LwWerft 31 is renamed into LwInsthGrp 13 and allocated to the LVR 1.

²¹ The official name for the bunker is underground installation (German abbreviation: UTA) . The prisoners working on the site called the whole site "Moll" as the main contractor for Weingut II was Mr Leonhard Moll from Munich.

After the cease of the company Moll (became in 1997 part of an other company) one member of the Moll family Mrs. Christiane Moll donated a very generous sum from her private funding towards the German Industrial foundation for compensations for the victims of the Holocaust.

²² Comp. Letter Uri Chanoch, Annex 2

²³ Torah lyrics: During World Ward II a sheltered aircraft factory was to be built at this place with the help of captives from the KZ-Dachau. Almost 15.000 prisoners, mainly of Jewish origin, lost their lives due to the inhuman conditions on the site and in the surrounding camps.

²⁴ Comp. Video 2