

# Weingut II Memorial Site

Military History Collection • Landsberg am Lech



**„In the Iglinger Forest, near Landsberg am Lech,  
a monstrosity of concrete arose  
which gobbled up endless wagon loads of cement  
and devoured thousands of lives..“**

*Zvi Katz, former prisoner*



Image: Von Mrtschmid - Eigenes Werk, CC BY-SA 4.0,  
<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=49008231>

**„How do you, weak and starving as you are, drag yourself  
nine kilometres through snow and cold back to the camp  
after twelve hours of hard work on a huge bunker for the  
production of fighter aircraft?  
And this day after day. I cannot explain it. But I managed  
it and others did, too. [...]  
We do all we can to preserve the memory - out of our  
growing concern that with the death of the survivors  
forgetting will begin“.**

*Abba Naor, former prisoner*



Dear visitor of the Weingut II Memorial Site military history collection,

*“Human dignity shall be inviolable.  
To respect and protect it shall be the duty of all state authority.”*

This principle is firmly enshrined in Article 1 of our Basic Law. But this was not always a matter of course in our history. Human rights were disregarded, abolished and trampled on. In the process, military personnel were involved not as willing followers but as perpetrators in positions of authority. Today, service personnel, as citizens in uniform, defend this worthy good of our society with their lives at home and abroad as a matter of course every day. Human dignity and human rights, as we exercise and live them in our country today, are still not a matter of course in the world and cannot always be taken for granted even in our modern society. Freedom, sovereignty, human rights and human dignity will only survive if we consciously live these values and defend them on a daily basis.

As the former German Federal President Roman Herzog implied in his proclamation speech on the occasion of the German Day of Remembrance for the Victims of National Socialism in 1996 -

*“As the former German Federal President Roman Herzog implied in his proclamation speech on the occasion of the German Day of Remembrance for the Victims of National Socialism in 1996”*

- any academically sound instruction especially of the young generation in our society is the right path to learn from the past and thus shape the future.

Places to commemorate National Socialist atrocities play an important part in this process. One of them is the former Weingut II Bunker, which is now maintained by the Bundeswehr in the context of a reappraisal of military history. It is also a unique example of the culture of remembrance in the German Air Force.

Gerhard Bechtold

Gernot Schroeder

Michael Siebert



Weingut II  
Memorial Site



## Words of greeting by Abba Naor on the new edition of the “Weingut II Memorial Site” brochure.

I think it is important that the Bundeswehr addresses the German past and the history of the Kaufering subcamp of the Dachau Concentration Camp Complex. With their commitment, the Bundeswehr have ensured that the Weingut II Memorial Site in Landsberg am Lech does not fall into oblivion.

It is thanks to them that a small museum was established here, and many visitors, especially school classes, can visit the place and take tours today. School classes can visit the bunker and thus the place where thousands of people had suffered and many lost their lives. During these tours, they can learn a lot for their future and their lives. I very much appreciate that the Bundeswehr, in particular, devotes itself to this history and in the process contributes to saving the sad history of this place from oblivion.

On behalf of the former prisoners of Camp Kaufering who are still alive today - unfortunately there are only a few left - I would like to express my thanks for the work that is done here to preserve memories, and for the publication of the new brochure on the history of the place. The second and third generations of former prisoners also have a connection to the place. We will never forget what happened here, and we will always thank the Bundeswehr for the important steps that are taken at this place to preserve memories.

### Abba Naor

(Abba Naor is a survivor of the Kaufering satellite concentration camp complex, he lives in Israel today, and still talks regularly about his memories in schools. For this commitment he has received several awards.)

## Words of greeting by President of the Land Parliament Ilse Aigner

Dear visitors,

Germany's National Socialist past is ever-present in both the collective memory and in the public sphere, and in view of the unfathomable dimensions of Nazi crimes it cannot be any different. Below ground in the Weingut II Bunker at the Welfen barracks, the past is palpable. Visitors to the memorial site are - literally - surrounded by bodies of the prisoners of the Landsberg/Kaufering satellite camp complex of the Dachau concentration camp. They died here, buried in concrete.

The prisoners of the concentration camp built large parts of the bunker under inhumane conditions; they were almost starved to death, frozen, utterly exhausted and tortured. Contemporary witnesses reported that some prisoners fell into the liquid concrete. Their bodies were covered with concrete, and a veil of silence was drawn over these crimes in the bunker. They are representative of the inhuman Nazi ideology and the Shoah, a unique and unprecedented crime against humanity to this day.

Today, the bunker no longer keeps silent. Although it took years before the glaring injustice and the barely conceivable extent of the horrors experienced in this building were revealed. But in the 1990s, after initial investigations, a relentless, consistent and sustainable discussion of the history of this place began.



Image: Laurence Chaperon / Bavarian Land Parliament

The Weingut II Memorial Site was established. This is in particular thanks to Bundeswehr members of Maintenance Centre 12. The military personnel of the military history collection have got invested in the history of their barracks and made it their responsibility to inform about it.

Their great commitment and talks with contemporary witnesses have resulted in a moving and important collection and an impressive exhibition. Remembering the cruelties of the past is important - for the sake of the dignity of the victims and for the sake of our future. Since the past is never dead, it's not even past. It reminds us of the crimes people are capable of committing. It makes us aware of what an ideology shaped by hatred and rabble-rousing had facilitated: it drove millions of people to extermination.

Freedom must be defended. This place is a reminder of this. I would like to thank all Bundeswehr officials at the Welfenkaserne in Landsberg for their important contribution to this important commemoration. They have also laid a valuable and lasting foundation for generations to come so that the memory of what had happened in this place will never be forgotten. The young generations in particular need to know what is at risk when the most important values such as freedom, justice and solidarity are betrayed. The suffering of the victims remains. It is cemented!

Ilse Aigner

## Words of greeting by Dr. h.c. mult. Charlotte Knobloch

President of the Jewish Community of Munich and Upper Bavaria, former President of the Central Council of Jews in Germany



Image: Daniel Schvarcz

Dear visitor,

“The past is never dead, it’s not even past.” - William Faulkner wrote more than 60 years ago. At the Weingut II Memorial Site you can feel what he meant by it. On 8 May 1985, Richard von Weizsäcker issued this notable reminder: “Whoever refuses to remember the inhumanity is prone to new risks of infection.”

