

From Mass Grave to KZ Cemetery on Max-von-Eythstrasse

Industrial Area of Landsberg am Lech

Von Gerhard Roletscheck 2023

The central cemetery for the concentration camp victims in the Kaufering camp complex lies hidden, almost idyllic in location, if not for the noise of the A-96 highway passing directly by. The cemetery is located in the industrial area of Landsberg on Max-von-Eythstrasse. A single signpost points those who are interested to this secluded memorial site. Approximately 600 meters away (as the crow flies) stood the Kaufering I subcamp and the command headquarters of the camp leadership.

On June 18th, 1944 the first transport of 1,000 prisoners arrived at Kaufering III camp. During the transport, prisoners Jenö Apell and Samuel Pollak² died. Their bodies were taken by truck to Dachau's main camp crematorium. In July, three more transports arrived³, bringing a total

Month	Deaths ¹
June	3
July	13
August	21
September	55
October	205
November	428
December	1,023

of 4,384 prisoners. By December, approximately 17,000 prisoners were held in the Kaufering subcamp complex, and correspondingly, the death numbers in the camps increased:

In July 1944, with the establishment of command headquarters outside Camp I, deceased prisoners were "gathered" at Kaufering I and transported to Dachau once a week. For this purpose, at least two trucks with drivers⁴ were made available to the command leader of the Kaufering camp complex. Prisoner William Eilert (prisoner no.

90891)⁵ was questioned in May 1949 by Landsberg District Administrator Dr. Gerbl about how deceased prisoners were handled. He stated:

“Until about September 1944, hardly any corpses were buried in Kaufering. The deceased were instead transported to Dachau and cremated there... Initially, trucks transported deceased prisoners approximately twice weekly to Dachau. The dead were placed in crates

¹ Taken from the ITS documents and compiled in a private database.

² Dachau ITS Folder 108, p. 17: Departure due to death on 24.06.1944, ITS Folder 42, Admission Register

³ 07/11/1944 Camp III; 07/15/1944 Camp I; 07/29/1944 Camp II

⁴ 119th Year of the Landsberger Historical Sheets, 2021: Origin and Personnel of the Kaufering Concentration Camp Subcamp Complex, by Gerhard Roletscheck.

⁵ William Eilert, born on 28/06/1907 in Stuttgart, has been in custody since 1940 as a protective custody prisoner for embezzlement, fraud, forgery, and begging. He was a prisoner under police security detention (PSV), classified as a 'career criminal' with a green triangle. Initially held at Buchenwald concentration camp until 1941, he was then transferred to Warsaw, where he served as a command office clerk. In August 1944, he was transferred to Kaufering.

*and taken away in these crates. These were not proper coffins but makeshift boxes that were brought from Dachau.”*⁶

Eilert himself only witnessed these events after arriving in Kaufering mid-August with prisoners from Warsaw. He also stated:

“Later, the bodies from the individual camps were brought to Camp I and buried there. There were pits that measured an area of 20-25 square meters and were about 2 ½ meters deep. Whether several pits were dug, I cannot specify. As far as I could see, there were at most 2-3. After the number of deaths increased, an order was issued that the individual camps were to bury their dead at the respective camps themselves.”

Based on Eilert’s account, as of September 1944, about 92 corpses had been transported to Dachau. At some unspecified date, burial of deceased prisoners began at Kaufering I. This decision originated from Dachau, although the Dachau camp administration did not have the authority to make such a decision. Such directives could only come from the SS-Wirtschafts-Verwaltungshauptamt (SS Economic and Administrative Main Office), Amtsgruppe D, in Oranienburg. This group was led by SS-Gruppenführer Richard Glücks. Although a direct copy of this directive is not currently available, its content can be reconstructed. A letter⁷ from the Gestapo in Stuttgart to the Reutlingen police administration on February 20, 1945, states:

“Subject: Deaths among Prisoners....The command of KL Natzweiler, in a letter dated October 5th, 1944, transmitted an order from the SS Economic and Administrative Main Office, Department D (Concentration Camps), dated September 21st, 1944, concerning deaths among prisoners to all sub-camps. This order states: "The Reichsführer-SS has approved a request that prisoners who die in the sub-camps of the armament industry and during construction projects shall, in consideration of general transportation difficulties and fuel shortages, no longer be transported to the crematoria of the main concentration camps. Consequently, the bodies that arise in the labor camps are to be buried in the nearest municipal crematorium. If this is also not possible due to existing transportation difficulties, the bodies shall be buried in local cemeteries – preferably in a remote area, such as the section designated for Russian prisoners of war or the area for suicides. The clothing of the corpses must be arranged so that they cannot be identified as prisoners. The burial is to be carried out by prisoners." The command leaders of the sub-camps have been ordered by the KL Natzweiler command to establish contact with the relevant municipal administration regarding the burial of prisoners.”

