

FORCED LABOUR AT THE DEUTSCHE WERFT IN FINKENWERDER

The *Deutsche Werft AG* in the Hamburg district of Finkenwerder became one of the largest German submarine shipyards during World War II. Thousands of forced labourers and prisoners of war were used in the construction of a 151 × 153 metre bunker facility on the *Rüschkanal* with the camouflage designation *FINK II* in 1941/1942. They also worked in production from 1940 onward. From 1944 onward, there was also a satellite camp of the Neuengamme main concentration camp on the site, which, according to estimates, housed around 600 male prisoners who had to perform forced labour for *Deutsche Werft*.



The site of the Deutsche Werft, 1944
(Peter Kaufner/Finkenwerder
Geschichtswerkstatt)

View from the Rüschkanal to the blown-up
submarine bunker FINK II around 1950.
(Peter Kaufner/
Finkenwerder Geschichtswerkstatt)



Work areas and housing in Finkenwerder

There were three barracks complexes for forced labourers on the shipyard grounds alone: the camps *Deutsche Werft Finkenwärder*, *Baustelle Deutsche Werft* and the *Ostarbeiterlager Rüschkanal*. In addition, five smaller camps existed in the town itself; *Deutsche Werft* maintained 15 more in the port and in the Hamburg city area. From there, the forced labourers were transported across the Elbe to the *Deutsche Werft* in wooden boats without an engine, so-called barges. Among other things, the labourers were employed as welders or locksmiths, as well as for cleanup work in the harbour or for railway work in Harburg. Hundreds of forced labourers were killed in bombing raids in 1944 and 1945, and the injured were usually denied medical care.

After 1945

Already in October 1945 it was decided to demolish the bunker, but its remains are still visible today. Since 2006, the *Bunker Ruin FINK II* serves as a memorial to the victims of National Socialism.

Personal stories

Lydija Grigorjevna Kashkina from Lubny, Ukraine, was deported to Finkenwerder for forced labour as a 14-year-old in February 1942. Every morning, she and other workers were loaded into barges and taken from their camp to workplaces in the port. Lydija Grigorjevna Kashkina has terrible memories of the bombing raids on the port. She remembers being loaded into open barges and transported unprotected on the Elbe even as the attacks were happening.

Ivan Ssorokotjaga, a Ukrainian, was deported to Germany via Hungary in August 1943 along with his brother and arrived in Finkenwerder in mid-1944. Here he was housed in a camp for young forced labourers on the shipyard grounds and first had to work as an unskilled labourer and then, after retraining, as a welder at *Deutsche Werft*. The brothers just barely survived the bomb attack on the submarine bunker *FINK II* on April 9, 1945. Eventually, they saw liberation in a village near the small city Heide.

Tatjana Spiridonona Doduch and her husband toiled at *Deutsche Werft* from September 1944 onward. On December 27, 1944, she gave birth to a daughter at the Finkenau Women's Clinic. Her husband was separated from her and taken to the *Langer Morgen* work education camp in Hamburg-Wilhelmsburg, where he perished on March 22, 1945. Tatjana Doduch was never able to show her daughter Galina his grave.



Remains of the blown-up bunker, 2019
(Peter Kaufner/Finkenwerder
Geschichtswerkstatt)