The Holocaust against the European Jews was a singular event in world history. Something unimaginable, in every respect heinous had happened in the German name - something that went beyond everything history had known so far in terms of crimes and atrocities. Today, Germany acknowledges this past. But it took a long time until the stony silence in the country was broken, and until a majority understood that it is impossible to block out what cannot be forgotten.

Long since, however, voices have been raised that encourage this very forgetting. In doing so, they risk that history becomes the present again; that the horrors of the past repeat themselves before our eyes.

This must not be the final word. It is of vital importance, therefore, that our culture of remembrance focusses on the future, and that commemoration does not become a burden

or even a debt of younger generations. Remembrance must not destroy the justified pride in our country. Above all, commemoration must not become bland routine.

Remembrance must retain its central purpose: It must immunise. With the growing distance to the events of the Nazi era the responsibility increases to pass our culture of remembrance on to the young generations in our country. We see how the last contemporary witnesses pass the baton of remembrance along.

The Bundeswehr is among those who take it. Today, our commemoration is under threat, and whether we will be able to preserve it strongly depends on the way in which it is conveyed. The personnel in charge of the Weingut II Memorial Site military history collection not only provide a historical perspective on the inhuman atrocities committed in this place. The concept of remembrance is also oriented toward the present and the future, and it clearly indicates that inhuman ideologies have no place in our political culture. Only by forging this link into the reality of people’s lives, people can be made aware of why they, too, should discuss their country’s past.

The key topic that connects all generations of our society today is responsibility. Today, more than ever, it is important to preserve the values and liberties enshrined in the Basic Law and to staunchly defend them against their enemies. This message emanates from this place! Let us work together to make it heard.

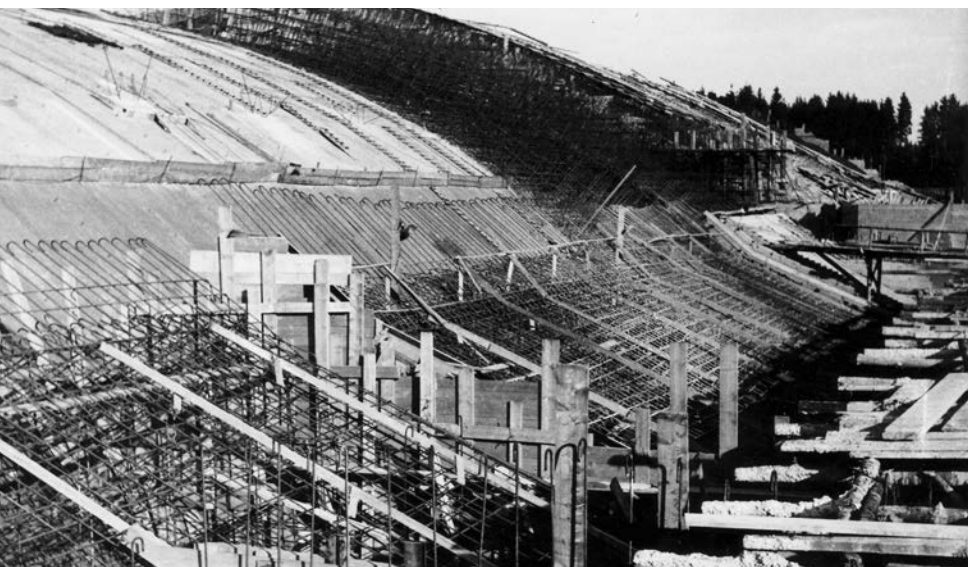
Thank you very much for your visit and for your willingness to acknowledge, to understand and to leave this place as an ambassador of responsibility.

Dr. h.c. mult. Charlotte Knobloch

## National Socialism until the liberation on 27 April 1945

For the purpose of protecting the air industry against allied air raids, in early 1944 it was planned to build six bombproof underground aircraft factories within the territory of the German Reich. Three of these gigantic semi-underground bunkers codenamed Diana II, Weingut II and Walnuss II were to be built west of Landsberg.

Under the supervision of an Oberbauleitung (OBL - Chief Construction Management) codenamed „Ringeltaube“, the entire construction project was supervised and carried out by Organisation Todt (OT).



In April 1944, construction companies moved their construction equipment in long train transports from France (Atlantic Wall) to Landsberg. In May, the clearing of the Weingut II construction site in Frauenwald began, followed by the Diana II (today the Kolhöfer gravel pit on Buchloer Straße) and Walnuss II (north of the B17 Igling-Kaufering junction) construction sites. The construction work on Diana II and Walnut II was abandoned at the turn of 1944/45.

In addition to civilian construction workers and the OT personnel, unskilled workers were needed. A total of 22,000 workers were considered necessary.

Hitler had already promised to have Himmler provide Jews as workforce; but Görig, too, wrote to Himmler, „to provide me with as many concentration camp prisoners as possible for air force armament, since previous experience has shown that this workforce is very useful. The air war situation makes it necessary to move the industry underground! In this, concentration camp prisoners can be particularly well grouped according to work and camps.

*Interim talks have already taken place between my and your agencies, and I would be particularly grateful if you could assist me in carrying out these tasks.“*

On 24 May 1944, Oswald Pohl, Chief of the SS-Wirtschafts- und Verwaltungshauptamt (SS Economic and Administrative Office), cabled to Reichsführer SS, Heinrich Himmler, regarding the Hungarian transports of Jews to Auschwitz: „The first transports of Jews from Hungary show that about 50 percent of Jews who are able to work are women. Since we do not have enough women’s work for this large number of women, we must employ them in the construction projects of OT. I request permission to do so, OT approves. Heil Hitler, Pohl.“

On 27 May 1944, Himmler responded with unconcealed, inhuman cynicism: „My dear Pohl! Jewish women are of course to be used for work. In this case, it is only necessary to provide a healthy diet, it is important to feed them raw vegetables. Do not forget to import sufficient quantities of garlic from Hungary. Heil Hitler! Your faithful Himmler.“

The first transport arrived at Kaufering station in mid-June 1944.

