

# 80 Years Since the End of War in Landsberg am Lech

## Resistance? Civil Disobedience?

By Gerhard Roletscheck 2025

### Foreword

Eighty years ago, World War II came to an end, a war that originating from Germany, engulfed all of Europe and ultimately the entire world, claiming millions of lives. Twelve years of dictatorship suddenly ended. What role did Landsberg's citizens play in the history of the final days of war in their locality? There have been recurring stories of resistance in the city. Who was involved? What form did it take? How did the war actually end in the city of Landsberg and in our district? This article attempts to provide answers.

### Key Figures

**Karl Neumeyer**, born on February 17<sup>th</sup>, 1890, in Stuttgart, was the editor-in-chief of the *Oberbayerischer Generalanzeiger* (Upper Bavarian General Gazette) published by his publishing house before the National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) seized power. His paper's articles showed early opposition to the emerging National Socialist movement. Hitler's Putsch of November 9<sup>th</sup>, 1923, was condemned<sup>1</sup>. During the subsequent Hitler trial, the paper criticized its "scandalous" and "highly unfortunate course," expressed "gravest concerns about the trial proceedings," and described the presiding judge as "not equal to the task."<sup>2</sup> When Adolf Hitler was released from prison, while reported, it was not particularly emphasized. It was noted that his release was not accompanied by applause<sup>3</sup>. Karl Neumeyer himself described his anti-Hitler conviction as follows:

*"1, Politically: Hitler meant a new war to me, and I had returned from the battlefields of Arras, Verdun, Somme, and Champagne as an opponent of war.*

*2, Ideologically: I was and am a practicing Catholic, and as such, I could never identify myself with National Socialism"*<sup>4</sup>



**Image 1:** The Karl and Elisabeth Neumeyer family with their 5 children.  
Source: Neumeyer family.

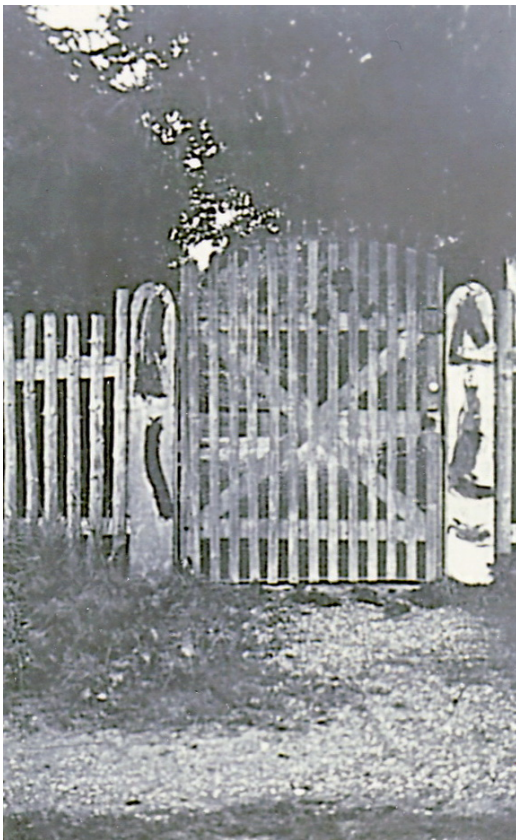
<sup>1</sup> *Oberbayerischer Generalanzeiger* from 12.02.1923

<sup>2</sup> *Oberbayerischer Generalanzeiger* from 08.03.1924

<sup>3</sup> *Oberbayerischer Generalanzeiger* from 22.12.1924

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Karl Neumeyer to the Spruchkammer Landsberg am Lech from April 10th, 1947, Roletscheck Collection

In the years before the transfer of power, Karl Neumeyer won a two instance defamation lawsuit against the then-District Leader Dr. Gmelin and the local health insurance administrator Oskar Kuhn, at the time the most prominent Nazis in Landsberg. However, harassment and hostility from the Party increased afterward. In August 1932, SA members broke 23 windows in the publishing house. On March 10th, 1933, the day of the NSDAP's "seizure of power" in Bavaria, the SA brazenly marched with torches and a marching band in front of the publishing house on Museumsstrasse. The Neumeyer couple was forced to "recant" at riding crop and revolver point. Karl managed to pretend to withdraw his articles and promise to refrain from writing such pieces in the future.<sup>5</sup> This raises the question: Resistance or adaptation? Neumeyer had to run a business and provide for his wife and five children. He chose adaptation for the following years. He had to give up his position as editor-in-chief and was no longer "master in his own house."<sup>6</sup>



**Image 2:** The Neumeyer family owned a lakeside property in Riederau. In 1933, SA members smeared human excrement on the front door as a warning. Source: Neumeyer

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<sup>5</sup> In fall of 1980, I researched the election results of 1933 in Landsberg and the circumstances of the election in the publishing house Neumeyer. There, the widow of Karl Neumeyer encountered me in the publishing rooms and had an intensive conversation with me, in which she reported on the events after the election and the Nazis in Landsberg. This conversation has haunted me to this day. For me as a young person, it was the first time I learned from an eyewitness about that time and the spirit of the age. Elisabeth Neumeyer died on May 28, 1981.

<sup>6</sup> More detailed and in-depth: Manfred Dilger, "Resistenz in Landsberg - The Editor and Publisher Karl Neumeyer and National Socialism", in: Landsberger Geschichtsblätter, 101st year 2002, p. 59ff.

**Wilhelm Jacob** was born on December 5<sup>th</sup>, 1893, in Schwangau. From 1919, he worked as an elementary school teacher in Memmingen, was politically active, and was nominated as a Reichstag candidate. During this time, Jacob maintained connections with Franz Sperr, the Bavarian Government's envoy in Berlin. In protest against the National Socialists, Franz Sperr



**Image 3:** Major Wilhelm Jacob.  
Source: Jacob family.

resigned from his position on June 20<sup>th</sup>, 1934. He subsequently became the focal point for resistance in Bavaria.<sup>7</sup> In 1933, Jacob transferred from Memmingen to the elementary school in Füssen. On August 26<sup>th</sup>, 1939, he was drafted into the Wehrmacht as a reserve officer and assigned as a driver in the ammunition unit of the VI. Division of Mountain Artillery Regiment 79 (GAR 79). The VI. Division was stationed in the Murnau barracks. GAR 79 was subordinate to the 1st Mountain Division and participated in the Polish campaign. On November 13, 1939, Jacob received the clasp to the Iron Cross (EK), Second Class. This indicates that he already possessed an EK II from World War I. The Polish campaign ended in early October. On December 1, 1939, Jacob was appointed adjutant of the VI. Division. GAR 79 remained under the 1st Mountain Division but was relocated to the Eifel region to prepare

for the France campaign. On May 10, 1940, the division advanced through Luxembourg and Belgium to the Meuse River, crossing it near Fumay to enter France.

Jacob was wounded during these battles and received the Iron Cross First Class as a result. In the following months, there were reorganizations. Jacob was transferred as captain to the staff of GAR 79 on August 1, 1940, and on September 7<sup>th</sup>, 1939, he was transferred as battery commander to the Heavy Artillery Replacement Battalion 63 (s. Art. Ers. Abt. 63) in Landsberg am Lech at the Saarbarracks. From then on, Jacob was responsible for training young recruits as artillerymen. He did not leave Landsberg am Lech after this. On January 21, 1941, he became commander of the 3./s.Art.Ers.Abt.(mot) 63 and on September 28, 1942, commander of the core battery. During this time, Jacob continued his political activities.

In autumn 1941, Adolf Hitler ordered the removal of crucifixes from classrooms. As a former teacher and devout Christian, Jacob could not accept this without protest. He wrote to the school administration in Füssen:

*"I have learned that during the summer holidays, the school halls of the boys' school building are to be repainted, and I assume that my classroom is included in this plan. I am also aware of the directive that renovation work in classrooms should be used to 'inconspicuously' remove crucifixes from the rooms. To prevent this, I request that this*

<sup>7</sup> Through the Jesuit priest Alfred Delp, he made contacts with the Kreisauer Kreis in the winter of 1942. On July 28, 1944, he was introduced to Claus von Stauffenberg. Due to knowledge of the assassination attempt of July 20, 1944, Franz Sperr was indicted and sentenced to death by Roland Freisler. The sentence was carried out on January 23, 1945.

*measure, if indeed planned, be avoided for my person and my classroom, and that the crucifix remain in its current place or be reinstalled there.*

*My request is based on the Führer's words, who in a solemn speech at the beginning of the second offensive in France on June 5, 1940, called upon the entire German people to pray for our soldiers. In my opinion, this call is primarily a command to German youth. I cannot imagine beginning or ending a lesson today as a teacher without a communal prayer for the German men fighting at the front. On the other hand, I cannot imagine such a prayer in a room from which the crucifix has been deliberately removed.*

*signed, Iacob  
Captain and Battery Commander"*<sup>8</sup>

One recognizes the teacher and skilled politician in how cleverly he crafted his criticism while still expressing unambiguously what he thought of this measure. The letter triggered a chain reaction. The school principal forwarded it to Füssen's mayor Hans Frank. By September 3rd, 1941, Frank had already justified himself in a letter to the district administrator of Füssen. Two days later, the district administrator wrote to District School Councilor Regner:

*"This is quite something from this fellow!*

*I consider it imperative that Jacob be transferred from Füssen to some backwater village! A teacher with such an attitude in the National Socialist Reich - especially as a 'youth educator!!' - has no place in the Füssen district! He should go to Rome, perhaps the Pope has a teaching position for him! I consider such a teacher incapable of educating German youth in the National Socialist sense - he lacks the very basic requirements! Therefore, I request that all necessary measures be initiated as School Councilor! I request the transmitted proceedings be returned, as I would also like to report separately to the Reich Defense Commissioner.*

*Füssen, September 5, 1941*

*The District Administrator"*<sup>9</sup>

The waves grew higher and culminated in NSDAP proceedings against Iacob in March 1945. In a political testimony prepared for the proceedings, the district leader of Füssen-Markt Oberdorf certified Iacob's distance from the party and stated:

*"While Iacob did not emerge as an opponent of the NSDAP after the seizure of power in Füssen, his actions made it clear that he had not grown closer to National Socialism internally. He refused, for example, to send his children to the Hitler Youth, using flimsy excuses that the local HJ leadership was inadequate. He also stayed away from his professional organization, the NSLB... Iacob is a very intelligent, articulate person in both writing and speech, who unfortunately has drifted so far into democratic waters that it is impossible for him to become a convinced National Socialist. I consider his political reliability to be N O T given."*<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Letter from Iacob to the principal in Füssen dated 09.01.1941, Roletscheck Collection

<sup>9</sup> Letter from the District Administrator of Füssen to the District School Board Regner in Marktoberdorf dated 09.05.1941, Roletscheck Collection

<sup>10</sup> Letter from District Leader Sailer, Marktoberdorf, to Major General Fehn, Gau Liaison Officer Swabia, Augsburg, dated 03.19.1945, Roletscheck Collection



On April 30, 1943, Wilhelm Iacob was transferred from the Training and Core Company of s.Art.Ers.Abt.(mot) 63 to the staff of Artillery Replacement Regiment 27 (Art.Ers.Rgt. 27). This transfer likely coincided with his promotion to Major and the awarding of the War Merit Cross with Swords. Thus, he became adjutant to Regiment Commander and Senior Garrison Officer Colonel König, as well as Garrison Commander, making him responsible for the defense of Landsberg am Lech. In this position, Iacob began actively searching for like-minded individuals who did not sympathize with the National Socialists. He found Friedrich Deichel from Eching am Ammersee, a comrade in the battery and teacher like himself. Through conversations, he drew him into his confidence and managed to have him transferred as local commander to Füssen in summer 1943<sup>11</sup>. In Captain Richard Scheringer, born on September 13, 1904, in Aachen, he found his next collaborator. As a Reichswehr lieutenant, Scheringer had sided with the Communists and had since actively resisted; his unit was transferred to Landsberg for reinforcement. Here, he immediately reached out to find like-minded individuals.

*"In Landsberg, I became acquainted with the garrison commander, a Major Iacob. We met at my private quarters' landlady. He speaks openly with me. He says: 'We have prepared the peaceful surrender of the city. The leaflets are already printed.' We agree that I will maintain contact with the Ingolstadt group and also inform those in Augsburg. It must be ensured by all means that there will be no new battle in Bavaria and no retreat to the National Redoubt."*<sup>12</sup>



**Image 4:** Johann Pfannenstiel.  
Source: City Archives.

Indeed, Iacob succeeded in having Captain Scheringer transferred to Ingolstadt. There, he was appointed local commander of Vohburg. From here, using a motorcycle, he maintained connections with Landsberg, Augsburg, and Ingolstadt to coordinate resistance efforts. Over the years, Iacob built a network of like-minded individuals. He had good contacts in all areas of the city, with trade and commerce, police, administration, and the city's mayor.

**Johann Pfannenstiel**, a fruit merchant in Landsberg am Lech, was born on November 6, 1893, in Zwiesel in the Bavarian Forest and came to Landsberg in 1929. He first opened a fruit and southern fruits shop at Alte Bergstraße 406, and in 1930 moved to building number 410, which is still known today as the Pfannenstiel house. Pfannenstiel was more

aligned with the left political spectrum. How he and Iacob came into contact is not documented.

<sup>11</sup> Affidavit by Wilhelm Iacob dated 04.05.1946, Roletscheck Collection

<sup>12</sup> Richard Scheringer: Among Soldiers, Farmers and Rebels: The Great Lot, Damitz Verlag München, 1979

**Dr. Karl Linn** was born on April 6, 1901, in Klingenberg/Main. In 1933, he was a government councilor in the district office of Pirmasens. Through connections with the NSDAP district leader in Landsberg, von Moltke, he received the vacant position of the deceased government councilor Gross in the local district office. In May 1937, he was appointed mayor of Landsberg am Lech.



**Image 5:** (From left to right) Mayor Dr. Linn and Gauleiter of Swabia Karl Wahl in conversation at the district craft fair in Landsberg am Lech. Source: Landsberg City Archives.

Major Iacob said the following about Dr. Linn:

*"In response to question: I founded the resistance group. It had existed since 1941 and was created to intervene at the moment when National Socialism showed weakness. Initially, it was purely in the military sector, and in 1942 I extended it to the civilian sector.*

*In response to question: I first met Dr. Linn personally in 1942. I went to him regarding the convent sisters who had asked me for help. I negotiated with them. He arranged for one sister to regain permission to teach. In 1941/42, Mr. Thielen from Munich, a hater of the Nazi regime, told me that he (namely Dr. Linn) had been drafted because he was unpopular in the party. He was also not promoted in the Wehrmacht. My resistance group joined Franz Sperr's group. The matter then merged with the July 20th movement. Sperr was hanged. In early 1944, I revealed to Dr. Linn in a meeting what it was about and asked him to tell me who the most important Nazis were. Then he gave me a list with the names of these people. At that moment, Dr. Linn knew exactly what it was about. After July 20th, I regularly negotiated with Dr. Linn. We then discussed everything openly. However, at this point, we could no longer aim solely for liberation from National Socialism, but for the preservation of our homeland. Many people helped us. As garrison officer, I had to negotiate with Dr. Linn on behalf of the senior garrison commander. The point was to appear to be doing something while actually preventing everything. There was an order to prepare for bridge demolition. I managed to get General Kriebel to come here and see for himself that the Lech could be forded. As a result, the bridge demolition order was rescinded. Then General Kriebel was recalled, and General Greiner, his successor, renewed the demolition order. He too rescinded it after inspecting the local conditions."<sup>13</sup>*

In summer 1944, Dr. Linn began gathering people around him whom he could trust. He requested a new chief for the Landsberg protection police. The incumbent was monitoring his mail and secretly passing the mayor's directives to loyal party members. Therefore, Dr. Linn requested a new police chief from the government of Upper Bavaria. The government president's clerk informed him that the chosen candidate Max Fellner had fallen into disfavor with District Leader Schwägerl and would face the greatest possible difficulties. These apparently were good references, as Dr. Linn approved the transfer.



**Max Fellner**, born on February 23, 1898, in Passau, a police lieutenant, was transferred from Mühldorf to Landsberg am Lech on September 1, 1944.<sup>14</sup> His predecessor, Senior Police Lieutenant Friedrich Kropf, went to Freising instead. Max Fellner soon became a confidant of Dr. Linn and thus quickly established good contact with Wilhelm Iacob.

**Image 6:** Max Josef Fellner. Source: City Archives, personnel file.

<sup>13</sup> Statement by Wilhelm Iacob, Spruchkammer Landsberg/Lech, Minutes of the public session of March 5, 1948, Staatsarchiv München Spk-Akten K 3130: Linn

<sup>14</sup> Records of Max Fellner and an undated eyewitness interview with Max Fellner and Anton Lichtenstern. Roletscheck Collection



## Resistance Planning in the Concentration Subcamps

The first 1,883 prisoners from Kaunas arrived at Camp I on July 15, 1944. Among them were **David Wolpe** (prisoner no. 81470), **Mendel Sandovski** (prisoner no. 81579), **Leo Garfunkel** (prisoner no. 82606), **Chana Silberzweig** (prisoner no. 84157), **Serubadel Rosenzweig** (prisoner no. 81024), and **Abraham Melamed** (prisoner no. 86207). On July 29, 1944, **David Galpert** (prisoner no. 86143) and **Selimar Frenkel** (prisoner no. 84671) followed. Both were



**Image 7:** Members of the Irgun Brit Zion (IBZ) underground movement in Kaunas around 1942. From left, standing: Elijah Kelson, Rivka Rogol, Selimar Frenkel (wearing glasses), the main author of the "Nitzot" editions, Sara Starovolsky, Serubadel Rosenzweig; Kneeling: Moshe Gurewitz, Mordka Fiszer (Prisoner No. 97849, died on January 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945, in Camp IV Kaufering), Chaim Stropp. Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

transferred to Camp II. In the Soviet-occupied part of Lithuania, the anti-communist-Zionist underground formed under the organization of Irgun Brith Zion (IBZ). After Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union, they continued their fight against National Socialism. In December 1940, high school graduates and upper-level students in Kaunas decided to establish an underground newspaper with the Hebrew name "Nitzot" – the Spark.<sup>15</sup> In the Kaunas ghetto, the authors managed to create 28 issues. After the dissolution of the ghetto, most of the survivors were transported to Kaufering via the Stutthof concentration camp. Here, the survivors met again. Selimar Frenkel, the main author of "Nitzot," and David Galpert managed to establish an underground organization, although they were cut off from their comrades in Camp I.

They succeeded in creating the first



**Image 8:**  
Medel Sadowski.  
Source: ITS  
125843088.



**Image 9:**  
Dawid Wolpe.  
Source: ITS  
125844054.

<sup>15</sup> Nitzot The spark of Resistance in Kovno Ghetto & Dachau-Kaufering Concentration Camp, Laura M. Weinrib, Syracuse University Press 2009 New York



two issues of "Nitzot" on German soil by December 1944. Through their connections to the camp office, the "Organization" managed to transfer Selimar Frenkel to Camp I. The following week, issue 3 was already published. The underground newspaper gave prisoners strength and purpose. Meetings were organized to determine the topics for each issue. Subsequently, different members copied the issues to reproduce them. In issue No. 5<sup>16</sup>, it was announced that a Hebrew circle could be established within "Nitzot." They also met in the earth barracks after hard work and discussed the future in Palestine and a State of Israel.

**Rudolf Valsonok** (prisoner no. 81474), born in Vilnius, was the leader of one of these groups:

*"In mid-March of the current year, at a meeting of the underground committee of prisoners in Camp 1 Kaufering, which I chaired, a report was received about establishing contact with the resistance movement in the city of Landsberg. The reporter, Rudolf Senf, a long-time Dachau prisoner who was brought to Camp 1 Kaufering at the beginning of the year, told us that after long efforts, he had managed to gain the trust of a brewery master in the city of Landsberg, who apparently had direct connections to the leadership of the resistance movement in Landsberg."*<sup>17</sup>



**Dr. Zalmann Grinberg** (prisoner no. 82151), one of the camp doctors and later director of the hospital in St. Ottilien, was even elected as a representative of the Zionist movement to the committee:

*"A committee was elected in which two political directions were represented, namely Zionists and Communists. Only one elected member of the committee, who was imprisoned in the camp as a political prisoner, was a Christian Aryan"<sup>18</sup>. I had the honor of participating among the Zionist members of the committee... In each hut, there was a trusted person from our group active, and every five trusted persons were led by a supervisor. We had already organized a police watch and other vital services in case the Germans should suddenly flee before the Allied armies arrived at the camp."*<sup>19</sup>

**Image 10:** Dr. Zalman Grinberg was appointed by the Americans as the head of the DP hospital in St. Ottilien. Source: Grinberg family,

<sup>16</sup> Late February 1945

<sup>17</sup> Affidavit by Rudolf Valsonok dated 06.22.1945, Staatsarchiv München, Spk-Akten K3130 Linn

<sup>18</sup> This was Rudolf Senf, born on 06.30.1898 in Leipzig. He came from Dachau to Kaufering, Camp I, on October 14, 1944 and was a functional prisoner.