This directive, issued on September 21st, 1944, was also disseminated to KL Dachau and passed along to Hauptsturmführer Walter Förster, commander of the Kaufering subcamp

⁶ Interrogation of William Eilert by District Administrator Dr. Gerbel on 05/21/1949. Archive of the Dachau Concentration Camp Memorial Site, DA 11516/88, as well as the Landsberg am Lech City Archive, Dr. Gerbel Collection

⁷ Source: https://www.kz-gedenkstaette-hailfingen-tailfingen.de/php/3.14_gestapo.php, accessed on 11/26/2021.

complex. However, delays in implementing this order seem evident, as indicated by correspondence on November 11st, 1944, where the District Administrator wrote to SS-Sturmbannführer Hans Aumeier, the command leader⁸:

“The question of where the deceased Jews should be buried has already been discussed several times. It was last agreed that they would be buried at a newly designated cemetery.”

On November 15th, Hans Aumeier justified the delays, explaining:

“During the previous discussions led by my predecessor, SS-Sturmbannführer Walter Langleist, individual mayors were instructed to designate burial sites for each camp. This has already been accomplished for Camps I, II, III, IV, VII, VIII, and X...”

Hauptsturmführer Walter Langleist, who replaced Förster in early October 1944, was himself replaced by SS-Obersturmbannführer Otto Förschner on November 1, 1944. Based on the correspondence, burial began in October, utilizing mass graves selected in consultation with local mayors. The delays likely stemmed from leadership changes and instability within the Kaufering complex’s command structure⁹. One of the earliest notable deaths was Dr. Elchanan Elkes (camp physician and head of the Jewish Council in Kaunas), who died of exhaustion on October 17th, 1944. He was among the first to be buried in the mass grave at Camp I. His comrades erected a gravestone in his honor, later incorporated into the cemetery under development by Holocaust survivors. Until liberation by U.S. troops on April 28th, 1945, approximately 415 prisoners were buried in mass graves at Camp I. On April 27th, 1945, the last guards and camp leaders left Camp I. The next day, recon scouts from the U.S. 12th Armored Division secured the camp. Colonel N.L. Adams was among the first to arrive; he documented his impressions and took photographs which he sent in a report to the general of the U.S. 6th Corps¹⁰.

“The bodies of those who died were brought to a small building where gold teeth were removed. The dead were collected here until around 25 or 30 bodies were ready. They were then taken to the burial site, about 200 meters north of the fenced camp... Around 200 bodies were buried in one pit. A layer of dead bodies was placed in the pit, covered with earth, followed by the next layer, and so on...”

⁸ Letter from District Administrator Dr. Gerbel to Aumeier dated 11/11/44. State Archive Munich, LRA 195535.

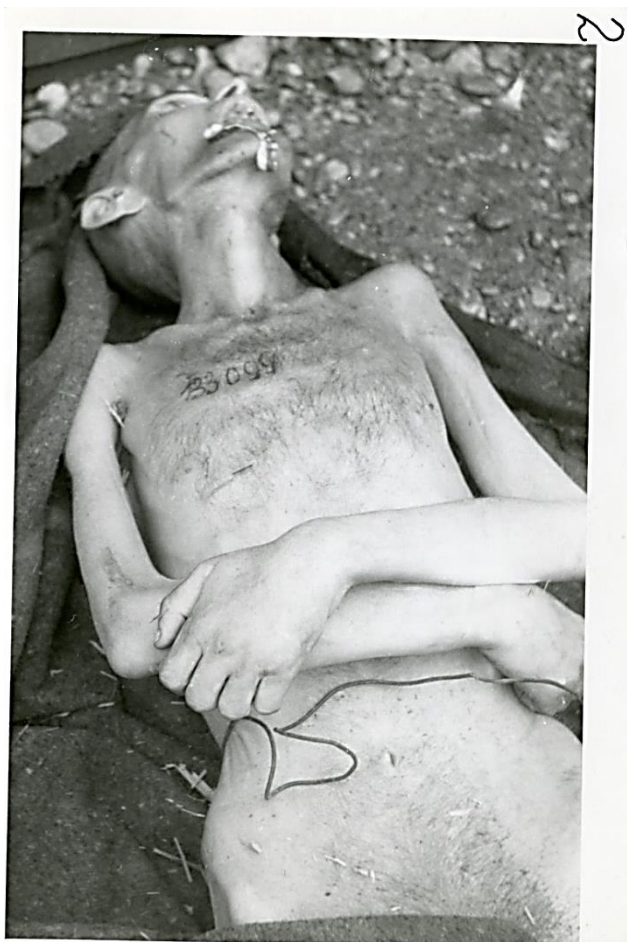
⁹ In mid-August, the deputy of the Inspector of Concentration Camps, Standartenführer (SS-General) Gerhard Maurer, came to Kaufering to inspect the situation and to replace Langleist. See also: Landsberger Historical Sheets, 119th Year, 2021, 'Origin and Personnel of the Kaufering Concentration Camp Subcamp Complex. By Gerhard Roletscheck.