In the curved track to Landsberg, the Organisation Todt had the first of ten concentration camps (eleven were planned, only ten were carried out) built by the prisoners. The satellite camp complex at Kaufering became the largest camp of the Dachau main camp.

According to current information, between June 1944 and April 1945 about 23,000 prisoners were brought to the camps and were forced to live under most deplorable conditions. Food, clothing and working conditions were extremely appalling. Although „OT“ required able to work concentration camp prisoners for the extremely urgent construction project,



the working power of the Jewish concentration camp prisoners was to be „exhaustively“ exploited within three months (quote Oswald Pohl). The industrial use of the deported concentration camp prisoners was subordinated to the objective of killing them within three months through complete exhaustion. Thus began the planned „extermination through labour“ in the camps around Weingut II.

On 27 March 1945, Hitler entrusted the SS under Kammler with the management of the Weingut II construction project. This one month until the liberation of the camp on 27 April 1945 saw a rapid increase in the number of murdered Jewish prisoners.

Between June 1944 and April 1945, 6,334 forced labourers – this number is documented by the SS bureaucracy – died of exhaustion, hunger and diseases in the camp complex, were beaten to death or simply murdered; another 2,700 people were selected as unfit for work and transported to the extermination camps of Auschwitz (approx. 1,300 men in August 1944) and Bergen-Belsen (approx. 1,400 women in December 1944). If the victims of the death marches etc. are also taken into account, the death toll will be even higher.

The underground aircraft factories were based on the idea that with a production area of 100,000 square meters it would have been possible to build a complete aircraft type including the engines. This would have required a building with five floors measuring 400 meters in length. The plans for the three bunkers were designed on this basis.

In the late summer of 1944, the Reich Aviation Ministry decided that the Do 335 (night fighter), Ta 152 (hunter) and Me 262 (jet fighter) aircraft were to be built in Landsberg. In the autumn of 1944, it was decided to move the Messerschmidt company with its Me 262 production into the Weingut II bunker. The required jet engines, however, were produced at BMW in Munich, therefore it was possible to reduce the size of the bunker, and shorten the length of the planned structure to 300 m. The still existing legend that completed aircraft were to take off directly from the bunker is not in accordance with the facts; given the length of the bunker this would not have been possible.

The construction of the bunker was based on a new technology developed at the Technical University of Berlin without elaborate formwork. In the first step, a gravel extraction tunnel was built on which the excavated material for the abutments was heaped. In the second step, the abutments (16 m wide and 13 m high) and the arch with a thickness of three metres were concreted (segment).

In the third step, the supporting gravel was removed via the extraction tunnel and reused for construction. In a last step, the internal finishing of the five floors was begun using ready-made concrete elements. In the process, the structure grew from north to south.

At its base, *Weingut II* had a width of 85 meters and a height of 26 meters. A total of 233 metres were built by 21 April 1945.

The facility in Mühldorf am Inn (*Weingut I*) was demolished within the scope of explosive tests by US troops in 1947. Therefore, of the six planned buildings, the *Weingut II* bunker is the only one that had been preserved.





We were like you.



Debbie .

30 ~~20~~ April 45

### Liberation

On 27 April 1945, US Army forces liberated Camp IV (Hurlach).

Only three days later, Lieutenant Albert Gaynes describes the horrors encountered by the troops in a letter to his wife.



I have seen today the full, complete bestiality of what was one of the Nazis' horror concentration camps. I saw for myself with my own eyes the ungodly will never see until I die.

Our division overran a camp located in the path of our The last town I visited before was Angbwa in southern

Debbie, I have seen today the full, complete bestiality of what was one of the Nazis' horror concentration camps. I saw for myself with my own eyes the ungodly sight. Debbie, I hope you will never see what I will see until I die.

of the way. The shacks resembled the OCS barracks which you saw at Aberdeen - the

about 300 yds off hidden or out

shacks resembled the OCS

barracks which you saw at Aberdeen - the

inhuman, unbelievable sights.

I saw dead men lying inside of these shacks. I saw them lying in the fields and on the ground.

They were naked. How had they died? They were starved & tortured to death. They were skeletons with skin. There hideous

How can I describe the actual inhuman, unbelievable sights? I saw dead men lying inside these shacks I saw them lying in the fields and on the ground. They were naked. How had they died?

They were starved and tortured to death. They were skeletons with skin.

I saw men with their arms broken into all shapes; men with arms and legs cut off, men with their throats slit; men with their heads cut off; men with their legs twisted and misshapen. I personally saw 50 or 60 of these creatures which were once human beings. There were some shacks which the Nazis had burned, and I saw the charred bodies.

of these creatures which once were human

stomach and heart could stand, I left. Others of the company who explored the area found long ditches for graves which ~~was~~ were littered with dead bodies which had not even been filled with dirt.



It had these men done to warrentures. [They were tortured; not the arms & legs and countless mutilations must have been done inmates still lived.]

These men had disagreed with the

Nazis. They were political prisoners -

Jews, Communists, liberals, devout Catholics - anyone who had disagreed with the Nazi political philosophy.

with the Nazi political philosophy. I saw these mangled, misshapen,

delicattesen owner. But they are black inside and their hands are bloody with the guts of humanity.

Don't ever let any sonofabitch tell you that the rape of Lidice, that the slaughter of 2,000,000 Jews in Poland, that the human furnaces, that the concentration camps you read about are lies. I have seen it with my own eyes. I have seen the unbelievable. I have seen the depths of depravity to which

Don't ever let another sonofabitch tell you that the rape of Lidice, that the slaughter of 2,000,000 Jews in Poland, that the human furnaces, that the concentration camps you read about are lies. I have seen it with my own eyes. I have seen the unbelievable. I have seen the depths of depravity to which so called human beings - the Nazis - can fall. Debbie, it is unbelievable. But believe me. I have seen it.

continue. I shall remember what I have seen. I shall never forget it. Whatever

**„You are not responsible for what happened, but you do have responsibility to ensure that it doesn't happen again.“**

**[Max Mannheimer]**

The horror of what happened also here in Landsberg among people - people like us - leaves us shocked even today. As Max Mannheimer, a concentration camp survivor, so aptly stated, the question of guilt is futile for today's generations.

