

Evacuation Transports and Marches of the Kaufering Concentration Camp Subcamps

Paths and fates of the prisoners on the death march

By Gerhard Roletscheck, 2024

Easter Sunday, April 1st, 1945, the weather was exceptionally warm, and spring was in the air. Josef Steinmann had been transferred to the Officer Training Battery of the Artillery Replacement and Training Department (motorized) 63 since September.¹ He was promoted to Ensign Sergeant Major with effect from April 1st, 1945. On this beautiful day, he picked up his young wife Hedwig from the train station in Landsberg. She was obligated to serve as a communications assistant in Mülheim an der Ruhr. They both spent a lovely afternoon strolling around the town. Forty-one years later, Uncle Sepp told me about this Easter weekend. He remembered exactly that there was only one topic of conversation everywhere on the streets and squares of the town: What will happen when the American troops enter the town and discover the concentration camps? He told me, "Anxiety was noticeably in the air." To take advantage of the nice weather, he took Hedwig for a walk in the woods to show her something. They both went into the forest near Erpfting and cautiously approached the Kaufering VII concentration camp. During his military training, he often passed this camp, and he wanted to show his wife what he had observed so far. From the cover of the forest, they witnessed the emaciated prisoners being driven around the roll call square, and prisoners kept collapsing. These memories haunted them both until their deaths.



Photo 1: Ensign Sergeant Major Josef Steinmann, second from the left, during the honor guard for the "Leader's Birthday" on April 20th, 1945, in front of the prison cell. Source: Steinmann family.

¹ On October 7th, 1939, Josef Steinmann was drafted into the 167th Infantry Division. From 1941, he was deployed on the Eastern Front, and from July 7th, 1944, he attended the Reserve Officer Applicant Course in the Saarbürg Barracks. In this course, Captain Herzstein was his superior, who later became the director of the Weststadt School in Landsberg. After completing the course, he was taken over as a regular soldier in September 1944.

On this April 1, there were approximately 6,600² prisoners (717 female) housed in the Kaufering concentration subcamp complex (Dachau) and in the two camps in the Landsberg area. The Dachau registry had 52,729 prisoners registered³, 29,939 of whom were in the various subcamps. In view of the advancing Allied troops, prisoners from the subcamps closer to the front were concentrated and also taken to the Kaufering and Landsberg camps.

Date	From	To	Number (male, female)
April 10 th , 1945	Lauingen	Kaufering	148m
April 12 th , 1945	Burgau	Lager VI	978f
April 14 th , 1945	Bäumenheim	Kaufering	68m
April 16 th , 1945	Augsburg	Kaufering	114m
April 16 th , 1945	Leonberg	Kaufering	1986m
April 19 th , 1945	Lauingen	Kaufering	276m
April 22 nd , 1945	Bäumenheim	Kaufering	250m

The transport⁴ of 1,986 prisoners from the Leonberg camp to Kaufering was controversial in the past. There was no transport list or other records for this, only an entry in the Dachau entry books. Many contemporary witnesses of the transport seemed to contradict each other in the past. Some said they came from Leonberg to Mühldorf and not to Kaufering, or they reported that they came to a camp on the Danube. After a long search for the famous "needle in a haystack," I have now found the explanation. A train transport of 1,986 male prisoners was indeed set in motion from Leonberg to Kaufering, and it did arrive in Kaufering, only to be divided here: 600 prisoners were forwarded to Ganacker (near the Danube), an external camp of Flossenbürg. Another 724 prisoners were taken to Mühldorf. This left 662 prisoners in Kaufering. These can also be partially verified in the death registers or camp lists, as they continued to be listed with their Natzweiler⁵ prisoner numbers from Leonberg.

Dem Aussenkommando K a u f e r i n g zugegangen:
 1989 männliche Häftlinge lt. politischer Zugangsliste.
 Dem Aussenkommando M ü h l d o r f zugegangen:
 724 männliche Häftlinge lt. politischer Zugangsliste.
 Vom Aussenkommando K a u f e r i n g abgegangen:
 660 Häftlinge auf Transport nach K.L.Flossenbürg (Garnaeker) lt.
 politischer Transportliste.

Photo 2: Excerpt from change reports Dachau dated April 17, 1945. Source: ITS Folder 114.

² Own database of all prisoners registered in Kaufering/Landsberg in the years 1944/45.