¹⁰ The report and the photographs are now located in the archive of the American University Norwich, Kreitzberg Library, 158 Harmon Drive, Northfield, VT 05663.

Colonel Adams witnessed the last burial at the cemetery. Survivors buried their deceased comrades in the customary mass grave. Adams accompanied the funeral procession and photographed the scenes. His original texts, written in simple military language, illustrate the horror. His photographic series began at the infirmary.



Image 1: A room in the hospital, measuring 6m x 18m, with 40 double-decker beds. The men on both sides were still alive at the time the photo was taken. This room housed 30 living individuals and approximately 8 dead. It appeared that no one was taking care of them.



Number on his chest 133099¹¹

Image 2: Bodies on the street, number written on his chest. Metal fillings removed from his dentures. Food in this camp consisted of a bowl of thin soup, thin coffee, and less than ½ pound of bread per head and person.

¹¹ The prisoner (133099) was the Hungarian Neumann Ladislaus, born on 03/03/1917 in Újpest. He arrived with a transport on November 24, 1944, to Kaufering and was transferred to Camp XI. Upon the dissolution of Camp XI, he was moved to Camp I, where he passed away. He was a carpenter by profession and was married to Rosa Schidler.



Picture 3 and 4: Seven bodies waiting for their burial.

Picture 4: A forehead seems to show a blow.



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Picture 5: Burial site. Each pit contains 200 bodies.

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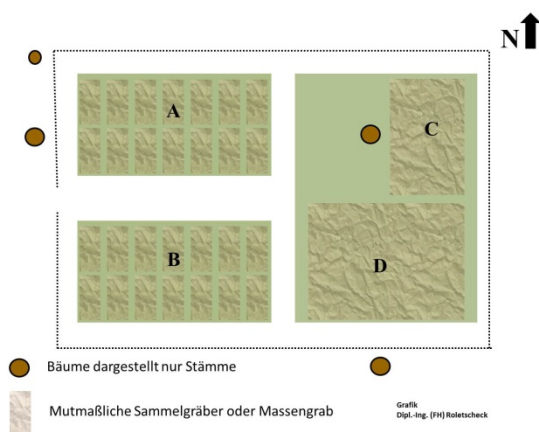
Image 6: Burial pit partially filled. Arrow points to a body.

The seven deceased individuals on the cart were buried, and the pit was finally closed around May 1945. After their liberation, the survivors continued to care for the cemetery. By summer, the mass grave was fenced off.



Image 7: Friends of Dr. Elkes visited the already fenced burial ground on November 25, 1945, looking east. In the background, two high-voltage pylons from the line running from Kaufering (Camp III) to Landsberg (Camp I), which still exists today, can be seen. source: Landsberg City archive, cemeteries file.

On November 25, 1945, friends of Dr. Elchanan Elkes visited the burial site. Around the same time, construction work on the cemetery by the city of Landsberg was halted¹² because the Jewish Committee of the DP Camp decided to prioritize completing the cemetery in Erpftinger Forest for Camp VII. Construction on the CC cemetery resumed in April 1946.



Graphic 1: Condition of the burial ground in November 1945. The last burials were carried out in the area of pit D.

¹² Chronological summary of the construction of the Jewish cemetery at Camp I, City Archive Landsberg am Lech, File District Administrator Gerbl.

At the committee's request, the cemetery was enlarged, and the district and city of Landsberg approved and provided the necessary building materials. For the design of the central memorial and commemorative stone, the Weilheim architect Simbeck was commissioned. To determine the size of the monument, a 1:1 wooden framework was erected.



