

Siegfried Line hiking trail Islek

Welcome to the Siegfried Line hiking trail Islek.

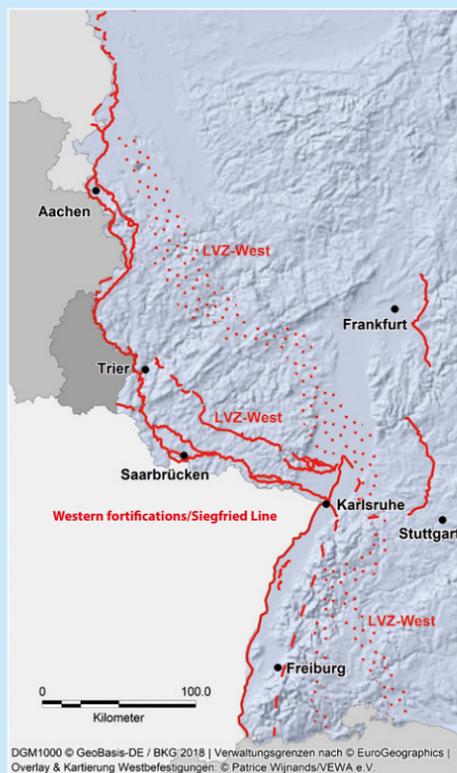
The hiking trail is divided into two sections, both starting from this starting point and returning here again. The east section has 8 stations and is about 6 km long with slight gradients, its focus lies on the Siegfried Line as a fortification system. The west section has 7 stations and is about 5 km long with medium gradients. It also deals with nature conservation and land consolidation. The first stations of both sections can be found at this starting point. The trails are marked and walkable in both directions, but we recommend to walk in numerical order of the stations.

What was the Siegfried Line?

The Siegfried Line was a **630 km long military fortification** along the western border of the German Reich, which was planned and built between 1936 and 1940 by the National Socialist regime. It consisted of more than **17,000 concrete bunkers and several hundred kilometres of tank barriers**. In the years 1944/1945, the Siegfried Line was a reason for considerable delays in the advance of the Allies, despite its outdated anti-tank defence system. In mid-December 1944, the Siegfried Line was the starting point for the **Battle of the Bulge**, the last major offensive of the German Reich. By January 21, 1945, some 40,000 American and German soldiers had lost their lives in the Belgium-Germany-Luxembourg border triangle. **The fighting on the Siegfried Line also prolonged the rule of the NS-regime of injustice, which thus was able to terrorize and murder for several months longer.**

What was the purpose of the Siegfried Line?

From 1936-1938 the Siegfried Line served to secure the military occupation of the demilitarized Rhineland under the Treaty of Versailles. From May 1938 the work on the Siegfried Line was intensified by the NS-regime in order to keep hands free for the planned war against Czechoslovakia. The fortification was stylized for the population by the NS-propaganda as an "invincible bulwark" against an impending French attack. In reality, the Siegfried Line was supposed to cover the back of the NS-regime in order to implement the **conquests of "Lebensraum" (living space) and NS-racial policy in Eastern Europe**. After the beginning of the Second World War, the Siegfried Line served first to keep France and Great Britain from executing an attack, and then as a starting point for the Western campaign from 10 May 1940.



DGM1000 © GeoBasis-DE / BKG 2018 | Verwaltungsgrenzen nach © EuroGeographics | Overlay & Kartierung Westbefestigungen: © Patrice Wijnands/VEWA e.V.

▲ *The western fortification, by the construction workers and later by NS-propaganda called "Siegfried Line", did not only include the tank obstructions and bunkers at the borders to France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands. Even before the occupation of the Rhineland in 1936, the Wetterau-Main-Tauber and Neckar-Enz positions were built east of the Rhine. With the Aachen-Saar programme, the cities of Aachen and Saarbrücken, which until then had been situated in front of the Siegfried Line, were included by fortification lines close to the border. South of Trier the Orscholz defence line was built, east of Karlsruhe the Ettlinger defence line, a barrier against advance to the north. The crossings over the Black Forest were first built as a barrier against rapid advances and then served as a second Line of defence. The Air Defence Zone West (LVZ West) was to serve as an air defence with guns against bombers entering Reich territory, but was also partly intended and developed as a second line of ground defence. The original planning was not completely implemented, in particular the large, underground connected and supplied work groups were not finished anywhere in the west.*

Who built the Siegfried Line?

Civil construction companies, the fortification pioneer staffs, the Organisation Todt, the German Reich Labour Service, the German Reich Mail Service, the German Reich Railway System and other NS-organisations with **up to 500,000**

workers were involved in the construction of the Siegfried Line. A large proportion of the workers, who came from all over the German Reich, had been obliged to build the Siegfried Line in accordance with the "compulsory service regulation" of June 1938.

What did the construction of the Siegfried Line cost?

The costs for the construction of the Siegfried Line amounted to about **3 billion Reichsmark**, which corresponded to **almost one third of the state budget** of the German Reich.



▲ *The Siegfried Line memorial "Unter den Buchen" has become a place of remembrance. It was erected in 2006 in a 72-hour campaign by the Catholic Rural Youth Movement of the parish of Großkampfenberg. Every year a prayer for peace takes place here on the evening of 3 October, during which the dragon's teeth line becomes a sea of lights. On this occasion young and old meet for an exchange about life in the past and today.*

Inflation-adjusted, that would be about 14.5 billion Euros today. The Siegfried Line devoured 5% of the annual production of steel, 8% of the wood production and 20% of the cement production. For comparison: Instead of a simple shelter "standard construction 10", of which almost 3500 were built, one could have built 4 single-family houses with basements. Thus, state and private building projects were left by the wayside in favour of the fortifications.

How many Siegfried Line complexes existed in the Großkampfenberg/Leidenborn/Kesfeld area?

A total of 115 bunkers (Kesfeld 62; Leidenborn 53) and about 6 kilometres of dragon's teeth were erected.



▲ *The large concrete blocks with teeth were part of a road block formed by inserting steel girders into the gaps between the teeth. The barrier blocked the road leading from Großkampfenberg to the present starting point of the Siegfried Line hiking trail and was located directly at the junction of the road from Kesfeld. Today you can still see the house in the background on the other side of the road.*



▲ *US radio operator under the Großkampfenberg town entrance sign.*

Map: Walter Stutterich/Patrice Wijnands
 Pictures: Road block – municipality of Großkampfenberg,
 Sea of lights – Hedi Hau, Großkampfenberg
 Picture: Entry sign – "Ralph Morse-LIFE Collection"
 Sources and literature:
 - Günther Wagner (honorary representative of the Directorate-General for Cultural Heritage (GDKE) for the Siegfried Line in Rhineland-Palatinate)
 - Bettinger/Büren: "Der Westwall", Osnabrück 1990
 - Manfred Groß: "Der Westwall zwischen Niederrhein und Schneeeifel", Cologne 1982
 - Deutsche Bundesbank: "Kaufkraftäquivalente historischer Beträge in deutschen Währungen", as of January 2017
 - "Wir bauen des Reiches Sicherheit: Mythos und Realität des Westwalls 1938", Berlin 1992
 - Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Benz: "Die Bedeutung des Westwalls für das nationalsozialistische Regime", Geisenheim 2016

WESTWALL
WANDERWEG
ISLEK



STARTING PANEL

East section "Siegfried Line hiking trail Islek"



The east section presents the Siegfried Line as a fortification system and covers its formation and disappearance. Following the dragon's teeth in front of you takes you to

Panel East 2

This explains the four-row dragon's teeth model 1938, a tank obstacle that was only effective against tanks weighing up to 20 tons.

Continuing along the dragon's teeth into the valley, you get to

Panel East 3

This takes a look at the system used for defending the dragon's teeth line from a hill-top machine gun bunker which is no longer there today but whose position is reconstructed in the picture.

Further along the valley, the trail leads to

Panel East 4

The bunker building is set in the context of European fortification history. Not only was the Siegfried Line constructed in the interwar period, similar fortification lines were installed all over Europe.

Proceeding uphill again, you come to the model 1939 dragon's teeth, now consisting of five rows, and along its course, to

Panel East 5

Explained here are the reasons for reinforcing the design and structure of the dragon's teeth to impede the movement of heavier tanks and also why a further line of model 1939 dragon's teeth was built in front of the model 1938 square-pyramidal fortifications.

Along the dragon's teeth model 1939 and later along the model 1938 line, you reach

Panel East 6

This deals with the disappearance of the Siegfried Line. You can see the remains of the dragon's teeth in front of you, but where are all the bunkers that once defended it?

The trail continues down a slight gradient to

Panel East 7

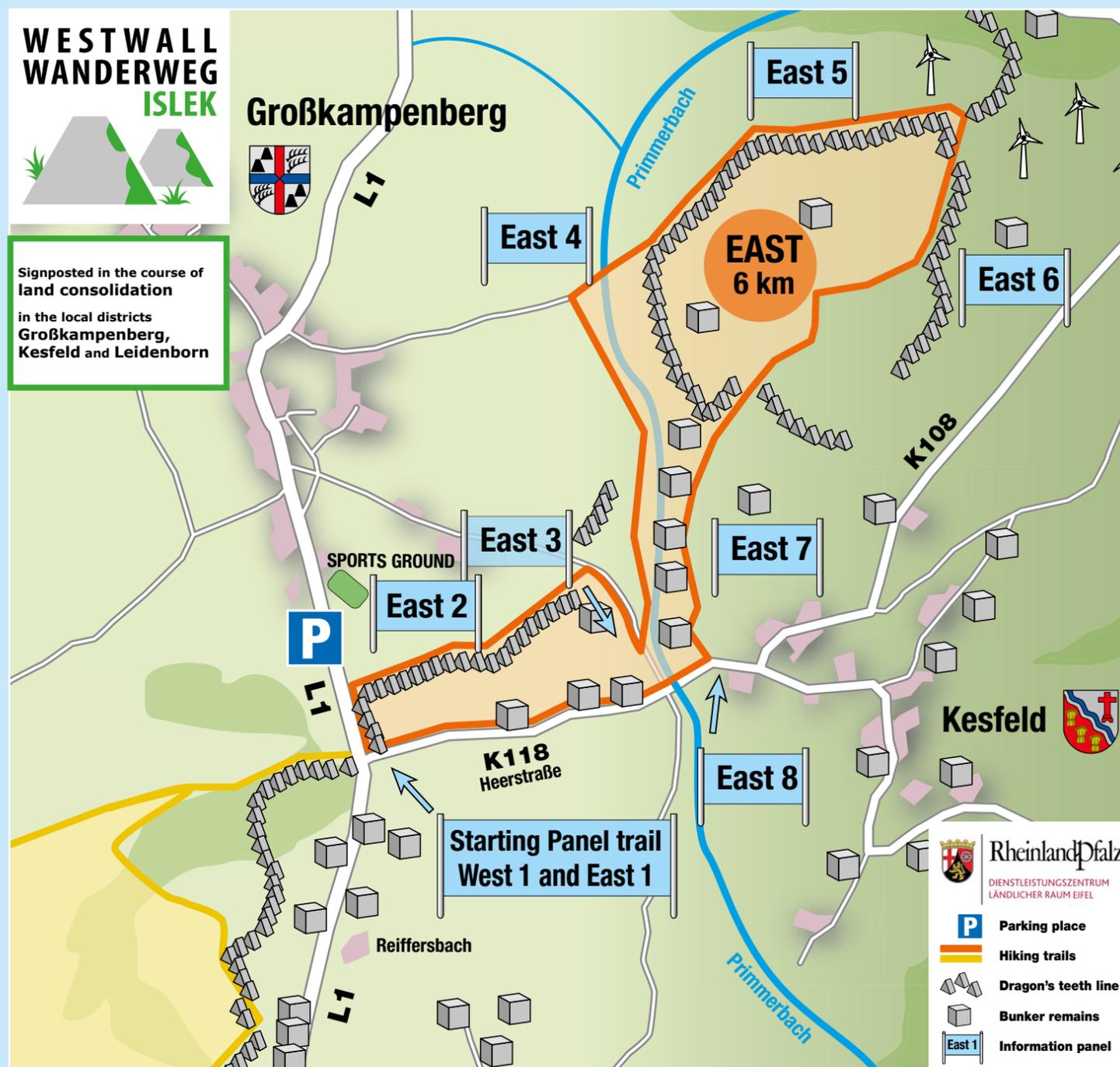
While the Siegfried Line was being constructed, a camp of the Reich Labour Service was located within sight of where you are now standing. What tasks did the Reich Labour Service have in constructing the Siegfried Line in the Third Reich?