The question of future *responsibility*, however, is timelessly urgent; it is our heritage as Germans. On the one side, this is, of course, a socio-political task that can only be accomplished if every person in our country is always aware of this responsibility, appreciates and internalises the value of our constitution, in particular its first article stating „human dignity shall be inviolable“, as well as the merit of our free and democratic basic order.

Everyone always needs to make decisions in life - it is important to be sensitive to totalitarian tendencies of any kind that aim to subject freedom and democracy of the country - but also of individual citizens - to any august objectives.

In the following, there are two examples of persons who had not been cogs in the machine but rather sand in the gears of the horror machinery of the “Weingut II” project. People who show us today: it is possible to say No to such a system - even more, it is imperative!

My first example, *Georg Deffner*, shows how easily a person can be led astray, seduced and finally broken within the mills of totalitarianism but ultimately rediscovers his humanity. From today's point of view, he was initially siding with evil. As a member of the SS, he had voluntarily entered National Socialist service in 1933. Since 1942, he had done office work at the Dachau concentration camp. It is hardly possible to grant “he was ignorant of what was going on”. In February 1945, he became Lagerführer (camp leader) at the Kaufering I satellite camp.

Can such a person serve as a role model? At any rate, he serves as an example. An example of seduction, brokenness but in the end also of a decision that put him at personal risk - albeit to a small extent - as he accepted his responsibility to do something about the cruel and inhumane effects of the NS system.

The second example is more clear: *Alois Elsner* is listed as „Righteous among the nations“ in Yad Vashem's database and serves as an example of what civilian resistance can look like when confronted with a terror system.

**Responsibility - to venture to do good in evil.  
Georg Deffner - a good man in the devil's uniform?**



Erzsebet Török and her son Georg, \* 08 December 1944  
Dora Löwy and her daughter Susanne, \* 28 December 1944  
Sara Speier and her son Josef, \* 02 January 1945  
Eva Schweroz and her daughter Maria, \* 08 January 1945  
Magda Reich and her daughter Judith, \* 13 January 1945  
Ibelya Abraham and her daughter Agnes, \* 14 January 1945  
Mirjam Schwarcz and her son László, \* 28 February 1945

In the last months of the war, a small miracle happened in Camp I in Landsberg. Thanks to happy circumstances, coincidences and acts of providence seven children were born in this camp. The fact that these seven children of seven female prisoners were able to survive is due, among other things, to Lagerführer SS Hauptscharführer Georg Deffner. These children, three boys and four girls, were born between 8 December 1944 and 28 February 1945. At first, the mothers tried everything to hide their pregnancy as long as possible because upon discovery they would have been threatened by immediate deportation to Auschwitz to be killed there.

A Hungarian gynaecologist, who was also detained in Camp I, helped with the delivery. The camp was disbanded on 26 April 1945. The mothers and their children were taken by train to the Dachau concentration camp, where they were liberated by the Americans on 29 April 1945. After the liberation by the Americans, five of the seven mothers were admitted to and looked after at the St. Ottilien Monastery. Two of the seven mothers, however, immediately left Germany.

This story was made into an ARD documentary *entitled „Geboren im Konzentrationslager“ (Born in the Concentration Camp)* and recounted in the book with the same title and the subtitle “*Sieben Mütter, sieben Kinder und das Wunder von Kaufering I*” (*Seven Mothers, Seven Children and the Miracle of Kaufering I*).

Children born in the Camp I, Landsberg.

No.	Name of the parents, Name of the child	Nation	Sex	Date of birth and hour
1.	Erzsebet Török and her son Georg	Hung.	Male	08.12.1944
2.	Dora Löwy and her daughter Susanne	Hung.	Female	28.12.1944
3.	Sara Speier and her son Josef	Czech.	Male	02.01.1945
4.	Eva Schweroz and her daughter Maria	Czech.	Female	08.01.1945
5.	Magda Reich and her daughter Judith	Hung.	Female	13.01.1945
6.	Ibelya Abraham and her daughter Agnes	Hung.	Female	14.01.1945
7.	Mirjam Schwarcz and her son László	Hung.	Male	28.02.1945

Deffner

14.9.

There are two written statements about the conduct of Deffner as Lagerführer of the Kaufering I concentration camp, which allow conclusions about his character.

On the one hand, there is a written statutory declaration by Schifra Noek of 14 September 1945. In this document, the former prisoner with prisoner number 83982 states that she worked as a nurse at Camp I under Lagerführer Deffner. She writes:

*„There were 7 puerperant women in the camp who gave birth in the area where I worked. Lagerführer Deffner paid a lot of attention to the mothers with the children.“*



Georg Deffner

She describes an incident when the SS camp physician Dr. Blanke took children's cloths and other things away from the mothers. Deffner later hid these things under his coat and brought them back to the mothers in secret. In addition, she describes an incident with Rapportführer Temple, who had taken potatoes away from the women. After the women had complained, Deffner made sure that this did not happen again.

Describing Deffner's character, she stated:

*„Lagerführer Deffner was too Christian, and without any fear we spoke to him. He has always comforted us saying the war would soon be over, and we would be free again. I do not know any second SS man other than Deffner who treated us so well. When we marched from Landsberg to Dachau, Lagerführer Deffner was like a father to the prisoners. {...} I only know Deffner as a good human being.“*

Elisabeth Legmann, who as Erzsebet Török was the first of the seven mothers to give birth to her child in Camp I on 08 December 1944, also gave Deffner an excellent character. In September 1945, she wrote:

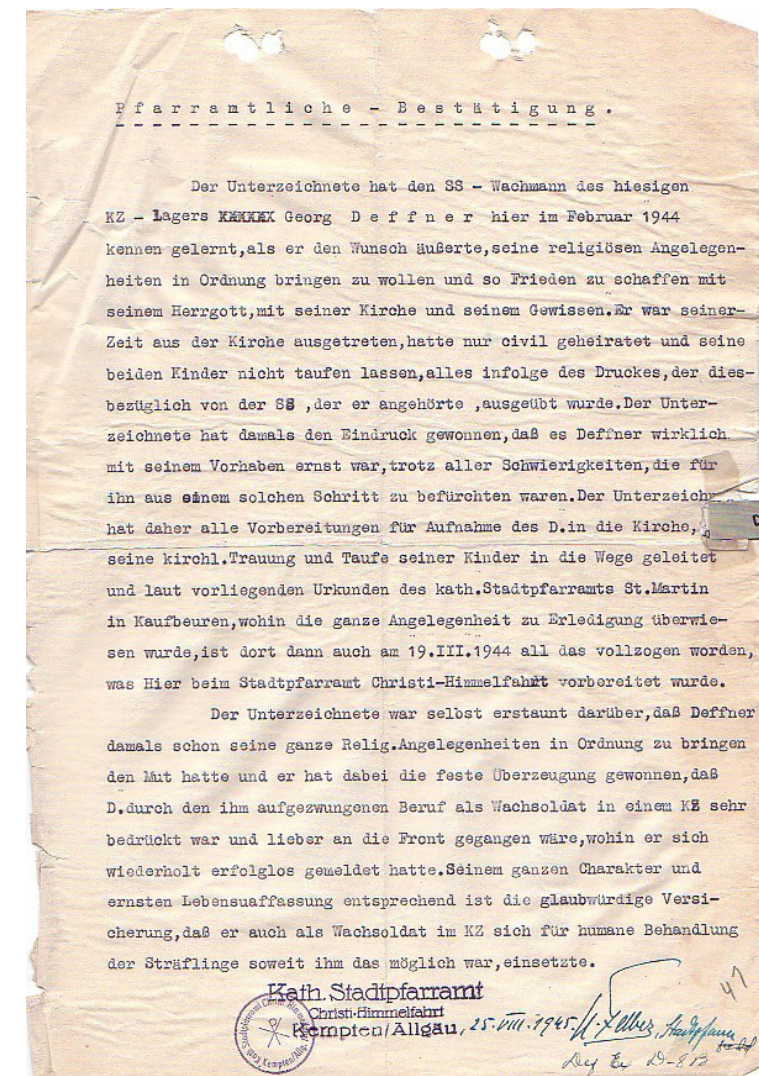
*„He was a Lagerführer to whom we could always turn to trustingly with requests and complaints, and he always did for us and our children what was possible for him to do. He provided us with food, wood and coals.“*

She, too, describes the above-mentioned incident with Dr. Blanke. She concludes with the impressive words:

*„I don't know anything about the previous life of Deffner, but for what he did for us, I ask you on behalf of the seven women and our children [...] to give a mild judgement, to release him, if possible, because we can only state against him what is good.“*

On 19 March 1944, Georg Deffner was baptised at the Catholic municipal pastoral office in Kempten/Allgäu. According to the town priest in charge, Feibar, Deffner had left the church under pressure from the SS, had been married in a civilian ceremony only, and had not baptised his two children either.

Probably due to the fact that Deffner had already been employed as SS guard in a concentration camp in February 1944, his devotion to the Church and to God would have been out of conviction. Town priest Feibar underlines this impression in his written confirmation of 25 August 1945 by stating that this return to Christian faith could well have led to reprisals for Deffner. Deffner's statement that he had several times applied for service at the front to escape from the work at the concentration camp had given the town priest the impression that Deffner really was of the decent character ascribed to him.



*Karlsfeld welche die Frauen mit sich von der...*

Ultimately, from today's point of view, it will never be possible to deduce what Georg Deffner was on the inside. What remains today is the view of a torn man who in the final stage of the war would have preferred to go to the front - with the associated probability of being killed - rather than serving in the concentration camp.

In the position he probably held against his will, he was a blessing at least for the seven women and their seven children who were born and allowed to live.

In any case, the judges of the US military court have passed a relatively lenient sentence - even though the above-mentioned exonerating testimonies are not included in the minutes of the military court. Deffner was sentenced to three years of imprisonment. Johann Viktor Kirsch, from August 1944 as Lagerführer in charge of the organisational aspects of the erection of the Kaufering I - Landsberg satellite camp, future Lagerführer Alfred Kramer, as well as Wilhelm Tempel, from January 1945 Rapportführer at that camp, and Martin Gottfried Weiß, who was involved in the execution of five concentration camp prisoners, were sentenced to death in the Dachau main trial in late 1945; the sentences were executed at the end of May 1946.

Evidence for Defense: Witness Kuhlo, a former inmate and capo at outcamp Kempten, testified that the accused issued an order forbidding capos to beat inmates (R 32). Witness Geiger, a priest, who had been an inmate at Dachau Concentration Camp, testified that while he worked under the accused in the mail room the accused always treated politely, decently and even comradesly, and that the accused never beat anyone (R 126; corroborated R 130). Witness Münchenheim testified that the accused conducted himself properly toward inmates (R 147-150). The accused testified that while he was stationed at Camp Dachau he reportedly volunteered for front line duty but without success (R 172); that he never mistreated inmates at Dachau (R 174); that he sometimes punished inmates at out-camp Kempten by boxing them once or twice on the ear when they stole articles; that more severe punishment was ordered by the authorities at Dachau (R 174,175); and that he issued an order forbidding the beating of inmates (R 176).

Excerpt from the minutes of the trial against Deffner. On this see also the link on the last pages

## Responsibility - to venture to do good in evil. Alois and Maria Elsner - Righteous among the nations

There is certainly hardly a better example of people who did good in these horrible days than that of Master Chimney Sweep Alois Elsner and his wife Maria Elsner.



The Elsner family: Alois, Maria and son Alois

He and his wife supported the prisoners by procuring warm clothing, socks, food and medicines and smuggling them into the barracks to the concentration camp inmates. This was possible because as chimney sweep Elsner was responsible for the district where the Kaufering III subcamp was located, and its chimneys also needed to be swept.

Even before Elsner took up his support for the prisoners, he was considered a non-

conformist. His exclusion from the NSDAP in April 1943 due to lack of discipline and disinterest is prove of that.

There are several sources that are evidence of the actions of Alois Elsner and his wife. There are both notes of prisoners who wrote their requests and letters of thanks of the post-war period. A slip of paper written by prisoner Stefan Fonyo, which was probably slipped to Elsner in March 1945, has been preserved and is therefore of particular interest to historical research.