<sup>19</sup> Zalman Grinberg. Our Liberation from Dachau - Memories of a Survivor (Manuscript), St. Ottilien 2018, Original in Hebrew from 1948, English translation in the 1960s

**Karl Zelger**, born 1894, was brewmaster at Waitzinger Bräu and the liaison to Rudolf Senf. He says about the events of that time:

*"At the beginning of 1945, I met a concentration camp prisoner from Camp I near Landsberg, who often came to me to get beer for the SS canteen. His name is Rudi Senf. After I had convinced myself that he was not a criminal but a political prisoner who had been imprisoned since 1933, I took him into my confidence and let him know that there was a resistance movement in Landsberg, which was all the more significant as Mayor Dr. Linn and Garrison Commander Major Jakob were at its head. I knew this through the mayor's confidant, police officer Eduard Pflanz."*<sup>20</sup>

He further stated:

*"One day Senf told me that there was an underground committee in the camp, that the prisoners were determined to fight against the SS if necessary. He also told me that the committee was conspiring with part of the guard force, namely with the Poles who had been forced into the SS. He asked me how they could obtain weapons. I explained to him that there would certainly be no danger from the garrison, the Volkssturm, or the mayor. Regarding armament, I suggested that they should get in touch with Dr. Linn. Due to the rapid development of events, this never happened."*<sup>21</sup>

### **Preparations for the Defense of the City**

On March 14<sup>th</sup>, 1945, the Protection Police in Landsberg formed an "Anti-Tank Combat Unit" from their officers. This unit, led by station commander Max Fellner, was motorized with a motorcycle (with sidecar)<sup>22</sup>. Training on the Panzerfaust 30 and 60 was conducted by Artillery Unit 63 in the Saaburg barracks and was completed on March 29<sup>th</sup>. As a protective and defensive measure, they began digging trenches and creating foxholes in Landsberg. These were intended to combat approaching enemy tanks.

To facilitate aiming with the Panzerfaust, anti-tank barriers were installed. Construction of these barriers began on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1945. One was built at the Bayertor and another on Neue Bergstrasse. A blockade of the passage to the main square and the Sandauer Gate was likely planned as well. On Neue Bergstrasse, at the exit to Hofgraben, steel rings approximately 3m in diameter and 2m high were positioned on the sides of the road and filled with gravel. When Allied tanks approached, these "barrels" were to be pulled onto the road using tractors. Additionally, barriers made of tree trunks were to be set up in Landsberg and surrounding villages. The Reich Defense Commissioners distributed construction plans for this purpose. The barriers were prepared. When tanks approached, tree trunks were to be placed in the abutments to close the barriers.

The following night, slogans and appeals were written in tar paint on the barriers. On the street in front of the tank barrier on Neue Bergstrasse: "THIS WORK MEANS THE DESTRUCTION OF YOUR HOMELAND." The inscriptions "TANK BARRIERS MEAN

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<sup>20</sup> Affidavit, signed by Zelger, undated, Staatsarchiv München Spk-Akten K3130: Linn

<sup>21</sup> Affidavit, signed by Zelger, undated, Staatsarchiv München Spk-Akten K3130: Linn

<sup>22</sup> Specifically, these were: Eugen Schmitt (Deputy), Hans Dentsch, Ernst Wolf, Rudolf Kugelman, Anton Brandl, and Ignatz Sedelmeier as shooters. Report to the Government President in Munich dated 03.14.45, Stadtarchiv Landsberg

THE DESTRUCTION OF YOUR HOMELAND" and "DON'T BUILD TANK BARRIERS" could be read at the Bayertor, at the passage to Neue Bergstrasse near the administration building, at the town parish church, and at the electrical power plant at Sandauer Bridge. At Stark's shoe store at the Lech Bridge was written "BUILDING TANK BARRIERS IS POINTLESS - RESIST."<sup>23</sup> To this day, it remains unclear who or which group carried out this act of civil disobedience/resistance – which is remarkable since many citizens claimed a role in the resistance after the collapse.

### Mission "Luxe I"

As on almost every night during the war, on April 4<sup>th</sup> 1945, aircraft of the 8th Air Force took off from their English airfields and from the already liberated French airfield in Dijon toward occupied territories with a special mission. For the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, this was the 925<sup>th</sup> mission, recorded in the diaries as a "Night Leaflet Operation." One B-17 and ten B-24s were deployed. The operational area included Holland, France, and Germany. One of the B-24s was tasked with dropping agents near the expected "Lech Front" to gather information about German troops. The mission was codenamed "Luxe I." On the morning of April 5<sup>th</sup>, at 2:35 AM, agents Fredi Appenzell and Leon Lindau parachuted near Raisting. Freddie, alias **Friedrich Lämmerhirt**, and Leon, alias **Rudolf Karl**, were dubious characters recruited by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS)<sup>24</sup> for these purposes. Lämmerhirt served as a civilian in the Luftwaffe in occupied France and was imprisoned in Paris for embezzlement. He eventually managed to escape and went into hiding in Paris. The French resistance movement put him in contact with the Americans. Besides payment, he hoped for American citizenship after the war. Karl was born in Munich and had relatives in Kempten. He joined the Foreign Legion and also went underground in France when it was occupied. Mission Luxe I managed to gain a foothold with supporters in the town of Stillern (near Raisting).

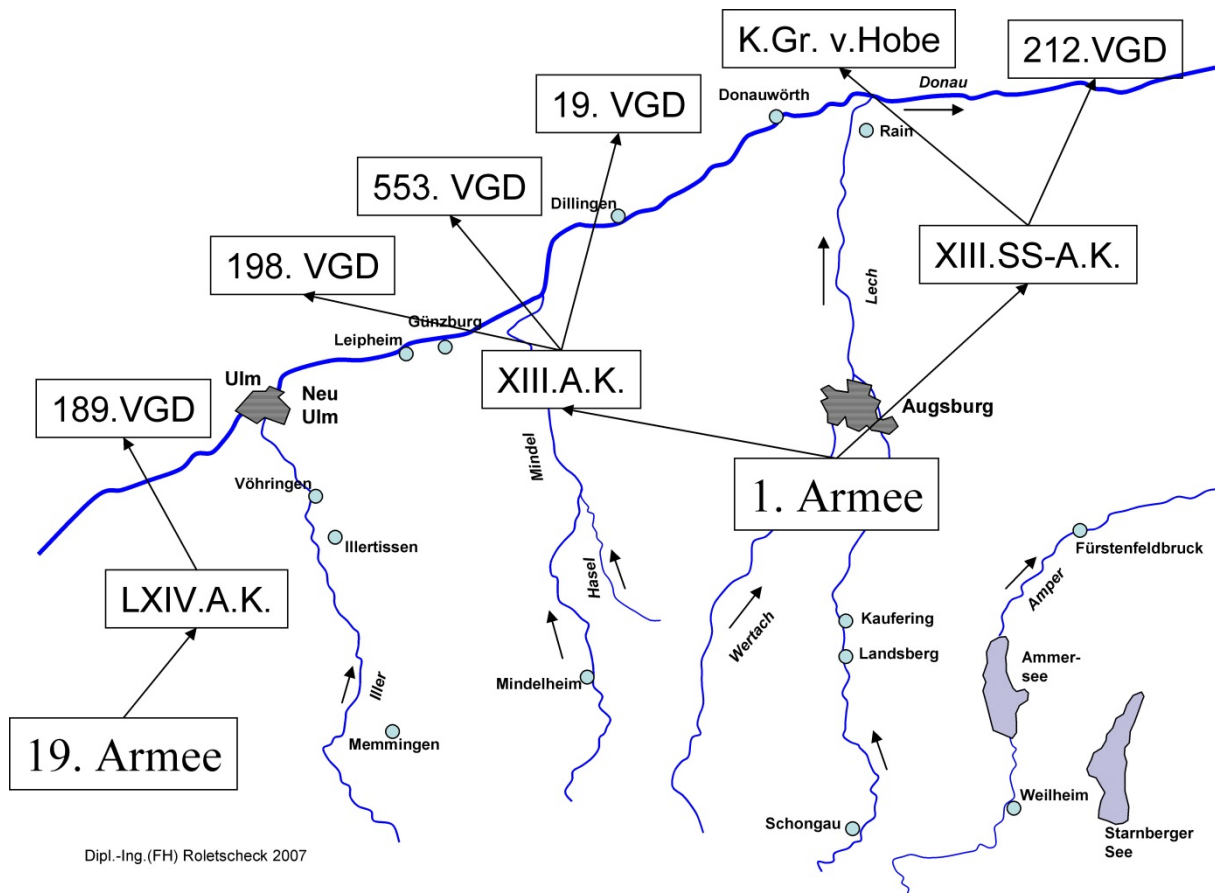


**Image 11:** On the right, Friedrich Lämmerhirt; after the war, the scene of the landing with parachute and equipment was recreated. Source: Lämmerhirt, Anton Huber Collection.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from the Schutzpolizei Landsberg-Lech to the Government President in Munich, the District Administrator of Landsberg, the District Leadership Landsberg and the Geh. Staatspol. - Branch Office Landsberg from 04.05.1945, Stadtarchiv Landsberg am Lech

<sup>24</sup> The OSS was the intelligence service of the United States War Department and thus the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIC) founded in 1947.

When the Americans broke through the German defense lines near Crailsheim on April 6, Infantry General Schulz, Commanding General of Army Group G, placed himself under Military District VII on April 8. Army Group G commanded the 7th, 1st, and 19th Armies. These were engaged in retreat battles with advancing American and French troops. On the right side, the 7th Army was pushed toward Czechoslovakia and lost contact with its neighbor, the 1st Army. The 1st Army was positioned along the Danube from Regensburg to Ulm. Ingolstadt, Donauwörth, Dillingen, and Günzburg were considered key points for defending the Danube. Combat commanders for these cities were specifically ordered. They were personally responsible for the defense.



**Map 1:** The forces of Army Group G under General of the Infantry, Schulz, on the borders of military district VII Bavaria

The Iller front wasn't particularly protected at this time, as the 19th Army was still operating far ahead and this was considered sufficient. This was when Station Commander **Colonel König** informed his combat commander Major Jacob and his battalion commander **Major Kammerer** of his decision not to defend Landsberg. Major Jacob and Dr. Linn prepared for the final phase of the "Thousand-Year Reich" and approached Karl Neumeyer with the following task:

*"About 14 days before the American occupation, I was taken into confidence by Station Officer Major Jacob and Mayor Dr. Linn and was to prepare everything for the quickest production of a resistance leaflet to be distributed to the population at the last moment before Landsberg's occupation. The approximate content was to read: Volkssturm lay down your weapons. Raise white flags everywhere, population to remain quietly in their houses. I discussed the details with Mayor Dr. Linn in his office, gave him the address of a trustworthy*



*typesetter and printer from my business who should be fetched by the police when the planned alert level was triggered (if at night), prepared the paper for the leaflet, made other preparations for printing, and reported my readiness to Mayor Dr. Linn."*<sup>25</sup>

On April 13, LUXE I<sup>26</sup> received orders to discover details about the intentions of Army Group G, Division Command 407 for special use (ZbV), and the Volkssturm. They learned from the blacksmith in Raisting that he had good business contacts with **Jakob Kink**, a sawmill owner in Landsberg. Agent Freddie and Hans Huttner decided to drive to Landsberg by truck on April 16. As a blacksmith, Huttner had permission and reason for the journey. Freddie was disguised as a French prisoner of war. Everything went well until Landsberg. After the Lech Bridge, shortly before Kink's sawmill, they were stopped and their papers checked, including those of the supposed Frenchman Freddie. Huttner explained he had forgotten to bring Freddie's papers, whereupon the logbook was thoroughly examined. It was in order and they were allowed to continue.



**Image 12:** Kink Sawmill in Landsberg at Englischen Garten, now a residential area. Source: Advertising photo from: Heimatbuch der Stadt und Landkreis Landsberg am Lech, 1966.

place. Major Jacob was absent as the meeting was too short notice. Flammenstiel and Kink informed Freddie about their resistance group and discussed further proceedings. Kink

<sup>25</sup> Letter from Karl Neumeyer to the Spruchkammer Landsberg a/Lech dated April 10, 1947, Roletscheck Collection

<sup>26</sup> Berta Huttner, The End of World War II in the Weilheim - Raisting Region (unpublished), including National Archive Washington, RG 226, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, Archiv Landsberg am Lech

committed to providing a truck to transport an agent to Munich so he could assess the situation himself. Pfannenstiel met with Major Iacob at Hubert and Olga Appel's apartment at Herkommerstr. 83 and informed him about the meeting. Iacob and Mrs. Appel had known each other since school days in Füssen. The Appel family's living room served as a secret meeting place until the end of the war. Major Iacob agreed with the plan and promised to do everything to surrender Landsberg without a fight and try to prevent the demolition of the Lech bridges. He also provided Pfannenstiel with military information. The next day, Kink and Pfannenstiel drove a truck from Kink's sawmill to Stillern to meet with both LUXE I agents. That night, Freddie transmitted the following radio message to a specially equipped Mosquito bomber circling over Raisting:

*"G = Ground, P = Pilot*

*G: Hello Vic, here is Freddie. Made contact today with garrison commandant of Landsberg. He commands at present 7000<sup>27</sup> men, including 4500 men heavy artillery, Army Group artillery, 15 cm cannons. What can we do with this man? He is willing to cooperate with us. Stop, over to you.*

*P: Hello Freddie, here is Vic. I understood well. Stop, go ahead.*

*G: Hello Vic, here is Freddie. All bridges across the Lech river have been mined and are ready to blow up... The morale here is very low. 95% of Army, and Home Guard (Volkssturm), and the whole civilian population is unwilling to fight. They all think of giving up, and people on the street often ask if the Americans are coming soon."<sup>28</sup>*

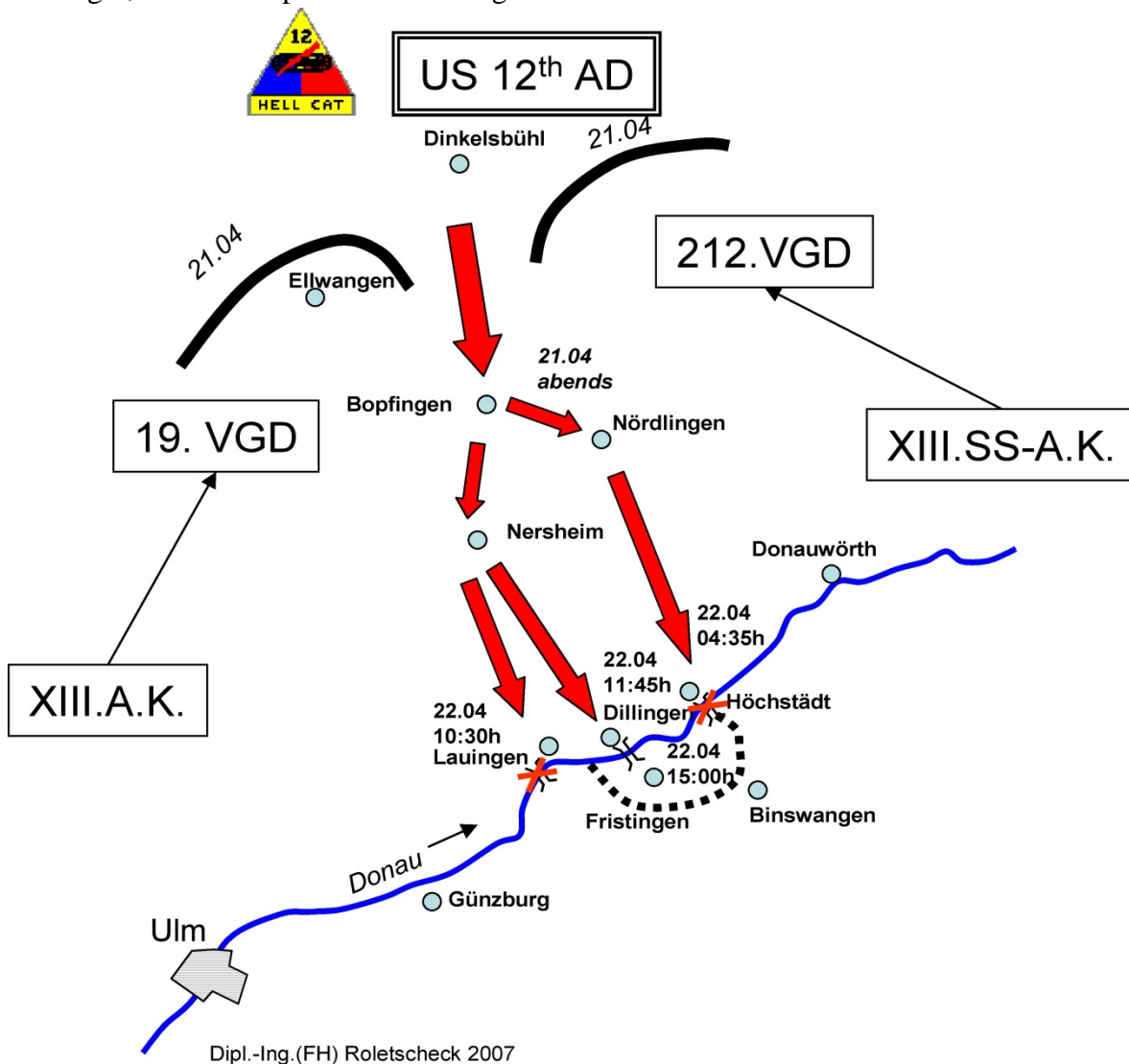
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<sup>27</sup> The numbers were grossly exaggerated. At this time there were about 2,000 convalescents and recruits in the barracks. The convalescents were mostly on medical leave at home.

<sup>28</sup> National Archive Washington, RG 226, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, from: Berta Huttner, The End of World War II in the Weilheim - Raisting Region (unpublished), Archiv Landsberg am Lech

## Opening of the Supply Depot

On April 22, 1945, tank spearheads of the 12th US Armored Division reached the Danube near Höchstädt but found the bridge there already destroyed. The units marched toward Dillingen and Lauingen. In Dillingen, US troops managed to overwhelm the surprised German bridge guard and capture the bridge intact. At 10:30 AM, a "second Remagen"<sup>29</sup> occurred. This put American troops in possession of a Danube crossing. The Americans immediately recognized the bridge's value, built a pontoon bridge upstream across the Danube overnight, and thus expanded their bridgehead.



**Map 2:** The American troops attacked at the seam between the 19th and 212th People's Grenadier Divisions and found the weak point. Within two days, they had captured the Danube bridge in Dillingen undamaged.

<sup>29</sup> The Army Group G had already warned on April 9, 45 "... Advance of enemy armored groups across the Danube, focus direction Munich, are possible. All Danube bridges must be secured immediately by adequate occupation and prepared for demolition. Under no circumstances may a Danube bridge fall into enemy hands unharmed. The Remagen case is recalled." Telegram, signed Schulz, Commander-in-Chief of Army Group G, Bundesarchiv RH 53-7/292





**Image 13:** April 22, 1945: Tanks from the 12th US Armored Division secure the defusing of explosive charges on the Dillinger Danube Bridge. Source: US Signal Corps, 2nd Lt. Newell, 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum.

Major Jacob reacted to this news on April 23, as it was now foreseeable when US troops would reach Landsberg. The responsible district commands maintained supply depots. In view of the approaching front, Major Jacob decided to inform Mayor Dr. Linn that he would open the supply depot in the barracks for use by the population.