Following the trail downhill towards the village of Kesfeld, you arrive at

Panel East 8

In August 1939, NS propaganda declared the Siegfried Line to be the guarantor of peace in the film "The Siegfried Line", as well as in book and newspaper publications; at the same time, the NS regime was preparing for the war in the East. What was the purpose of this propaganda?

Back we go on the street to the starting panel.



Signposted in the course of land consolidation in the local districts Großkampfenberg, Kesfeld and Leidenborn

Starting Panel EAST 1

Tank obstacles at the Siegfried Line

The Siegfried Line consisted not only of bunkers, but also of a **multitude of barriers and obstacles**. Their task was to prevent enemy soldiers and tanks from entering the approach area of the bunkers.

As an infantry obstacle, barbed wire (approx. 2,200 km of obstacles) was mainly used at the Siegfried Line. The simplest protection against tanks was the **utilization of tank-safe terrain**, such as forests, rivers, swamps and steep rock edges. In flat terrain **wet combat vehicle ditches** (artificial ponds) could be created. For hilly terrain like the Eifel, the pioneers developed other artificial obstacles. The **rising wooden pile obstacle** (artificial forest) consisted of five rows of approx. 40 cm thick trunk wood piles, which were driven into the ground. The **armoured wall** looked like a 3 m high slope support wall and the "Hemmkurven"-obstacle consisted of upward-curved steel rails, which, however, was very expensive. Barrier, rope and girder barriers closed the passages through the obstacle system.

Reinforced concrete obstacle "model 1938"

As a replacement for the wooden pile obstacle, the **reinforced concrete obstacle "model 1938"** was introduced on 02 June 1938. Concrete was available in large quantities compared to valuable trunk wood. The subterranean cross

beams bearing the dragon's teeth were connected with two longitudinal beams to a net. Barbed wire was laid in front of and inside the tank trap to keep pioneers away with their explosives. Where the ground was too swampy for the heavy concrete dragon's teeth, wooden pile obstacles were still used, including east of Großkampenbergr. In 1940 there were **265 km of tank obstacles of all kinds** at the Siegfried Line.

Tank traps, dragon's teethline, Toblerone

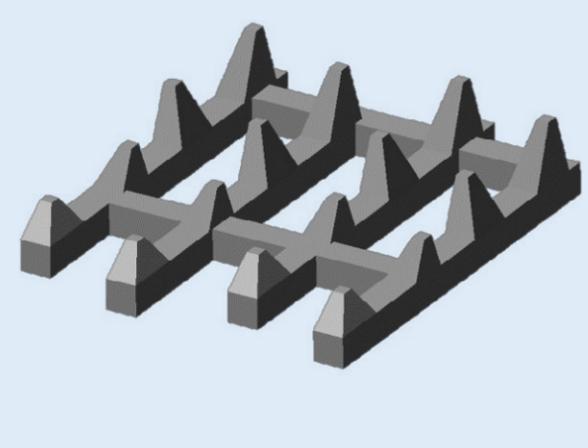
The dragon's teeth line visible from afar **characterises the optical image of the Siegfried Line** to this day. Its rugged concrete obstacles stimulated the imagination of soldiers and civilians alike. Thus, in the course of the war, **numerous names** were created for them. In the vernacular the term "dragon's teeth line" has established itself. The metaphor "**dragon's teeth**" dates from 1944, when the allied soldiers broke through the Siegfried Line. In Switzerland, where these concrete obstacles were also built, the name "**Toblerone**" is often found in reference to the visually similar chocolate.

Military effect

In 1944, the US Army's standard **Sherman** tank weighed over 30 tons. In addition, the US troops were equipped with armoured bulldozers. The

"model 1938" was too light for these tanks. Without anti-tank defence it could simply be over-grounded by a bulldozer. The weakness of the "model 1938" had already been recognized by those responsible for the Siegfried Line planning before the war and so they designed a stronger obstacle, the "model 1939", which is also part of this Siegfried Line route.

Dragon's teeth model 1938	
Rows	Four
Structure	Linear Grid
Tank safety	Up to 20 tons
Costs	Unknown
Height of the teeth	Row 1: 40cm Row 2: 60cm Row 3: 80cm Row 4 : 1.0m



▲ Above and below ground part of the reinforced concrete obstacle model 1938.

3D-Model: Patrice Wijnand/Vewa e.V. (CC-BY-SA 3.0)
Literature: Bettinger/Büren: "Der Westwall", Osnabrück 1990



The "standard construction principle"

From 1937 the Siegfried Line was built according to the "standard construction principle" (Regelbau). The fortress pioneers developed **standardized bunker types** for the different **uses** and **orders**. These were optimally placed by the fortress pioneer staffs in the terrain for the respective purpose (e.g. an observation post on a hill). The use of standard construction plans and prefabricated steel components (e.g. armoured doors, embrasure plates, ventilation grids) **accelerated the construction work considerably**, even though the bunker facilities could **not always be perfectly** adapted to the local conditions. **The pioneer staffs also modified standard structures on location to adapt to the terrain** (e.g. additional slope retaining walls).

The MG-bunker "standard construction 1"

Most Siegfried Line bunkers were pure **shelters**, which offered the soldiers protection from artillery fire. They had to fight from the trenches next to the bunkers. The **MG-bunker** with embrasures made it possible to shoot at the obstacles against tanks (dragon's teeth) and infantry (barbed wire obstacle, disappeared today) under protection with a **machine gun (MG)** in order to prevent infantry attacks or blasting of the obstacles by pioneers. The enfilade is carried out **along the flank**, i.e. parallel to the obstacle, in order to be able to fire at as large a range of the obstacles as possible and not to be hit **frontally** by artillery or a tank or an anti-tank cannon in the embrasure. The MG-bunker on the road was a **standard construction 1**, equipped with a modern **MG 34** or the older **MG 08** behind a 10 cm thick steel plate with a firing range of 65 degrees. The



▲ Standard construction 1 with embrasure plate at Koerprich in the Saarland.



▲ Photomontage of standard construction 1 next to the road to Kesfeld.

combat area at the same time served as the living space of the occupation, consisting of up to 6 soldiers. The bunker was gas-proof with a **gas lock and protective ventilation**. It had an **embrasure for entrance defence** with rifle, machine pistol or pistol as well as an emergency exit which was not visible from the outside. Like all bunkers of the Siegfried Line, it was connected to the **underground fortress cable network** and thus had a telephone connection

Earthworks and camouflage of the finished bunker were carried out by the **Reich Labour Service (RLS)**. The construction of the bunker, for which the RLS seemed unsuitable, was carried out in reinforced concrete with cast armoured parts by the **Organisation Todt (OT)** with the support of civilian

construction companies. The OT, named after its leader Dr. Fritz Todt, was first deployed in the construction of the **Hunsrückhöhenstraße and the motorways**. On June 9, 1938, Hitler commissioned the OT to build the Siegfried Line, since the fortress pioneers who were actually militarily responsible for it, were unable to realize the **10,000 shelters and 1800 MG-bunkers** demanded by Hitler by October 1, 1938 within four months. Although the OT could not achieve this either, it mobilized **a large number of workers** who were obliged to work on the Siegfried Line on the basis of the "Ordinance to Secure the Need for Strength for Tasks of Special State Political Importance" issued by Hermann Göring on 22 June 1938. A total of **up to 500,000 people** worked at the Siegfried Line.

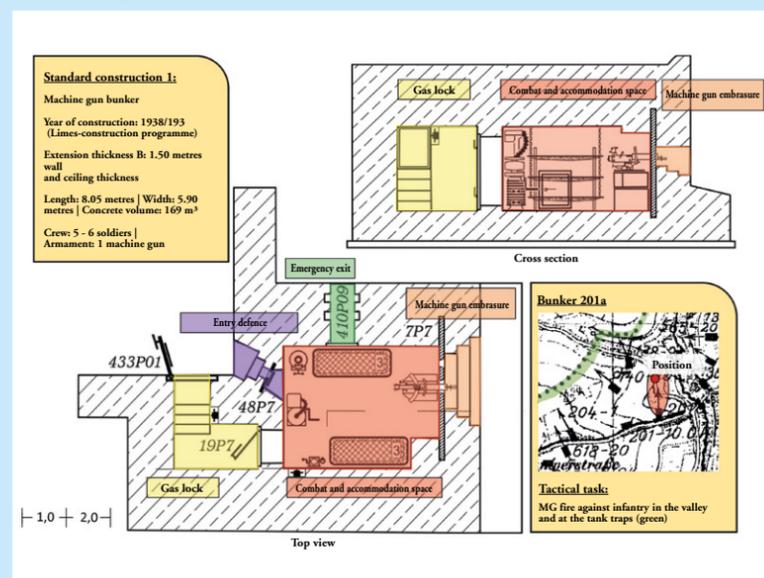
Military effect

For the soldiers in the bunker 10 cm steel appeared as an impressive protection, in the case of **armour steel** it would still have been a good protection in 1944. The soft **rolled steel** of the embrasure plate 7P7, however, was straightly penetrated by the 76mm anti-tank gun of the US Army and the 76mm gun of the Sherman tank and was a **deceptive protection!**



▲ Deceptive protection! This embrasure plate was straightly penetrated by three 76mm grenades.