Elsner was also supported by a small Landsberg resistance group including Walter Groos, construction manager at Camp Kaufering and Landsberg, who is also honoured as Righteous in





Yad Vashem, police officer Rasso Leitenstorfer, Alfred Schacke and two doctors who smuggled medicines, clothing and food into the camp. In this group, Alois Elsner was probably the one with the most dangerous mission (see link on the last page).

In an interview as contemporary witness at the Weingut II Memorial site military history collection on 06 May 2021, the son said about his father Alois Elsner:

„Every morning, my father put on several layers of clothing one above the other, which he took off at the appropriate moment and handed them over to the camp physician (a concentration camp prisoner himself) to distribute them among the prisoners.“

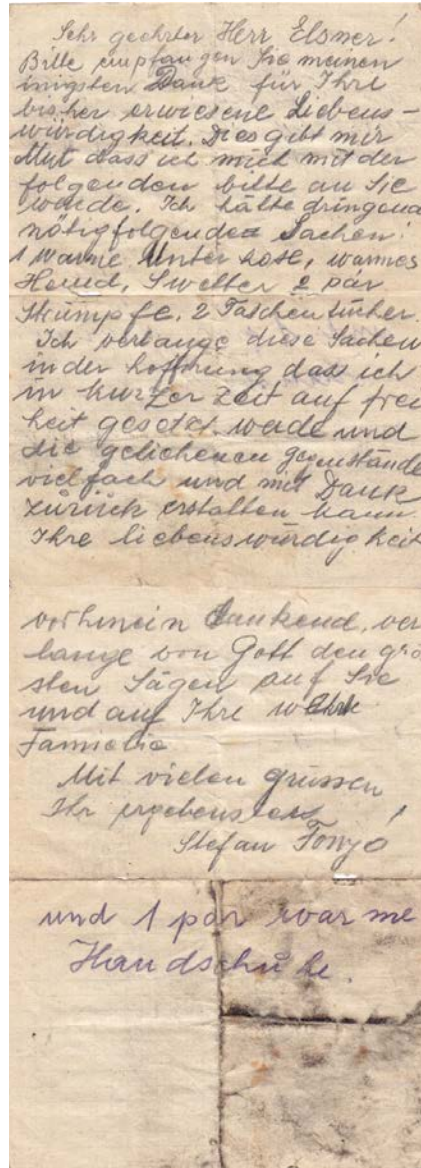
On 24 July 1945, several prisoners confirmed his good deeds in writing. In addition, there are numerous letters of thanks. The descriptions, the many sincere thanks shed a special light on Elsner and his wife, who have



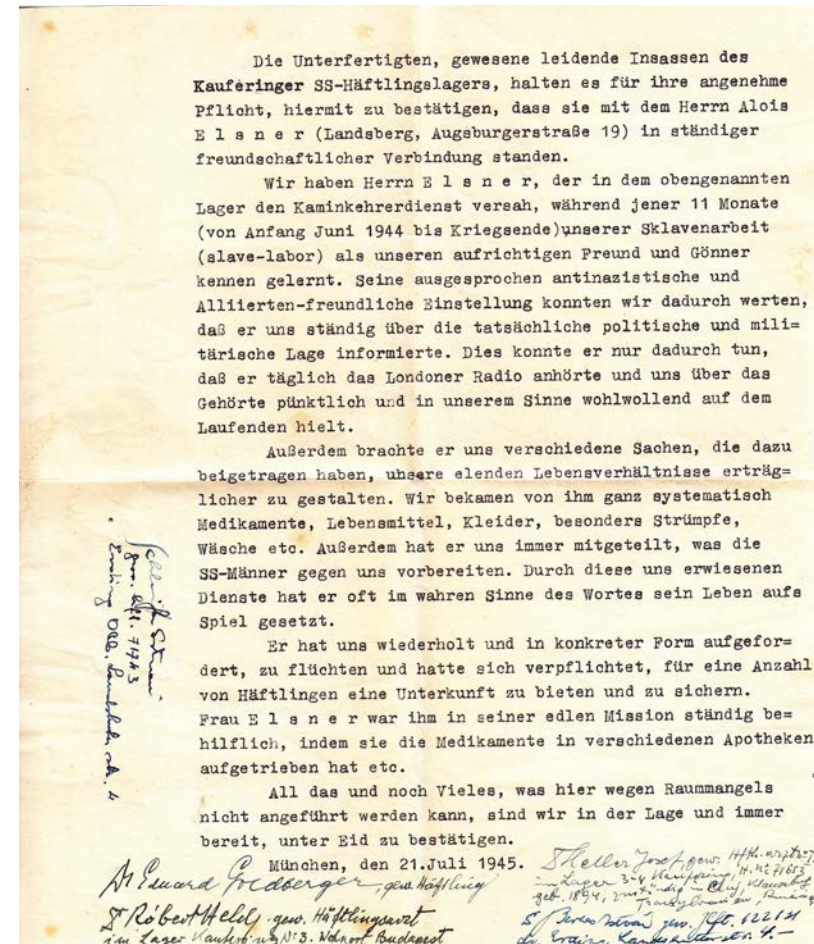
Alois Elsner at his parents' memorial stele

continuously exposed themselves to the great danger of being shot by the SS. Over time, they must have organised and smuggled considerable amounts of clothing and food; they did not „leave it at“ doing it once or twice, but again and again made the decision to oppose the misery caused by the Nazi system.

Over the past decades, regional and national historical science as well as the town of Landsberg am Lech have recognized, described and acknowledged the actions of Alois Elsner:



- 1998 - essay on The courage of the Alois Elsner. “Ein Landsberger Kaminkehrermeister hilft KZ-Häftlingen “ (A master chimney sweep from Landsberg helps concentration camp prisoners) by former mayor Franz Xaver Rößle is published in Landsberger Geschichtsblätter. It is the beginning of the reappraisal of regional history. (See link on the final pages)
- 6 October 2015 - Alois Elsner and his wife Maria are included in the list of the „Righteous among the nations“ for their efforts, an award that the State of Israel has bestowed since 1953. On 24 October 2017, the honour was officially rendered by the State of Israel in a ceremony in Munich.
- 26 April 2018 - Unveiling of the memorial stele in Landsberg am Lech in the presence of the President of the Jewish Community of Munich, Ms. Charlotte Knobloch (Geschwister-Scholl-Str. / Alois-Elsner-Str., site of the former Saarbürg Barracks).