Image 8: Photo taken in May 1946, facing east. The western boundary wall with the entrance area is completed, while the remaining walls are partially formworked. The lattice framework for the central memorial stone has been erected. In the background, the power line to Kaufering is visible. Source: City Archives, Cemetery Files.



Image 9: Condition of the cemetery in autumn 1946 during the handover by the mayor to Dr. Abkras, the authorized representative for cemeteries in Bavaria. Source: City Archives, Cemetery Files.

On September 1st, 1946, the cemetery was handed over by the mayor to Dr. Abkras, the Bavarian representative for cemeteries.

At the handover, the prayer house, which is now located in the northern enclosure wall, had not yet been constructed. It was only completed in the spring of 1947, and the central commemorative stone was erected. Survivors celebrated the inauguration extensively.



Image 10: Survivors coming by bus for the inauguration of the cemetery, facing west towards the DAG area. At the location where the bus is parked today stands the metal foundry Pfefferkorn GmbH & Co. Source: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](https://www.ushmm.org/).

On Sunday, October 1st, 1950, all KZ cemeteries in Kaufering and Landsberg were officially inaugurated. The central event, including speeches by District Administrator Dr. Gerbl, Bavarian State Commissioner for Racial, Religious, and Political Persecution Victims Philipp Auerbach, Vice President of the Government Dr. Hölzl, and representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and Finance, as well as mayors of the district communities, took place at the large cemetery in Kaufering Heath at 5:30 PM. The Landsberg newspaper reported that a convoy of about 50 cars and several buses traveled from cemetery to cemetery. They visited Cemetery IV (Hurlach) at 6:30 PM, Cemetery I (Landsberg) at 7:00 PM, Cemetery XI (Gravel Pit) at 7:45 PM, Cemetery II (Stoffersberg) at 8:15 PM, and Cemetery VII (Erpftinger Forest) at 8:45 PM. Afterwards, there was a communal dinner at Hotel Goggl. At Cemetery I, the mayor of Landsberg, Thoma, along with almost all city councilors, addressed numerous citizens of

the city. Former prisoner Bernard Pickert¹³ from Camp I recalled the suffering endured in the camp and then recited the Kaddish.



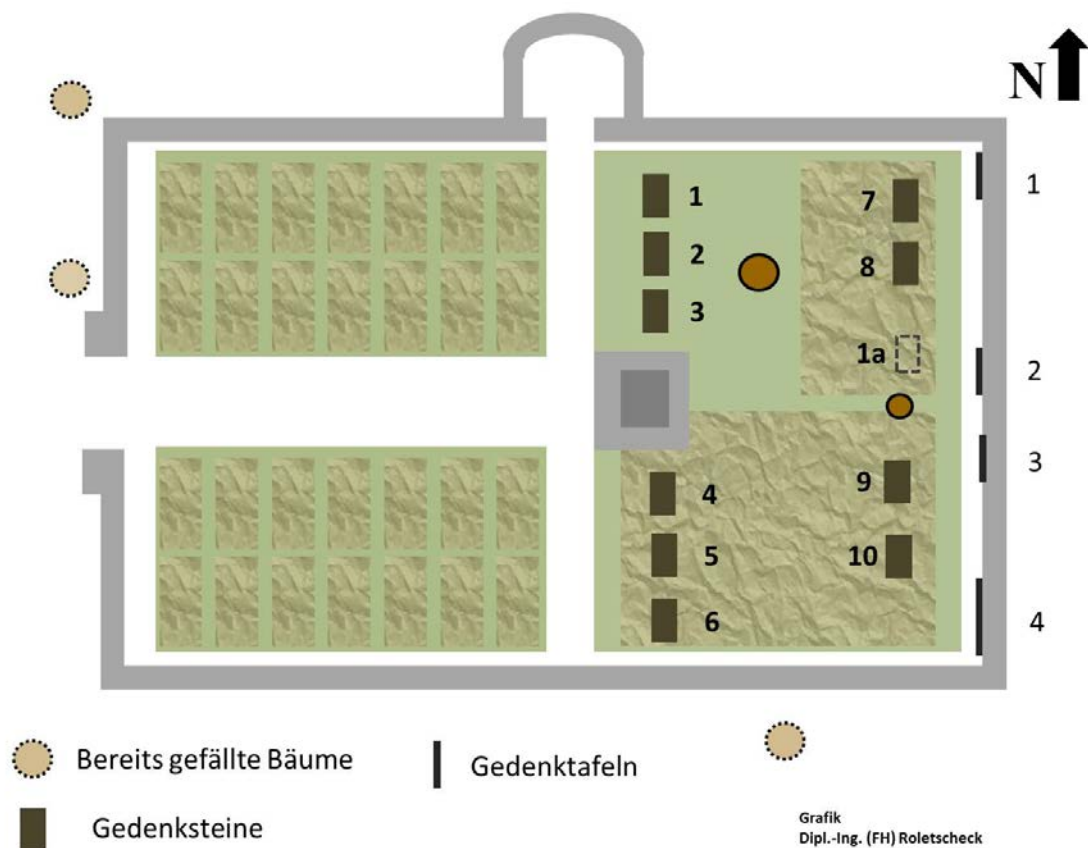
Image 11: On the day of the celebration, Israel Gruzin (Prisoner No. 82291) gave a speech, at the moment when he was overwhelmed by his emotions, as captured in this photo. Source: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](https://www.ushmm.org/).