³ ITS 1.1.6.0 No. 82090163

⁴ ITS Folder 114 Change reports April 1945

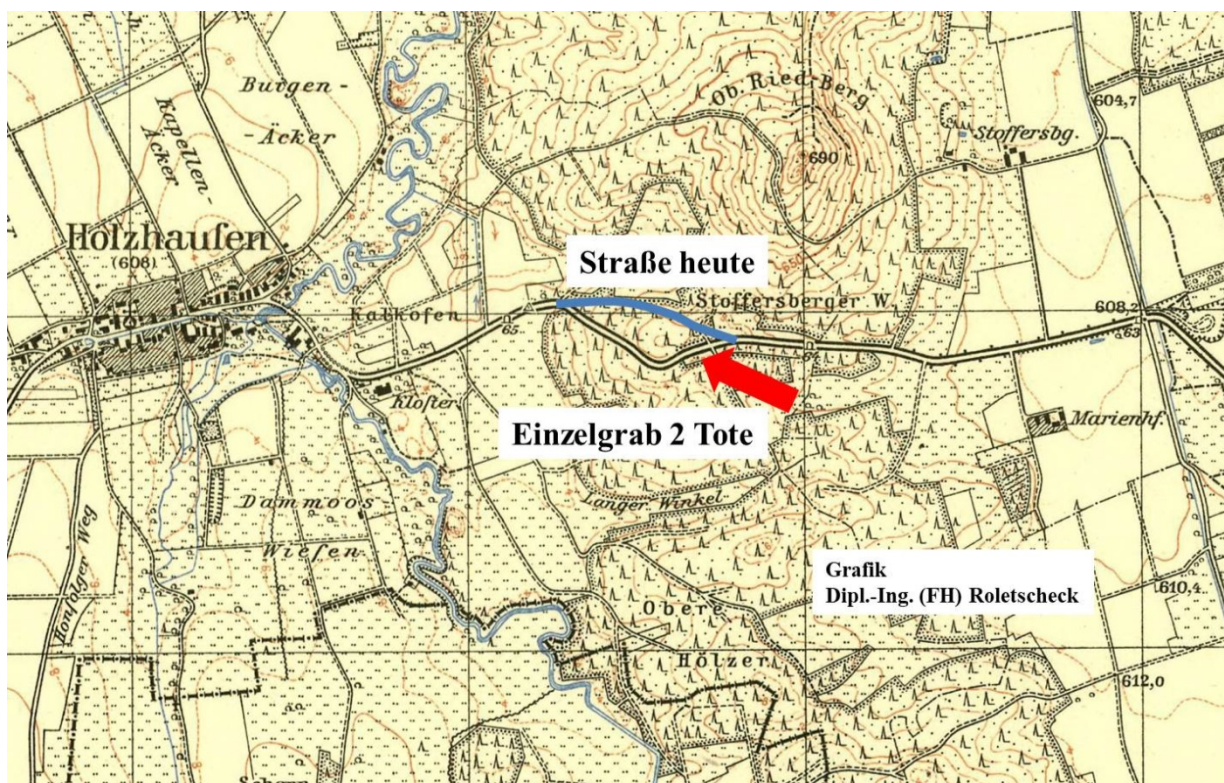
⁵ Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp from 1941 to November 1944 in Alsace, after which the prisoners were divided among other concentration camps, including Leonberg.

With the key date of April 22nd, there were already approximately 9,100 prisoners (1,700 female) in the camps around Landsberg and a total of 37,823 prisoners in the subcamps of the Dachau concentration camp. On April 22nd, US troops reached the Danube near Lauingen and captured a bridge over the Danube near Dillingen.

On April 23rd, the evacuation marches began in the area of the Kaufering command with the clearing of Camp VI Türkheim. Many prisoners managed to escape and hid in the forests, where they were found a few days later by US troops. In marching columns of 1,000 people, the prisoners were taken via Wiedergeltingen - Buchloe - Stoffersberg to the camps in Landsberg and distributed among the camps. On March 5th, 1950, the district administrator reported the following concentration camp grave to the government of Upper Bavaria:

*"Single grave in the district of Holzhausen near Buchloe on the height of the Stoffersberg in the meadow of Anton Müller of Holzhausen."*⁶

On June 8th, 1951, all war dead in Holzhausen were exhumed⁷ and reburied in the soldiers cemetery in Schwabstadel. In the course of this measure, the "single grave" on the Stoffersberg was also exhumed. Two dead⁸ were recovered, who were buried as unknown soldiers in Schwabstadel.



Map 1: Location of the grave at Stoffersberg, Bavarian Atlas – Time Travel Sheet 708 from 1942.

⁶ Letter from the district office to the government of Upper Bavaria from March 6, 1950, (City Archives, file Friedhöfe [cemeteries])

⁷ Village cemetery and refugee cemetery.

⁸ Municipal administration Holzhausen, main group 0, war graves 061

At the same time, in addition to the retreating German soldiers, soldiers of the Wlassow troops were also moving on the road from Buchloe to Landsberg. This troop consisted of volunteer Russian soldiers who were recruited from the ranks of prisoners of war. This troop was led by General Andrei Andrejewitsch Wlassow. Since April 19th, 1945, they had been moving from the Heuberg training area near Sigmaringen to the Buchloe, Landsberg, and Fürstenfeldbruck area in order to be transported to Linz by train. Before Landsberg, there was a serious incident on Buchloer Straße at the level of the Hospital (today) between the prisoner columns and the Russians.