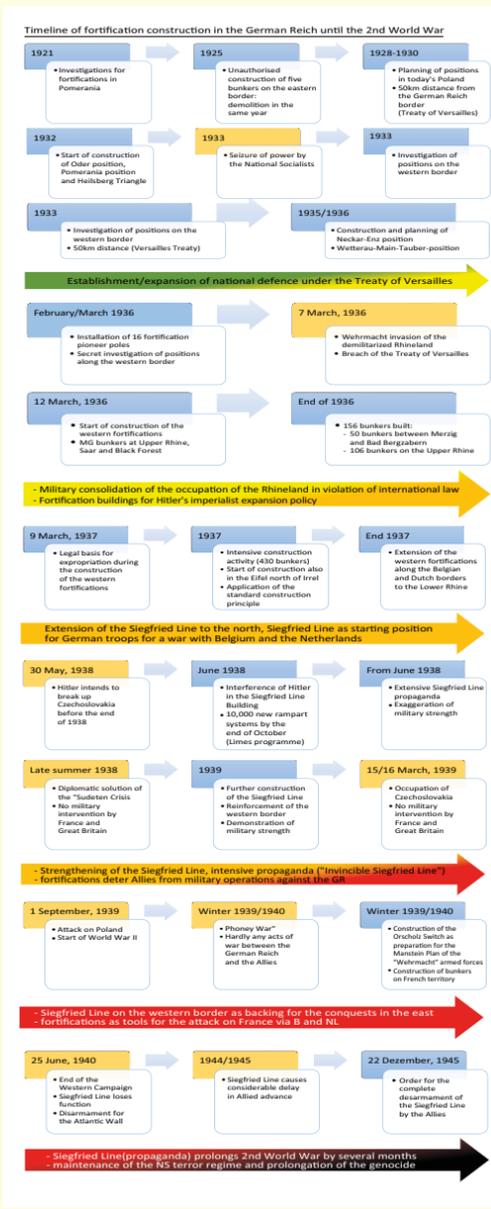
Standard construction plan: Enrico Kanis
Photo standard construction 1: Enrico Kanis
Photo Kesfeld: Martin Lang
Photo embrasure plate: Werner Schmachtenberg



▲ Ground plan and outline of standard construction 1 with functional areas marked in different colours.



Fortification construction and military aspects



▲ German fortification construction after the First World War.

A paradigm shift took place in European fortification construction with the First World War. Before the First World War, fortification **belts** were built around important cities such as Verdun, Metz and Liège, particularly in France, the German Empire and Belgium. They were supposed to obstruct the way for the attacker and protect the cities as well as their own forces. **Linear fortification systems** protected a **political outer border** such as the **Roman Limes** and the Chinese Wall, or an area

against raids such as the **medieval land weirs**. Experiences with the positional war in the First World War led to a **renaissance of linear fortification systems**, beginning in

France

After an analysis of the First World War, it was concluded there that the **fortifications around Verdun** had played an important role in the defeat of the German Reich. France therefore began planning and building a new **fortification line** along the border with Germany and Luxembourg at the end of the 1920s, which was later extended to the English Channel and the Mediterranean: **The Maginot Line**.

Also in Belgium, Poland, Finland, the Netherlands and Czechoslovakia, fortifications were erected along the borders with Germany, Austria and the Soviet Union by the end of the 1930s. The highest density of fortifications was reached on both sides of the German western border.

An entire continent was covered with bunkers within a decade ("**bunkering**" of **Europe**). During the Second World War further fortification lines were built, in particular the Atlantic Wall as a coastal fortification from the Spanish border to northern Norway. Today some fortification lines are located in the country against which they were once built, e.g. the former German eastern fortification in today's Poland.

Germany

The **Treaty of Versailles** of 1919 had a major influence on the economy and politics of the Weimar Republic. The determination of the **war guilt of the German Reich** had negative territorial and financial consequences for the German Reich. Sensitive restrictions also affected the military. All **fortifications** to the west and in a 50 km wide strip to

the east of the Rhine had to be **rendered unusable for military purposes**. The construction of new fortifications and the stationing of armed forces in this **demilitarized zone** were forbidden. Compliance with these regulations was monitored by the Inter-Allied Military Control Commission (IMCC). There was little sign of peaceful international understanding between the world wars. **The political situation remained unstable**. The first bunker lines were already built in the Weimar Republic in the east against Poland. The Third Reich erected extensive fortifications first in the east and after the occupation of the Rhineland, which was contrary to the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, also in the west.



▲ Today's Europe and its bunker relics.

Source:
Timeline Martin Lang

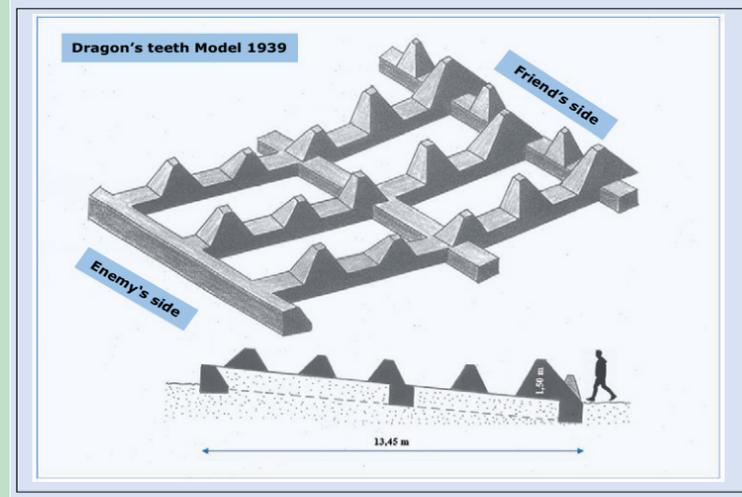
Map:
Werner Konold: "Militärische Schichten der Kulturlandschaft", Freiburg 2014, p. 30, modified after Rohde/Wegener: "Vom Denkmalwert des Unfreulichen", Rhineland 1997, p. 33

Literature
Comparison Ingo Eberle: "Territorialfestungen in Europa im Überblick unter Berücksichtigung ihrer gegenwärtigen touristischen Situation", in: Eberle/Reichert: "Beiträge zur angewandten Festungsforschung – Volume 1. Der Westwall – Erhaltung, gesellschaftliche Akzeptanz und touristische Nutzung eines schweren Erbes für die Zukunft", Trier 2006, P. 1-32

Reinforced concrete obstacle "model 1939"



Dragon's teeth Model 1939	
Rows	Five
Structure	Grids from row 4 and 5 bent by 15°
Tank safety	Up to 36 tons
Costs	100,000 Reichsmark per kilometre
Height of teeth	Row 1 : 80 cm Row 2 : 80 cm Row 3 : 90 cm Row 4 : 1.0 m Row 5 : 1.0 m and 1.5 m alternately



▲ The reinforced concrete obstacle model 1939

In autumn 1938, the Munich Agreement averted a military conflict with Czechoslovakia through diplomatic channels by transferring the Sudeten German territories to the German Reich. In the eyes of the Reich leadership, the Siegfried Line had passed its first "**propagandistic baptism of fire**" by helping France and Great Britain to make concessions in Munich. The construction activities on the western fortifications were then put to the test. The **rapid development of tank technology** at the end of the 1930s and the associated higher weight of the combat vehicles made it necessary to **reinforce the obstacles**. On January 19, 1939, with the "first order for expansion", the construction of the dragon's teeth "model 1938" was prohibited. It was replaced by the improved "**model 1939**".

Dragon's teeth in the Großkampfenberg/Kesfeld area

Bunkers and dragon's teeth in the Großkampfenberg and Kesfeld areas **were mainly built in 1938**, with the construction of bunkers and obstacles **taking place in parallel**. Subsequent changes to the position course therefore meant **additional expenditure**. The **hill north of Kesfeld** was to be included in the Siegfried Line, in order to be able to open fire at the forest-free area east of Großkampfenberg from there. The effective area of the installations behind the old dragon's teeth line was limited by the forest area on the hill. **Three bunkers** were built for this purpose, but they were now located in front of the safe dragon's teeth. In 1939 it was therefore decided to also make the hill with the reinforced concrete obstacle "model 1939" safe against tanks. The new dragon's teeth line **branches off at 90°** from the old one (model 1938). The preserved "seams" are **unique in this form**.

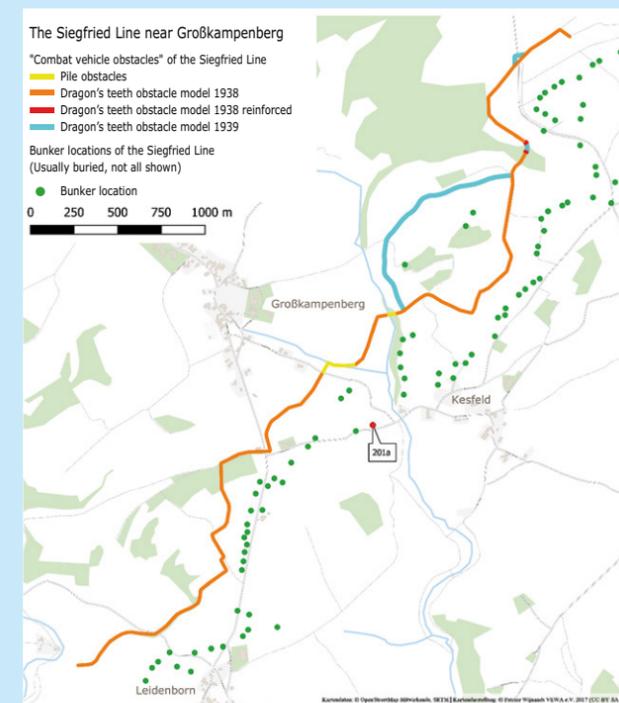
Military effect

The reinforced concrete obstacle model 1939 was very resistant, it could even stop the **heavy German Tiger tank**, as later experiments showed. New compared to the 1938 model was, besides the **fifth row of teeth, a third longitudinal switch**, which was built as a free-standing wall **on the enemy side** and ensured that an attacking tank could no longer jump over the obstacle when it hit it, but showed its vulnerable underside. However, the tank obstacle was only as

WITNESSES OF THE TIMES

Nikolaus Hoffman from Kesfeld remembers:
"The dragon's teeth were a nuisance for farmers. They were simply built over many field paths and nobody asked anyone about it. To get to their fields, the farmers had to drive all the way around to one of the passages".

good as its defence. It was able to stop the Sherman tank of the US Army in 1944. The weaponry of the Siegfried Line, however, was still designed for the tanks of the year 1939 and thus in 1944 mostly ineffective and modern anti-tank weapons were often too big for the old bunkers.