## The post-war underground facility

After the war, the terrain around the bunker construction site was initially used by the US forces as a storage site for aircraft bombs. It was the largest ammunition storage of US troops in Europe. The rudimentarily fitted area under the bunker shell, which had been completed in two thirds, was used as a demolition range for the bombs stored on the site.

The still ongoing rumour that there had been several attempts to demolish the facility does not agree with the facts. This was only true for the Weingut I facility near Mühlendorf.

In 1959, the German Air Force took over the installation from the Americans. The German Air Force began to convert the Weingut II bunker for the storage/repair of the so-called flying bomb MATADOR (24 units) and its successor model MACE (95 units). For this purpose, the existing interior fixtures were removed, and a completely new underground facility was installed. This facility was typical of the Cold War era; it was - and continues to be - completely self-contained, with its own power generation, its own deep well and its own air generation system.

The transport of the flying bombs to and from the facility would have taken place via two independent vehicle checkpoints with two lock gates each (169 tons each).

Shortly before the completion of the facility, the Federal Government decided to dispense with the MATADOR and MACE weapon systems and to deploy PERSHING 1 missiles instead.

Thus, the underground facility („UTA“) became home to Air Force Service Regiment 3 (LwVersRgt 3), a logistic unit, and was used to store Air Force supplies and to accommodate an electronics maintenance detachment of Air Depot Wing 1 (LwPkRgt 1) for the repair of aircraft electronic components of the F-104 Starfighter.

The introduction of the new TORNADO fighter bomber in 1982 led to a reorganization. Air Force Maintenance Depot 15 (formerly Electronics Maintenance Detachment, since 1963 5th/Air Depot Wing 1, since 1969 Air Force Maintenance Depot 15) was renamed Air Force Maintenance Depot 31 (LwWerft 31, until 2002) in 1978 and subordinate to Air Force Service Regiment 3. At the same time, they moved into the newly established top floor Red of the underground facility.

For the purpose of maintaining and upgrading the complex software of the TORNADO, the Air Force Programming Centre for Airborne Weapon Systems (ProgrZLwflgWS, 1979 - 2002) was established, and it also found its home in the underground facility.

In the late 1980s, the space situation for Air Force Service Regiment 3 became increasingly difficult. The staff and its units were scattered throughout the garrison town of Landsberg.

In order to counter this situation, it was decided to build a new barracks on the surface of the UTA premises. From 1987 to 1989, accommodation quarters, utility buildings as well as a headquarters building were built for Air Force Service Regiment 3.

In May 1991, the premises were named Welfenkaserne. In in the course of the reorientation of the Air Force's weapon systems logistics, Air Force Service Regiment 3 was disbanded in the Welfenkaserne in 2002, and the Weapon Systems Support Centre was established with a completely changed mission and an entirely new subordination structure.

The regiment headquarter of the Weapon Systems Support Centre was accommodated in the Welfenkaserne; it was disbanded on 31 December 2012. The units were distributed among other regiments.

After another restructuring and new tasks, the Air Force Maintenance Depot 31 was re-named Air Force Maintenance Group 13 (from 2002 to 2009), then Avionics Systems Centre (from 2009 to 2014) and then Maintenance Centre 13 (since 2014).

Today (as of 2022), the Welfenkaserne is home to Maintenance Centre 13, which is part of Weapon Systems Support Centre 1 in Manching, as well as other civilian and military agencies.

The underground facility mainly houses electronics and optronics maintenance and the associated workshops where components of all Bundeswehr systems can be repaired.



„Weingut II“ Memorial Site from its beginnings to the present day

When the Bundeswehr Air Force began to use the former Weingut II bunker, they had no interest in further in-depth research of the Nazi atrocities after the conclusion of the Nuremberg Trials.

Although the terrible history of the bunker building was known, it was taken note of in a rather neutral manner. The still young Federal Republic - as well as the armed forces - were in the identification stage; an increasing threat posed by the East-West conflict and the „Cold War“, which would have almost led to a nuclear conflict in the Cuban Missile Crisis, shaped the thinking and action of the armed forces. Both military personnel stationed here and the local population hardly took note of the history of the underground facility, colloquially referred to as „Messerschmitt-Bunker“, and if they did, it was only through narratives.

This changed in the early 1980s, when history workshops in schools as well as free initiatives emerged in Germany, at first only sporadically but later with increasing frequency; and people began to concern themselves with regional history and in particular with the history of National Socialism. Landsberg students of the Ignaz Kögler Gymnasium under the guidance of their teacher Anton Posset began to ask questions on the subject; and in 1981 their project won the German History Competition advertised by the German Federal President.

At the same time, Captain Helmut Weißbach and Staff Sergeant Rudolf Schmidt, both members of the former Air Force Maintenance Depot 31, began to collect information on and study the history of the bunker. They entered into a cooperation with the „Bürgervereinigung Landsberg im 20. Jahrhundert“ (Citizens' Association of Landsberg in the 20th Century), which Posset had co-founded. This cooperation

was crowned by an exhibition at the Landratsamt (County Office) of Landsberg. Due to differences of opinion, the cooperation ceased and everybody continued to work on their own.

In May 1984, on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of former Air Force Service Regiment 3, a memorial plaque was erected to commemorate the many deaths caused by the construction of the building. After the transfer of Weißbach, who had been promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in the interim, the „Bunker History“ Project lost its momentum in 1986. Schmidt, meanwhile flight sergeant, continued to work in this spirit. After his retirement, the project came to a standstill and was almost forgotten.

In 1995, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the liberation of the concentration camps, former concentration camp prisoners were invited by the town of Landsberg am Lech and the municipality of Kaufering. For the first time, survivors visited the site of their torments and humiliations. The Commander of Air Force Service Regiment 3 appointed Commander (Navy) Fritz-Walter Odinius as project officer for this meeting. The very emotional visit of survivors and family members was a great success. Prejudices were removed and deep friendships developed between soldiers and survivors.