*"Parallel to this 'withdrawal movement,' wretched columns of concentration camp prisoners were led east by SS men, and again parallel to these, the Wlassow men marched. So it was no wonder that there were fraternization scenes between these concentration camp marching columns, in which there were many Russians, and the Wlassow men. In no time, the Russian concentration camp prisoners were dressed by the Wlassow men in German uniforms with the ROA insignia. An impenetrable mess ensued. The guarding SS men were at a loss and finally shot in between. I came across such a scene just west of the gates of Landsberg. After quickly asking around, I learned that Wlassow had set up quarters just a few kilometers southwest of Landsberg. I drove to him immediately and picked him up on the spot. He did his best to restrain his troops from further rash actions, and I appeased the SS men who believed they had to do their duty. But some dead on both sides were already lying on the road."*⁹

The chief construction manager of the Landsberg armaments large-scale construction sites, the bunker facilities in the Landsberg am Lech area, Rudolf Neuhaus, also witnessed the incidents. He described this:

*"When I arrived at the main construction office in Landsberg, a larger unit of the Wlassow Army was just passing by on the road in front of the construction office barracks. The unit had suddenly been stopped, and Wlassow men, SS, and OT men took up position on both sides of the road. I went up to the Wlassow men and asked what was going on. A soldier who could speak some German explained to me: 'SS officer shot man.' A soldier was lying on the ground next to a horse-drawn wagon. I then went to the other side of the road and asked an SS Obersturmführer what was going on. The Russians had already set up machine guns. The SS officer then told me that the Russians had hidden a Jewish prisoner girl from the construction management on their wagon. He wanted to search the wagon and was prevented from doing so by a Vlasov soldier. Thereupon he shot this man after being asked to clear the way."*¹⁰

Presumably, there were two dead, an unknown Russian and an unknown Jewish prisoner. Shortly after the US Americans marched into Landsberg, the prison in Landsberg reported two grave occupancy in the Spöttinger Friedhof cemetery.

*"First and last name of the deceased: Name unknown died on ? Profession Jew Grave number 19...as well as first and last name of the deceased: Name unknown died on ? Profession Russian Grave number 16"*¹¹

⁹ Herre, Compilation of the Wlassow Divisions, Institute für Zeitgeschichte Munich.

¹⁰ Rudolf Neuhaus, statement April 16th, 1982, bunker collection, Landsberg City Archives.

¹¹ City Archives, grave site records in Spötting 554_1944. Underlined handwritten

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Both were buried in the Spöttinger Friedhof cemetery and still lie there today under grave number 165 "unknown Jew" and 197b "unknown Russian."

On April 24th, the first marching columns left the Kaufering and Landsberg camps on foot for Dachau. Columns of different strengths between 200 and 2000 were formed. Each group was accompanied by guards. Many guards used these marches to escape. The former operator of the Aral gas station on Neue Bergstraße reported that as a teenager, after the march past, he found a handcart full of discarded rifles at the gas station and had to bury them in the family's garden on Weilheimer Straße on the instructions of his father.



Photo 3: In the photo by Johann Mutter, one can presumably see one of the Red Cross vehicles that transported the non-mobile individuals to Dachau. They were also transported using handcarts, which had to be pulled by the inmates themselves. Source: Johann Mutter, City Archives.

The marching columns were accompanied by ambulance vehicles, which took prisoners who could no longer walk to the main camp in Dachau or to the Allach subcamp. A contemporary testimony of this has been preserved. American secret agents (Lux II, Erich and Jean) were taken from Raisting, where they had landed with parachutes and equipment on April 18th, 1945, to Etterschlag to the Maxlbauerhof farm, where they found shelter.

*"In the meantime, a truck full of concentration camp inmates was also driven to the farm and housed in the barn for one night. The legacy was terrible, because many had diarrhea. The sight of these poor people brought horror."*¹²

Many prisoners were afraid to get into one of the cars. The fear of being shot in the next forest was too great. Some prisoners were all the more astonished when they saw their friends, who had got into such escort cars, alive again in Dachau or Allach.

The marching columns passed through the village of Ramsach. After they had passed through the village, two bodies were found in the quarry south of the village. The mayor ordered the gravedigger to bury them in the cemetery at the church. This was reported to the International Tracing Service (ITS) in Bad Arolson by the district office on August 1st, 1946. In 1949, the Bavarian Administration of State Palaces, Gardens and Lakes (German: Bayerische Verwaltung der staatlichen Schlösser, Gärten und Seen), or Bavarian Castles Administration for short, was commissioned by the Bavarian government to record the concentration camp graves, build concentration camp cemeteries and administer them. Therefore, the Bavarian Castles Administration became aware of the grave in the Ramsach cemetery in 1955 and requested a report from the Landsberg am Lech district office. On June 28th, 1956, the district office determined that the grave had been occupied again. Since a separation of the dead was no longer possible, the cemetery 55a Ramsach file was closed by the Palaces Administration. The bones of the two dead still lie in this cemetery today.¹³