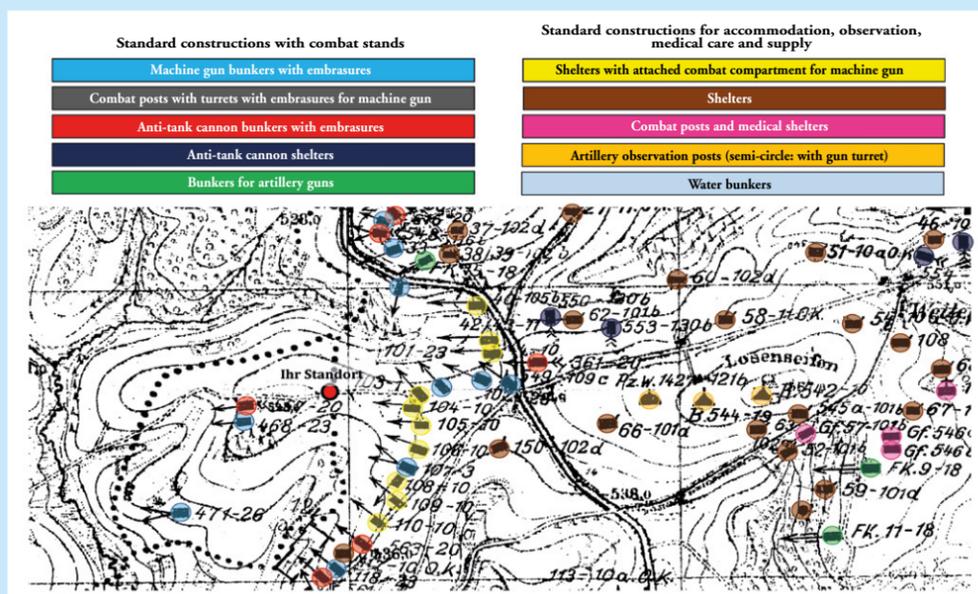


▲ The obstacles and the bunkers defending them.

Map: Patrice Wijnand/Vewa e.V. (CC-BY-SA 3.0)
3D-graphic: DLR-Eifel
Literature: Bettinger/Büren: "Der Westwall", Osnabrück 1990

The vanished Siegfried Line

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▲ Density and diversity of the bunkers and their depth in the back country.

Various dragon's teeth accompany this trail, but **where are the bunkers** that were supposed to defend this line? They were destroyed in several blasts and erased from the landscape. Few have been preserved intact. In the woods they are often still found as **blasted ruins**. In the field districts they have either been completely removed or are still recognizable as flat hills or tree islands in the open landscape.

The destruction by the battles in 1944/45

The first destructions already took place during the battles in the Siegfried Line area in 1944/45. To prevent reconquests, **bunkers were blown up by the US pioneers**, unless they had already been destroyed during their conquest or were used for their own purposes.

Directive no. 22

Directive no. 22 of the Allied Control Council of December 6, 1945 ordered the destruction

WITNESSES OF THE TIMES

Nikolaus Hoffman from Kesfeld remembers:
"It didn't take long for the blasts to go off after the war. We also had a bunker right behind our house. One day we had to leave our house because the bunker was to be blown up. We had repaired and cleaned up a lot in the months before. After the blasts everything was full of concrete again".

destruction of the defence works located on the strategic priorities. [...]

After the fortifications in the west, up to 50 km east of the Rhine, were destroyed on the basis of the Treaty of Versailles, all fortifications in Germany, including the Siegfried Line **built contrary to the provisions of the Treaty of Versailles**, were now to be destroyed, in order to prevent another war emanating from Germany. For this purpose the still undestroyed fortifications were blown up, which in case of bunkers located near villages also caused **damage to the buildings in the villages**. For the **extraction of raw materials** the steel used in the bunkers was recovered.

The debris fields of blown up bunkers hindered agriculture and forestry, bunkers in settlement areas hindered road and building construction. In addition, the bunkers, whether blown up or still intact, were potential sources of danger.

The Institute for Federal Real Estate

After it was clarified in 1956 by a decision of the Federal Court of Justice in a case from Rhineland-Palatinate that the structural legacies of the Siegfried Line belonged to the Federal Republic of Germany as the legal successor of the German Reich and not to the respective property owners, the Federal Government also had to take over traffic safety or removal of installations. In the following decades, the **Institute for Federal Real Estate (BImA)** removed many bunkers and bunker ruins by crushing the concrete and burying the remains on site. This was very expensive in the beginning and only became cheaper in the 1960s. Between 1957 and

of all fortifications in Germany within five years.

1.) A complete demining [is] to be carried out and all fortifications, underground buildings, military installations [...] are to be destroyed. The work must be considered and carried out in such a way that the cohesion of the German defence system is broken in the shortest possible time; above all, it is necessary to carry out the complete

1967 about 1200 bunkers, 8 kilometres of dragon's teeth and 73 vaulted galleries were removed in Rhineland-Palatinate, which cost the equivalent of 29.5 million Euros. Not only did this remove the **unwelcome Nazi concrete blocks** from the landscape, but they no longer posed a danger. However, the flat hills or tree islands in the landscape are still visible to the trained eye and mark the old bunker locations.

The Siegfried Line under monument protection

On October 1, 2014, the state of Rhineland-Palatinate took over the Siegfried Line from the federal government and its remains are now **completely protected as a surface monument**. The foundation **"Grüner Wall im Westen - Mahmal ehemaliger Westwall" (Green Wall in the West - Memorial of the former Siegfried Line)** was established to take care of nature conservation and traffic safety. Information about the history of the Siegfried Line is available at the Landeszentrale Politische Bildung Rheinland-Pfalz (State Agency for Civic Education Rhineland-Palatinate)



▲ Hills and groups of trees as markings of former Siegfried Line bunkers. Compare map and picture and look east yourself!



▲ A blast bunker in the Hürtgen Forest.

Photos: Werner Schmachtenberg
 Source to the map with bunker complexes:
 German Federal Archive map 932-9
 Literature: Werner Schmachtenberg:
 "Der Westwall in Rheinland-Pfalz", Band 1, Mainz 2018
 Altena/Mewes: "Zum Umgang mit den Westwallanlagen", Trier 2014

Panel EAST 6

Reich Labour Service Camp Kesfeld

Creation of the Reich Labour Service (RAD)



▲ Flag of the Reich Labour Service

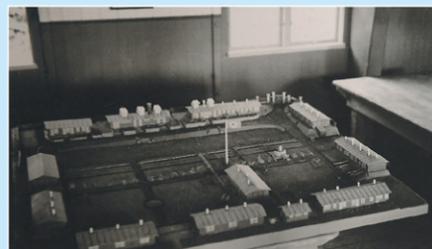
In 1931, the **Voluntary Labour Service (FAD)** was founded under the direction of the Labour Administration. It was intended to alleviate the high unemployment caused by the world economic crisis and to

contribute to "physical training" and "civic education" in the national sense. The FAD had **little to do with voluntarism**. The receipt of social benefits presupposed charitable consideration. Therefore, refusal to provide labour service had **serious financial consequences**. In 1933, the FAD was brought into line and given a **paramilitary structure**. On 26 June 1935, general compulsory service was introduced for men between 18 and 25 and the FAD was renamed the **Reich Labour Service (RAD)**. Pre-sorting according to **racial criteria** took place. Thus persons of "non-Aryan descent" were to be excluded from service.

For the strenuous work, those who were obliged to do so were uniformly paid 21 Reichsmark per week, which corresponded roughly to the wages of an unskilled labourer. However, only **50 Reichspfennig per day** were paid out of this. The difference was withheld for board, lodging, clothing and insurance.

Function of the Reich Labour Service

The Reich Labour Service had three main functions in the Third Reich:



▲ A model of the RAD camp.



▲ Community sports on the muster ground.



▲ The entrance to the camp, to the left the dining room.



▲ Lined up for appeal on 1 May 1941, "National Labour Day"!

1. **Disciplining the youth** through paramilitary drill ("Soldier of Labour")
2. **Promotion of the national community** through equal treatment (service for all social classes)
3. **Assumption of auxiliary services** for the Wehrmacht (from 1938)

Thus, the RAD was **rather a part of the National Socialist education system**, as the work performance of RAD men was only about half that of workers in a private enterprise. Only those who had completed their work service could study. The RAD also **had an influence on the number of unemployed**, because RAD members were not registered as unemployed.

Use of the Reich Labour Service

The main activity of the Reich Labour Service was initially cultivation work, i.e. the **reclamation of "German soil"**. From 1938 onwards, the educational factor of the RAD receded into the background and the Labour Service developed into the "Wehrmacht earthwork force" on the Siegfried Line. The RAD was not considered capable of building bunkers. It was used for **earth moving** (excavating the building pits, road construction, preparing the building sites) and **camouflage work**. In the course of the 2nd World War, the RAD lost importance and was largely absorbed by the Wehrmacht. From 1944 at the latest, forced labourers were also incorporated into the RAD and forced to work in factories, in agriculture and, in 1944, to build trenches and anti-tank trenches on the Siegfried Line.

The RAD camp Kesfeld

The RAD camp "Hans von Volkmann" near Kesfeld was one of hundreds of barracks camps in the area of the Siegfried Line. Its history began in 1933 as a **FAD camp at Bleialf**. Historical references between 1933 and the period of building the Siegfried Line are hardly found. It was probably moved from the **RAD department 7/242** to the construction sites in Kesfeld **in October 1938** as part of the Limes construction programme of the Siegfried Line. This RAD department was part of the "Arbeitsgau" (Work District) XIV Moselland (Mittelrhein), one of 32 Arbeitsgau-locations in the



▲ Location of the (vanished) RAD camp in the present landscape.

German Reich. **A total of 11 wooden barracks** stood on the approximately **1.5 hectare** site on the outskirts of the village. In the middle of the camp there was a large **muster ground with a flagpole**. The RAD camp housed about **150 workers** (more than the population of Kesfeld) and other personnel. When the construction work was completed, the RAD workers were mainly deployed **to camouflage the bunkers**. During the war of 1939/40 they built **wire entanglements and trenches**.

The workers initially came from all over Germany. After the occupation of Luxembourg and France, many people were also conscripted from there to the Reich Labour Service: *"After the war in the West, many Luxembourgers were here, as well as people from Lorraine. Apart from this the workers came from all over the Reich, especially from the cities," reports contemporary witness Hoffmann. "After the war, the wooden barracks were used as emergency shelters, by families whose farms had been destroyed - and later they were all dismantled."*

ZEUGEN DER ZEIT

Nikolaus Hoffman from Kesfeld remembers:

"Work on the Siegfried Line was carried out day and night. Behind our house, the RAD built a path from the accommodation bunker to the first aid station. And the RAD also helped with the artillery bunker. Food and fuel was transported from Üttfeld railway station to the camp. In winter, when the trucks couldn't get down to the railway station, we drove to the railway station with our big horse-drawn sleigh. We always had 3-6 workers from the camp with us to help us. My father got the sledge paid by the RAD for this purpose, because we had strong horses and my father was well known in the village."

Flag: public domain
Historical photos: Adolf Winkler/Bitburg
Landscape photo: Werner Schmachtenberg
Literature:

- Prof. Dr. Manfred Weißbecker: "Das Reichsarbeitsdienstgesetz vom 26. Juni 1935 und seine lange Vorgeschichte", Jena 2010
- Kiran Klaus Patel: "Soldaten der Arbeit. Arbeitsdienste in Deutschland und den USA 1933-1945", Göttingen 2003
- Bernhard Kramer: "Der Krieg in der Schneifel", Sellerich 1996

WESTWALL
WANDERWEG
ISLEK



Panel EAST 7

The Siegfried Line in propaganda

On September 12, 1938, Adolf Hitler's speech at the NSDAP's Nuremberg Reich Party Congress turned the secret armament "Western Fortification" into the "Siegfried Line" of propaganda, the name



▲ Book "Wir bauen am Westwall" by Werner Flack, Gerhard Stalling publisher's book shop, Oldenburg . O./Berlin, 1939.