*"After Mayor Dr. Linn of Landsberg was informed, he ordered, after consulting with Mr. R. Obermayer, then inspector at the Economic Office, Mr. Michael Schmid, innkeeper of Hotel Goggl, and myself, that the food supplies in the livestock hall at Inselbad be released for the rural population of Landsberg district."*<sup>30</sup>

The mentioned gentlemen Obermayer and Schmid had motorized transport and could thus inform the mayors of the district communities about the situation. And what had to happen, happened. On foot, by bicycle, with handcarts and ox-drawn vehicles, the population and farmers came to stock up on all kinds of food before the expected arrival of American troops. There was everything: coffee beans, sugar, peas, rice, flour, dried potatoes, and canned goods. There was pushing and shoving, creating considerable tumult. The then 15-year-old Manfred Neumeyer describes the events around the livestock hall in a diary entry as follows:

<sup>30</sup> Memories of the then Police Station Manager Max Fellner, Roletscheck Collection



*"Rumors spread that the huge supply depot in the barracks would be released. In the evening, I learned that canned goods were being distributed at the livestock hall. I immediately rode there on the business bicycle to get something too. But thousands of people were already*



**Image 13B:** The picture was taken on April 29, 1945, in front of the Neumeyer publishing house. US soldiers pick up employees and family members for the burial of the dead concentration camp prisoners in Camp IV. On the left of the picture, the boy with the striped sweater is Manfred Neumeyer; he was also taken along. Source: US Signal Corps, 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum.

*standing there, and it seemed impossible to get through. After incredible pushing, I finally managed to enter the livestock hall. There were huge stacks of boxes, and since people were simply taking the boxes away, I got one too. Of course, I didn't know what was inside. Then I wanted to get out again, which was impossible because both entrance gates had been locked. Although I held the box tightly in my hands, I had to let go several times, but it remained stuck between people in this crowd - as impossible as it seemed. Shortly after, I saw my mother, who was also locked in. She had a can in her hand. Together it was easier. Finally, after some time, a gate was opened again. Some wanted to get out and others wanted in, creating an even bigger tumult. But I didn't let go of my box until I had forced my way through the people with all my might. When I put it in the tricycle, I had no feeling in my hands, and they were blue and bleeding quite a bit. Even though 'Alarm' and 'Acute Air Danger' were announced, no one cared. If just one fighter plane had come, it could have taken out hundreds of people in a row."<sup>31</sup>*



**Image 14:** On the right in the background, the gymnasium's sports hall; on the left, the old cattle hall. Photo circa 1950. Source: LG 103rd year, 2004.

<sup>31</sup> Diary entries by Manfred Neumeyer, Roletscheck Collection

The guards of the supply depot were powerless against the chaos. They fired into the air, and when this didn't help either, they triggered an air raid alarm. This measure brought no solution either. As Manfred Neumeyer had already described in his account, nobody paid attention to the alarm. At the same time, the first evacuated prisoners from the Türkheim concentration camp arrived in Landsberg.<sup>32</sup>

Once again, the demolition of the Lech crossings was regulated in an order, this time in Corps Order No. 5 of the Deputy General Command VII. Lieutenant General Greiner ordered:

"3. c)

*Division<sup>33</sup> prepares, in connection with Army High Command 1 and 19, accelerated preparation of Lech crossings for demolition. For this purpose, Engineer Battalion 7 Munich is assigned and subordinated to the Division.*

3. d)

*4. Division must accelerate checking of charges and detonators of bridges prepared for demolition. Execution report by telephone to General Command. Another failure of a bridge demolition like in the case of Dillingen must be prevented at all costs.*"<sup>34</sup>

On April 24, the demolition teams arrived at their objects (Lech bridges in Schwabstadt/Zollhaus, Kaufering, Landsberg, Mundraching, Epfach, and in Schongau) with the necessary explosives and took up quarters.



**Image 15:** Gasthof Kratzer served as accommodation for the pioneers of the demolition command. Source: Advertising photo: Das Bayerland, 49th year, 1938.

An unknown person from the Landsberg Party District Leadership informed the Gau Leadership in Munich about the decision to distribute the stored supplies to the population. Those responsible and implementing had to answer to the Gau Leadership in Munich on April 25:

*"Mayor Dr. Linn, Mr. Obermayer, and I had to report to Munich, to the Gau Leadership, the next day - Wednesday - and justify ourselves. And only because we could prove to the Gau Leadership that the Wehrmacht had first released the provision halls in the Saarburg barracks for the population, we could return to Landsberg unharmed."*<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> see Landsberger Geschichtsblätter, 122nd year 2024, p. 102

<sup>33</sup> Division No. 407

<sup>34</sup> Stellv. Generalkommando VII A.K. Wehrkreiskommando VII from 04.23.1945, Bundesarchiv Freiburg RH 53-7/287.

<sup>35</sup> Memories of the then Police Station Manager Max Fellner, Roletscheck Collection

When station chief Max Fellner returned to the police station, he found several boxes of Panzerfausts intended for the Volkssturm<sup>36</sup> stacked at the stairway.<sup>37</sup> Fellner informed Major Jacob, whereupon the boxes were collected by a soldier and 4 auxiliaries with a horse-drawn cart and taken in the direction of the barracks. Thus they were removed from circulation. In the last days, most concentration camps in Landsberg were evacuated, and the prisoners were marched on foot to Dachau or Allach. This thwarted the planned resistance of prisoners from Camp I. The non-ambulatory, sick, and weak prisoners from Camp IV were to be transported to Dachau by train in the afternoon. The train was attacked by US aircraft, resulting in a bloodbath.<sup>38</sup>

The next day, Major Jacob had to answer to a court-martial in Munich:

*"On 26.04.1945, a court-martial proceeding (1 war judge, 1 special representative of Field Marshal Kesselring) was opened against my father for transferring army supplies to the civilian sector to prevent demolition or destruction of these important foodstuffs. Result: Acquittal. Proceedings dismissed."*<sup>39</sup>

After his return, Major Jacob again faced charges of undermining military morale, this time unofficially and behind his back. As time was pressing, a secret court was hastily convened by a Nazi officer, probably Lieutenant Speer.<sup>40</sup> Against this background, Major Jacob was sentenced to death by the feme tribunal<sup>41</sup> in the artillery barracks. They decided to lure him from his apartment to the barracks under a pretext to kill him. Now it paid off that the Major had placed trustworthy soldiers in key positions in recent months who were informed about the mood in the barracks.

*"Mr. Lörcher has continuously kept me informed about the events in the troops and especially about the ideas and planned measures of young Nazi officers, so that counter-measures were almost always possible. He has further repeatedly informed me about things that were to be undertaken or were undertaken against me personally, so that I was able to parry in time with suitable means and thus hold out until the end. His services became particularly valuable to me in April 1945, at a time when I was already in contact with American paratroopers to prepare the handover of Landsberg without a fight and to pass information about the German situation to the American army. The resistance work in the barracks in Landsberg was particularly difficult and dangerous at this time because parts of the OKW and the staff of BdE (Himmler) were stationed in this barracks."*<sup>42</sup>

The death sentence of the secret court against Jacob was recognized by Master Sergeant Müller, who informed Major Jacob of the plan, allowing him to escape through a window. Together with the Master Sergeant, who had organized a motorcycle, he managed to escape to

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<sup>36</sup> Memories of the then Police Station Manager Max Fellner, Roletscheck Collection

<sup>37</sup> The panzerfausts were intended for the police's anti-tank squad, whose squad leader he was, and not for the Volkssturm as Fellner suspected and stated. This fact was probably suppressed from his memory.

<sup>38</sup> Gerhard Roletscheck: Evacuation transports and marches of the Kaufering sub-camp complex, Landsberger Geschichtsblätter, 122nd year 2024.

<sup>39</sup> Declaration by Wilhelm Jacob, son of Major Jacob, dated June 22, 1991, Roletscheck Collection

<sup>40</sup> Letter from Wilhelm Jacob to Jakob Jordan dated 03.10.1946 and statement of the son in December 1998, Roletscheck Collection

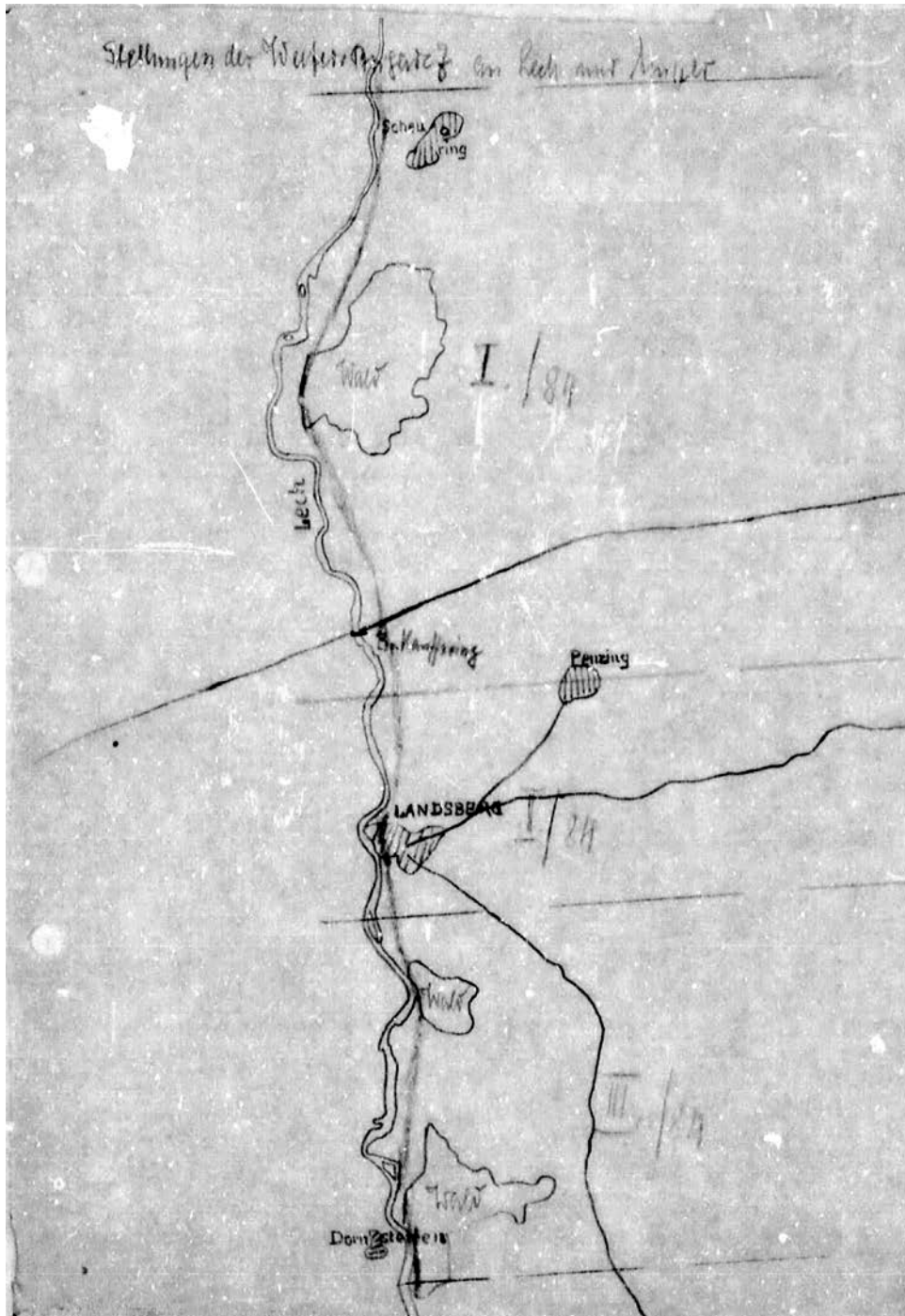
<sup>41</sup> Term for politically motivated, illegally carried out private justice murders.

<sup>42</sup> Wilhelm Jacob: Affidavit for Paul Lörchner, Mindelheim, dated 10.12.1946, Roletscheck Collection



Füssen. Here in his hometown, he hid until the Americans came. When he secretly visited his wife, she already knew of rumors about his alleged death. Word had spread as far as Füssen that the traitor Jacob had been hanged in Landsberg!<sup>43</sup>

## Final Resistance



**Map 3:** Original drawing by Generalmajor Paape about the use of the Volks-Werfer-Regiment 84 on the Lechfront. From top to bottom Scheuring to south of Kaufing Department I, then to south of Landsberg approx. Wildpark Department II and then up to the height of Dornstätten the Department III, staff in Landsberg  
Source: Report B-131 Collection  
Roletscheck

Major Jacob was no longer active in Landsberg from April 26, creating a power vacuum. On April 26, the regimental staff of the People's Rocket Regiment 84 reached Landsberg. Colonel

<sup>43</sup> Declaration by Wilhelm Jacob, son of Major Jacob, dated June 22, 1991 and conversation in December 1998, Roletscheck Collection



Herbert Wolf had orders from his commander General Kurt Paape to take up position in the Landsberg area at the "Lech Front."

*"On April 25, the brigade staff with Rocket Regiment 84 was deployed for infantry defense of the Lech section on both sides of Landsberg across a front width of more than 18km. This represented an impossible task, especially considering the lack of heavy weapons and shortage of small arms ammunition."*<sup>44</sup>

When Colonel Wolf didn't find the responsible defense commander Major Iacob, he took command of the city<sup>45</sup>. In the collective memory of Landsberg's citizens, he and his soldiers were "SS men." The defense policy changed radically; in contrast to Major Iacob's policy of directing all flowing troops to the "national redoubt" Wolf began positioning his and arriving soldiers in their positions.

The Rocket Regiment 84 had been in the Mindelheim – Türkheim – Markt Wald – Kirchheim area since April 1 for refreshment, as it had shrunk to half its material and personnel in the battles in Saarland. After its refreshment, it was renamed People's Rocket Regiment 84 and deployed in Landsberg for the first time.

*"The refreshment suffered from railway difficulties and fuel shortages. Nevertheless, within three weeks, they managed to bring the personnel strength to full capacity, as well as the number of launchers. About 2/3 of the vehicles could be repaired or replaced with new ones. There was a shortage of small arms, where only about every second man could receive a carbine; only five live rounds were available for each firearm. The rest of the men had to be equipped with pistols."*<sup>46</sup>

Additionally, they couldn't equip the rocket launchers with ammunition. Thus, this unit had no combat value (a toothless tiger!) and was essentially unusable. This was fortunate for Landsberg, as it meant they couldn't engage the US troops.

*"The police station was then offered to the combat commander of Landsberg, an army colonel, as a command post and was accepted by him. After various suggestions in consultation with the mayor, it was arranged to cut the telephone lines, intercept the messenger who would deliver the bridge demolition order to the demolition team, and transmit an order from our side stating that the demolition was to be abandoned and the demolition team should withdraw immediately. The telephone wires were cut to prevent telephone transmission of orders. Later, the commander's command post was relocated to the bunker on Schlossberg."*<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Major General Dr. Kurt Paape, Commander People's Mortar Brigade 7. This report was prepared for the US troops after the war. The captured troop leaders had to prepare experience reports in US captivity. These reports became known as US, WWII Foreign Military Studies, 1945-1954. This report by Kurt Paape received the number B-131. <https://www.fold3.com/image/153645955/b-131-7th-werfer-brigade-24-mar-30-apr-1945-page-1-us-wwii-foreign-military-studies-1945-1954?terms=paape,kurt>, Roletscheck Collection.

<sup>45</sup> This procedure was ordered on April 22, 45 by the Deputy General Command VII, A.K. Operations Staff Report Center Munich, for all defense commanders in Military District VII. "The combat commanders come under the command of the responsible section commander of the field troops if the field troops move into village strongholds," Bundesarchiv RH 53-7/292

<sup>46</sup> Report General Kurt Paape

<sup>47</sup> Affidavit of Eduard Pflanz, Staatsarchiv München, Spk.-Akten Kaufering 3130 Linn

Additional retreating units were called upon for defense. On the Krachenberg<sup>48</sup>, from the Schlageter Memorial to the Eselssteig near the wildlife park, at least three anti-aircraft guns of an army unit were positioned. These could control the other bank of the Lech and the Pössinger Au. Throughout the day, positions were occupied. Soldier Karl Theodor Scheuermann remembers:

*"The deployment location was on the steep cliffs leading down to the Lech at what was then the northern end of the urban development. The defense line was only thinly manned, one soldier every 30 meters. Only every third man still had a carbine, the rest pistols or just a spade."*<sup>49</sup>

The two young recruits Josef Klöck and Karl Joos were also ordered to defend Landsberg.

*"One afternoon, we recruits and the soldiers temporarily stationed in the barracks were ordered to report to the old barracks with full equipment and all belongings. Here, in front of the barracks, a platoon of soldiers was assembled for the defense of Landsberg. After an officer had given a spirited patriotic speech, we moved into the city in several groups. My group was tasked with occupying the Lech island with the café. Full of uncertainty and anxiety, we stood watch all night with shouldered rifles, mostly outdoors. It was clear to us that we couldn't hold this island against the enemy. So we withdrew toward Bergstrasse and came to the area of the agricultural school. After some time, we abandoned this position as well. To have a better view of the city, we moved over to the castle brewery."*<sup>50</sup>

### **"In Landsberg, No Shots Will Be Fired"**

On the other side, attempts were made to persuade the soldiers to surrender. Police officers Kugelman, Wolf, and Fichtner, on behalf of their chief Max Fellner, tried to convince the soldiers in their positions on the eastern Lech slope not to defend Landsberg.<sup>51</sup> Some soldiers followed the requests and withdrew, certainly relieved to have escaped once more. Max Fellner even sacrificed his secret schnapps supply to prevent the threatened bridge demolition. In spring 1944, Fellner had confiscated a wagon load of fruit brandy. Now he tried to use the schnapps to prevent the engineers from blowing up the bridge. They gratefully accepted the fruit brandy but wouldn't abandon their plans.

**Eduard Pflanz**, Police Senior Master Sergeant of the Reserve, born 1904, had been employed as an auxiliary policeman in Landsberg since the beginning of the war. On the night of April 26, he was on duty at the police station in the Old Town Hall. Here, air situation reports came in from the center in Buchloe.

*"According to my memory, at around 5 AM as duty officer in the town hall, I received the last radio message from Buchloe. The telephone operator of the air news center signed off with*

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<sup>48</sup> This was also observed by Eduard Pflanz when he was stationed as a tower observer at the Bayertor. "From there I observed how a German AAA battery took up its defensive position on the right bank of the Lech at the Krachenberg," Heinrich Pflanz: *The End of the War 1945 in Landsberg a. Lech and the Postwar Period*, Lindenbaum Verlag, Beltheim, 2019

<sup>49</sup> Landsberger Tagblatt from 04.27.95

<sup>50</sup> Josef Klöck and Karl Joos: *Our Last Days of War in Landsberg* Landsberger Geschichtsblätter 93./94. Jahrgang 1994/95

<sup>51</sup> Memories of the then Police Station Manager Max Fellner, Roletscheck Collection

*the words: 'The Americans are just entering Buchloe. We are ending our transmissions and wish you good luck.' I notified Mayor Dr. Linn and all active police officers and police reservists, though not all came. From then on, I acted independently. I gave siren warning for air danger and not continuous alarm, as was actually prescribed, and no all-clear. The population behaved accordingly and correctly. No one stayed on the street, many went to the air raid shelters."*<sup>52</sup>



**Image 16:** Major Kammerer (X) with his chiefs and officers of his battalion; Hptm Thomann standing at the top left in the background. The photo was taken in autumn 1944 during an exercise in Landsberg a. Lech. Source: Martin Thomann, Roletscheck Collection.

In the Saarbürg barracks, the battalion commander of Artillery Regiment 63, Major Kammerer, called his chiefs for a meeting. He bluntly described the situation and his decision:

*"Tomorrow the Americans are coming. In our Landsberg, there will be no shooting."*<sup>53</sup>

For the then commander of the 1st Company, Lieutenant Thomann, this was a great relief, as he had been worried for days about how he should defend Landsberg with his mixed, inadequately trained, and completely insufficiently equipped unit.



**Image 17:** Even during the war, the training unit from the Saarbürgkaserne built a village on the military training area, which was modeled after a village in Russia to prepare the recruits for the respective combat situations. Until Thomann could return to Lindau, he earned his money selling watercolors, like this one. Source: Martin Thomann, Roletscheck Collection.