The columns continued via Schwabhausen and Eresing to Geltendorf. Here, the prisoners from Camp X Utting also joined the marching columns. The mayor of Geltendorf reported the following to the district administrator of Fürstenfeldbruck on December 6th, 1946.¹⁴

*"The undersigned reports that none of the alleged prisoner transports passed through here, only a few days before the Americans came here, 3 to 4 larger transports from Kaufering - Landsberg passed through here, there must have been 3 - 4000 Jewish prisoners, one transport also included sick people, who were transported by the municipality of Schwabhausen with wagons and the local municipality had to transport them to Moorenweis on the orders of a Sturmbannführer, which also happened immediately, one of these sick people also included a corpse, which was unloaded in the forest between Geltendorf and Moorenweis where a transport also spent the night, and had to be buried there immediately on the orders of the Sturmbannführer. Personal details are not known here, the Sturmbannführer explained that everything else would be done by them."*¹⁵

On July 24, 1950, the municipality reported additional information about the dead to the ITS.

¹² Berta Basel-Huttner, *Fragments of my life and my time*, self-published, Raisting August 1, 1988.

¹³ The author will soon campaign for a memorial plaque to commemorate the two unknown concentration camp dead.

¹⁴ In "Death March Programming," after the war, the Allies tried to find the dead of the death marches throughout Germany. For this purpose, all mayors and district administrators were asked to answer a questionnaire. Questions had to be answered about prisoner marches and graves on the municipal properties. More details: Martin Clemens Winter, "Violence and Remembrance in Rural Areas – The German Population and the Death Marches," 2018 Metropol Verlag, Berlin.

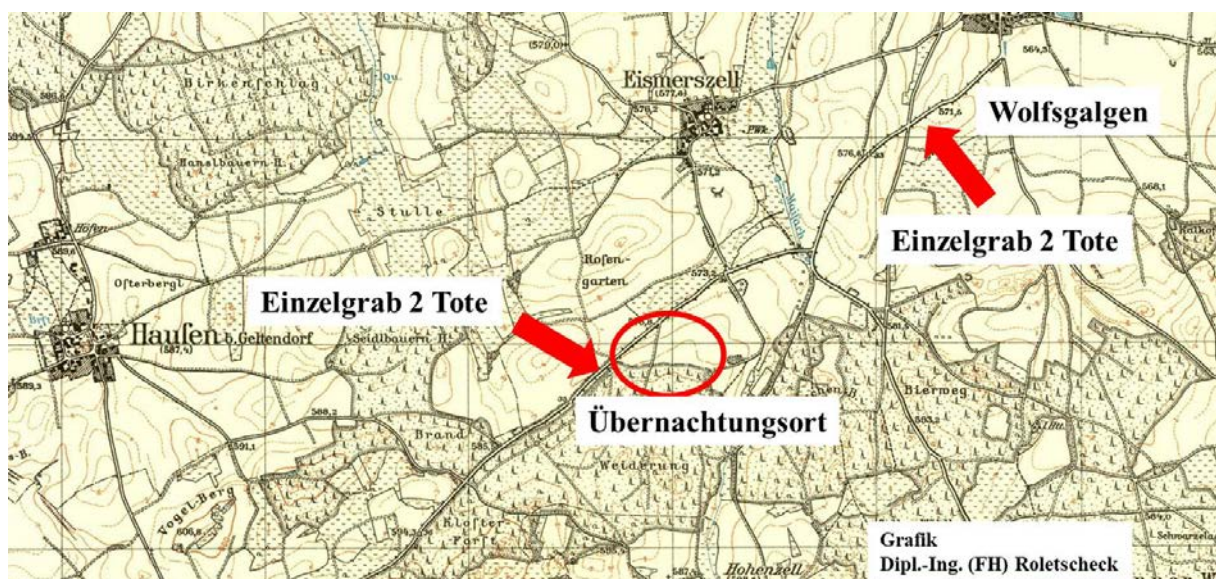
¹⁵ ITS Document 5.3.1 - 84598152

*"On the property Plan No. 313 to the right of the road from Geltendorf to Moorenweis, one person, died 24.04.45, name unknown. male, concentration camp prisoner; In the state forest on the road to Moorenweis, one person, died 24.04.45, name unknown. male, concentration camp prisoner."*¹⁶

Thus, two unknown prisoners of the march were buried on the way from Geltendorf to Moorenweis. If you drive on the Staatsstraße 2054 to Moorenweis today, the forest ends on the right after about 2 km. The prisoners spent the night at this point to continue marching the next morning. The mayor Sedelmayer of Moorenweis reported to the Fürstenfeldbruck district office on November 29th, 1946:

*"In April 1945 and until one day before the Americans marched in, several transports from the direction of Kaufering/Geltendorf passed through the municipality. Strength of 1000 to 1500 prisoners each. No prisoners died or were buried in the municipality. Probably 1 to 2 prisoners were buried in front of the village (Wolfsgalgen south of cadastral no.766) by the fellow prisoners. Witnesses were not tolerated by the SS guards. The incident only became known in the village the next day."*¹⁷

These four graves on Staatsstraße 2054 are not further documented. It is possible that they were also identified as soldiers' graves in the early 1950s and reburied in Schwabstadel. The marches continued to Fürstenfeldbruck.