"Siegfried Line" coming from the workers. Hitler spoke of the **"most gigantic fortification of all time"** and declared: **"I have made this most enormous effort of all time to benefit peace."**

The peace rhetoric of the NS regime continued until the beginning of the Second World War. An article to this effect

can still be found in the Bitburger Zeitung on 24 August 1939, when preparations for the war against Poland were already in full swing. Books enthusiastically described the joint work to secure peace on the Siegfried Line, such as Werner Flack's book "Wir bauen am Westwall" (We are building on the Siegfried Line) in 1939. And the film "The Siegfried Line" by Fritz Hippler, which was released in cinemas on August 10, 1939, put his message in a nutshell after only a few minutes: **"The West of the Reich is in grave danger!"**

The film "The Siegfried Line"

The film not only attempted to portray the Siegfried Line as the result of a joyfully performed **joint effort of the national community** based on the ingenious foresight of the "Führer". It also portrayed it much stronger than it actually was and would be until the beginning of the invasion into the West on May 10th, 1940. For this he used two complementary strategies. Aerial photographs of closely spaced bunkers of all kinds and of kilometre-long lines of dragon's teeth created the **impression of quantity**. The **impression of quality** was created by depicting modern fortifications, communications and weapons technology and large quantities of weapons and ammunition. In the imagination of the viewer, both

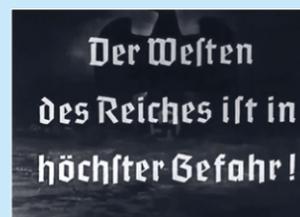
were to merge into one unit, the "impenetrable wall". In reality, the bunker density shown in The Siegfried Line was only present in a few places, such as in the Weissenburg Valley and the pictures of modern technology came from an experimental and training fortress of the **Hillersleben army testing station near Magdeburg** and from the underground installations of the Oder-Warthe-Bogen fortification system, which had already been built against Poland from 1936 on. The Siegfried Line forces had also begun to build such facilities, and their completion was scheduled for 1952, but never took place.

Propaganda for Germany and abroad

Nazi propaganda was not only aimed at the German population, the majority of whom, like the civilian population of other countries, were afraid of another war. German civilians were deceived to the last about the war plans of the **Nazi leadership and the military**. The propaganda was also intended to deceive foreign countries in the same sense, but at the same time to prevent them from attacking the Reich in the West in the event of a war by the German Reich in the East, thus starting the **two-front war feared** after the experiences of the First World War, for which the Wehrmacht was too weak. This already applied to the invasion of Czechoslovakia planned by Hitler to take place on October 1, 1938, which did not come about as a result of the Munich Agreement, but it was especially true of the attack on Poland on 1 September 1939. One of the reasons why France and Great Britain did not attack after the declaration of war on the German Reich was the strength of the Siegfried Line as conveyed by propaganda. The main reason, however, was that the governments in Paris and London did not want to impose a new offensive war on their countries only 20 years after the First World War. When in September 1944 the Allies pursued the



▲ Title of the film "The Siegfried Line" by Fritz Hippler, 1939.



▲ Text panel from the film "The Siegfried Line" with the central claim why the Siegfried Line should have been built.

fleeing Wehrmacht / Waffen-SS through France to the Reich border, **the propaganda of the invincible Siegfried Line** played a final role. In order to bypass the Siegfried Line in the north via Arnhem, the Allies planned and carried out a risky operation with air landings and a tank advance over a single road. It failed at the **bridge of Arnhem**, which could not be conquered.

In the Bitburger Zeitung on August 24, 1939, the headline was: **"The Siegfried Line, a new German miracle":**

"While the earth resounds full of the hysterical war cries of forces intending to encircle Germany and the war psychosis shakes the peoples of the "peace front" like a devastating plague, the order states and among them the united Greater Germany pursue their peaceful reconstruction work in unswerving and unshakable calm, based on the proud German defence system created by the deeds of the Führer, strengthened by the unbreakable friendship of great and strong nations, animated by the best military spirit, which is one of the essential traits of the German people. This feeling of security and safety is deepened and strengthened by a new great deed of the Führer and the National Socialist German national community, which in its planning and execution must be called a new German miracle, the Siegfried Line. What has been created here in the almost unbelievably short time of only 1½ years in an unheard-of joint effort of the entire nation, this wall of steel and iron, of stone and concrete, is unparalleled".

The film "The Siegfried Line" begins with inserted texts:

"1914" "The entente's policy of encirclement leads to World War I - against a Germany whose parliament had refused to provide sufficient armament." "With open borders, the empire stands against a world of enemies." "1938" "The encirclement policy of our old adversaries comes to life. Western democracies encourage the Czech government to mobilize. - They want to bring the war into Germany through Germany's open borders." "The western part of the German Reich is in grave danger!"

The narrator in the film "The Siegfried Line" repeatedly takes up the peace motif:

"This peaceful German land should be devastated by the invasion of enemy armies, as in previous centuries." "For the protection of the German country, the Führer gave the order to the army and the German air force on May 28, 1938, to reinforce and accelerate the expansion of the western fortifications." "Behind this wall of steel and concrete the German farmer tills his field in peace and safety."

At one point in the film "The Siegfried Line" the true intentions of the NS-regime with the Siegfried Line are probably revealed rather unintentionally by the speaker. The meaning of these words only became clear to contemporaries three weeks later:

"The fortifications of the West need so little occupation for the defensive struggle that the main mass of the German armed forces can be used on other fronts."

Photo title "Wir bauen am Westwall": Werner Schmachtenberg
Pictures film "The Siegfried Line": Still images from the film "The Siegfried Line"

WESTWALL
WANDERWEG
ISLEK



Panel EAST 8

West section "Siegfried Line hiking trail Islek"

WESTWALL
WANDERWEG
ISLEK

The west section presents the Siegfried Line as a fortification system, but also contemporary life in the Eifel, the battles in 1944/45, the consequences of mines, nature conservation at the Siegfried Line and land consolidation. If you follow the path along the edge of the forest on the other side of the road, along the dragon's teeth, you will reach

Panel West 2

It is dedicated to nature conservation on the Siegfried Line, which fulfils an important biotope function in the agricultural landscape.

We continue into the valley to

Panel West 3

The subject is life in the Eifel and the influence that the Siegfried Line and especially its construction had on the people living here.

Further down in the valley the path leads to

Panel West 4

Here the deadly legacies of the war are thematised: mines and unexploded ordnance still claimed many lives after the war.

Proceeding uphill again you reach the four-row dragon's teeth model 1938 and in its course

Panel West 5

It explains the land consolidation process that initiated and implemented these Siegfried Line hiking trails.

Along the dragon's teeth model 1938 you reach

Panel West 6

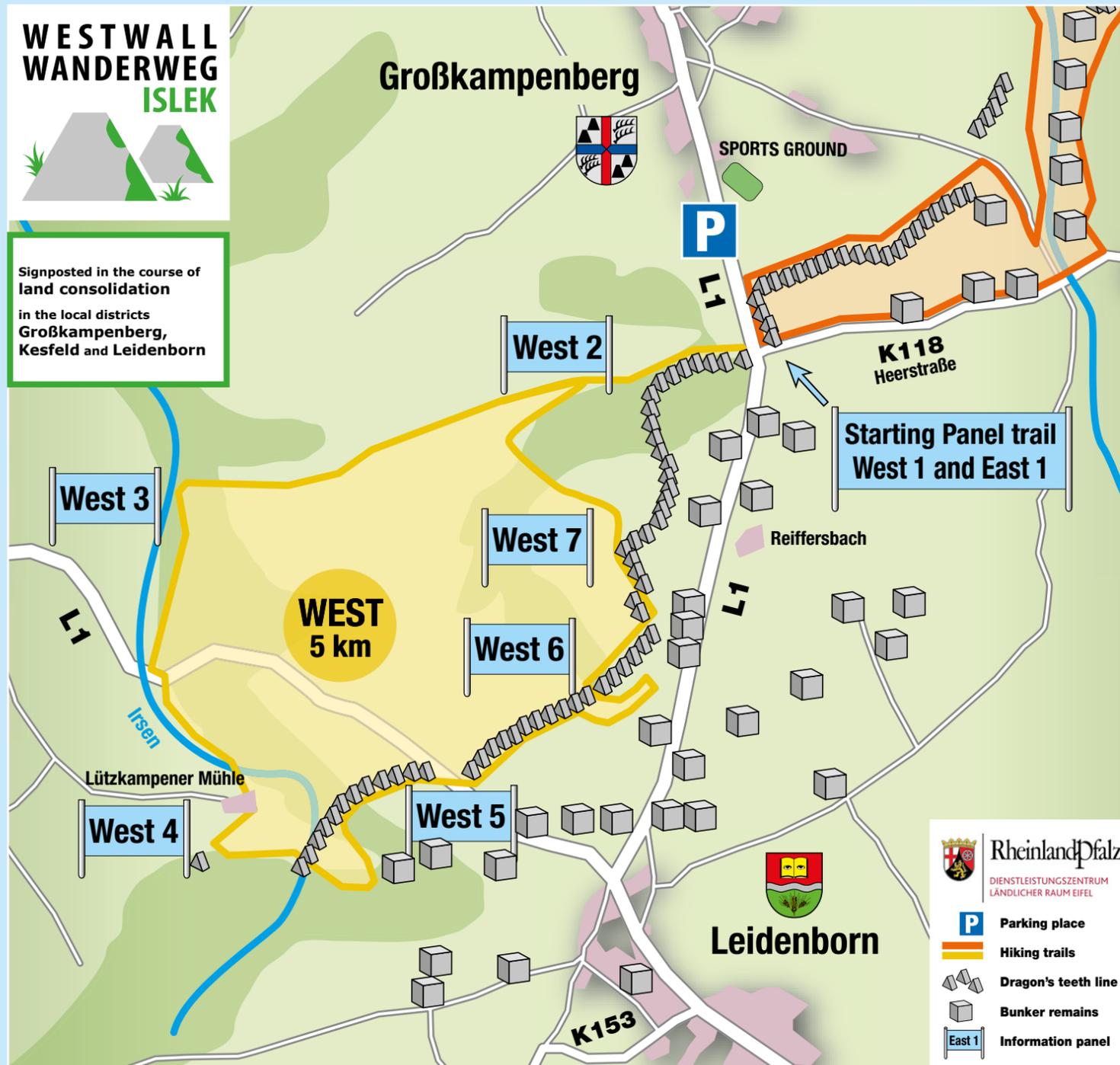
Here you can see preparations for static battle and the role played by the Siegfried Line in 1944/45.

Slightly uphill we continue to

Panel West 7

This area was conquered and reconquered three times in 1944/45, with serious consequences for the population. This is reported on the last panel.

Back we go over a field path to the starting panel.