<sup>52</sup> Heinrich Pflanz: The End of the War 1945 in Landsberg a. Lech and the Postwar Period, Lindenbaum Verlag, Beltheim 2019

<sup>53</sup> "Major orders: No shooting in Landsberg", Landsberger Tagblatt from April 27, 1985

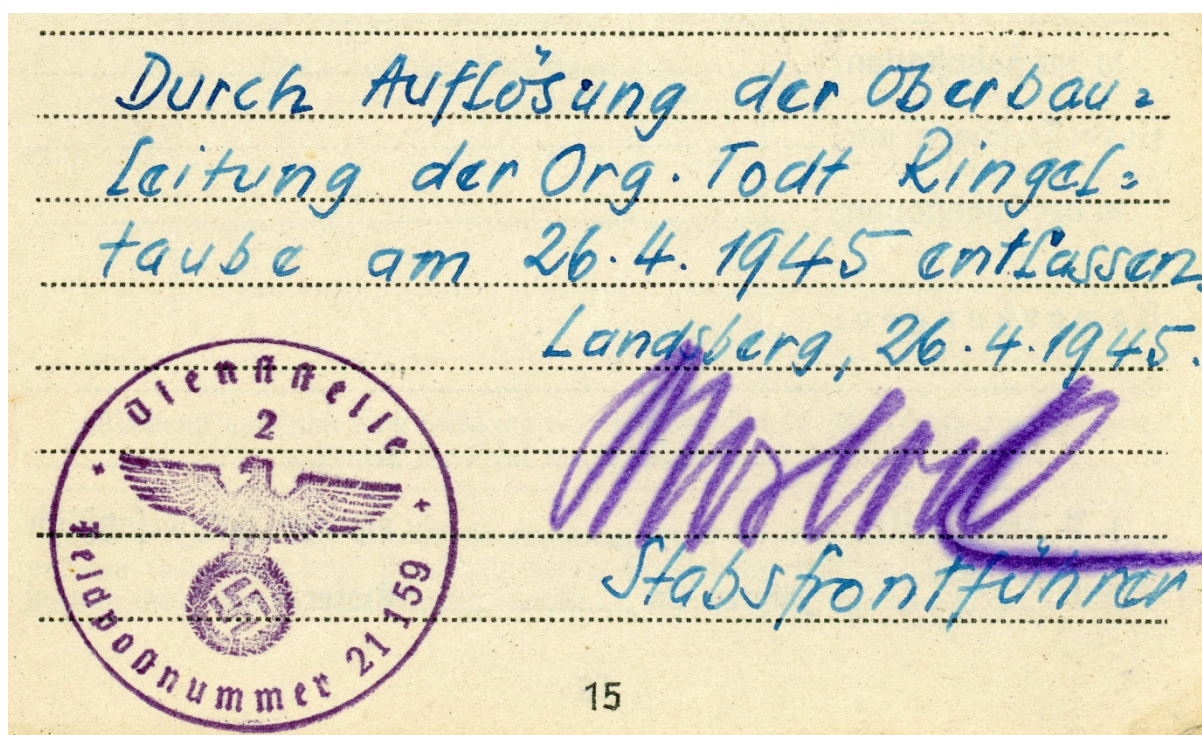




*"I hurried over to my battery building, had my non-commissioned officers and sergeants come, and explained the new situation to them. I had the battery prepare for marching, and at nightfall, we left the barracks grounds and marched the few kilometers south to the forest area where our Russian village and bunker settlement were located."*<sup>54</sup>

After arrival, the orderly room, under the leadership of Willi Hepp from Waal, began issuing discharge papers for each soldier in one of the huts. They were properly discharged from the Wehrmacht and equipped with appropriate marching papers so they wouldn't have to fear the military police or flying courts-martial. By morning, the last soldiers from Thomann's battery and the other batteries were on their way home.

**Image 18:** Martin Thoman came from Lindau and had a bakery there. In the picture, he is still a non-commissioned officer. Source: Martin Thoman, Roletscheck Collection.



**Image 19:** On the same day, the senior management of the bunker construction site was dissolved. The entry in the military pass was the guarantee not to be arrested during controls; it meant that one was no longer considered a soldier or a member of the Wehrmacht. Source: Estate of Ing. Schulz, Förderverein der "MGS Weingut II" Collection.

<sup>54</sup> Martin Thomann: "I Believe in Miracles" (unpublished manuscript), Lindau



Other soldiers took up positions in the forest edges toward the Reich Road, today's Federal Road 17. Master Sergeant Reserve Officer Candidate (ROC) Josef Steinmann remembers:

*"As a sergeant, young recruits were entrusted to me. Most were enthusiastic 'Hitler Youth' who thought they had to prove themselves at the front. Internally, I was fully aware of our hopeless situation, but I wasn't sure how they would react if I told them this. From my experience in Russia, I knew that a well-built position would 'save blood.' Therefore, I first had them build our position which was located at the forest edge toward R17. This physical exertion would cool down the hotheads. The small troop was busy setting up all night."<sup>55</sup>*

It was a restless and cold night on this April 26, 1945, when Master Sergeant ROC Steinmann "celebrated" his 25th birthday. His thoughts were with his young wife<sup>56</sup>; he wouldn't see her again until summer 1945.



**Image 20:** Non-commissioned officer Josef Steinmann, he was taken prisoner of war in Landsberg and brought to a camp in Neu Ulm. He was lucky; in the summer, he was released and walked back to his hometown of Cham, where his wife was already waiting for him. Source: Steinmann family, Roletscheck Collection.

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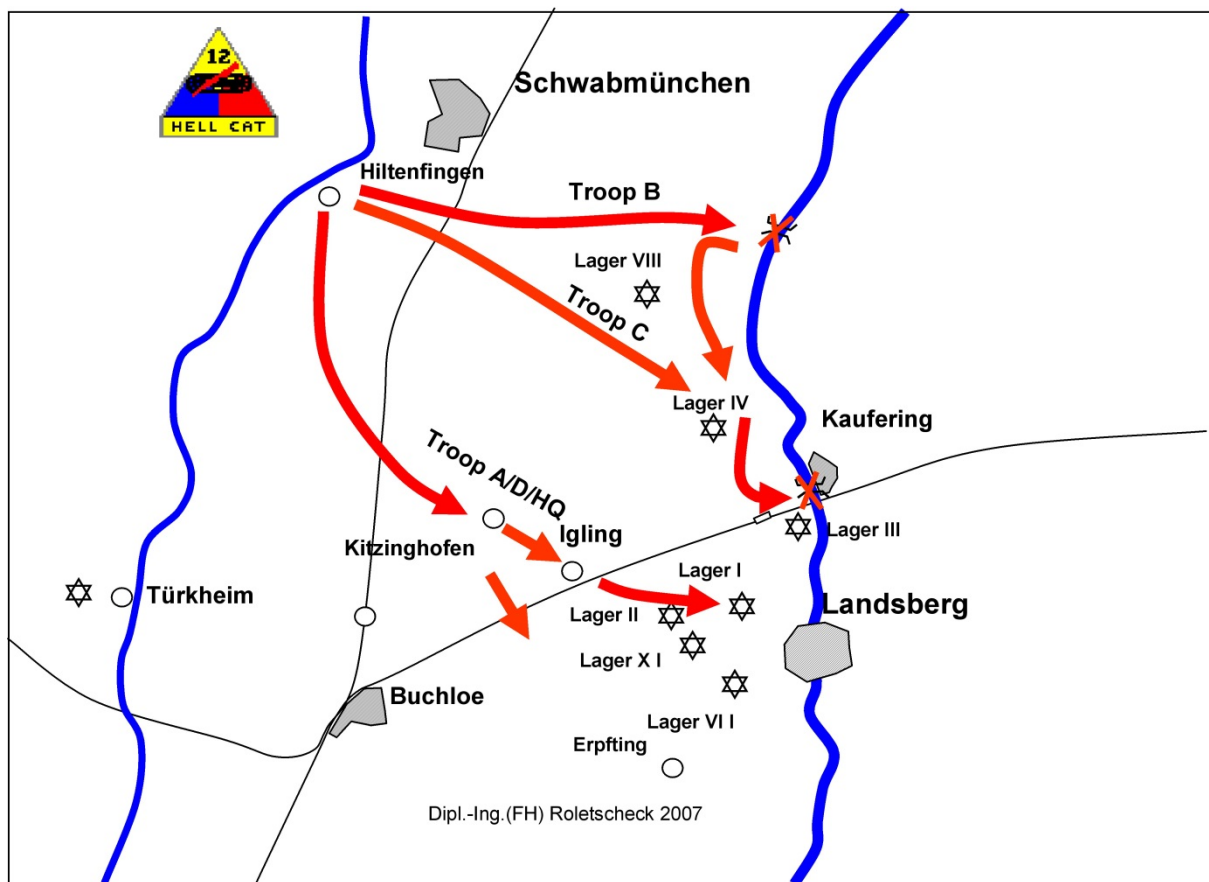
<sup>55</sup> Information provided by Hauptfeldwebel Josef Steinmann, who had been in the Offz. Nachw. Batt. Art. Ers. u. Ausb. Abt. (mot.) 63 in the Saarburskaserne since 09.15.1944 as a reserve officer candidate. Roletscheck Collection

<sup>56</sup> Gerhard Roletscheck: Evacuation transports and marches of the Kaufering sub-camp complex, Landsberger Geschichtsblätter, 122nd year 2024

## The End is Near - April 27, 1945

### Klein- and Großkitzighofen, Hurlach, Igling and Kaufering

In the early morning hours, the individual US troops of the 92nd Cavalry Recon Squadron (92nd Cav. Rcn. Sq.) set out. They left Hiltenfingen to advance toward Landsberg and scout the way for the following 12th Armored Division (12th AD). Their main mission was to secure the Lech River crossings undamaged. Initially, they encountered only light resistance from disorganized German troops, but near Landsberg, they met fierce opposition. The US troops split up; Troop D set out to capture the emergency field hospital in Holzhausen and make contact with their right neighbor, the 10th Armored Division (10th AD). Former Sister Ehrenwalda remembers:



**Map 4:** The way of the 92nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron, traditionally all US reconnaissance units were called cavalry although they were equipped with modern mobile armored vehicles.

*"We were just sitting at lunch. Then it echoed through the house: 'The Americans are coming!' From the third floor, you could see it. From Igling, Kitzinghofen, a long line of cars was moving toward Holzhausen. Some medics went to meet them at the Singold bridge. As a sign of peace, they waved white napkins and pointed to the large red cross on the roof of the Magnus home. The Americans understood. They stopped in front of the main gate. Officers got out of a Jeep. They asked for an interpreter, Head Sister M. Baptista - former language teacher - presented herself. All hospital personnel had to line up: doctors, medics, nuns, Red Cross helpers... Guards with rifles were posted at the gate and courtyard entrance. No one*

*was allowed to leave or enter the building without permission from the 'Americans' who were now our superiors.*"<sup>57</sup>

The remaining troops moved on. In Oberigling, shortly afterward, Wehrmacht helper Christa Döhlen (who had celebrated her 20th birthday on April 1) and Corporal Kurt Baumgart were shot by the advancing Americans as they climbed over the railway embankment heading south, as the railway underpass was barricaded. Another group of the 92nd Cav. Rcn. Sq. made their way directly to take control of the bridge in Schwabstadel. Shortly before the troops reached the bridge, the explosive charge was detonated. This time, the entire bridge didn't blow up, but it was only damaged enough to prevent vehicles from crossing. However, the infantry managed to cross the bridge and establish a small bridgehead. Following units of the 4th Infantry Division (22nd Infantry Regiment) reinforced and relieved the 12th AD



**Image 21:** Above St. Leonhard there was still an anti-aircraft gun; it is not known whether it was involved in the fire attack. After the war, the barrel of the cannon was removed by a farmer from Kaufering and used as a dumbbell for strength training. Source: US soldier, Bernard Marks Collection.

reconnaissance units. These could now hurry to the next bridge. Along R17, they felt their way forward to Kaufering to the Lech bridge there. Then the unexpected happened: a German anti-aircraft gun, well-positioned at the "Beim Raps" farm, opened fire from an elevated position at the northern edge of Kaufering on Troop B. The fire from the 20mm guns was accurate; the hit half-track vehicle immediately caught fire and burned.<sup>58</sup> During this brief

<sup>57</sup> Ulrich Hauser: Regens Wagner Holzhausen, Magnusheim, 100 years

<sup>58</sup> The Troop "B" lost only this one vehicle through enemy action in the entire war.



firefight, the Peischer<sup>59</sup> family's farm went up in flames. Battery "A" of the 493rd Armored Artillery Battalion then received the fire order and took up position.<sup>60</sup> The guns were driven off the road and aligned. After a short barrage, the German weapons fell silent. The anti-aircraft gun crew fled into the farmhouse and eastward across the fields to Penzing. They left the farm's residents behind with their fear in the washhouse.



**Image 22:** Men of Battery A of the 493rd Armed Field Artillery Battalion, shortly before Landsberg; one of the guns can be seen in the background on the left. Source: Landsberg am Lech City Archives.

The farm was hit by eight US shells but fortunately didn't catch fire.<sup>61</sup> Furthermore, the neighbor's stable was hit, and a horse was killed in the stable. The outhouse on the farm also fell victim to the US shells. During this exchange of fire, Private First Class Peter Neumeyer<sup>62</sup> from Art. Ers. Abt. 7 lost his life. The wounding and later death of Senior Gunner Paul Gieber<sup>63</sup> from Werfer Ers. Abt. 5 might also be connected to this firefight. After the battle, the US artillerymen noticed that their position was near concentration camp IV. Curiously, they approached the fence:

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<sup>59</sup> Our Homeland on the Lechraim, Volume 11, Heimatbuch Kaufering, by Bernard Müller-Hahl

<sup>60</sup> Letter dated 02.28.1996 from Herbert Arenz, WWII member of Battery A 493rd Armed Field Artillery Battalion. Roletscheck Collection

<sup>61</sup> According to the owner's information in 2005

<sup>62</sup> Our Homeland on the Lechraim, Volume 11, Heimatbuch Kaufering, by Bernard Müller-Hahl

<sup>63</sup> Died on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1945 in Kaufering.



*"Lieutenant Wolcott and I were driving a Volkswagen which we had 'liberated' somewhere and added to our unit. We saw the open gate of the concentration camp. Being normal curious GIs, the Lieutenant and I turned off to investigate it closer. We stood at the gate and saw emaciated bodies scattered on the ground. Suddenly, arms wrapped around our legs and a person, whom we thought was dead, kissed our shoes and a quiet weak voice said: "Americans." "*<sup>64</sup>



They reported their discovery to the command post. Ed Bernstein was a member of the G-5 section and received the notification about the find at noon, whereupon he set out with four comrades. They reached the camp when the infantry was already searching it. From a distance, he could tell from the smoke clouds that the camp was burning. A horrible sight greeted the entering soldiers. After the sick prisoners had been taken away two days earlier, SS doctor Dr. Blanke had ordered the dead who had accumulated in the camp to be burned to leave no traces.

**Image 23:** One of the first pictures taken by GIs in Camp IV. The wood of the huts is partly burning and still smoking. Some corpses lay in front of the respective huts, so the soldiers had the impression that the prisoners had been burned alive. Source: 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum.

In the entrance area, around 40 corpses of dead prisoners were piled into a mountain, doused with gasoline, and set on fire.<sup>65</sup> However, the amount of gasoline used hadn't been sufficient to burn the bodies. Setting rain additionally extinguished the fire. Furthermore, the guard detail had tried to set individual earth huts on fire, but only some of the huts caught fire and burned to the ground. Numerous dead bodies were scattered throughout the camp. The Americans had come too quickly for the SS to "clean up."

<sup>64</sup> Letter dated 02.28.1996 from Herbert Arenz, WWII member of Battery A 493rd Armed Field Artillery Battalion. Roletscheck Collection

<sup>65</sup> The burned bodies were piled up between two huts and set on fire, with the huts also burning down. In none of the burned-down earth huts is a burned body visible in the many known photos. There were only a few more burned corpses on the camp grounds. These dead burned because they were lying near the burning huts.



**Image 24:** Directly after the entrance to Camp IV, about 40 corpses were piled up on the right side and doused with gasoline to be burned. Dr. Blanke, the SS doctor, gave the order for this. With this measure, the SS administration tried to destroy the traces of their actions. Starting drizzle stifled the fire. When the US troops entered the camp, the ignited earth huts and the pile of corpses were still smoking. Source: Landsberg am Lech City Archives.

SS doctor Dr. Max Blanke<sup>66</sup> had retreated to his private quarters in Hurlach, where he lived with his wife. The G-5 section of the 12th Armored Division immediately began searching for him. They found Blanke and his wife in their apartment in Hurlach, where they had poisoned<sup>67</sup> themselves to evade responsibility.

The German firefight only briefly hindered the US troops' further advance. Soon they approached the Kaufering Lech bridge. The vigilant German engineers blew up the road bridge at the first sign of enemy approach.<sup>68</sup> With loud thunder and much smoke, two wooden bridge spans disintegrated into their components.

The railway bridge, which was blown up significantly later than the road bridge, caused greater problems. The demolition team had been quartered at the "Brückenwirt" inn in Kaufering for some time. A certain familiarity developed with the inn's owners, Agathe and Sebastian Schmid. There were no secrets, and all decisions were discussed in the tavern. The

<sup>66</sup> Dr. Max Blanke, born on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1909 in Heinsberg, party member since July 1933, membership number 5309864. First assistant physician at the City Hospital Barmen, then from 20<sup>th</sup> April 1940 to 22<sup>nd</sup> Feb 1941 employed for the Inspector of Concentration Camps; during this time he was in the Natzweiler, Buchenwald and Oranienburg concentration camps. In the spring of 1944 he became camp physician in the Lublin camp, from there he was transferred to Landsberg. He was married to Agathe Dietrich (born 8<sup>th</sup> June 1910) and had a daughter born on 26<sup>th</sup> April 1941. Personnel file Roletscheck Collection

<sup>67</sup> Copy from the death register of the municipality of Hurlach dated April 29, 1945, Roletscheck Collection

<sup>68</sup> Bernhard Müller-Hahl: *ibid.*



**Image 25:** Kaufering, April 28, 1945: traffic over the Lech is in full swing, on the repaired railway bridge itself and on the pontoon bridge. In the background, the blown-up road bridge of Kaufering. Source: Capt. William D. Mc. Workman, Bernard Marks Collection.

innkeeper's six daughters were therefore able to hear all conversations and decisions. Since the Brückenwirt had the only telephone connection in the village, the tavern became the command post where all retreating units reported after crossing the Lech. On April 25<sup>th</sup> or 26<sup>th</sup>, the 1st Battalion of People's Rocket Regiment 84 arrived to take up position in Kaufering as ordered. The foreign officer tried to seize command authority over both bridges. A loud argument erupted with the leader of the railway engineers who was responsible for blowing up the bridges. After much back and forth, the soldiers withdrew. The responsible railway engineer then explained his plan to the innkeepers to blow up the road bridge but not the railway bridge, as this would be much harder to replace. As a railway worker, he knew the problems of bridge construction and held the view that one must think ahead to the future. After the war, the homeland would need a functioning railway network, therefore the bridge was not to be destroyed under any circumstances.<sup>69</sup> To maintain appearances, only a small harmless charge was placed and detonated without causing real damage. The night before the demolition, all residents near the bridges were evacuated. That this wasn't an overreaction was noticed by the innkeepers when they returned to the inn: All windows were broken, some window frames had been torn from the wall, and all roof tiles had been blown off. A soldier

<sup>69</sup> The responsible leader of the railway pioneers visited the Brückenwirt again in the 1970s. On this occasion, this event was once again confirmed by him, and he was proud that he had succeeded in putting his plan into action. Unfortunately, the name can no longer be remembered. Statement of two sisters, children of the former owners Schmid.



from the engineer unit died during the demolition. The exact circumstances of his death are unknown. At least the engineer Walter Beler (37 years) of the 2nd Railway Engineer Replacement Battalion 4 was recovered from the Lech and later buried in the Schwabstadl military cemetery. A few hours after the demolition, the engineers took cover from fighter planes in the hamlet of Machelberg near Schwabhausen, before driving their trucks loaded with explosives to Stegen am Ammersee to blow up the Amper bridge there.<sup>70</sup> The American engineers recognized that the railway bridge was only damaged and immediately began repairs and the construction of a pontoon bridge across the Lech 200m north of the railway bridge.