For the first time after their liberation, survivors came into contact with Bundeswehr military personnel and experienced a modern, enlightened army that was firmly rooted in democracy. After the terrible experiences with uniformed personnel of the Third Reich, they now experienced German uniforms worn by completely different people - military personnel of the Bundeswehr who represented human dignity and human rights.

Commander (Navy) Odinius was deeply impressed by this meeting. From then on, he was committed to giving at least the military and civilian personnel of the



Reconstruction of an earthen hut, accommodation at the camps





underground facility an understanding of the history of the survivors. From then on, every member of the Bundeswehr was given a guided tour through the bunker and familiarised with the stories of the survivors. Subsequently, guided tours of the underground facility were prepared especially for local students, and an exhibition was set up and later extended.

**A documentation** prepared by students of the Ignaz Kögler Gymnasium is part of this exhibition. In the documentation they describe how they „rediscovered“ and made accessible a place that had previously been forgotten - concentration camp XI.

**In 2009**, Commander (Navy) Odinius retired, and a new team, Chief Master Sergeant Helmut Müller from autumn 2008 and Lieutenant Colonel Gerhard Roletscheck from summer 2009 - both of them working at the headquarters of the Weapon Systems Support Centre - took over the commemorative work. The contents of the guided tours were revised and extended. They focussed on the reappraisal of the entire history of the bunker. Hence, the post-war period, including the use of the bunker by the German Air Force, was integrated into the commemorative work. At a supra-regional level, contact was established with the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site and the umbrella organisation Bavarian Memorial Foundation. In addition, contact with regional places of remembrance and organisations was sought or renewed.

**In September 2016**, Chief Master Sergeant Michael Siebert took over the office of Chief Master Sergeant Helmut Müller, because the latter had retired. Since October 2018, Captain Gerhard Bechtold has been in charge of the military history collection, succeeding Lieutenant Colonel Gerhard Roletscheck, who had retired. The guided tours and the exhibition are constantly updated and kept up-to-date as a result of work done at the archives.

**The „Military History Collection“** was recognized as such by the Commander, Air Force Office and is officially named „Weingut II Memorial Site“ Military History Collection. In addition, an officer post for a historian was established which further substantiated memorial work academically. Captain Gernot Schroeder performs this task.



**Since 2013**, Esther Glück has accompanied the commemorative work with her art. She has contributed several installations to the memorial site in the underground facility.

The art installation „Berührungspunkt“ (Point of Touch) – hands protruding from the raw concrete surface of the bunker wall - reminds us of the victims who were simply „buried“ in fresh concrete and whose bodies are probably still embedded in the concrete. Visitors often react very emotionally to this installation. With her work, Esther Glück succeeds in making the terror palpable and tangible.

**Within the scope** of military services and beyond, Flight Sergeant (ret.) Alexander Wittmann has been supporting the military history collection for several years. It is thanks to his research and initiative that the exhibition „A Letter to Debbie“ by Yardena Donig-Youner is an integral part of the memorial site as a permanent loan. In addition, he has designed the new exhibition of the eleven camps of the Landsberg/Kaufering satellite camp complex.

**The exhibition „A Letter to Debbie“** was opened as an integral part of the exhibition at the memorial site in 2022. Artist Yardena Donig-Youner, whose parents had fled Germany from the Nazis, had come across the letter by chance through the widow of Albert Gaynes and developed the artwork for an exhibition which, after many stations in the United States and in Europe, can now be seen permanently at the place where Gaynes wrote his letter.

**At present (2023)**, documents of the estate of Mr. and Mrs. Elsner, which was left to the memorial site by the couple's son Alois, are being processed and integrated into the exhibition, and all exhibition areas are being further developed.

**Today, this exhibition**, which includes a presentation and guided tour, is visited mainly by school classes of all school systems starting at grade 8, teaching staff, students, individuals registered at adult education centres and, of course, by military personnel.

**Every year**, former concentration camp prisoners and their relatives come to visit. Guests from public life also visit this exhibition.

**Since 2008**, the number of visitors has constantly increased. As of 2022, we have up to 4000 visitors per year.

## Further Information / Links

*We do not take responsibility for the contents or the functioning of the links - some of the images are shocking.*



*Weingut II Memorial Site at the Federal Agency for Civic Education*



*Video parts 1 and 2:  
Kaufering Concentration Camp  
Complex (YouTube)*



*Contemporary witness reports from  
the camps (Landsberg Association of  
Citizens)*



*Death March from the Kaufering  
satellite camps - Editor: County  
District Office of Fürstfeldbruck (pdf)*



*Liberation of the camps in Kaufering/  
Landsberg - original films (YouTube)*



*Liberation of the camps - with English  
comments (YouTube)*



*Mr. and Mrs. Elsner:  
Documentation with letters of  
thanks from survivors, database  
entry „righteous among the nations“*



*Minutes of the Deffner trial (pdf)*



*Documentation of the use of Under-  
ground Facility by the Bundeswehr  
(YouTube)*



*Weingut II Memorial Site -  
Commemoration ceremony 2022 and  
opening of the permanent exhibition  
„A Letter to Debbie“ (newspaper  
report)*



*Recording of the Ceremony commemo-  
rating the Liberation of Camps in  
2022 at the Memorial Site (YouTube)*

## LEGAL NOTICE

**Publishing agency:**  
Militärgeschichtliche Sammlung  
„Erinnerungsort Weingut II“  
Siegfried-Meister-Strasse 10/104  
86899 Landsberg am Lech  
Bavaria  
Germany

**POC:**  
Instandsetzungszentrum 13  
- Leiter MGS -  
Siegfried-Meister-Strasse 10/104  
86899 Landsberg am Lech  
Bavaria  
Germany

**E-Mail:**  
Instz13milgeschsammlung  
@bundeswehr.org

**Picture credits:**  
Wikimedia Commons, D. Schvarcz,  
Laurence Chaperon / Bayerischer  
Landtag, Bundeswehr, MGS

**Concept/Design:**  
Oberstlt. d. Res. Hermann v. Koch

**Printed by:** Technisches  
Ausbildungszentrum der Luftwaffe  
Abteilung Süd,  
Fachmedienzentrum



**BUNDESWEHR**