Starting Panel WEST 1

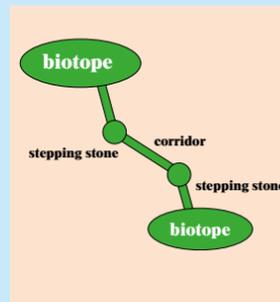
Nature conservation at the former Siegfried Line

Elaborate removal operations of bunker installations far from settlements and agricultural areas met with **resistance from environmentalists** in the area of the Palatinate Forest from the late 1970s onwards. Nature conservationists and biologists then began to scientifically record the nature conservation function of the ruins of the Siegfried Line. In the 1980s, numerous publications on the **biotope function of the former Siegfried Line** appeared in scientific journals. Nature conservation at the Siegfried Line was discussed in politics and in public from 1985 onwards. In addition to the nature conservation associations, the environmental ministries of the federal states were also increasingly concerned with the Siegfried Line. Attempts were made to find **nature-compatible alternatives to the previous demolition practice**. At the turn of the millennium, media reports about the **waste of taxpayers' money** for the removal of the Siegfried Line caused a stir ("Million Grave Siegfried Line"). In view of this criticism, a cost-intensive removal of bunker facilities to the detriment of flora and fauna could no longer be justified. In 2004 the demolition of the remains of the former Siegfried Line in Rhineland-Palatinate was stopped.

Stepping stone biotope:

In its present form, the former Siegfried Line serves as an important stepping stone biotope for animals and plants. The blasted bunker ruins and the dragon's teeth remain in agriculturally used landscapes as **untouched vegetation islands** without soil cultivation,

use of fertilizers and artificial planting. Flora and fauna use these point and line-shaped **bridging elements** to move between spatially separated habitats in a protected manner. For many forest animals, staying on treeless areas poses considerable dangers and many plant seeds cannot overcome agricultural areas. Stepping stone biotopes connect separate populations, allow a gradual spread and thus promote gene flow. In addition, they can support the **new and re-population of habitats**.



Biotope network dragon's teeth:

The relics of the former Siegfried Line as stepping stones are the prerequisite for a biotope network. This means a **network of individual biotopes** which are interconnected by **corridors**. In the course of land consolidation by the Eifel Rural Service Centre (DLR), the dragon's teeth near Leidenborn, Großkampfenberg and Kesfeld were separated from agricultural use by a **buffer zone** and connected to form a corridor. The herbaceous strip of the buffer zone has since developed into a **species-rich meadow**. In Großkampfenberg, the dragon's teeth line is used as a **grazing area for**

sheep, which keeps the vegetation small and thus prevents scrub encroachment. **Drought-loving plants** such as the "toothless grimmia", which is threatened with extinction, settle on the exposed dragon's teeth surfaces.



▲ A fox gazes out in amazement between concrete rubble and bent steel bars.

Further information on nature conservation on the former Siegfried Line:

Projekt "Grüner Wall im Westen" BUND Rheinland-Pfalz
Pfützenstraße 1 | 54290 Trier | <http://gwiw.bund-rlp.de/>

Flora and fauna in the "bunker ruin" habitat

Mosses and lichens

Many **mosses and lichens** require **calcareous substrates** such as limestone rocks. The bunker concrete, which is also very calcareous, is suitable for such mosses and lichens. Since blasted ruins have a particularly large surface area, up to **72 different moss species** have been identified at a single site, many of which are acutely endangered and are on the red list.

Mammals

Siegfried Line bunkers are habitats for carnivorous mammals. The **wildcat**, which is particularly worthy of protection, is known to settle in bunker ruins. Where natural rock caves are missing, bunker ruins are the ideal substitute habitat for raising young animals. The concrete ruins providing protection from wind and frost are also a preferred habitat for **foxes, badgers and martens**, also for **hibernation**. For **bats**, the western ramparts have a special significance. In summer they use blasted ruins as day quarters, while in winter intact bunkers and tunnels are ideal for hibernation. It can be assumed that the undisturbed winter quarters on the former Siegfried Line have contributed decisively to the **recovery of the bat population**.

Birds

Red-backed shrikes and wrens use biotope islands with blown up western ramparts to raise their brood in agricultural areas. Ground-living birds such as **partridges** also benefit from bushy concrete relics as **cover and a place of retreat** in the otherwise treeless and shrub-free fields.

Amphibians and reptiles

For amphibians like the **fire salamander, frogs and toads**, marshy bunker ruins and cable bunkers offer ideal living conditions. The frost-free ruins offer good protection from the winter cold and help to overwinter. In summer, Siegfried Line relics in the open country offer an ideal **sunny spot for reptiles** and can compensate for the lack of natural rocks. On the warmed concrete of bunkers and dragon's teeth the red listed **wall and sand lizards** could be found.



◀ Blown up Siegfried Line bunker made of reinforced concrete with moss and lichen.



◀ Blasted bunkers in Hürtgenwald with steel lattice doors for bats.

Photos
Moss-covered bunker and fox:
Martin Lang
Photo: Bat bunker:
Werner Schmachtenberg
Figure: Stepping stone biotopes:
Martin Lang
Literature:
- Altena/Mewes: "Zum Umgang mit den Westwallanlagen", Trier 2014
- Grüner Wall im Westen (Green wall in the west) /BUND RLP
- Röller/Übel: "Der Westwall in der Südpfalz", Ludwigshafen 2012

Effects of the Siegfried Line construction on life in the Eifel



Social and economic change

The construction of the Siegfried Line fundamentally changed the Eifel region, which was characterised by self-sufficient agriculture, from one day to the next. **Land was expropriated** for the construction of the bunker facilities. **Workers were quartered** in private and community houses and **labour camps were set up**. The social composition changed fundamentally. The old structures were also broken with economically. While village life had previously been characterised by a "give-and-take" in the sense of a barter economy, the Siegfried Line construction brought an unprecedented amount of cash to the Eifel. Local gastronomy and retail trade benefited from the foreign workers, and the population appreciated the **extended job opportunities**. Bakers, butchers, construction and haulage companies worked towards the Siegfried Line "construction project" and **created jobs**.

Crime and police prison camps

The new living situation also created problems between the workers and the local population. **Frictions with local men** and also among each other occurred. Quite a few workers drowned their frustration about the hard work drill in **alcohol**.



▲ US soldiers in front of (still) undestroyed houses.

Fights and binge drinking were the order of the day. The cases of "**refusal to work**" also increased. The local police forces were overwhelmed by the situation and were reinforced. Thus 37 police officers were transferred from Düsseldorf to Prüm. In order to ensure work discipline, the Reich leadership set up so-called police prison camps in various places, where workers who were "unwilling to work" and had become criminals were interned and "re-educated". The **police prison camp Hinzert** (near Trier) was responsible for the workers in the southern Eifel region. In mid-1940 it was merged with the **SS-special camp Hinzert** to form a concentration camp. In the **SS-special camp/concentration camp Hinzert**, about 10,000 people

were held prisoner and were exploited by forced labour until the end of the war. **321 of them were murdered there according to available documents**. The actual number of victims was certainly higher.

Traffic

The construction of the Siegfried Line led to a **considerable increase in traffic**. Due to time pressure, speeding was the order of the day. Many of the narrow roads and paths in the Eifel were not designed for continuous truck traffic. Complaints about **improper driving** were therefore just as common as **serious traffic accidents**. The traffic noise additionally burdened the villagers.



▲ Signpost near Großkampenberg 1944.

Religious conflicts

Many of the Siegfried Line workers were **Protestants**. This led to conflicts when a large number of Protestant workers were assigned to construction work in a Catholic region such as Saarland or the Eifel.

"Siegfried Line children"

The workforce at the Siegfried Line was mainly **young men** between 20 and 30 years old. The Siegfried Line workers, often from large cities, were often interesting for young women in the predominantly rural and Catholic-conservative areas. Relationships often developed between them, from which the so called "Siegfried Line children" emerged. The changes were drastic and happened in a very short time, **but they were not sustainable**. From about 1941, with the end of the work on the Siegfried Line, village life also returned.



▲ Memorial of the SS-Special Camp / KZ Hinzert. In the background the documentation and meeting place.

Home becomes a battlefield

Soon after construction began, the locals were aware of what a bunker line in the homeland meant: **if war broke out, our home would become the**

battlefield. And so it came. On September 16, 1944, US troops reached Kesfeld. Until December 1944 the front line ran between Kesfeld and Niederüttfeld. Then came the Battle of the Bulge. **90% of the village of Kesfeld was destroyed**. In February 1945 the South Eifel was liberated by the Americans.

WITNESSES OF THE TIMES

Nikolaus Hoffman from Kesfeld remembers:

"You can hardly imagine what it was like back then. Our life in the village had turned 180 degrees from one day to the next. It was like in Wonderland. Workers came from all over the German Reich and construction continued day and night. We were very poor farmers and lived from what we had on the farm. I still remember that every morning a column of workers passed our house and threw away their sandwiches. Our dog ate only the salami from the sandwiches for months. That someone threw away his sandwiches was unimaginable for us. We had never seen such abundance before."

Dieter Leyhr from Dillingen/Saar remembers:

"My father came from Pforzheim in Baden-Württemberg and was protestant. When he was called to Saarland for the construction work, the relationship with the Catholics was not so good."

Nikolaus Hoffman from Kesfeld:

"After the war in France everything here was the same again."

Nikolaus Hoffman from Kesfeld remembers:

"In the spring of 1937 an engineer named Ahrens was staying at our house. He was out and about in the field all day. He wasn't allowed to tell us much, it was all secret, but we soon knew that bunkers were to be built here in the Eifel."



▲ A beaten path and a destroyed building - consequences of the war.

Photo Hinzert: Cayambe (CC-BY-3.0)

Photos Großkampenberg: Ralph Morse - LIFE Collection

Literature:

- Historical working group Bitburger Land: "Dokumentation Westwall in der Eifel", Bitburg 1994
- Übel/Rölller: "Der Westwall in der Südpfalz", Ludwigshafen 2012
- Bader/Welter: "Das SS-Sonderlager/KZ Hinzert", in Benz/Distel: "Der Ort des Terrors. Band 5. Hinzert, Auschwitz, Neuengamme", Munich 2007
- Bettinger/Büren: "Der Westwall", Osnabrück 1990

Mines and ammunition

Mine operations at the Siegfried Line

At the Siegfried Line, gunner and tank mines were used. Still today these mines can be found in the area of the Siegfried Line. They are still lethal!

The **shrapnel mines (S-Mine) model 35 and model 44** are fragmentation mines, which jump about one metre into the air when triggered and only then explode. They not only killed or injured the soldier who stepped on them or triggered their trip wire, but everyone around them. The **glass mine 43** and the **artillery mine 42**, which is encased in a wooden box, contain very little metal and were very difficult to detect during the Second World War and even today. In the **stick mine**, the explosive charge is surrounded by a concrete body with metal splinters.

Anti-tank mines were designed to destroy the tracks of tanks or to penetrate the only weakly armoured underside of the tank. For this reason, the **Teller (plate) mine (T-Mine) 35**, for example, only triggers at a high load of 90 to 190 kg. On a dirt road, this could mean that a light vehicle drove over the mine several times without any consequences. When it then drove back heavily loaded for the first time during harvesting...