### **Last Air Combat over Landsberg**

Despite the overwhelming air superiority of the Allies, an air battle occurred at 3:00 PM in the Igling-Kitzighofen area, where German pilots proved they were still a force to be reckoned with. Karl Heinz Rusack, who flew this last mission with II./JG 300, describes the course of this operation:

*"At the mission briefing on 04/27/1945, we received orders to conduct low-level attacks on enemy supply vehicles in the Landsberg - Schongau - Kaufbeuren area. Shortly before 2:00 PM, the takeoff order came. Three flights of Messerschmitt 109s were already hanging as high cover above the airfield when Lieutenant Radener reported his aircraft unserviceable, and I had to take over leadership, although my 'red 10' had its quirks that day too, as it wasn't the youngest from the A 8 series either. We were four to five flights of FW 190s. Old comrades like Dieter Oehm, Charlie Schick, Heinz Stoll, Rudi Salfner, and Karl Spent flew with us. It was excellent fighter weather, approximately 6/10 to 7/10 cumulus clouds. Our high group kept constant vigilance, as the sky was full of 'violins'. We crept along the mountains and flew sharply above the clouds to approach the advancing enemy as unseen and surprisingly as possible and then sweep the road from west to east. When the ground station reported several formations of Indians near us on the fighter wave, I became somewhat uneasy and made a course change to the north, thus making a large loop along the Ammersee towards Landsberg to strike Kaufbeuren from the northwest. We were flying at 3,000 to 4,000 meters, securing all sides. Behind Landsberg, I suddenly saw exactly below me three to four flights of Thunderbolts on opposite course. Since they were flying at cloud base while we were at cloud top, they hadn't seen us yet. I quickly called out 'Indians below us', dropped my auxiliary tank, and plunged at the head of my formation in a sharp descent through the cloud gaps until I was in a favorable firing position behind a flight of Thunderbolts. A short burst of fire and the first opponent went nose-down into the depths. Favored by the cloud patches, our attack was so surprising that the enemy only realized what was happening when the first Thunderbolts were already tumbling burning toward the earth. The Mustangs pulled up in a right turn; I had already attached myself to my second opponent and fired from all barrels until he too fell from the sky like a burning spinning top in flames. But in the heat of battle, I must have overstressed the aircraft somewhat, got caught in the propeller wash of another aircraft and stalled. When I realized I had the whole pack of Mustangs on my tail, I thought only 'Adelheid, this is it!'. The earth came closer at tremendous speed; bailing out was my only option. I jettisoned the canopy and the next moment was hanging from the parachute. Only when it became unusually cold around my feet did I notice that I had lost my fur boots while bailing out. So I was dangling cursing and helpless on the parachute, heading exactly for the*

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<sup>70</sup> Volker Gold: The Jewish Graves of Schwabhausen, revised version, 1995



*Americans' advance road. Barely five minutes later, I was picked up by the American tank spearhead. While I marched on socks and with raised hands in front of the American tanks from Buchloe to Kaufbeuren, I thought with satisfaction about my sixth and seventh victories, the two Thunderbolts, and I was glad that I had been spared having to blow up my brave 'red 10', the 'old gypsy', myself in the end."*<sup>71</sup>

The Thunderbolts belonged to a group of ten aircraft from 525 Squadron, tasked with conducting armed reconnaissance in southern Bavaria and destroying rail connections around the Ammersee. Shortly after 3:00 PM, over Türkheim at an altitude of 2,500 meters, the two formations met. The carried bombs were emergency-dropped, and the air battle, lasting only three minutes, began. One P-47 crashed near Kleinkitzighofen, pilot Paul J. Dornstadter died in the crash.

*"I was flying as wingman for Lt. Paul J. Dornstadter on a bombing mission on 04/27/1945. En route to the target, we were suddenly attacked by 12 Fw-190s; we dropped our auxiliary tanks and our bombs. We immediately turned into them for a head-on attack when Lt. Dornstadter turned to the left side. Two Fw-190s were on him and I gave a short burst at him. The one I shot at and hit seemed to let go and fall back. There was only one still after Lt. Dornstadter. Both went into a tight downward spiral to the left and I followed them until several aircraft came between us and I was forced to turn away to avoid a collision. After that, I never saw Lt. Dornstadter again."*<sup>72</sup>

Rusack landed by parachute near Ketterschwang near Eurishofen and was captured there by the Americans. Arno Brunner, whose FW 190 was shot down near Lamerdingen, was also captured. A third FW 190 was hit by American anti-aircraft fire; the pilot, Lt. Karl Schick, managed to make an emergency landing near Großkitzighofen.<sup>73</sup> On the ground, individual troops of the 92nd Cav. Rcn. Sq. witnessed the battles and even actively participated in the events in the sky. Troop "D" opened fire on Lt. Schick's Fw 190, during which Sergeant John K. Lorenz was wounded by shrapnel and T/5 Frederico Black<sup>74</sup> was even killed by their own salvo.<sup>75</sup> After the emergency landing, the wounded German pilot Lorenz was treated by the medical unit of the 92nd Cav. Rcn. Sq.

### **Advance into the City**

In the morning, SS-Sturmabführer Otto Förschner, the camp commander of the Kaufering concentration camp subcamps, and his deputy Obersturmführer Vincent Schöttl decided to withdraw southward.<sup>76</sup>

*"At the Schongauer intersection in Landsberg, at the war's end, a black Opel P4 with two German soldiers drove up. The German guards tried to stop the car. The driver of the vehicle ignored them and drove through. Approximately at VW Kohler, the car hit a mine. The engine*

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<sup>71</sup> Walter Dahl, Rammjäger the last levy, Orion-Heimreiter-Verlag, Heusenstamm 1961

<sup>72</sup> Missing Air Crew Report 14330, Statement by F/O Virgil R. Thornton, National Archive Washington

<sup>73</sup> Information from "The Last Air Battle in Our Homeland", Landsberger Tagblatt, 27.04.1985

<sup>74</sup> "Squadron History" 92nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron

<sup>75</sup> According to the History 92nd Cavalry Recon Sq., he was the last casualty of the unit in this war.

<sup>76</sup> Unfortunately, it cannot be deduced from this statement where the two wanted to go. During the interrogation of Schöttl by the US court, he stated that they had driven to Epfach. It is certain that the two wanted to get away.

*flew about ten meters through the air. The two German soldiers jumped from the car and miraculously survived."*<sup>77</sup>



**Image 26:** Vincent Schöttel. Source: Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site.



**Image 27:** Otto Förschner with an eye patch. Source: Dachau Concentration Camp

Otto Förschner was severely wounded and lost an eye. He was taken to the hospital in Landsberg and later arrested by the Americans. Vincent Schöttl managed to continue in another vehicle. The incident shows that the roads around Landsberg had been mined in preparation for the Americans' arrival. The 92nd Cav. Rcn. Sq. cleared the roadblock at the railway underpass in Igling and advanced through the Frauenwald toward Camp I. Since not all German soldiers had withdrawn from the area, a brief firefight developed.

The Americans had no mercy for the SS soldiers.

*"... We had heard so much about their mercilessness, we had seen so much of their dirty work, had heard how they tortured and killed our prisoners, that we were out for revenge. We got it. We showed them no mercy. The enraged number of men who wanted to kill ten of them for one of ours fallen was unleashed in their full fury against these crawling murderers whose uniform insignia was the death's head with crossed bones. When it came to SS men, we took only a few prisoners."*<sup>78</sup>

On April 28, 1951, the remains of an unknown soldier were found in a filled-in former splinter trench on Iglinger Street. From shoulder pieces, it could be determined that he had been an SS officer. It was further established that he had been killed by a shot to the head.<sup>79</sup> He was transferred and buried as an unknown soldier at the Schwabstadl military cemetery.<sup>80</sup> The troops continued along the road toward the city. Another firefight occurred on Iglinger

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<sup>77</sup> Heinrich Pflanz, *The End of the War 1945 in Landsberg a. Lech and the Postwar Period*, Lindenbaum Verlag, Beltheim, 2019

<sup>78</sup> "Squadron History" 92nd Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron

<sup>79</sup> Communication from the Volksbund Deutsche Kriegsgräberfürsorge Bayern of July 2, 1951.

<sup>80</sup> Grave number 380

Street. SS man Robert Lange (18 years)<sup>81</sup> fell with a head shot and was buried in the adjacent cattle pasture of Spötting. Whether he fell in combat or was shot by the Americans after capture cannot be determined anymore. However, one can lean toward the latter view, as head shots in combat are rather rare. In this case, it would have occurred twice in succession, which is very unlikely by general consideration.

Unstoppably, American columns of vehicles and tanks moved along Augsburger Street to Hindenburgring and to the prison. There must have been a battle here as well. In the prison's own medical station, friend and foe were now being treated.<sup>82</sup> The following German soldiers died here: NCO Paul Bühren, driver Johan Jacquemin (45 years)<sup>83</sup>, Corporal Georg Taube (22 years)<sup>84</sup>, and soldier Helmut Ulbrich (30 years).



**Image 28:** The GIs Ken Odnol and Giannopolous, souvenir photo in front of the entrance gate of the prison. At the end of April, the medical department of the prison was the only possibility for medical care east of the Lech. Source: 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum.

The 20-year-old Herbert Regele, discharged from the Wehrmacht due to illness, experienced the American troops' entry firsthand. He lived with his parents at Königsberger Square. During the morning, he couldn't stand the tension anymore and left the house to visit a school friend at the prison. This friend had lost both legs in the war and lay helpless in his parents' apartment. He walked unhindered parallel to the American vehicle columns along Hindenburgring toward the prison. After about 100 meters, machine gun bursts suddenly struck nearby. An American soldier called to him from a tank to take cover before disappearing into the tank hatch himself. The former infantryman Regele had already independently taken cover in the road ditch. From there, he could see the machine gun position on Leitenberg from which the Americans were being fired upon. After a short time, the firing stopped, allowing him to reach his friend unhindered.

Reinforced by the 411th Infantry Regiment of the 103rd Infantry Division, the Combat Command Reserve (CCR) of the 10th AD set out from Buchloe to Landsberg, once along Reich Road 12 toward Holzhausen to meet

<sup>81</sup> Robert Lange was born on 13<sup>th</sup> October 1927 and drafted into the SS-Pz.Gren. Ausb. u. Ers. Batl. 5 in Ellwangen on 9<sup>th</sup>, Feb 1945.

<sup>82</sup> The hospital was within sight, but unreachable, separated by the Lech on the other side of the river.

<sup>83</sup> Army master mechanic d.R.

<sup>84</sup> Staff battery heavy flak replacement battalion 8



the 92nd Cav. Rcn. Sq. The other American thrust advanced from Erpfting along Erpftinger Street toward Landsberg. In Erpfting, some of the armored vehicles turned right toward Denklingen. The infantry marched on toward Landsberg to secure the Lech bridges undamaged. In doing so, the soldiers passed Camp VII. The guards had already left the camp and had set some of the barracks on fire. The remaining prisoners could move freely and first went searching for food. They also found the guards' food storage. Satisfied, prisoner Tomas Mandl (prisoner no. 116177) lay down on the still-warm foundations of a burned-down barrack and experienced the entry of the liberators:

*"While reading, I registered a new sound. It was a rumbling, unfamiliar noise. Straining, I looked around. Then I saw them: American soldiers on tanks. The foundations of the SS headquarters were about fifteen meters from the road<sup>85</sup>, on which the tanks moved forward, no faster than a running man. The tanks were imposing; they conveyed the impression of enormous, steady, unstoppable power; but on the tanks sat, lay, and crouched people - laughing people who waved to us. People, half covered with flowers, thrown to them by prisoners. Somewhere there must have been flowers that I hadn't noticed anywhere. The people on the tanks laughed, waved, and threw chocolate and cigarettes to us; there had only been a few tanks, perhaps five or six, but before they passed, I had begun to cry uncontrollably."<sup>86</sup>*

In the Hindenburg settlement, young German soldiers were still holding out. They tried to hide somewhere. Out of pity, they were given civilian clothes. One of the soldiers was still



changing when the first GIs came along the Galgenweg. He fled toward the forest with his jacket fluttering. But after just a few meters, he was struck by a bullet in the back and thrown to the ground. It was SS-Sturmmann Georg Hirl (19 years)<sup>87</sup>; he was buried at the old sports field.

**Image 29:** In the new development area Viktor-Frankl-Str. in 1997, bones of one soldier were found, and a year later, on the grounds of the former Belinda factory on Schongauer Str., bones of another soldier were found. An examination in the forensic department of the University Hospital of Ulm revealed an estimated age of the persons of 20-30 years. In 1999, the two soldiers were buried with military honors in Schwabstadel. The two graves are currently the last ones which were reburied here. Source: Roletscheck

<sup>85</sup> Here Tomas Mandl is mistaken. It was not the country road, but the connecting road from the camp to the Erpftinger Straße.

<sup>86</sup> Prof. Herbert Tomas Mandl, *Music from the Darkness*, Ingolstadt 1983

<sup>87</sup> 10/SS PzGrenReg 6

German troops had entrenched themselves on the grounds of the ROA training barracks at the end of today's Viktor-Frankl-Street. Again, a brief firefight developed. Two unknown soldiers were killed. Their remains were only discovered during construction work on the site in summer 1997 and summer 1998. Their bones were found in masonry air raid shelters along with ammunition and weapons. On the author's initiative, the remains of the two fallen soldiers were buried with military honors as unknown soldiers at the Schwabstadl military cemetery in 1999. After the Germans recognized the Americans' superiority, they withdrew southward into the forest, leaving behind their dead. The Americans pursued and opened fire.



**Image 30:** The soldier Karl Thon suffered a pulmonary embolism and died in the house of the Keller family. He was buried provisionally in the family garden. In July 45 in the cemetery and on May 31, 46 reburied to Goslar. Source: Fam. Thon Pflanz Collection

They wounded soldier Karl Ton (48 years)<sup>88</sup> as he crossed the Landsberg-Schongau railway track. He suffered a bullet wound to the lung. The GIs brought him along with other German and their own wounded to the Trautwein Street to the Keller family. The family's daughter was a trained Red Cross nurse. Thus, a collection point was established in the small house where the wounded from both sides were treated. Organization Todt man Ilja Ubistubez could not be helped anymore; he fell on Schongau Street. The Americans pursued the fleeing troops on today's Federal Road 17 toward Schongau. On the right side of Schongau Street shortly after Landsberg, already in Ellighof territory, soldier Adolf Zeller (31 years) died. Meanwhile, the 411th Infantry Regiment advanced along Adolf-Hitler-Street (Katharine Street) into the city. At the height of Saarburg Street, the commander of "L" Company, Captain Joseph F.

Kasun from Bisbee, Arizona, was stopped by a parliamentarian. The battalion adjutant of a Hungarian unit had been sent ahead to conduct surrender negotiations. Together with a platoon from "L" Company, the Captain accompanied the parliamentarian to the Artillery Barracks. Arriving at the barracks, he found the entire Hungarian division with 918 soldiers lined up in parade formation. The commander called his troops to "attention" and, after saluting the Captain, handed over the troops with the words "Captain, they are your men". They had neatly arranged their weapons in pyramids beforehand.<sup>89</sup>

<sup>88</sup> 2./Landeschützen-Battalion 710

<sup>89</sup> Unit History of the 411th Infantry Regiment for the month April 1945



**Image 31:** The Hungarian Major General with his adjutants in a US souvenir photo, the snow suggests that the picture was taken in early May. Because in 1945 there was a white blanket of snow on May 2. Before that, the dandelions had already bloomed. Source: Report After Action – The Story of the 103rd Infantry Division Innsbruck 1945

Slowly, the remaining GIs of the 411th Infantry Regiment worked their way into the city. At the police station (Gendarmerie) on Adolf-Hitler-Street, now Katharine Street, a fatal incident occurred.



*"Johann Bökl, born 1884, was chief of the Gendarmerie in Landsberg. The station was located on Katharine Street. The entrance was on the side at that time. When the Americans arrived, Böckl stepped out of the building with his men to surrender to the Americans. Böckl was led away by an American soldier. Josef Reich Sr. saw this from his garden behind. Shortly after, he heard a shot. Bökl lay with a head shot at the corner of Katharine Street/Museum Street at the house corner of baker master Ehelechner, now Lahner."*<sup>90</sup>

Beside the dead Gendarmerie Lieutenant Bökl lay another shot unknown soldier.<sup>91</sup>

**Image 32:** Gendarmerie First Lieutenant Bökl. Source: Elfriede Neumeyer, Roletscheck Collection.

<sup>90</sup> Heinrich Pflanz, The End of the War 1945 in Landsberg a. Lech and the Postwar Period, Lindenbaum Verlag, In the registry book, 9:15 a.m. is given as the time of Bökl's death. He was killed by a gunshot to the head. To what extent the gunshot could have been an execution, as eyewitnesses report, can no longer be clarified today.

<sup>91</sup> Unfortunately, I could not identify the name of the dead person to this day.



## Bridge Demolition and Shelling

Before the Americans could reach the Karolinen Bridge and the Sandauer Bridge, they were blown up around 9:30 AM. Thus, all efforts by Dr. Linn and his supporters were in vain. Colonel Wolf personally delivered the demolition order to the "Kratzer," where the demolition team had taken quarters.

*"As we stood at the garden gate, the bridge went up in the air. It made a tremendous bang, so that I - not knowing what was happening - quickly threw myself, or rather flew, to the ground and took cover under the hedge. Then you could hear the debris whistling through the air with a piercing howl. In the office, two window panes were broken afterward. As the shooting grew stronger, we went into the cellar and stayed down there with brief interruptions until noon."*<sup>92</sup>

The two soldiers Josef Klöck and Karl Joos experienced the demolition from their position next to the student dormitory on Schlossberg:

*"At daybreak, a sergeant ordered us to take position with our machine gun north of the brewery building. From here, we were to observe the row of houses across the Lech River and shoot at any enemy spotted. Around mid-morning, there was a terrible detonation! In the west, above the Lech bridge, a huge cloud of smoke stood and enormous debris flew through the air. We saw it now. The bridge had been blown up. Only bridge torsos remained on the western and eastern sides."*<sup>93</sup>



**Image 33:** Field of vision and fire of the two soldiers Josef Klöck and Karl Joos from the Schlossberg, just to the right of the church tower of the church St. Katharina at the old ice station, the US tanks took up position and fired about 4 shots at the Schlossberg.  
Source: Roletscheck 2005

<sup>92</sup> Manfred Neumeyer experienced this in the printing plant of the Landsberger Tagblatt in the Museumsstraße, where the staff was just busy printing the new newspaper when they were surprised by the news of the explosion. All employees were immediately sent home and they still managed to cross the bridge before the explosion.

<sup>93</sup> Josef Klöck and Karl Joos: Our Last Days of War in Landsberg Landsberger Geschichtsblätter 93./94. Jahrgang 1994/95

To support the US infantry, tanks and armored vehicles accompanied the infantry. Thus, around 11:00 AM, the first armored vehicles drove up in front of the post office to assess the situation.

*"Many Landsberg residents on both sides of the river had hung white flags from their houses. Still during the morning, heavy American tanks moved up at the other end of the destroyed bridge. Suddenly, an officer, recognizable as an officer of the Wlassow Army, approached our machine gun from behind and ordered my comrade, who was operating the weapon, to fire at the first tank across the bridge. My comrade refused, considering the danger to the city. The Russian officer threatened to shoot him for disobeying orders. My comrade remained undaunted, pointed to his own pistol, and thus unmistakably showed that he intended to defend himself. The officer then forcibly seized the machine gun and fired at the first tank. An American soldier, presumably an officer, who was surveying the western row of houses with his field glasses and had risen openly in the tank, collapsed, presumably fatally hit. Just a few minutes later, our house was hit with tank shells. It was very bad and lasted for quite a while. When I fled into the house from this bombardment, I barely escaped a fatal shell that flew through a window. We no longer felt safe on the ground floor of the house, so we went into a cellar of the castle brewery tavern."*<sup>94</sup>

A member of the 103rd Infantry Division Signal Company reports about this incident from the American perspective:

*"The Germans blew up the bridge, and with that ended our dreams of Munich. Those of us who were at the head of our column went to the still-smoking ruins of the bridge to look. What remained was a hopeless tangle of twisted steel girders. As we walked back, a rifle shot followed from a building on the other side of the river. No one was hit, but a GI saw where the shot came from and responded with a few bursts of tracer rounds from his machine gun. One burst after another followed across the river and a lively firefight developed... Soon the call rang out: "Bring up the tanks!"*"<sup>95</sup>



**Image 34:**  
Johann Mutter captured the hit in the Hofgraben in the picture, he lived directly behind his position in a house that no longer exists today. Source: Johann Mutter,

<sup>94</sup> Josef Klöck and Karl Joos: Our Last Days of War in Landsberg Landsberger Geschichtsblätter 93./94. Jahrgang 1994/95

<sup>95</sup> Excerpts From Papa's War. The 411th Infantry Regiment



**Image 35:** From the same position as his picture of the Hofgraben, Johann Mutter took a picture of the impact of the tank shell on the Bayertor a short time later. Source: Mutter, Landsberg City Archives

The Americans identified the machine gun position on Schlossberg, additionally took up position with tanks on Hindenburgring at the height of the old ice stadium, and opened fire. The first shot went too far left and too low, striking the back side of Café Zirnheld. The next shot tore a hole in the gable front of the Schlossberg school, the next went somewhat lower but too far right and hit the gable of house number 472 on Hofgraben, setting a woodshed on fire. The next shot was on target but too high and hit the left battlement of the Bayertor,<sup>96</sup> but the shooters were already in safety.