Map 2: Location of graves between Geltendorf and Moorenweis – Time Travel Sheet 688 from 1927.

"On April 27th, 1945, around noon, a very long concentration camp prisoner train moved on foot, guarded by German soldiers, through our town. There must have been 500 people, partly dressed in concentration camp clothes and partly wrapped in other rags, who all had wooden shoes as footwear, and because they were completely starved, they dragged themselves along with difficulty. The train offered a heart-rending picture. It came from the direction of Landsberg a/Lech, passed through our town center, and marched to Dachau. Between 2 and 3 p.m. on the same day, two farm carts with horses came from the same

¹⁶ ITS Document 5.3.1 - 82403313

¹⁷ ITS Document 5.3.1 - 84600016

*direction and stopped here at Schöngesingerstrasse (junction to Hauptstrasse) to change teams. On these two wagons were about 60 Kaufering concentration camp prisoners (Jewish male and female) who, as the non-commissioned officer leading the transport told me, were sick or could no longer walk. This NCO, who was unknown to me, further informed me that some of the prisoners had already died on the march here, whose bodies they had buried on the spot. I was unable to find out from him where these bodies were buried and how many. This NCO was terribly agitated because civilians and some German soldiers had given bread to the prisoners, so I could not speak to him any further. Finally, the two wagons rolled off towards Dachau without changing teams. None of the prisoners were buried in Fürstenfeldbruck itself."*¹⁸

The march continued to Emmering. After the war, the ITS in Bad Arolson tried to reconstruct the evacuation marches at the end of the war. In Emmering, there was a branch line from the Lindau - Munich railway line, which led to Dachau. In the existing documents of the ITS, Emmering is listed as a railway station and hub of the concentration camp transports. It was now assumed that the prisoners changed here to the train in order to get to the concentration camp in Dachau. However, all eyewitness accounts speak of a march to Dachau or Allach. The first 1,183 male and 341 female prisoners from Kaufering/Landsberg reached the Dachau camp on April 25th,¹⁹ another 644 male prisoners on April 27th.²⁰ From this list, it can be concluded that the rest were directed to Allach.

On April 24th, 1945, the prisoners from Camp IV, the death or sick camp, also had to join this march. Only the weak, non-ambulatory remained in the camp. Sturmbannführer Otto Förschner decided to take these prisoners to Dachau by train. For this purpose, the fence of the camp on the west side was cut through in the night of April 24th to 25th, and the prisoners had to go about 500 m to the railway line under the supervision of a chain of guards.

"I dragged my tired legs further forward, and we were to stop in front of a track in the forest and wait for what was to come. The clearing was littered with sick, weakened fellow sufferers. Most of them were lying or sitting on the cold, wet ground, calling for help in many languages: someone should reach out their hand to them, they wanted to get up, they would not be able to do it on their own. I had to admit to my shame, but also with the plausible explanation that I did not stretch out my hand to help for the simple reason that I would have been pulled down and I would have been unable to muster the strength to get up then. ... The day broke, a locomotive with several wagons - how many there were, I do not know - came slowly. It stopped. A scream went up. The bandits in black roared: 'Get in, quickly, quickly.' There was no running away, not even creeping away, you could easily be seen, and I had no doubt that the inhumane creatures in black would shoot afterwards to kill. We got into the wagons, but by no means all could get in. Almost the last, I came half pulled in, half pushed in from the outside into my wagon. The train started moving. Perhaps 100 meters after starting, we suddenly heard a noise from above. The train stopped and machine gun fire riddled the roof and the wooden walls. I thought this would be the end and the fired ammunition would fulfill what it was created for. I did not see the planes for the time being, therefore my firm conviction that they were German. But I should have been terribly wrong. I could see from the

¹⁸ ITS Document 5.3.1 – 84598052, Letter from the Fürstenfeldbruck City Police of November 24, 1946, to the Mayor of Fürstenfeldbruck

¹⁹ ITS Document, Strength report Dachau from April 2, 1945, ITS 1.1.6.0 No.: 82090111

²⁰ ITS Document, Strength report Dachau from April 27, 1945, ITS 1.1.6.0 No.: 82090108

*bullet holes that there were - I think there were four - American ones. Twice, or was it three times, we were attacked in a low-level flight. There were wounded, there were dead. No one counted, no one seemed to want to know anything, everyone only thought about running away.*²¹



Photo 4: The meadow west of the camp by the railway tracks, taken after the liberation by US troops around April 28, 1945. Source: US Signal Corps.