Wartime legacies

In the area of the Siegfried Line, thousands of treacherous legacies of the war remained in the landscape immediately after the end of the war. On the one hand, there were the **extensive minefields** between the former German Reich border and the bunkers of the Siegfried Line, on the other hand, there was an **unmanageable amount of unexploded ordnance (duds) and left behind ammunition**. When the population returned to their villages in the early autumn of 1945, the Second World War began to claim its victims even after the war had ended. Especially children and young people fell victim to their curiosity and were **injured or killed by explosions**. Farmers, too, were often victims of mines or unexploded ordnance while carrying out their work. Often not only land areas were mined, but also buildings, which thus became uninhabitable. **The extensive minefields prevented the farmers from cultivating their land, which was desperately needed as a food base**. Therefore, mine and ammunition clearance was a top priority in the early post-war period.

Mine clearance

So shortly after the war, mine clearance began along the Siegfried Line. The work was initially carried out by **German prisoners of war, especially pioneers**, who were promised an accelerated release. In 1946, in view of the great effort involved, **demining detachments of volunteers were formed**. The work was very dangerous. Between 1945 and 1960 more than 120 minesweepers died in the Eifel. In the same period, 30,000 live bombs and grenades were blown up or defused by minesweepers in the Eifel. Even today there are still many tons of live ammunition in the ground. In 2015 alone, 30 tons of live explosive ordnance were recovered and removed in Rhineland-Palatinate.



**T-Mine 35
(Teller (plate)
mine 35)**

Weight ~10 kg, explosive weight 5.5 kg
Diameter 320 mm
Release pressure 90 - 100 kg (at the edge) 190 kg in the middle
Penetration capability 80 - 100 mm armour steel
Over 4.2 million built



**Glass mine 43
(shoe mine 43)**

Weight 1.5 kg, explosive weight 0.2 kg
Diameter 152 mm above, 127 mm below
Release pressure 8 - 10 kg (lever fuse)
5 kg (pressure fuse, chemical)
About 11 million built

Mine almost completely made of glass with low metal content. The mine was and is very difficult to locate today. Glass splinters are very difficult to see on an X-ray.



Shoe mine 42

Mine almost completely made of wood, fuse made of bakelite/metal. Mine was difficult to locate with a mine detector, the low trigger pressure and the preloaded fuse make the mine extremely dangerous.

Weight 0.5 kg, explosive weight 0.2 kg
Length 128 mm, width 98 mm, height 60 mm
Release pressure 2,5 kg - 5,5 kg, from 1944 changed to 4 to 8 kg
Around 21 million built



**S-Mine 35
(shooter/jump/fast refill)**

The mine jumps out of the ground 4 - 5 seconds after the release about 1m and explodes. It releases about 350 shrapnel balls, which are deadly within a radius of 20 m. At 100 m the mine causes severe injuries. The mine shown here has three detonators.

Weight 4 kg, explosive weight 0,2 kg
Diameter 122 mm, height 130 mm
Triggered by pressure (4 - 6 kg), pull (approx. 4 kg) or electrical remote ignition
Around 9.5 million built



**Stockmine
(Betonmine)**

The mine body consists of cast concrete with metal splinters.

Weight 2 - 2.5 kg, explosive weight 0.1 kg
Diameter 72 mm, height 155 mm
Triggering via pull fuse, approx. 4 kg train required
About 6 million built



S-Mine 44

The mine jumps out of the ground 4 - 5 seconds after the release about 1 m and explodes. It releases about 400 fragments, which are deadly within a radius of 20 m. At 100 m the mine causes severe injuries.

Weight 4 kg, explosive weight 0,2 kg
Diameter 122 mm, height 130 mm
Triggered by pressure (4 - 9 kg), pull (approx. 4 kg) or electrical remote ignition
Number of mines manufactured not known

Photos: H. Volke
Literature:

- Doris Seck: "Nachkriegsjahre an der Saar", Saarbrücken 1983
- Der Spiegel 26/1951: "Wie ich die V1 entschärfte"
- Die Zeit 03.07.1958: "Der Tod lauert noch im Eifelwald"

WITNESSES OF THE TIMES

Nikolaus Hoffman from Kesfeld remembers:
"Our room was full of artillery shells, which we had to clear out first. It was all mined. Almost every day one went up in the air here, from the farmers and from the soldiers who were supposed to defuse the mines. Many good acquaintances were killed by mines. I myself ploughed an anti-tank mine out of the ground with a plough, and in spring I also ploughed one with a harrow. In the spring of 1945 my aunt was driving with our cows to a pasture when suddenly a cow stepped on a mine. We had already mowed there a few weeks before."

++++ EXPLOSIVE ORDNANCE IS LETHAL +++++

If you find objects that could be explosive ordnance (bombs, mines, grenades, other ammunition), please keep your distance and inform the responsible public order office or the police immediately.

Never touch explosive ordnance and never transport it!

WESTWALL
WANDERWEG
ISLEK



Panel WEST 4

Integrated approach for territorial spatial planning at Leidenborn

Agriculture · **nature conservation** · **water protection** · **tourism**



<p>Rheinland-Pfalz DLR Eifel (Eifel Rural Service Centre) Department of Rural Development / Rural Land Readjustment Westpark 11 54634 Bitburg</p>	<p>Land consolidation</p> <p>In the neighbouring municipalities of Großkampenber, Heckhuscheid, Kesfeld and Leidenborn, simplified land consolidation procedures according to § 86 of the Land Consolidation Act with an integral approach were carried out at the beginning of the 2000s to secure the future of rural areas over a total period of about 10 years.</p> <p>A unique characteristic and a special challenge of these land readjustment procedures was the treatment and protection of the remnants of the Siegfried Line, which, in the form of bunker remains and dragon's teeth, permeate large areas of the landscape.</p> <p>In close co-operation and co-ordination with all affected institutions and other bodies, these military-historical relics could be integrated into the improvement of agricultural structures without conflict.</p>
<p>Process data / Initial situation</p>	<p>Total area of the 4 land consolidation projects: 2390 ha with 860 owners Utilised agricultural area (UAA): 1.565 ha Forestry area (FA): 722 ha 4 localities: 47 ha 10 local farms with focus on: dairy farming / alternative energy production</p> <p>> agrarian structural land deficiencies in agriculture and forestry (number of plots, size, shape, fragmentation of ownership)</p> <p>> deficiencies in development due to insufficient road network with deficiencies in structure</p> <p>> inadequate cadastral situation (demarcation, border conformity)</p> <p>> cutting of land parcels through remnants of the Siegfried Line</p> <p>> nature conservation deficits (landscape, securing biotopes)</p> <p>> deficient water situation (structural quality)</p>
<p>Objectives Measures / Results</p>	<p>Improvement of land through consolidation of land, increase in area and improvement in shape Formation of large cultivation units Consolidation ratio LR of 3.5:1 Doubling of the field strip length from approx. 200m to 400m Support for long-term land lease Support for partial resettlement</p> <p>Improvement of the development through construction and demand-oriented expansion of the network of rural service roads through full resurvey and demarcation according to requirements Timely proof of ownership</p> <p>Securing the Siegfried Line relics by transferring the ownership of the dragon's teeth sections and bunker remains to the public sector and designating buffer strips with extensive use in an area of 14 ha</p> <p>Village development through regulation and demarcation of property boundaries in the local area and support of village development measures. Planning and construction of the Siegfried Line hiking trails EAST and WEST Designation of playgrounds, hiking trails on the outskirts of towns, building site management</p> <p>Nature conservation/ land management. Planning and designation of compensation measures for interventions in nature and landscape Improvement of the topography through private participation in the campaign "more green through land consolidation".</p> <p>Improvement of the water situation through the purchase, financing and designation of 33 ha of waterfront strips with extensive use as part of the "Aktion Blau" of the state of Rheinland-Pfalz; transfer of ownership with security in the land register</p> <p>Total investment volume of € 3.5 million (of which over 80% is public funding)</p>
<p>Process steps</p>	<p>A land consolidation procedure is divided into several stages of planning, administration and implementation. The land owners involved are represented by the elected board of participants and enjoy comprehensive legal protection for all official decisions, which are marked by administrative acts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Order of land consolidation by land consolidation resolution - Election of the participant board by the property owners - Surveying work (aerial photography, terrestrial surveys, marking of the new property boundaries) - Implementation and determination of the soil evaluation by independent experts of agriculture and forestry - Planning, coordination, financing, approval and expansion of the road, water and land management measures together with the TG board, the upper land consolidation authority and public bodies - Planning and discussion of land allocation with the parties involved in the desired planning date - Instruction in the new economic areas through ownership instruction - Preparation and consultation on the land consolidation plan - Transfer of ownership by implementing regulation on the land consolidation plan - Renewal of evidence for real estate cadastre, land register and other public registers - Promotion of long-term leasing and financial closure - Conclusion of proceedings by means of a final decision