¹³ Bernd Pickert (Prisoner No. 81729), born in Kaunas, arrived at Camp I with the first transport on July 15, 1944

Memorial Stones and Plaques

The inscription on the central memorial stone reads:

THE STONE CRIES OUT FROM THE WALL! THUS, THIS MONUMENT SHALL BEAR WITNESS TO THE HOLY AND PURE SOULS WHO PERISHED BY SWORD AND STARVATION, WHOSE SOULS FLED FROM SEVERE TORMENT AND SUFFERING CAUSED BY THE ACCURSED CRIMINALS—MAY THEIR MEMORY BE ERASED—HERE IN CAMP IV DURING THE YEARS 5704/5705 [1944/1945]. MAY THEIR SOULS BE BOUND IN THE BOND OF LIFE.



Graphic 2: Condition of the cemetery in October 2022, memorial stones and plaques.

Bereits gefällte Bäume = Already felled trees, Gedenksteine = memorial stones,
Gedenktafeln = memorial plaques

Memorial Stone 1 and 1a



Image 14: Dr. Elchanan Elkes, Chairman of the Council of Elders in the Kaunas Ghetto, at his desk in the Kaunas Ghetto. [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#).

The first memorial stone at the cemetery was Stone 1a dedicated to Dr. Elchanan Elkes. He was the leader of the Jewish Council in the Kaunas Ghetto. In August 1941, he was elected by the Jewish community to manage the ghetto's administration and was tasked by the SS with preparing labor lists as well as lists for deportations to death camps. Dr. Elkes (prisoner number 81688) arrived at Camp I with the first transport on July 15, 1944. He died from exhaustion on October

17, 1944, making him one of the first to be buried in the mass grave. In 1946, his friends erected a commemorative stone in his honor. A few years later, a second stone was also added, though the original stone disappeared sometime in the '50s.



Image 13: October 1948. Joel, the son of Dr. Elkes, standing by the second memorial stone for his father, with the first memorial stone, now lost, visible in the background. Source: [United States Holocaust Memorial Museum](#).

Memorial Stone 2

This memorial stone commemorates Oscher Melamdowitsch (prisoner number 81820). Born in 1888 in Kaunas, he arrived at Camp I with the first transport on July 15, 1944. He died on November 9, 1944, and his death was reported to the Dachau administration along with 44 comrades on November 16.

Memorial Stone 3

Dedicated to Nessanel Kotler (prisoner number 80999) and his son Faiwusch (prisoner number 82145). Faiwusch was born on October 28th, 1911, in Kaunas and arrived with his father in the first transport on July 15th, 1944. He passed away on November 13th, 1944, and his death, along with 39 others, was reported to Dachau on November 24th. Nessanel, born in 1893 in Kaunas, died on December 10th, 1944. His death was reported, along with 43 others, to Dachau on January 4th, 1945.

Memorial Stone 4

Dedicated to Bernard Kalisch (prisoner number 119813), who was born on June 3rd, 1900, in Galanta (modern-day Slovakia, then part of Hungary). He was moved to Camp II on October 27th, 1944, and later transferred to Camp I after Camp II was dissolved in early January 1945. Kalisch succumbed on March 29th, 1945, and his death was documented with 98 comrades at Dachau on April 21st, 1945.