Photo 5: Forests were filled with corpses due to the attack on April 25, 1945. Source: US Signal Corps

The guards screamed and shot at the fleeing people to prevent the prisoners from escaping. Afterwards, the meadow and the adjacent forest were littered with dead and dying people. Many of the prisoners took the opportunity to escape or hid in the forest. When calm had returned, transports were organized from the surrounding villages to take the seriously injured and non-ambulatory people to Camp I. The Lithuanian doctor and prisoner Zalman Grinberg (prisoner no. 82151) experienced the

²¹ Sam Berger, *The unforgettable six and a half years of my life 1939-1945*, R.G. Fischer Verlag, Frankfurt am Main 1985.

arrival of the wounded in the infirmary of Camp I:

*"Outside, a terrible sight awaited me: living skeletons, completely exhausted bodies, as I had already seen them the previous night, only that these prisoners were wounded and badly battered with torn arms and legs, blood-soaked faces, etc. as a result of shelling and bombardments. In addition, they were heavily infested with lice. Crammed in and pressed tightly together, they had lain completely immobile in the trucks. The strangest aspect of this terrible sight was that, despite their serious injuries, they neither complained nor screamed, nor even uttered any moans, as if their terrible wounds did not matter to them at all. I recovered from this abyss of horror to give them first aid. Since the medical area was completely free of lice, their transfer to the huts would create a possible source of infection for typhus. So we decided to set up our own dressing and treatment room, where we brought the sick and wounded. As it later turned out, they had been wounded in an Allied air raid on the freight wagons on which they were to be transported here. Despite the serious injuries, our station was unique in that it was absolutely silent. One can speculate whether perhaps the nerve center of these wounded had been completely paralyzed, so that they no longer felt pain. Bleeding people with shattered limbs sat there completely apathetic. Only when a bucket of watery soup was brought from the kitchen did they fall upon it with their torn arms and legs to catch a mouthful of soup. With my own eyes, I watched as a wounded man lost an arm, which was still loosely dangling from his body, in this scramble for a drop of soup, and did not even notice it. The severed arm remained lying on the ground and people stepped on it in their fight for a spoonful of soup."*²²

The prisoner doctors tried everything to help the wounded. Nevertheless, many died of their wounds and fever on this April 26th, 1945. In the evening, those who were able to be transported were loaded onto trucks again and those who were able to walk were taken out of the camp in marching columns. Together with his colleague, Dr. Windzberger, Dr. Grinberg also had to join the marching line and they went to an uncertain fate.

*"At this point, a truck overtook us, filled to overflowing with sick prisoners. One of the hikers in the line in front of us whispered: 'They will be taken to the same place where we are going - and we are going to the place where they are being taken.' Other voices joined in: 'Let us only live to see tomorrow.' Or: 'What is the point of all this unrest and panic - the angel of death can no longer surprise us and liberation can no longer frighten us.' Thus, a lively discussion arose in which cynical humor, bitter sarcasm and complete indifference were mixed until we reached our destination. It was the construction site of the Holzmann company, which is located between Landsberg and Kaufering²³. A long line of freight wagons, most of them open at the top, stood ready on the tracks. They were quickly filled to the brim with the sick. Some had typhus and tuberculosis and many should not have been transported at all. But now they were all lying like sardines in a can and apathetically awaiting their further fate. At midnight, the train started rolling."*²⁴

²² Zalman Grinberg, Our Liberation from Dachau – Memories of a Survivor, Written in Hebrew in 1948, translated from English by Cyrill Schäfer OBS, published as manuscript, St. Ottilien 2018.

²³ Grinberg is mistaken here; the Holzmann company's train station was at the construction site of the "Diana II" bunker, today's Kohlhöfer gravel pit!

²⁴ Zalman Grinberg, Our Liberation from Dachau – Memories of a Survivor, Written in Hebrew in 1948, translated from English by Cyrill Schäfer OBS, published as manuscript, St. Ottilien 2018.

On April 27th, 1945, shortly after midnight, the train slowly started and joined the main line at Kaufering station. Extraordinarily, after telephone clearance, from railway station to railway station, it went in the direction of Munich. After him, another transport train²⁵ of the Wehrmacht passed over the railway bridge before it was blown up in the morning. The evacuation train had to stop at the entrance signal of Schwabhausen, as a train was already waiting in the station for onward travel. Then preliminary alarm was triggered. According to Reichsbahn regulations, no train was allowed to be in the station during an air raid. Since trains were the preferred target of fighter-bombers, this regulation was intended to prevent major damage to points and signal equipment in the station area. The evacuation train was now slowly shunted into the station onto the track from Munich and then backwards out of the station again to the area of the entrance signal. Then the Wehrmacht transport train in the station also moved backwards to the place where the evacuation train had previously stopped. Both trains were now in a place west of Schwabhausen station, where a small forest at that time protected the tracks from view to the north and south. The two locomotives were uncoupled and drove alone towards Munich to hide in the open countryside. This shunting maneuver was later always interpreted by the prisoners as if they wanted to use them as human shields for the Wehrmacht train. Both trains were discovered and attacked by P-47 fighter-bombers of the French Air Force. The result was again dead²⁶ and wounded. After the attack, the surviving prisoners fled into the neighboring forest to hide. Among them was Dr. Grinberg. He tried again to help the wounded. So the day passed in a desperate attempt to do something.

