

Aus der Berliner Morgenpost vom 13.12.2006:

„Es gelingt dem obersten Repräsentanten der Stadt nicht, seine Bemühungen um Unternehmer und Investoren glaubhaft zu kommunizieren. Die Überlegungen des amerikanischen Investor Fred Langhammer, mit immerhin 345 Millionen Euro den alten Flughafen Tempelhof zum Gesundheitszentrum mit Landebahn zu veredeln, wurden aus dem Roten Rathaus sogleich als wenig seriös abqualifiziert. Die "Financial Times Europe" bezeichnete gestern Klaus Wowereit als "notorious business basher", was so viel bedeutet wie: Der Mann macht es sich zur Gewohnheit die Unternehmer zu beschimpfen und vorzuführen.“

Und dies ist der Text aus der Financial Times Europe:

A German-American businessman's two-year battle to save Europe's most iconic airport from closure finally collapsed this week after getting bogged down in a political, legal and bureaucratic tangle.

Tempelhof, Berlin's gateway to the free world during the massive US airlift that ended the Soviet blockade of the city in 1949, will close as planned next October, Klaus Wowereit, the city's mayor, said on Wednesday after meeting would-be investors.

The decision seems certain to bury a Euros 350m (Dollars 465m, Pounds 237m) project led by Fred Langhammer, a Walt Disney Company director and former chief executive of the Estee Lauder Companies, to convert this piece of cold-war history into a luxury hospital-cum-airport for wealthy international patients.

A spokesman for Mr Langhammer, who is backed by Ronald Lauder, the US billionaire, says the offer remains on the table but insists it hinges on private jets and small aircraft being allowed to keep landing at Tempelhof.

"Without air traffic, Tempelhof is just another empty office block in Berlin, and not a particularly attractive one," says the spokesman for the 62-year-old, Bavarian-born businessman.

Mr Wowereit's decision has its roots in the move by the Berlin and neighbouring Brandenburg states to close two of the city's small and tatty airports - Tempelhof in the centre and Tegel in the west - following unification and concentrate all traffic at a third, Schonefeld, by 2011. The Euros 2bn project, on which construction began in March after a decade-long legal tussle, will turn the former east Berlin airport at Schonefeld from a low-cost carrier hub into Berlin Brandenburg International (BBI), the first gateway worthy of the city's status as the capital of united Germany.

The official grounds for Mr Wowereit's opposition to the Langhammer project is that it would change the basis of the German Federal Administrative Court's ruling this year to dismiss suits by Schonefeld residents that had blocked the construction of BBI.

"The ruling was partly justified by the fact that the quality-of-life improvement for people living near Tegel and Tempelhof following their closures would outweigh the inconvenience for residents of Schonefeld," says an official at the Berlin's urban planning -authority.

"Wowereit feared that keeping Tempelhof open could trigger new lawsuits. But this is debatable. To me, political and ideological arguments played a bigger role in killing Langhammer's project."

Mr Langhammer suggested as much this week when he told a local daily: "With the political will, the legal hurdles could be overcome."

Angela Merkel, the chancellor, is supportive of the American's project, which also foresees a hotel and a congress centre. As co-financier of BBI and 85-per-cent-owner of the Tempelhof buildings - although only a minority shareholder in its operating company - the federal government has a say in the future of both airports.

Yet Ms Merkel's rapport with Mr Wowereit has soured considerably since a suit by the mayor seeking federal aid for his heavily indebted city was slammed by the constitutional court in October. This, say people close to Mr Wowereit, may have played a key role in his opposition to the Tempelhof revival.

A Social Democrat and notorious business-basher who heads a coalition with former communists, the mayor was also wary of backing a project tailored for the super-rich, although Mr Langhammer had pledged his clinic would treat 120,000 state-insured patients a year. Mr Wowereit's objection leaves Tempelhof facing an uncertain future. The horseshoe-shaped landmark by Nazi-era architect Ernst Sagebiel is listed and will have to be preserved after its seven remaining airlines have left.

Yearly maintenance costs of Euros 20m have scared away many potential developers and several conversion schemes have been dropped, including plans to turn it over to the BND intelligence agency or the federal criminal police or make it into a railway terminal for Schönefeld.

As Mr Langhammer put it this week: "Tempelhof is a symbol of peace, friendship, freedom and the fortitude of Berliners. The airlift moved the world. It would be a shame if it became a ruin."

Den letzten Satz noch einmal in Deutsch:

„Tempelhof ist ein Symbol für Frieden, Freundschaft, Freiheit und Standhaftigkeit der Berliner. Die Luftbrücke bewegte die Welt. Es würde eine Schande sein, wenn daraus eine Ruine würde.“