Memorial Stone 5

The front side of this memorial stone commemorates Leiba Braude (prisoner number 81498), born on December 17th, 1882, in Zagare (Lithuania). He arrived at Camp I with the first transport on July 15th, 1944. While his recorded death, along with 112 comrades, was reported to Dachau on December 2nd, 1944, his son remembered the exact date of his passing as November 16th, 1944. The back side memorializes Sara, the wife of Leiba Braude. Sara was separated from her husband and son at Stutthof and was killed on an unknown date.

Memorial Stone 6

This commemorates Leiba Koch (prisoner number 81157), born on August 10th, 1894, in Neustadt, Lithuania. He arrived with the first transport on July 15th, 1944, at Camp I. His death was reported on December 19th, 1944, together with 116 fellow prisoners in Dachau.

Memorial Stone 7

Dedicated to Pinchus Burstein (prisoner number 82604), born on July 12th, 1906, in Ukmerge, Lithuania. He arrived with the first transport on July 15th, 1944, at Camp I. His death was reported on March 29th, 1945, alongside 216 comrades at Dachau.

Memorial Stone 8

This memorial stone displays only a Star of David without an inscription.

Memorial Stone 9



Commemorates Mayer Itzchok Lisoprawski (prisoner number 119306), born in 1894 in Lithuania. He arrived on October 27th, 1944, at Camp VII. His death is not officially recorded, but a missing persons report from Yad Vashem in 2000 presumed his death on April 13th, 1945, in Kaufering. Mayer was reportedly too weak to make a planned transfer to Dachau with his sons Jakob (prisoner number 119307), Lajbusz (119309), and Abram (119308). The sons erected the memorial for their father.

Image 14: Majer Lisoprawski. This picture was submitted together with a victim report to Yad Vashem.

Source:
https://yvng.yadvashem.org/index.html?language=de&s_id=&s_lastName=lisoprawski&s_firstName=majer&s_place=&s_dateOfBirth=&cluster=true

Memorial Stone 10

Honors Salomon Finkelstein (prisoner number 81215), born on June 10th, 1924, in Kaunas, Lithuania. He arrived with the first transport on July 15th, 1944, at Camp I. His death was reported on February 17th, 1945, together with 149 comrades in Dachau.

Commemorative Plaque 1

This plaque honors Judel Chaimowitz (prisoner number 81303), born on February 17th, 1907, in Vilnius. He arrived with the first transport on July 15th, 1944, at Camp I. His death was reported on December 30th, 1944, together with 93 comrades in Dachau.

Commemorative Plaque 2

Dedicated to Alois Schlesinger (prisoner number 92202), born on March 5th, 1884, in Brno. He was transported with a group on August 18th, 1944, to Camp Utting and was later transferred at an unknown date to Camp I. His death was reported on December 3rd, 1944, along with 112 comrades in Dachau. Despite his Jewish ancestry, Alois practiced Christianity. His daughter's request for the plaque included a cross to signify his faith.

Commemorative Plaque 3

This plaque acknowledges Dr. Sabatino Schinazi (prisoner number 116926), born on June 28th, 1893, in Mehalla-Kebir, Egypt, of French nationality. Dr. Schinazi, with a group of eleven physicians, was transported on October 23th, 1944, from Auschwitz to Camp I specifically to serve as medical staff for Kaufering's subcam network. His passing was recorded in Dachau's files on February 23rd, 1945, together with 89 others.

Commemorative Plaque 4

The commemorative plaque is devoted to members of a family. Arranged clockwise starting from the top right:

1. **Dr. Leon Gerstein** (prisoner number 81897), born on January 26th, 1891, in Vilnius—arrived on July 15th, 1944, at Camp I, his death logged on November 24th, 1944, with 39 comrades reported to Dachau.
2. **Pharmacist David Horowitz**—regrettably, no traces directly link David to Dachau ID numbers.
3. **Dipl.-Ing. Adolf Blumenthal** (Prisoner No. 82164) was born in 1891 in Schaulen and arrived at Camp I on July 15th, 1944. His death was reported to Dachau on February 6th, 1945, along with 99 comrades.
4. **Dr. Boris Strasburg** (Prisoner No. 82375) was born in 1888 in Kaunas and arrived at Camp I on July 15th, 1944. His death was reported to Dachau on December 2nd, 1944, along with 112 comrades.

Acknowledgments: I would like to express my sincere gratitude for the unwavering support in the creation of this article to Dr. Jascha März of the Bavarian Memorials Foundation, as well as to Mr. Michael Shubitz of Israel. This translation into English was made by “Chat - merlin AI” under surveillance and control of the author, 2025.