1 Construction of service roads



2 Weed strips along the dragon's teeth as a compensatory measure



3 Support for partial resettlement



4 Keeping fields open by grazing



5 Biotope network "Siegfried Line"



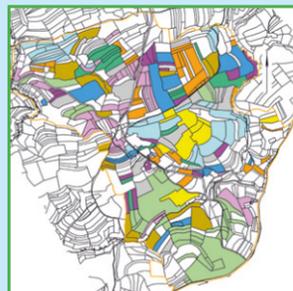
6 Protection of a bunker biotope



7 Protection of spring swamps



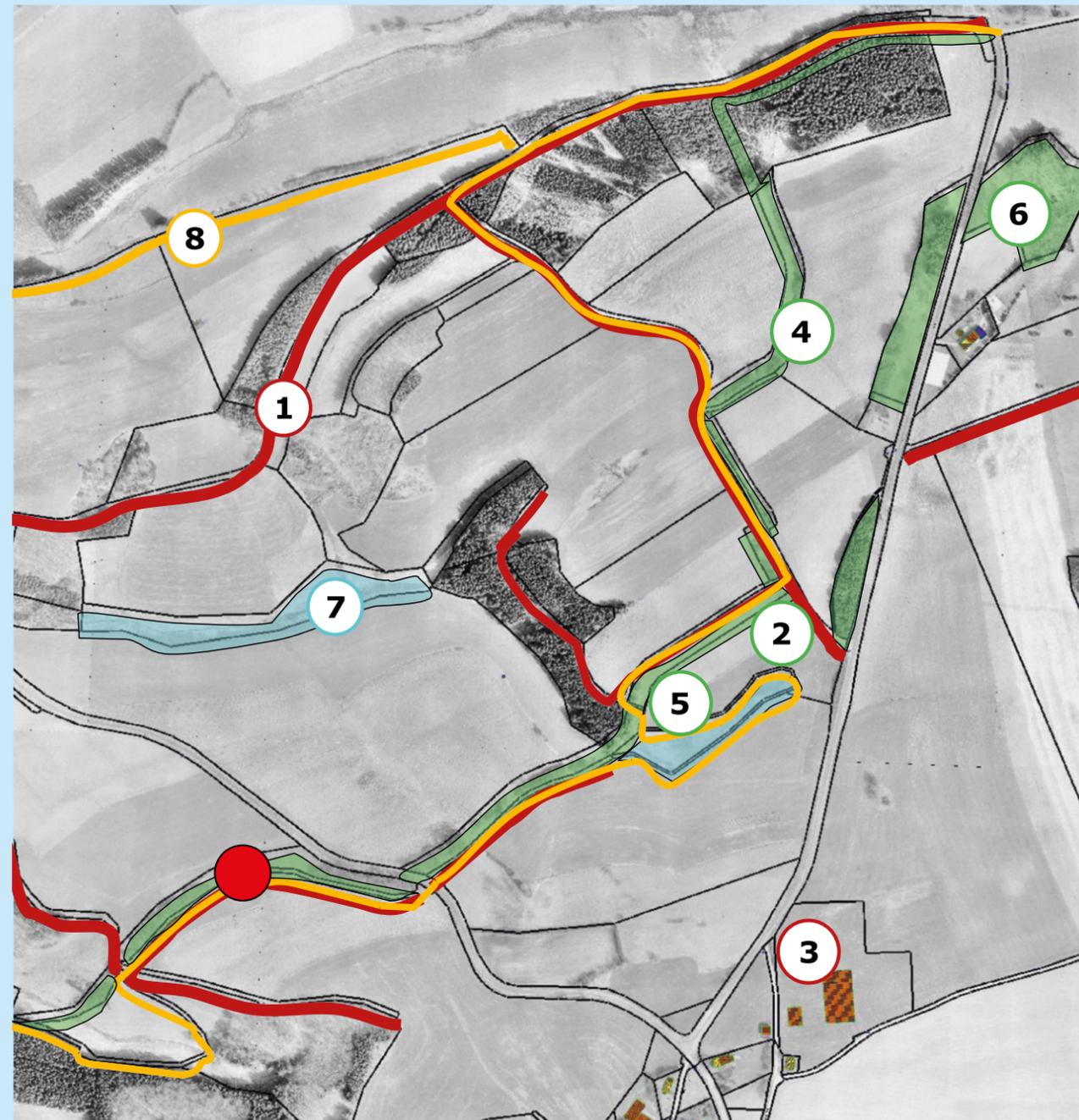
8 Marking of a hiking trail



Land structure before land consolidation:
fragmented and unfavourably shaped agricultural units



Land structure after land readjustment:
large-area farming units with road connections and new survey



Photos of path construction, weed strips, settlement, sheep, bunker ruins, spring swamp and hiking trail: DLR-Eifel • Photo dragon's teeth: Torsten Weber
Illustrations of field structure OLD and NEW: DLR-Eifel • Graphic design and text: Michael Plein DLR Eifel

Panel WEST 5

Dragon's teeth and bunkers - The prepared static battle

With the Siegfried Line, the **trench system of the First World War** was built in a modernized form at the Reich's border. The Siegfried Line followed a **linear concept**. However, the German fortification pioneers placed the **principles of decentralisation and depth** in the foreground. In addition to larger works, **many small installations** were to be built **deeper inland (depth staggering)**. The goal was **gapless machine gun fire** along the entire length and depth of the Siegfried Line.

The Hindenburg Line (Siegfried Position in German)

Already during the First World War, complete trench systems were built in the hinterland of the front. The so-called **Hindenburg Line** was rebuilt behind the western front in 1917 in order to save troops and build up reserves by retreating to this well-developed position in an optimal location. The **MEBU (crew iron-concrete shelters)** and machine gun (MG) bunkers could be optimally protected and effectively placed in the terrain and could be built undisturbed by artillery fire with the best transport possibilities for the necessary material. These experiences only had to be supplemented by the latest findings of German fortification pioneers after the First World War.

The technical progress

The fortification pioneers had to take a number of innovations into account when building the Siegfried Line. **Tanks** had to be taken into account and led to tank obstacles such as the dragon's teeth and the integration of anti-tank guns. **Combat gases** were a great danger for the soldiers in bunkers and led to gas-tight openings and mechanical ventilation with gas filters. **Communication from bunkers** was difficult and at the same time vital, so every bunker was given a **telephone connection** to the deeply buried cable network, which still runs through the entire Siegfried Line today. And against **airplanes** another fortification line was built 20 - 30 km behind the Siegfried Line, the **Air Defence Zone West (LVZ West)**, equipped with heavy 8.8 cm anti-aircraft guns against incoming bombers and light 2 cm machine guns against low-flying aircraft, but also with machine gun bunkers and dragon's teeth for ground defence.

The Limes program

The fortification pioneers also planned large **groups of works** with underground access in the hinterland and partly began with their construction. However, the Siegfried Line planned in this way **was not to be completed until 1952**, due to a lack of steel, money and manpower. But for Adolf Hitler this was far too long, he wanted to wage war as long as the German Reich still had an armament advantage. As a first step he wanted to **smash Czechoslovakia**. Therefore, in June 1938, he ordered the construction of **10,000 shelters and 1,800 MG-bunkers with embrasures**, which were to be ready by October 1, 1938, the so-called **Limes program**. He entrusted the construction organization to the General Inspector for German Roads, Dr.-Ing. Fritz Todt, who brought with him experience and an entire building organization from the motorway construction. This construction organization has become known as **"Organisation Todt"** (OT). During the Second World War it also built the Atlantic Wall, submarine bunkers and other military structures in German-occupied Europe.

Warfare 1939/40

From 3 September 1939 to 10 May 1940, the Siegfried Line remained quiet except for minor skirmishes. Thus, despite its frontal position, it was possible to continue building on the Siegfried Line. The German **propaganda** about the "invincible Siegfried Line" met with the unwillingness of the French and British to wage another static war. The result was the so-called **"phoney war"**. However, during the Battle of France from 10 May 1940 onwards, the German armed forces demonstrated how bunkers and their occupants could be fought: With flat fire from tank, anti-tank and anti-aircraft guns and with **hollow charges** and flamethrowers against the embrasures.

Warfare 1944/45

The US troops were geared for **mobile combat with armoured vehicles**, fortification combat was not one of their core capabilities. After they had landed in Normandy on June 6, 1944, they experienced on the **beach of "Omaha"** how loss-intensive a fight against fortifications could be.

And the Siegfried Line had a **bunker density 10 times greater** than the Atlantic Wall. So at first the allies were cautious and tried to bypass the Siegfried Line in the north via Arnhem, but this failed. The Siegfried Line could not decide the war though, it could only prolong it. The **anti-tank defence of 1938** could no longer be dangerous to the tanks of 1944, the 76 mm cannons of the US Army penetrated the 10 cm thick "armour" plates (made of soft rolled steel!) of the Siegfried Line bunker smoothly and the **anti-tank missile "Bazooka"** could also be used against embrasures. After the armed forces had used up its last reserves in the **Battle of the Bulge**, the Allies could finally break through the Siegfried Line from February 1945 and advance to the Rhine. On 8 May 1945 the Second World War was over in Europe.



▲ Three shots from a 76 mm cannon smoothly penetrated the embrasure plate of soft rolled steel.



▲ The differently coloured hill in front of the group of trees is a typical sign of a crushed and earth-covered Siegfried Line bunker.

Literature: Werner Schmachtenberg:
"Der Westwall in Rheinland-Pfalz", volume 1, Mainz 2018
Photos: Embrasure plate and bunker covered with earth,
Werner Schmachtenberg

WESTWALL
WANDERWEG
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Panel WEST 6

Siegfried Line combats 1944/45

After the landing of the Allies in Normandy on 6 June 1944, they were only able to break out of the landing head on 30 July 1944, and on 19 August 1944 they were able to enclose large parts of the "Wehrmacht" armed forces in France in the **Falaise basin**. After that, the Wehrmacht in France was on the run, and on 11 September 1944 the Allies appeared at the Reich border and thus at the Siegfried Line. In the weeks before that, the Siegfried Line had again been provisionally rearranged on the orders of the NS-regime by the deployment of **up to 500,000 people**, including women, children, forced labourers and Russian prisoners of war. However, a modern anti-tank defence system was lacking, and the troops were partly made up of infantry personnel who were completely inexperienced **navy and air force personnel**. In the beginning several bunkers were not occupied at all.

The 1st US attack

On 14 and 15 September 1944, the **28th US Infantry Division** advanced from the west onto the Roscheid - Üttfeld - Kesfeld - Heckhuscheid line. Fierce fighting broke out around the Siegfried Line bunkers, in which the US troops also used tanks and armoured bulldozers to fire at or fill the bunker openings. On September 20, a **counterattack by the 10th Company of Armoured Infantry Regiment 4** threw US troops back one kilometre along the Heckhuscheid - Niederüttfeld road. From the end of September 1944 it became quiet at the front near Großkampenber, the Americans patrolled the area, the main battle line was on the slopes behind the Our and the majority of the troops were in **resting quarters in Belgium**. The German troops also did not undertake any major operations, the troops were trained and reinforced. The Wehrmacht prepared a major offensive in the west, code name "Wacht am Rhein".

The Battle of the Bulge



▲ US soldiers in a ditch, probably at the northern end of Großkampenber towards Heckhuscheid.

On the morning of December 16, 1944, German troops advanced from **Kesfeld to Großkampenber** as part of the Battle of the Bulge, also known as the "Rundstedt Offensive". After persistent resistance from the Americans, they succeeded in



▲ American MG troop marches on Großkampenber.

occupying the Berg-district the next day. On the way to Belgium **the Our was crossed at Dasburg**, the German units advanced through Luxembourg towards Bastogne. Bastogne could not be conquered and disturbed the further German advance, from the south General Patton's 3rd US Army advanced against Bastogne. On December 23, 1944 the weather cleared up and the **US Air Force** was able to supply Bastogne and fly massive attacks against the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS troops. Because of the losses and the lack of supplies, the "Battle of the Bulge" got stuck and finally collapsed. The German troops withdrew. At the end of December 1944 the fled villagers returned. They found their houses destroyed and burnt out.

The 2nd US attack

On 1 February 1945 the Americans were back, the **358th infantry regiment** took Heckhuscheid. On February 7, 1945 Großkampenber was also retaken by **Combat Commando R of the 11th US Armoured Division**. Hard fights broke out around the bunkers of the Siegfried Line, which were occupied here by combat groups of the **276th "Volksgranadier"-division**. The Siegfried Line was also breached in the Schnee-Eifel, but the decision was made further north by conquering the intact railway bridge at Remagen and by crossing the Rhine at Wesel.



▲ US radio operator under the town sign of Großkampenber.



▲ US radio operator and radio under the town sign in the north of Großkampenber, this time photographed from the other side.

The consequences

As the front rolled over the villages three times, there was a great loss of historic buildings. However, the dragon's teeth of the Siegfried Line were preserved. The fallen US soldiers were buried outside the German Reich, no American should have to rest in German soil. The fallen German soldiers were initially buried in 72 smaller cemeteries in the region and between 1954 and 1959 they were moved from there to the Daleiden military cemetery, where 3,224 soldiers are buried today. It is thus the largest war cemetery in Rhineland-Palatinate.



▲ The rotunda of the military cemetery Daleiden, where the German soldiers who died in the region were buried.

Photos Großkampenber: Ralph Morse - LIFE Collection
 Photo Daleiden: Verbandsgemeinde Arzfeld
 Literature: Christoffel, Edgar: Krieg am Westwall 1944/45; Volume 1 Pages 108, 109, 205, volume 2 page 384.

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Panel WEST 7