*"Some of the prisoners lay in the meadow, guarded by a ring of SS guards, and another part was in the wagons. As I walked along the wagons, I suddenly saw a young mother (the train had also transported female prisoners from other camps) carrying a two-month-old child in her arms. As it turned out, she had arrived in the camp seven months earlier and had given birth to her child two months before the evacuation. It was a beautiful child, from whose round face a sunny smile shone out to the whole world, an innocent smile that was so completely at odds with the reality surrounding us."*²⁷

The prisoners spent a night in Schwabhausen. In the early morning of the next day, the transport leader, Obersturmführer Paul Müller, again tried to persuade the prisoners who were not on the train to get on this train. When a locomotive came back and coupled to the train, the guard crew got on and left several hundred in Schwabhausen. The abandoned organized themselves. Under the leadership of Dr. Grinberg and with the help of citizens from the village, it was possible to bring all surviving prisoners to St. Ottilien²⁸. The train reached the Dachau camp around noon and was registered.

²⁵ This train was hidden in the siding of the airfield in Erpfting. However, it was discovered by fighter-bombers and set on fire. Landsberger Geschichtsblätter 103rd year 2004, Two aircraft shoot-downs near Weil in 1944.

²⁶ Zalman Grinberg gave the number of dead as 136; ultimately, the number of dead in the three mass graves is given as follows: I: 65, II: 58, III: 47, total: 170. Collection of Palaces and Lakes Administration, file Schwabhausen

²⁷ Zalman Grinberg, Our Liberation from Dachau – Memories of a Survivor, Written in Hebrew in 1948, translated from English by Cyrill Schäfer OBS, published as manuscript, St. Ottilien 2018.

²⁸ Landsberger Geschichtsblätter 118th year, 2020, article: The KZ Cemetery of St. Ottilien by Gerhard Roletscheck, with background information on the work of Dr. Grinberg as director of St. Ottilien.

"In the course of April 28, 1945, the following arrivals arrived at the camp: Kaufering men 1602 women 167+; + in the number 167 female prisoners from Kaufering there are 7 women with children. "29

In the meantime, the camps in Kaufering/Landsberg were liberated by American troops on April 27th and the town of Landsberg was occupied on April 28th. Shocked by what they found, they tried to organize support. On April 29th, they went to Landsberg and engaged the



Photo 6: Henrik Malek after his recovery in 1947. Source: Melech family, Haifa, Israel.

"Sisters of Mercy"³⁰ to care for the ailing wounded and sick in Camp I.³¹ Even with their help, the mass of sick could not be helped. The US troops finally brought the victims to the hospital in Holzhausen with ambulances. In the first five days, 23 patients died; they were admitted already unconscious and could no longer communicate their names. Among the admitted wounded was Henrik Malek (prisoner no. 72078) from Transylvania. He came to the Kaufering Camp III together with his father on June 18th, 1944. His father was transported to Auschwitz as no longer able to work on October 25th, 1944 and gassed. Henrik came to Camp II on January 23rd, 1945 and later to the sick/death Camp IV. He was loaded onto the evacuation train and tried to hide under the wagon after the shelling. He was

discovered by a guard and asked to come along. He did not immediately comply with this request. Thereupon the guard shot at him.

Henrik Malek suffered a head shot and woke up in Holzhausen in the hospital. Someone had brought him to Camp I and on April 29th to the hospital in Holzhausen. He survived unharmed and became healthy, emigrated to Israel, founded a family and became chief of police in Haifa. In April 2010, as Chaim Melech, he unveiled a memorial plaque at the "Wagon" memorial site in Kaufering at the station.