Unrest had long been spreading in the city. More and more residents urged policeman Eduard Pflanz during his rounds to do

something. Since he knew that Dr. Linn was staying at Hotel Goggl, he sought him out and explained that people were worried. Dr. Linn considered the situation and decided: "I'll go to Colonel Wolf and you come with me for my protection." At the headquarters of the People's Rocket Regiment in the Jesuit school, about 50 officers and non-commissioned officers of the staff were gathered; the mayor walked back and forth with Colonel Wolf in front of his headquarters. At this time, the US shell hit the Bayertor. Pflanz knew that policeman Leitensdorfer was on duty as tower observer at the gate. He asked Dr. Linn for permission to check on him and ran to look for him. Arriving at the Bayertor, he couldn't find Leitensdorfer, as he had gone down to safety a few minutes before the shot.

<sup>96</sup> It has been claimed in the past that the Americans deliberately shot a white flag from the Bayertor. According to the available documents, this is not the case. What reason would they have had to do this? The hit on the Bayertor was more of an accident and not intentional. If you stand in the position where the tanks were, you can see that the Bayertor is exactly behind the MG position on the Schlossberg and the shot was only set too high.



Pflanz then went back to the Jesuit school:

*"I said to the officers that the defense no longer made any sense. Must our beautiful old city be destroyed too? Then an officer came to me and said: 'I advise you to keep your mouth shut. There are two here, if they hear that, you might end up hanging from the next tree.' Mayor Linn spoke quite a long time with the combat commander. It was a great fortune that this Colonel Wolf was a very fine man. When we went back down from Schlossberg, Mayor Linn said to me: Colonel Wolf had promised him that as soon as possible, he would withdraw his men."<sup>97</sup>*

Other troops of the 12th AD advanced along Augsburger Street toward the Sandauer Bridge. At the cemetery, Staff Corporal Wilhelm Haußner fell. With a roar, the Sandauer Bridge was blown up before their eyes.



**Image 36:** Captain Martin Thomann had himself photographed a few weeks earlier on the Sandauerbrücke Source: Thomann

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<sup>97</sup> Reports according to the diary of Eduard Pflanz in Heinrich Pflanz, The End of the War 1945 in Landsberg a. Lech and the Postwar Period, Lindenbaum Verlag, Beltheim 2019



**Image 37:** Herman Böhler was an enthusiastic KPD supporter before 1933, and then an equally enthusiastic supporter of National Socialist ideas. He was drafted and fought in Russia. He was seriously wounded and could no longer move his left arm. As a civilian, he was employed by the party in Landsberg in the administration. At the end of the war, he became head of the Volksturm. On April 27, he recognized the futility and dissolved the Volksturm. Source: Böhler family, Roletscheck Collection

The angered US soldiers took up position. Shortly after the bridge demolition, a VW Kübelwagen drove from the city toward the bridge. When the driver realized the bridge was no longer passable, he stopped at Ludwig the stonemason's house, possibly to turn around. Then the Americans opened fire with a machine gun from one of the armored vehicles. The Kübelwagen was hit; a severely wounded soldier left the car and managed to crawl to cover. He was rescued by residents, taken to the hospital, and reportedly died there.<sup>98</sup> Teacher Breuer observed this incident from his apartment in the corner house of Lechstrasse/Sandauer Strasse. He recognized the victim in the car as Volkssturm leader Hermann Böhler (37 years). Apparently, after dissolving the Volkssturm in the morning, he had wanted to drive home to Weiherstrasse.

News of Böhler's death, who was not very popular in Landsberg, spread like wildfire. Many residents saw the dead man in the car, but nobody cared for his body. Due to his very active involvement with the party, Böhler was a thorn in many people's side in Landsberg, and now was the time to settle old scores. The Kübelwagen with the dead man was even rolled to Lechstrasse and left there. After days, Böhler's 11-year-old daughter went searching for her missing father. Accompanied by her uncle, she found the VW Kübelwagen in Lechstrasse, where her father lay dead in the passenger seat,<sup>99</sup> hit by multiple bullets. Together they buried him in front of the Hitler Youth home in the provisional cemetery.

<sup>98</sup> Everything indicates that this was the Obergefreiter Otto Lang from Munich. He succumbed to severe gunshot wounds in the hospital on 10<sup>th</sup> May 1945. On November 19<sup>th</sup>, he was transferred to Munich.

<sup>99</sup> Statement by Mrs. Böhler in the fall of 1998.

## Liberated Concentration Camp Prisoners

In the liberated concentration camps, the prisoners who had gone into hiding were left to fend for themselves. The soldiers tried to help wherever they could and supplied the starving with their food rations.



**Image 38:** A prisoner with a can from a US food ration. Source: 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum.

*secured Colt. I had my finger off the trigger, as I was afraid of injuring someone if I was jostled. I waved the gun over my head until someone finally noticed and pointed at me. Thereupon, they all retreated from the car. Sinker jumped into the Jeep and drove a piece away. We opened the food rations and drove back to distribute them. We distributed what we had. As we drove off, I handed the last can to a man. Another reached for it and the can fell to the ground. One of them managed to grab it and walked off a few steps. The loser trudged away slowly. I don't know what these prisoners had done, but they were in poor condition.*"<sup>100</sup>

*"A large group of prisoners surrounded our Jeep and rummaged through our belongings in search of food. They couldn't find anything, as the food rations were stored in a locked wooden crate. Sinker and I were pushed to the edge of the group. I feared they would dismantle the vehicle, so I tried to pull one of them away by the arm. I thought I would sooner tear his arm off than get him to move just a bit. So I let go again. A woman grabbed our bottle of wine and ran about 10 meters away, stopping to see our reaction. I ignored this and hoped the wine wouldn't harm her. I squeezed myself into the driver's seat of the Jeep and started the engine. I let the engine run for a while, but this didn't further disturb the people searching the vehicle. One of them grabbed the captured German rifle I had in the Jeep. I had gotten it because I was only armed with a pistol. When he realized what it was, he put it back. Now I stood up on the front seat and pulled out my*

<sup>100</sup> From "Indescribable Horror" by Julien D. Saks. Saks was a lieutenant colonel in the 12th Armored Division and visited camps IV and III in the early afternoon of April 27, 1945. The encounter described took place in camp III.



For some prisoners, this assistance was fatal, however. Their emaciated stomachs could no longer tolerate the fatty food, and the prisoners died in terrible agony. Others set out to search for their relatives. After the young Herbert Regele found his comrades unharmed at the prison, a guard asked him to stop by his family and tell them he was doing well. On his way to the family, he encountered a prisoner moving towards the town.

*"On Iglinger Street, a liberated, starving concentration camp inmate came towards me. He staggered with weakness like a drunk and collapsed several times. When I reached him, he clung to me and stammered: 'Where train station? When train? Home! Wife... Children...' I tried to explain to him that no train was running because all the bridges were destroyed. But he wouldn't let up, and I described the way to him. He staggered on, calling out again and again: 'Wife... Children...'"*<sup>101</sup>

### The Americans on the Lech



**Image 39:** The passage as well as the Schlossberg restaurant on the right and the house on the left have been demolished. The entrance to the air raid shelter is sealed. Source: Roletscheck 2005

The western part of Landsberg was occupied by American troops. However, they failed to cross the Lech. American snipers took up position and targeted the right bank of the Lech. Some German soldiers and civilians fell victim to their accurate shots, such as a young soldier on the Schlossberg near the exit of the Schlossberg cellar, which served as an air-raid shelter for the population.

*"For us children, the seriousness of the situation was not apparent. Our parents could no longer keep us in the cellar, and after some calm had set in, the older ones went upstairs. Soon we were conversing with the young soldiers. They were not much older than us. I had a very lively conversation with one boy. Suddenly, he didn't answer me anymore and fell over. When I looked closer, he was already dead. A bullet had hit him in the head."*<sup>102</sup> *Shocked by the experience, I quickly went back down to the cellar."*<sup>103</sup>

<sup>101</sup> Herbert Regele: Unpublished Memories. Roletscheck Collection

<sup>102</sup> Unfortunately, the name of the soldier can no longer be assigned.

<sup>103</sup> Statement Ms. Liselotte Greiter, Landsberg

Another victim was retrieved on Neue Bergstraße:

*"...I observed the Red Cross, with Oberlehrerin Frl. Peslmüller leading the way with the Red Cross flag, carrying a deathly pale, severely wounded captain down the Neue Bergstraße on a stretcher into the air-raid shelter. The Americans did not fire on the Red Cross."*<sup>104</sup>

Landsberg's Lorenz Greiter experiences this incident up close:

*"I was working at the Spring company in Landsberg and came down Neue Bergstraße on April 27, 1945. I wanted to go home to the Klösterl. At the big curve, a captain of the German Wehrmacht, about 40 to 50 years old, and his approximately 18-year-old son came up the stairs from the Klösterl. The captain waved me over and asked where a bunker was. The spot was already in view of the Americans. I was hit by an American projectile in the right lower leg. The captain received a gunshot wound to the abdomen. The son remained unharmed on the other side of the street. My wife drove me from the Klösterl to the hospital on Lechstraße in a wagon. The captain was also taken to the Landsberg hospital, where he died."*<sup>105</sup>

The severely injured man was Capt. Hans Gustav Schaak (52 years old). On September 26, 1944, he was deployed as the commander of the 7th Company of the Wachsturmbann K.L. Natzweiler and was responsible for guarding the Leonberg concentration camp and its subcamps. When a transport of 1,989 prisoners arrived in Kaufering from Leonberg on April 17<sup>th</sup>, he was the responsible transport leader.<sup>106</sup> He remained in the Landsberg concentration camp command here. In 1950, when the French state was searching for its war dead in Germany, Schaak's grave was reported, as he was born in Alsace. On September 19, 1950, he was reburied in a French military cemetery in Mühlhausen.

In the occupied western part of Landsberg, the occupiers had meanwhile begun to requisition accommodations for themselves. Families were ruthlessly driven out of their homes. They had to see for themselves where they ended up. Those who were lucky found shelter with relatives. Others had to go to the villages, where they ended up in haystacks.

*"Towards evening, quartermasters (they spoke German) came and said we had to leave the house. I asked, 'Where are we supposed to go?' (One said: to the village). We packed the essentials and spent the night in the former carpentry workshop in the courtyard. In the evening, a truck came into the courtyard; in the light of the headlights, we saw that a lot of equipment was unloaded. A field kitchen was set up in Mother's kitchen in the front house."*<sup>107</sup>

GI Evans, a radio operator with the 103rd Infantry Division, set up night quarters with his comrades in the property at Adolf-Hitler-Straße 2 1/3. They liked the house number so much that they simply unscrewed it and attached it to their truck. Until the end of the war, it remained their rolling address: "Adolf-Hitler Straße 2 1/3".

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<sup>104</sup> Heinrich Pflanz, The End of the War 1945 in Landsberg a. Lech and the Postwar Period, Lindenbaum Verlag, Beltheim, 2019

<sup>105</sup> Heinrich Pflanz, The End of the War 1945 in Landsberg a. Lech and the Postwar Period, Lindenbaum Verlag, Beltheim, 2019

<sup>106</sup> When the city of Leonberg was researching the history of the Leonberg concentration camp in October 2001, the whereabouts of Capt. Schaak was unknown to them. After several phone calls, I was able to inform Eberhard Röhm in Leonberg about Schaak's fate: Concentration camp and forced labor in Leonberg, Julius Reichert printing house, Leonberg.

<sup>107</sup> Records of Sophie Klieber from Landsberg am Lech, Spöttinger Straße 3

## **Advance Towards Schongau, Dornstetten, Ellighofen, Fuchstal, Apfeldorf, Seestall und Reichling**

At Reichsstraße 17 towards Schongau, Master Sergeant ROA Josef Steinmann had entrenched himself with his young, impatient recruits. Despite repeated admonitions not to open fire independently, one of the young men lost his nerve and fired his bazooka at an American tank. The shot missed and immediately provoked an American reaction. The position was bombarded with artillery fire. However, the master sergeant and his protégés managed to withdraw without any losses. After they had calmed down in the forest, it was decided to abandon the fight. The American superiority, which was moving along the road towards Schongau, was overwhelming. Master Sergeant ROA Steinmann dismissed his recruits and thus ended the war for them.

The troops in Landsberg no longer found the undamaged bridge crossing over the Lech, so they tried their luck further south. Parts of the 10th AD set out for Schongau. They advanced as far south as the Fuchstal. Unterdießen, Oberdießen and Ellighofen were occupied by the troops around 6 p.m. All day long, German troops had been fleeing through Unterdießen. Even as the Americans were already driving on today's Federal Highway 17 towards Schongau, the troops tried to escape in parallel. The following incident occurred:

*"At the same hour, two German soldiers on a motorcycle wanted to reach their unit that had gone ahead, in the direction of Bahnhofstraße and Federal Highway 17. Despite being urgently warned not to take this route, they tried the impossible and had to pay for their obstinacy with their lives. Catching sight of the enemy tank spearhead, they wanted to turn back at the last moment, but the American machine gun bursts were faster. The two bodies were brought into the village by some courageous men and laid out with dignity in the fire station."*<sup>108</sup>

The two dead were Corporal Bruno Krüger (25 years) from the 2nd Flak Battalion 26 and Corporal Gottfried Klotsch (19 years). The Americans pushed further south, and the following was reported from the Fuchstal:

*"Towards evening, the first enemy tank rolled through the village. When the crew saw a passerby, they jumped out. Black and white soldiers aimed their rifles at him. Soldiers were hiding at the Zapfenwirt. They were told to remain calm. When nothing stirred, the tank moved on. The innkeeper had hoisted the white flag. Tank after tank followed. The foreigners went towards the tanks with white flags. Again a tank stopped. An American jumped into a house. German soldiers were also hiding there. Shots were fired. Then the first soldiers went into captivity. More and more joined. A long column! All with their hands raised. Prisoners came from Oberdießen, Asch and Denklingen. They were collected. All their watches were taken."*<sup>109</sup>

Previously, in Ellighofen, the radio operator Wilhelm Scharf (45 years) from the Flak Replacement Battalion III and the soldier Kurt Propst (20 years) had been killed. It was not until two days later that the body of an unknown Luftwaffe soldier, about 35 years old, was found in the forests of Ellighofen. He had probably also been killed on April 27.

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<sup>108</sup> Landsberger Tagblatt 1965

<sup>109</sup> Anton Kreutmayr: Our Home in the Fuchstal, 1973



The Americans also had victims to mourn, although only due to their own recklessness. About 20 American tanks turned off from today's Federal Highway 17 towards Dornstetten.

*"It was noon. The Americans went into the houses and helped themselves to meals. One also came to cheese master Epple. He was sitting at the table with the family. The three children were also there. Three Americans were standing guard in front of the house. Suddenly, four shots rang out. They went through the window. One hit the American directly in the head. He was dead on the spot. Cheese master Epple received a graze wound. An American had been fiddling with the rifles in front of the house. Through carelessness, the shots went off."*<sup>110</sup>

Further on today's Federal Highway 17, in Seestall, Lieutenant Krawietz (29 years) and Corporal Herbert Keil (22 years) were killed in fighting with the Americans. The American troops reached Hohenfurch that day, where Sergeant Hans Werner Schmidt (23 years) fell. Shortly before the US troops reached the Lech bridge at Apfeldorf, it was blown up in front of their noses. Previously, German troops had been able to cross the bridge all day and reach safety on the Bavarian side of the Lech, even though this safety was illusory. In Reichling, low-flying planes shot at soldiers who had hidden in the houses and parked their vehicles in the barns. The Röschlbauer's property caught fire,<sup>111</sup> as well as an adjacent barn where a Wehrmacht ammunition wagon was parked. Together with the soldiers, some courageous Reichlingers managed to pull the wagon out of the burning barn before the fire could reach the ammunition. The whole village was on its feet to extinguish the fires and prevent worse. The mayor used the situation and ordered all documents with a swastika to be removed from the town hall. These were thrown through the windows into the burning house, and Reichling was denazified.<sup>112</sup> Meanwhile, a bed sheet was prepared to be hoisted on the church tower. An officer present tried to prevent this, leading to a scuffle. It was only when a Reichlinger threatened to hit him with a club that the dispute could be settled. The "white flag" was attached to the church tower, and the low-flying planes ceased the attack.<sup>113</sup>

### **Air Raids near Eresing and Schwabhausen**

There were many deaths on this April 27th from air raids east of Landsberg. At 9:55 am, nine P-47 Thunderbolts from the 525th Squadron took off from the French airfield in Tantonville. They had been tasked with bombing and strafing attacks on trucks as well as armed reconnaissance. They scanned the Reich railway lines, which had provided lucrative targets in recent days. Along the Lindau-Kaufering-Munich Reich railway line, they found their target near the Schwabhausen train station. On the road from Schöffelding to Eresing, they discovered their objective. A column of vehicles with soldiers of the Vlasov Army was heading from Landsberg to Fürstenfeldbruck to be loaded onto the train. This column was immediately attacked with onboard weapons, and death reaped a bountiful harvest. The after-action report cites five destroyed and eight damaged trucks, as well as two damaged trailers. At 12:30 pm, all nine aircraft of the squadron landed back at their starting airfield in France.

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<sup>110</sup> In "Our Home in the Fuchstal" it is further reported that in the Lechkaserne in Landsberg an American sentry fell asleep and a shot was accidentally fired from his rifle, killing him. At first, a German was accused, which almost cost him his life.

<sup>111</sup> The barn belonged to the estate of Ludwig Steininger.

<sup>112</sup> Franz Horner: Reichling in the War and Postwar Years 1939-1945, undated

<sup>113</sup> Franz Horner: Reichling in the War and Postwar Years 1939-1945, undated

What unfolded on the ground during the attack is not recorded. It is only known that the wounded and dead were transported to the hospital in St. Ottilien throughout the day. The following victims<sup>114</sup> are documented:

Date	Name	Remark
27.04.1945	17 Russians without personal details	When the Americans advanced across the Lech, a marching column of Russian soldiers fighting on the German side was attacked on the Schöffelding-Eresing road by low-flying planes with fragmentation bombs and onboard weapons. 15 men were killed on the spot. Two died in the hospital.
27.04.1945	Krakov Alexander	24 years old, head and abdominal wounds from onboard weapons of low-flying planes
29.04.1945	Bukvok Dimiteon	Shrapnel in the neck vertebrae
30.04.1945	Destrow Alexander	Head, lung and liver shots - amputation of the right arm
01.05.1945	Two Russian soldiers without personal details	Severely wounded in the low-flying attack in Eresing - lung gunshot wound
01.05.1945	Russian soldier	Wounded in the low-flying attack on the Eresing road - head and neck shot - arm amputated
02.05.1945	Wasilius Dometri	Russian soldier in the German army - pneumonia and circulatory weakness

The nature of the wounds gives an inkling of what unfolded on the ground during the attack. In total, at least 24 soldiers were killed, 15 in the direct attack, nine later succumbing to their injuries.

At 9:20 am, 12 P-47s from the French Air Force's Group de Chasse ¼ Navarre took off from the French airfield in Luxeuil with the mission to bomb trains on the Lindau - Munich rail line. At 10:20 am, they found their target in Schwabhausen. The train that had departed Kaufering at midnight, full of concentration camp prisoners, only made it as far as the Schwabhausen train station. There it was parked outside the station along with an air force material train. A local resident from the Machelberg district unwittingly witnessed the events on the embankment. She was searching for her 8-year-old son, who had curiously gone to Schwabhausen. Alongside the strafed trains lay the wounded and dead prisoners, unprotected along the embankment and in the surrounding woods. The few doctors among the prisoners, including Dr. Zalmann Grinberg (Prisoner #82151) from Camp I, desperately tried to help. There were 170 fatalities, who were buried in three mass graves in the following days.<sup>115</sup>

<sup>114</sup> Church register St. Ottilien

<sup>115</sup> see Landsberger Geschichtsblätter, 122nd year 2024

## The Last Day - April 28, 1945

### Advance towards Dießen and Weilheim

*"It was clear to us that the enemy would come either that night or in the following days. The dark night in our hometown passed as quiet as a mouse... When the German Wehrmacht left the town under the cover of night unnoticed by the population and evacuated the right bank of the Lech, there was no longer any defense; the roadblocks that had been set up became meaningless."*<sup>116</sup>

The Volks-Werfer-Regiment 84 left its position quietly and inconspicuously that night, moving according to orders to the Amper, where they took up new positions.

*"Since the enemy had almost simultaneously succeeded in crossing the Lech to the south of Landsberg, I decided on the afternoon of the 28th (around 4 PM<sup>117</sup>) to withdraw the Regiment 84 from the Landsberg sector to avoid unnecessary losses and to establish a new defensive line north of the Ammersee, along the Amper section. It was clear that a sustainable resistance was impossible given the complete inferiority of our armaments and, considering the overall situation, hardly made any sense."*<sup>118</sup>

When the Americans discovered that the railway bridge in Kaufering was still intact, Company A of the 119th Armored Engineer Battalion<sup>119</sup> was assigned to repair the bridge for vehicle, especially tank, passage as quickly as possible. Engineers worked throughout the night, and by 6:00 AM, the first reconnaissance tanks from the 116th Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (116th Cav. Rcn. Sq.), followed by the 101st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (101st Cav. Rcn. Sq.), crossed the railway bridge.



**Image 40:** In the early morning hours of April 28, traffic rolled over the railway bridge.  
Source: 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum.

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<sup>116</sup> Report and diary of Eduard Pflanz. Heinrich Pflanz, The End of the War 1945 in Landsberg a. Lech and the Postwar Period, Lindenbaum Verlag, Beltheim, 2019

<sup>117</sup> The report was created after the war and it is to be assumed that the commander, Colonel Wolf, had not reported to his general that he had already left his position during the night. The unit surrendered on April 30, as it had no ammunition and the leadership saw the futility.

<sup>118</sup> Major General Dr. Kurt Paape in Report B-131

<sup>119</sup> Letter from 1st Lt. C.E. Steve J. Novak, undated, Roletscheck Collection





**Image 41:** Parallel to the railway bridge, traffic also rolled over a pontoon bridge to the eastern bank of the Lech. Source: 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum.

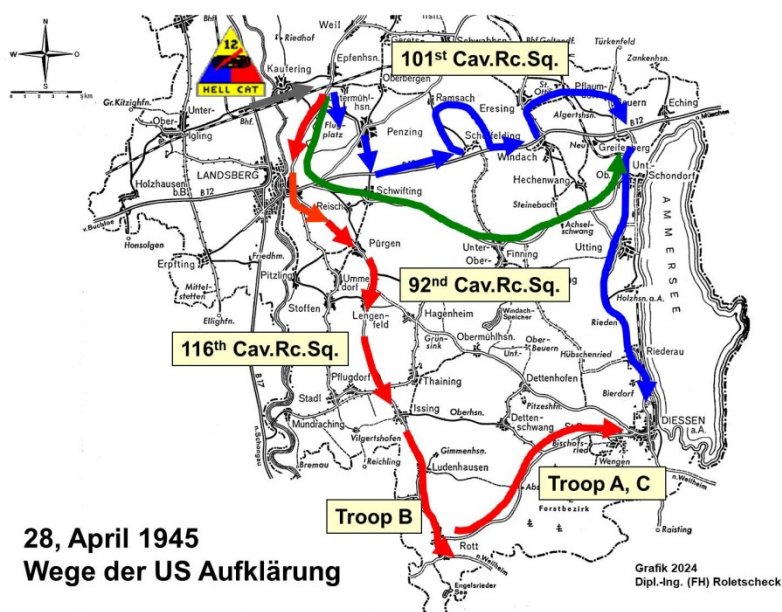


**Image 42:** From late morning, the individual battle groups (CCA/CCB and CCR) rolled to their daily destinations. Here, tank destroyers specialized in tank hunting. Source: 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum



**Image 43:** This photo of a half-track vehicle was taken a few days later. It has been repeatedly reported by contemporary witnesses that it was unusually warm at this time. You can see the blooming dandelions on the meadow. Spring was there, on May 2 there was a sudden onset of winter with a closed blanket of snow. Source: Capt. William D. Mc. Workman, Bernard Marks Collection

Due to long embankments on the western side and a long cut on the eastern side of the Lech, the vehicles started at Kaufering station and exited the tracks before reaching Epfenhausen.



**Map 5:** Routes of the different US reconnaissance units on April 28, 1945

Here, the troops spread out. The 116th followed the road toward Landsberg with instructions to advance via Rott in the southern district further towards Innsbruck. The 101st Cav. Rcn. Sq. was tasked with securing the Amper bridge near Eching.

Shortly after, the 116th reached Landsberg. In the Epfenhausen settlement, there was a brief skirmish with German non-commissioned officer Jürgen Böhmer (aged 20), who died during his retreat. Moving past Bayertor, they



continued towards Weilheimer Straße in the direction of Reisch and Pürgen. Near the dairy, now Feneberg, another exchange of gunfire occurred with soldiers at an established checkpoint. SS-Unterscharführer Willi Niehoff (aged 41), SS-Rottenführer Alfred Braatz (aged 38)<sup>120</sup>, and SS-Schütze Walter Simitis (aged 25)<sup>121</sup> lost their lives in this altercation.

Earlier that night, soldiers Klöck and Joos, who had been in a cellar under Schlossberg, decided, given the hopeless situation, to retreat to Klöck's relatives in Pürgen. As they exited the cellar, Joos removed the breech from the machine gun and threw it down the Schlossberg. They proceeded along Weilheimer Straße, sneaking toward Pürgen:

*"But already at the edge of town, we were brusquely stopped by an SS soldier who emerged from a roadside ditch. We were terrified, especially since he had a larger group of soldiers with him on an adjacent field. My comrade came up with the right response: 'We are messengers from a unit near Landsberg.' The SS soldier let us pass. With a carbine slung over our shoulder, we now marched down the road toward Pürgen. When we reached the village, the night was almost over."*<sup>122</sup>

The two men just barely passed the checkpoint before US troops arrived and killed three SS soldiers. Their bodies were later buried by local residents.



**Image 44:** Grave of the three killed SS soldiers, residents buried them on the spot, they were reburied in the cemetery in July 1945 and in Schwabhausen in June 1951. Source: US soldier, Bernard Marks Collection

<sup>120</sup> According to information from the WAST Berlin SS-Pz Div "Hitler Jugend" Motor Vehicle Field Replacement Company 12

<sup>121</sup> According to information from the WAST Berlin SS Leibstandarte Adolf Hitler SS Artillery Regiment 1

<sup>122</sup> Josef Klöck and Karl Joos, "Our Last Days of War in Landsberg"



On the way to Weilheim, the 119th and the following Combat Command A (CCA) of the 12th Armored Division encountered sporadic resistance, such as in Pürgen and near Reisch. Some soldiers of the Volks-Werfer-Regiment 84 were caught by surprise during their retreat and

were killed. Among the dead were OLT Ehrenfried Petermann (aged 30), OLT Otto Gerlicher (aged 27), Lt Alois Brunfies (aged 21), and Gunner Kurt Schlichtling (aged 38). Additionally, Josef Mohring, a civilian from Pürgen, was killed:

*“In the northern part of the village, the family of Josef Mohring, consisting of his wife and six children, left their house early for safety and sought refuge in a cellar of a remote house 300–400 meters away. After a seemingly calm period, they attempted to return home but were fired upon. During their escape through gardens, they took cover in nearby trenches. Mrs. Mohring recalls: ‘Bullets were whizzing around us; it was horrible.’ When they thought it was safe, they tried to run home, but machine gun fire resumed immediately. Josef Mohring, carrying his 2-year-old daughter, was hit by a bullet and was brought to the Murr house with a large hole in his belly. While trying to fetch the mayor or a doctor for help, Mrs. Mohring was stopped by an American soldier who pointed a rifle at her chest and forced her to return. In the meantime, her husband died at the Murr house.”<sup>123</sup>*

Already in Reisch, the group had lost Oberfähnrich Hans Erwald Mentzel (aged 24) in combat. Eyewitnesses described a “hunting down” of individual soldiers by tanks; Mentzel was shot on a field near Reisch. The German War Graves Commission records state:

*“Mentzel, senior officer cadet of a rocket launcher unit. Killed in action against the Americans on April 28, 1945, near Reisch and buried in a field.”<sup>124</sup>*

Near Lengenfeld, a Wehrmacht Kubelwagen encountered the American vanguard. Driving on State Road 2057 from Hagenheim toward Pürgen, the vehicle was discovered approximately 150 meters before a road junction. The exact circumstances of the encounter remain unclear. However, the U.S. troops opened fire, resulting in the deaths of four soldiers in the Kubelwagen, with one soldier wounded. The wounded soldier was treated by the Americans, strapped to a stretcher on a tank, and transported away. His fate is unknown. The deceased included Oberschütze Hans Pustelnick (aged 42) from the Landschützen Ersatz and Ausbildungs Battalion 3, along with three Reichsarbeitsdienst (RAD) members: Eberhard Ulsamer (aged 17), Kurt Taupp (aged 18), and Berthold Ziegler (aged 18). Their origins and destination remain unknown. The bodies were buried the next day by a farmer, Pius Geisenberger, in Stoffen’s cemetery. In November, the fathers of Taupp and Ziegler exhumed their sons and transported them back home for reburial. Details of their deaths emerged during this process – one of them had clung to a piece of white cloth indicating surrender. Kurt Taupp died from a headshot.<sup>125</sup> Pustelnick and Ulsamer were later reburied in Schwabstadl’s military cemetery.

The village of Issing also prepared for the arrival of American troops. Fighter-bombers dropped bombs, setting a solitary farmstead along the road to Landsberg ablaze. Around 70

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<sup>123</sup> Unpublished records of Heinrich Loderer, “Wurmbauer”, deceased 17.06.1999, Roletscheck Collection

<sup>124</sup> Other voices claim that he was cornered by the tanks and crushed to death.

<sup>125</sup> Medical certificate for the purpose of corpse transport dated 30.11.1945, Roletscheck Collection

German soldiers under the command of an Oberleutnant prepared for the town's surrender. White flags were raised throughout the village. Passing German soldiers noticed the flags and warned parish priest Adolf Veit: "Pastor, make sure the flags disappear; otherwise, the village will be burned down."<sup>126</sup> The flags were subsequently taken down until the soldiers left, at which point they were raised again. At 6 PM, the Americans entered the town with tanks and occupied it. South of Hirschberg, further fighting ensued, leaving four dead and one gravely wounded. At 5 PM, the last German soldiers and vehicles departed Thaining. Maintaining a 50-meter interval to avoid aircraft fire, they moved cautiously from cover to cover. Yet they were still targeted by enemy planes. In Thaining, communications assistant Hedwig Simon (aged 27) was killed in an airstrike, while a Hauptmann was wounded. Before reaching Dettenhofen, four soldiers – Uffz Kurt Huster (aged 33), Gefr Bruno Schilb (aged 49), Gefr Kurt Hoffmann (aged 43), and Gefr Otto Ziel (aged 51) – lost their lives. Vehicles hidden beneath trees were struck and set ablaze, leading to the fire spreading to a nearby agricultural building.

On the German side, troops planned to hold off the enemy near Rott, specifically by the Ottilienkapelle. Soldiers took defensive positions along the wall surrounding the site. However, by the end of the day, they withdrew and established a defensive line/roadblock south of Rott. At 6 PM, the 116th entered Rott but encountered heavy resistance. As a result, they decided to split their forces. Company B maintained contact with the German troops. This involved American artillery targeting presumed German positions on Wippberg and Stadelberg. Companies A and C continued advancing during the night toward Dießen. In the morning, they captured the Amper Bridge and entered Weilheim. Days later, four corpses dressed in civilian clothing were found in a trench in Rott. All were executed with neck shots and lacked identification tags. They were buried on-site but were later transferred to Schwabstadl. It remains unclear who killed them or when the killings took place.<sup>127</sup>

### **Advance Toward Munich**

Meanwhile, the 101st Cavalry Reconnaissance Squadron (101st Cav Rcn Sq.) left the railway line near Epfenhausen and pushed toward Untermühlhausen and the local airbase.

*"They saw a group of German soldiers running through the village. One of Sophie Kramer's sisters asked one of the soldiers: 'Are the Americans coming?' to which he replied: 'Yes, go into the basement.' On her way back to the cellar, Sophie Kramer encountered a young messenger holding a white-colored dispatch, heading into the woods to deliver the retreat orders to a unit. When the young woman tried to explain that the unit had already fled, the soldier responded: 'That's impossible. They would never retreat without orders. I must go into the forest.' Sophie ultimately decided to show him the way. On the way to the woods, a villager warned the two: 'Run! I can already see the American tanks in Epfenhausen!' Still, the messenger insisted on proceeding. The miller then shouted: 'Get out of here! The Americans are already at the village entrance.' At this point, the soldier saw the futility of his undertaking and turned back. By then, white flags were flying across the entire village, and the streets were filled with American military vehicles. Heavy artillery fire could also be*

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<sup>126</sup> "We're burning down the village," Landsberger Tagblatt, 24.04.1995

<sup>127</sup> Jakob Hirschauer: Local History Book with Farm and House History of the Municipality of Rott, Municipality of Rott 1996

*heard. Sophie Kramer went to the village's southern exit. Three American soldiers with rifles were already stationed there with her family and a group of locals. On the field near the airfield, five American tanks were strategically positioned. From this vantage point, Sophie witnessed the surrender of the airfield. At the main entrance, a young German soldier appeared with a white flag and approached the tanks. An American officer met him and greeted the German soldier with a handshake. The young soldier, who wore the white flag around his neck, returned to the group. "The poor guy's hands and feet were trembling. I was frustrated that none of the officers had the courage to oversee such an important surrender," Sophie said while describing her emotions. As this German soldier passed the group, one of the Americans struck him in the back with the butt of his rifle. "I found that cruel," Sophie remarked."*<sup>128</sup>

Along the roads, American troops advanced further, fortifying their bridgehead east of the Lech River. As their priority was to reach Munich as quickly as possible, reconnaissance units pressed forward along Reichsstraße 12 (National Road 12) to scout their route. Shortly before Schöffelding, retreating German troops had erected a roadblock by felling fir trees on both sides of the road. The trees interlocked their branches, forming an impassable barrier, while the trunks wedged into each other, making removal difficult. At around 4:00 PM, the residents of Schöffelding heard the rumble of approaching tanks. A rumor spread that the tanks would destroy the village with their cannons. However, the Americans only fired at the roadblock and the soldiers defending it. Soon, the Americans realized the barrier could not be cleared quickly and turned back. They eventually reached Schöffelding via Penzing and Ramsach. By this point, white flags already flew from Schöffelding's church tower. The remaining men were rounded up by the soldiers and forced to make the roadblock passable. During this process, two fallen soldiers were discovered. The dead were buried in existing trenches, and birch crosses adorned with their helmets were erected.<sup>129</sup> The dead soldiers were Alfred Brockelt (aged 43)<sup>130</sup> and Hans Haller (aged 26).<sup>131</sup>



**Image 45:** US tanks try to get through a tree barrier, the photo was probably taken at the barrier in Schöffelding. Source: 12th Armored Division Memorial Museum

<sup>128</sup> "Airfield occupied without a fight," Landsberger Tagblatt, 28.04.1995

<sup>129</sup> Johann Kaendl, "Schöffeldinger Local History Book"

<sup>130</sup> Pilot Replacement Battalion. Frankfurt Main

<sup>131</sup> 3rd Airport Operations Company



The Americans continued their advance along Reichsstraße 12 but were not unchallenged. A detachment of the Panzerjäger-Abteilung 653 (Tank Destroyer Unit 653) had retreated steadily from the Rhine to Würzburg, Dillingen, Augsburg, and Landsberg. The unit further withdrew via St. Ottilien and Pflaumdorf<sup>132</sup> to cross the Amper River en route to Munich, engaging sporadically. This unit was equipped with one of the latest tank innovations, the "Jagdpanzer VI" or "Jagdtiger." Armed with an 8.8 cm cannon, the Jagdtiger was feared by the Americans, as its shells easily penetrated their tank armor. Before Greifenberg, Reichsstraße 12 was once again blocked, forcing the 101st Cavalry to detour via Unterfinning, eventually reaching Greifenberg using secondary roads. Here, the retreating Germans ambushed the Americans using four "Jagdtigers." After crossing the Amper Bridge, the Germans destroyed it using the same engineers who had previously demolished bridges in Kaufering and Landsberg. Near Etterschlag, the Panzerjäger-Abteilung 653 had to destroy one of their special "Tigers," equipped with a 12 cm cannon, due to a lack of spare parts.

### Entry into the Old Town

In the morning, soldiers from the 411th Infantry Regiment prepared to find a secure way across the Lech via the weir at Barrage 15 in the English Garden.



**Image 46:** Through the maintenance passage in the dam wall, the US soldiers came to the other side of the Leches in today's wildlife park. Source: Roletscheck 2005

<sup>132</sup> "Chronicle of Windach from the End of the War", Landsberger Tagblatt, 20.04.1995

US soldier **Bill Sprosser** (Company L) recalled the plan:

*"The plan was to drive trucks upriver, go through a tunnel at the barrage works to the other side, and then march downriver toward Landsberg. Once we reached the other side and started moving north in a single line, the Germans on the mountain continuously fired on us. Their fire split our company into five groups, and none of us knew where the others were. Since we had to maintain radio silence, all communication had to be done by voice. Jack Scannell spotted a vehicle that looked like a jeep full of Germans. He immediately shouted the command: 'Stop the vehicle—pass it on!' By the time the message reached the front line, the jeep had vanished into the distance. We managed to gather behind an embankment near the Lech. However, we couldn't move beyond it because the Germans were shooting at us from the wooded mountain. Scannell then went back through the tunnel to the west side of the river and brought a bazooka.<sup>133</sup> Once the cannons started firing over their heads, it felt safe enough to climb over the embankment. "I looked back and saw a big explosion where the cannons were located," Bill recalled. At first, he thought it was enemy artillery fire, but it turned out to be friendly fire—a cannon placed too close to a tree had hit a branch. Thankfully, the incident only caused injuries and no deaths."<sup>134</sup>*

The GIs fought their way from there along the present-day Wildpark toward Landsberg. Repeatedly, defensive fire from German troops forced their advance to halt. The German anti-aircraft guns (Flak) stationed on Krachenberg joined the fighting as well. To silence the guns and stop defensive positions, part of the American forces climbed up Krachenberg. A firefight developed, leaving two German gunners dead. Their corpses were buried beside their cannons at the Schlageter Memorial. The immediate withdrawal after the fight was chaotic, as the cannon itself was left behind in a functional state.<sup>135</sup> The names of the dead soldiers were unknown at the time. Today, they lie buried in Schwabstadl. One remained unidentified, but



the other was later identified as Josef Hiller (aged 36).<sup>136</sup> Near the Naturfreunde (Friends of Nature) memorial at Krachenberg, Sergeant Otto Hellmuth (aged 46) was found dead.

The GIs steadily pushed toward Landsberg and reached Nonnenturm. Cautiously, they advanced through the "Klösterl" (a narrow passage) to the main square, ensuring mutual cover as they moved. White sheets hung out of

**Image 47:** Unfortunately, so far the only picture of Landsberg's main square with white flags. Source: US soldier of the 12th AD, Bernard Marks Collection

<sup>133</sup> This was a recoilless anti-tank weapon.

<sup>134</sup> Bill Sprosser of "Forty Days of Combat and one day of Hell" (unpublished manuscript), Roletscheck Collection

<sup>135</sup> Many a Landsberger can still remember the gun that served as "toys" for children for years to come. Statement Mr. Anton Lichtenstern.

<sup>136</sup> He was from the 1./light AAA replacement battalion 97 and came from the vicinity of Vienna.



almost every window, forming an eerie scene on the abandoned Hauptplatz (main square). No one was seen aside from the fluttering white “flags.”

As infantrymen carefully entered the square, someone shouted out of a window at the Zederbräu Hotel, "Bavaria is free!"<sup>137</sup> Nervous American soldiers immediately fired a volley in response. Thankfully, the bullets only hit the ceiling and caused no injuries.



**Image 48:** Hotel and restaurant Zederbräu was centrally located on the main square. Note the advertising text from 1938: "Jews are not served" Source: Advertising photo: Das Bayerland 49th year, 1938

The city police station in the town hall (Rathaus) was occupied, and the policemen present were arrested. The air raid shelter in Schlossberg was searched for hiding soldiers. Police Chief Max Fellner was arrested and taken to the monastery. A temporary detention center for prisoners was set up in the monastery hallways. More and more soldiers and uniformed

<sup>137</sup> Landsberger Tagblatt, "The Last Days before Capitulation", series, April 3 to June 14, 1965. The bullet holes were still visible for years after the war. The exclamation is certainly in the context of the Liberation action Bayern. Since 3:00 a.m. the following message had been broadcast on the radio: "Attention, attention! This is the Liberation action Bayern. Eliminate the officials of the National Socialist Party. The FAB has seized power tonight."



personnel were rounded up and placed under guard.<sup>138</sup> Gradually, the occupation of the town expanded; more infantry arrived via the "Klösterl" route. Eventually, the line of prisoners stretched from Ludwigstraße to the monastery school.<sup>139</sup> Hungarian soldiers were also located in the boys' school and captured. One Hungarian soldier, Johann Böröcy (aged 24), was killed during this process. By mid-morning, the prisoners of war were taken across the barrage to Saarbürg Barracks (Saarbürgkaserne) for interrogation. Some were transported across the Lech by boat for questioning.



**Image 49:** Original US Text – Hungarian troops which surrendered to the 411th in Landsberg are brought across the Lech with barges. Source: Report After Action – The Story of the 103rd Infantry Division Innsbruck 1945

Meanwhile, American soldiers began searching houses:

*“Suddenly, there was loud knocking at the cellar door of a building. A man shouted, ‘Open up, open up!’ A group of American soldiers stormed in, weapons at the ready—short rifles, determined expressions, red scarves, round steel helmets, and combat gear. They searched the cellar frantically and returned shortly after. One soldier held the uniform of a prison guard in his hand and repeatedly asked, ‘Where Officer—Nazi?’”<sup>140</sup>*

The soldiers worked their way up Alte Bergstraße and along Neue Bergstraße, climbing the hill. Simultaneously, another group of U.S. soldiers ascended the Lech hillside near Krachenberg via the Wildpark. From their elevated position, they could see down along Neue

<sup>138</sup> Soldiers, police, air raid protection, Red Cross and post office. Max Fellner, Memories, unpublished, Roletscheck Collection

<sup>139</sup> Memories of the then police station manager Max Fellner, Roletscheck Collection

<sup>140</sup> Werner Hemmrich in "Infantry crept through the old town", Landsberger Tagblatt, 28.04.1995

Bergstraße, shooting at movement from above. Like, the Gasthof zum Goldenen Stern inn, innkeeper Johann Schweyer (aged 67) who attempted to take his dog out, but he was fatally hit by a stomach shot. He was taken to the nearby Schlossberg cellar and later to the hospital, where he died.



**Image 50:** The Neue Bergstraße was completed in 1937, on the road as well as on the Schweden Schanze at the Krachenberg there were hardly any trees and bushes in 1945 which would have blocked the view of the road. Source: Josef Sutor in Das Bayerland 49th year, 1938

At the Bayertor, the infantrymen from the 411th Infantry Regiment linked up with the Combat Command A (CCA) of the 12th Armored Division. By the evening of April 28th, 1945, the Thousand-Year Reich had come to an end in Landsberg and its surrounding areas. A new era began, marked by the collapse of all order and structure, chaos, hunger, homelessness, despair, revenge against those who held power, and denunciations. Nevertheless, some locals also experienced the happiness of having survived.

## Summary

**"Resistance refers to political behavior that is directed against a form of rule perceived as threatening and illegitimate. There is resistance against persons (the ruler, the rulers), against the form of rule (e.g. dictatorship) or against individual political measures. Passive resistance, i.e. the non-violent refusal (e.g. strike), is to be distinguished from militant resistance, i.e. active actions associated with violence against things or persons."**<sup>141</sup>

The resistance in Landsberg am Lech, as I have described it in connection with the last days of Landsberg in the war, is certainly not comparable to a "White Rose" or Stauffenberg, but it was and is a sign of civic responsibility and conscience! This was often enough the case, sometimes perceived, sometimes drowned out, in the face of terror.

*"Exactly at the height of the Höß hairdressing shop, a detachment of Jewish prisoners with a heavy, large two-wheeled cart, loaded with gravel or the like, came towards us. Four men at the front on the long crossbar of the pole, three or four pushing behind, their guard, an OT*

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<sup>141</sup> Federal Agency for Civic Education, Call 19.11.2024 <https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/lexika/politiklexikon/18481/widerstand/>

*man with a carbine on his shoulder, a little behind. At the said spot, a woman then handed a roll to one of the pushing prisoners right next to the sidewalk. The starving man of course bit into it immediately. The guard saw this and with the roar "always just eating" he pushed his carbine into the unfortunate man's back. At the same moment, a group of soldiers marched towards the town on the other side of the street, accompanied by an NCO or sergeant who was a few meters behind. This man now saw what had just happened. Exactly at the height of the Kiermeier butcher's shop (now Moser), he turned half around while walking, raised his fist and shouted at the top of his voice to the OT guard: "You pig, you rotten one, I hope it happens to you like that too!"<sup>142</sup>*

Another, similar incident was described to me, in which a woman punished such behavior of a guard by beating him with her handbag in the open street. The bewildered guard fled after this attack amidst loud shouts and applause from the bystanders. Resistance is manifold and just as manifold it also occurred in our homeland.

**Unknown persons** wrote slogans against the construction of roadblocks on house walls or on the asphalt of the streets in the night from April 4 to 5, 1945, thus giving vent to their displeasure and setting a sign of resistance. It is remarkable that it is still unknown who was behind this act.



**Image 51:** The slogan at the Stark schoolhouse, Johann Mutter took this picture from his apartment on the other side of the street from the "Kratzer". An agent of the police is just beginning to remove the writing. Source: Johan Mutter, Landsberg City Archives

<sup>142</sup> Experience of Hans Drexel, letter dated 11.06.1998, Roletscheck Collection





**Image 52:** A short time later, more passers-by become aware of the slogan and stop to see what happens. The "worker" has already partially removed the last part of the sentence. Source: Johan Mutter, Pflanz Collection

**Wilhelm Iacob** was the leading figure of the resistance in Landsberg. He began early on to resist the arbitrariness of the NSDAP, maintained a friendship with Franz Sperr, who was executed eight days later due to his involvement in the July 20, 1944 assassination attempt. Iacob was the pivot of the actions in Landsberg. When he had to flee from Landsberg on April 26, 1945, Colonel Herbert Wolf took over the role of the combat commander. Despite all resistance, he ultimately gave the order to blow up the bridges. But after the conversation with Dr. Linn, he and his troops left Landsberg in the last night and disappeared. In June 1945, the Military Government in Landsberg first offered Iacob the position of school councilor and then that of county administrator. He did not accept either office. The Military Government of Füssen finally appointed him as school councilor for the Füssen district.

*"Now I'm playing the school councilor here and have also been transferred to the government in Augsburg twice in the meantime and could only escape this latest 'evil' with the help of the Americans. I don't want to become anything, but I would like to retire as soon as possible. And there are so many who strive for 'height' with all means - let them have free rein!"<sup>143</sup>*

Iacob died on January 2, 1969 in Kaufbeuren.

<sup>143</sup> Letter from Wilhelm Iacob dated 10.03.1946, Roletscheck Collection

**Johann Pfannenstiel** was appointed to the provisional working committee of the city of Landsberg on May 5, 1945. On May 9, he was elected mayor of the city of Landsberg by the committee, as the acting mayor, Dr. Linn, had been appointed county administrator by the Military Government. On January 27, 1946, there were the first free mayoral elections in Landsberg am Lech, for which Johann Pfannenstiel did not run. On January 31, he gave another speech before the newly elected city council and the old working committee and concluded his time as mayor with a quite recognizable positive balance sheet. He returned to his fruit and vegetable business, acquired the Café Lechblick in Fuchstal and withdrew there. He died on April 15, 1959.

**Dr. Karl Linn** was left in office by the Americans and even appointed county administrator on May 1, 1945, but was dismissed again on August 18<sup>th</sup> and placed in automatic arrest in the internment camp in Moosburg. For health reasons, he was released from there on November 13<sup>th</sup>, 1947. In the subsequent denazification proceedings, he was classified into the group of the exonerated. Decisive for this were the statements about his actions in the last days and his behavior at the end of the war. The Military Government rejected the decision and filed an appeal, which the public prosecutor in turn rejected. On April 25, 1948, the verdict became final. Already in July, Dr. Linn was nominated as a candidate for the upcoming mayoral election by the KPD, Bayernpartei, Notgemeinschaft and SPD. According to the municipal code at the time, the mayor was elected by the city council. The election resulted in a tie of ten votes each. In the next meeting, Dr. Linn announced his renunciation, so that Ludwig Thoma could be elected as the new mayor. In May 1951, he joined the Bavarian state service as a legal clerk at the government of Middle Franconia. In 1954 he switched to the administrative court in Ansbach, in 1956 he even became its president and retired in 1966. He died on October 24<sup>th</sup>, 1983.<sup>144</sup>

**Max Fellner** was arrested together with the entire police force in Landsberg on April 28, 1945, released again after an intervention by a French forced laborer together with the other policemen and reinstated as a policeman. However, contrary to the assurances of Dr. Linn, he was no longer considered as head of the police station. On May 3, he was arrested by the Americans, for he was on a list compiled by his successor in office! Fellner was used for the burial of the dead in camp IV Hurlach, afterwards he had to work at the airfield in Penzing. Subsequently, he was in the internment camp in Moosburg for a year, after his release followed from June 1948 to February 1949 an employment with the company Holzmann for the reconstruction of the Sandauer bridge. From 1949 he was an employee in the registration office and from 1956 until his retirement a police inspector in the administrative service of the city of Landsberg. He died on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1988.

**David Wolpe, Mendel Sandovski, Leo Garfunkel, Chana Silberzweig, Abraham Melamed, David Galpert and Selimar Frenkel** were the initiators and authors of the Nitzot and survived the evacuation. They wrote further issues of the Nitzot, although it is not clear where these were created. Much speaks for the Displaced Person (DP) Camp Landsberg. At least one copy has been handed down. It is located in the archive of the Ghetto Fighter House

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<sup>144</sup> Denazification in Landsberg, contribution by Wolfgang Daum in: Landsberg in Contemporary History - Contemporary History in Landsberg, Edited by Volker Dotterweich and Karl Filser, Verlag Ernst Vögel, Munich, 2010.



in Israel. The IBZ member Morechai Fiszer (prisoner number 97849) was not so lucky, for some reason he did not arrive in Kaufering until September 1, 1944 and was assigned to camp VIII Seestall - not like the other members to camp I or II. After the closure of the camp, he came to camp IV. Separated from his friends and without their support, he had poorer chances, he died on January 2, 1945, presumably in camp IV.



**Image 53:** First page of the last issue of the Nitzot, created in the DP Camp Landsberg 20 July 1945 Source: Ghetto Fighters House Archive, Israel



**Rudolf Valsonok**, born October 24, 1889 in Vilnius/Lithuania, survived camp I and the evacuation march. On May 11, 1945, he reported on the situation of the DPs in Landsberg and the surrounding area before the working committee. In early December, he was reported as a patient in the hospital in Waldtrudering, and on December 30, 1945, his death from heart and circulatory failure was registered in Munich and confirmed by a death certificate.



**Karl Zelger** was a member of the provisional working committee since May 4, 1945 and helped to guide the fortunes of Landsberg in the difficult times. In July, he was appointed as a consultant for the slaughterhouse. On July 19, the brewmaster Zelger informed the committee that the Americans had told him that surplus beer could be distributed to the civilian population. On August 2, after the arrest of Dr. Linn, the committee had laid down its work to express solidarity. When the committee was reconstituted under the new mayor Pfannenstiel on August 3, Karl Zelger was no longer there. Karl Zelger died in 1975 in Landsberg.

**Image 54:** Karl Zelger taken 1951. Source: Zelger family

**Dr. Zalman Grinberg**, the camp physician of camp I, was evacuated by train in the night of April 26, 1945. The train was attacked by French fighter-bombers at noon the next day in Schwabhausen. Thanks to his initiative, hundreds of the attack's wounded were brought to the military hospital in St. Ottilien and survived. He was appointed by the Americans as the head of the hospital. He died on August 8, 1983 in New York.



**Jakob Kink**, born on November 28, 1880 in Thaining, sawmill owner from Landsberg, was sanctioned in 1935 by Mayor Dr. Ernst Schmidhuber for his resistance against the NSDAP city administration. The mayor issued a decree and prohibited until further notice all municipal businesses from placing any orders (wood, coal, etc.) with the Kink company. He justified it as follows:

*"The Kink company here has been rejecting any wood purchases from municipal or foundation forests for some time on principle. It prefers to obtain the wood with increased transport costs from elsewhere. It does this to express its aversion to the current city administration; the intimate friendship with Mayor Baur was just much nicer."*<sup>145</sup>

**Image 55:** Jakob King.  
Source: King Family

Against this background, it is no wonder that Kink promised the agents and Pfannenstiel his support for the resistance.

<sup>145</sup> Directive to all departments and referents of the city administration from Mayor Dr. Ernst Schmidhuber, signed on 02.12.1935, Roletscheck Collection

Nevertheless, at the end he received the order from the city to deliver the timber for the "final victory" road barriers. In doing so, he committed to Major Iacob to cut the trunks for the closure of the barrier so short that they were too short for the abutments and thus useless. In May 1945, the wholesale timber company Jakob Kink & Co. was commissioned with the reconstruction of the Sandauer bridge. At that time it had 40 employees. Jakob Kink died on May 27, 1954 in Landsberg.

**Friedrich Lämmerhirt**, agent Freddie von Luxe I, born as an illegitimate child on September 9, 1916 in Bielefeld, had begun an upholstery apprenticeship, but had stolen from his masters and was sentenced to three months in prison. A year later, he was sentenced again to one year and nine months. In October 1943, he had gone underground in Paris as Ferdinand Appenzeller and there recruited as a German-speaking agent by the OSS officer Major Aubrey Harwood.<sup>146</sup> During his training in England, he was issued a devastating psychological certificate.

*"Personal characteristics: He is stubborn and not always precise. A bit physically lazy. Intellectually lazy. Constantly looking for excuses. Boastful. Telling lies."*

After the war, Lämmerhirt was entrusted with the management of the Reconstruction Office in Paderborn on the orders of the British occupation authorities. Soon it became apparent that he was unsuitable for this work. He preceded his dismissal in the summer of 1946 by resigning. In September, he moved to Landsberg am Lech. On December 3, 1946, he spoke at an extraordinary meeting of the city council, praised his deeds as agent Luxe I in the highest tones and emphasized that the city only owed it to him that it had not been bombed during the war. The attending head of the Military Government, Major Rein, gave the following statement:

*"Major Rein stated that when Lämmerhirt first reported to him on his mission, he had considered the whole affair to be boastfulness. The salvation of Landsberg and the whole incident had seemed like a fairy tale to him."<sup>147</sup>*

Major Rein was not wrong in this assessment. Lämmerhirt circulated this Münchhausen tale in order to persuade the city council to grant him a license for a casino in the "Zederbräu", which, however, did not happen. In the summer, Lämmerhirt moved to Stuttgart. In November 1985, he visited Raisting. Various newspaper articles appeared about his "deeds". After this visit, there are no further indications regarding Friedrich Lämmerhirt.

**Rudolf Karl**, Agent Leon, the second man from Luxe I: There are no clues about his whereabouts.

**Colonel Friedrich König** was born in 1894, was Protestant and a professional soldier. Before the war, he was commander of the Jüterbog training ground south of Berlin. He was deployed during the war as a battalion commander of the 4th Battalion of Artillery Regiment 176, which was decimated and dissolved in Stalingrad. From 1942 on, he was deployed as

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<sup>146</sup> Berta Huttner, What is Left to Say, 1997, unpublished manuscript, Stadtarchiv Landsberg am Lech

<sup>147</sup> National Archive Washington, RG 226, Records of the Office of Strategic Services, from: The End of World War II in the Weilheim - Raisting Area, Berta Huttner, unpublished, Archiv Landsberg am Lech

commander of the Artillery Replacement Regiment 27 in Landsberg. His general assessed him as "energetic, very well suited".<sup>148</sup> König was at the same time the senior officer of the garrison and thus responsible for the defense of the location. He delegated this task to his adjutant on the staff, Major Iacob. From his statements it becomes clear that it was in the sense of Colonel König not to defend Landsberg. The colonel knew about all the decisions of his combat commander and approved them. Eyewitnesses have repeatedly told me that Colonel König was somehow in contact with the Americans. However, I cannot prove this. However, Colonel König was not arrested by the Americans and did not end up in prisoner of war camp, which is surprising given his rank. In a letter dated March 10, 1946, Wilhelm Iacob wrote that König and his wife would still be residing in Pürgen. In the Pürgen resident register, he was listed as a resident in 1950. In the address book of the city of Landsberg am Lech for 1967, a "retired" Friedrich König with wife Margaretha, residing at Johann-Schmidt-Strasse 7, is listed.



**Image 56:** Colonel König at his desk Saarbürgkaserne. Source: Martin Thomann Collection Roletscheck

**Major Alfons Kammerer** was battalion commander and thus the second highest officer in Landsberg. On April 26, 1945, he decided that all soldiers of his battalion should go to the Dornstetten training ground to be dissolved as a unit. This plan succeeded except for a few exceptions. The Hungarian battalion, which was attached to the training of the reserve artillery detachment, remained in the barracks and surrendered en masse under the leadership of a general to the Americans the next day without intervening in the fighting. HFW

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<sup>148</sup> Bundesarchiv Freiburg RH 53-7/1114 p.34, Deputy General Command VII A.K, List of the senior officers in Military District VII dated 20.03.1945



Steinmann, who was also a member of the battalion, received the order for the defense with "HJ boys"! It was also claimed of Major Kammerer that he had been in contact with the Americans. I could not find any direct evidence for this. However, it is strange that Major Kammerer was not treated as a prisoner of war, but was appointed by the Military Government as head of the prison as early as July 17, 1945.<sup>149</sup>



**Image 57:** Certificate that Director Alfons Kammerer was issued the 168th pass for the Landsberg am Lech prison. Source Klaus Weichert - 100 years of Landsberg am Lech Penitentiary, KDD Competence Center Nuremberg, 2008

On September 12, 1945, the following announcement was published in the official gazette for the Landsberg/Lech district:

*"The management of the Landsberg penitentiary has been entrusted by the Military Government to Mr. Landgerichtsrat Lindner from Munich. Mr. Kammerer has been entrusted by the Military Government with the management of the county police for the Landsberg district."*

The official gazette lists Bez. Ob. Insp. a.P. Alfons Kammerer as the head of the county police, after which his trail is lost.

**Eduard Pflanz:** After his activity as an auxiliary policeman, he returned to his shoe shop. He was involved in the Historical Association, wrote numerous articles and conducted archaeologically significant excavations on the castle hill. In 1978 he became an honorary member of the association and died in 1995.

<sup>149</sup> Klaus Weichert: 100 Years Justizvollzugsanstalt Landsberg am Lech, KDD Kompetenzzentrum, 90439 Nuremberg, 2008

**Colonel Herbert Wolf** (51 years old)<sup>150</sup> and Volks-Werfer-Kompanie 84: This unit had been stationed in the Mindelheim area from April 1 until its transfer to Landsberg to replenish material and personnel. According to Major General Dr. Kurt Paape, the regiment was filled up to strength in personnel and material. This means in detail: Staff 70 soldiers, I. Abteilung 632 soldiers, II. Abteilung 632 soldiers, III. Abteilung 579 soldiers, in total 1913 soldiers. The planned armament was: Staff 10 x 15 cm Nebelwerfer 41, I. Abteilung 18 x 15 cm Nebelwerfer 41, II. Abteilung 18 x 15 cm Nebelwerfer 41, Abteilung III. 18 x 21 cm Nebelwerfer 42. In total, a frightening firepower. Fortunately, there was no ammunition for this and the soldiers had only six rounds of ammunition for every other man's carbine. Colonel Wolf was also able to assess his situation; to what extent the conversation with Dr. Linn influenced his decision to withdraw from Landsberg without a fight and take up his new position on the Amper, we do not know. It is certain that he left Landsberg earlier than ordered and did not inform his general of this.<sup>151</sup>



**Image 58:** Towing vehicle with 15cm Nebelwerfer 41 with which the Volks-Werfer-Regiment 84 was equipped. Source: German Federal Archives, Picture 101I-155-2109A-06A, Russia, half-track vehicle with rocket launcher

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<sup>150</sup> Evaluation note dated February 14, 1945, National Archive Washington T78-0271, Roletscheck Collection

<sup>151</sup> See Report B-131 Roletscheck Collection