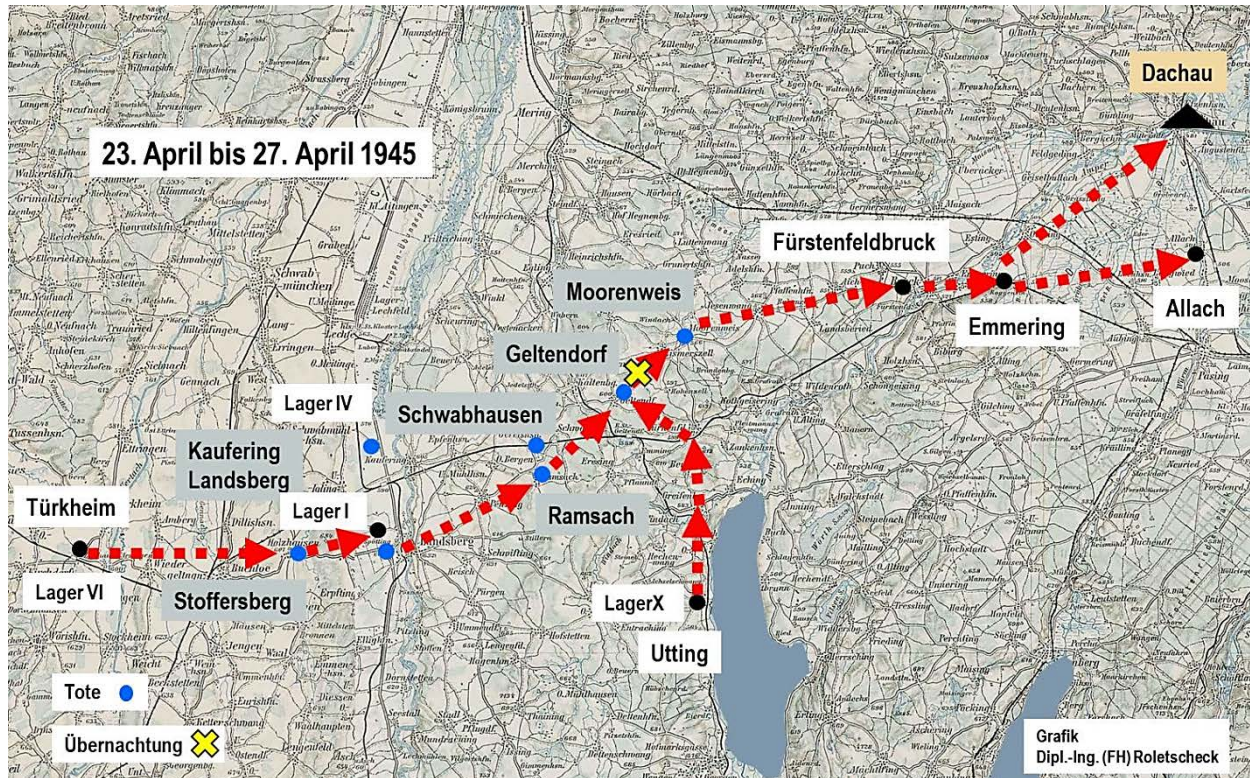
²⁹ ITS Document, Strength report Dachau from April 29, 1945, ITS 1.1.6.0 No.: 82090106

³⁰ Roman Catholic religious order - in Landsberg responsible for the care in the hospital.

³¹ The report by Sister Betha Blöcher about her experiences was published in Geschichtsblätter 93./94. Jahrgang 1994/95.

Summary period from April 23rd to April 27th, 1945

Within five days, approximately 8,800 of the approximately 9,100 concentration camp inmates in Kaufering/Landsberg were taken to the Dachau main camp or the Allach subcamp on foot and by means of a train transport. At least 278 people died in the process. They were buried individually on the road or in mass graves. An estimated number of 300 prisoners managed to escape or hid in the camps themselves.



Map 3: March routes from Türkheim to Dachau or Allach, Bavarian atlas.

Evacuation of Dachau to the Alps

When the first Kaufering prisoners reached Dachau on April 25th, the leadership had already planned to move the prisoners to the Alps the next day. Sturmbannführer Fritz Degelow was assigned as the commander. The plan was to start marching on the evening of April 26th to bring Russian, Polish, German, and Jewish prisoners from the camp to the Alps. There were three marching columns: I with 3600, II with 2944, and III with 342 women, totaling 6,887 people³² who set out from Dachau. The columns were to start marching at half-hour intervals. The prisoners were given provisions for two days at the start. On the third day, they were to be supplied from a Wehrmacht depot in Königsdorf. The first marching destination with an overnight stay was about 23 km before Starnberg, and the second with an overnight stay was planned after another 23 km behind Wolfratshausen. Hirsch Katz (Prisoner No: 81213), who came from Kaunas, describes the arrival in Dachau as follows:

*"That night we simply camped on the large parade ground, which was covered with discarded prisoner clothing. You couldn't imagine something like that in a concentration camp just a few days before! There could have been no better sign that the Nazi regime was falling apart. I was particularly concerned about my footwear, which could be my downfall. So I was glad that there were old shoes lying around on the square. I immediately started searching. Unfortunately, most of them didn't fit, or they were in unusable condition. In the end, I found a fairly well-preserved and fitting pair. They were a bit tight, but they undoubtedly saved my life; without them, I wouldn't have gotten very far later. My luck hadn't left me yet! The next day we got a whole loaf of bread! Something I had never seen in the concentration camp before. Our march into the unknown continued, but equipped with the 'new' shoes and the loaf of bread, I was in good spirits. I felt strong enough, and by all indications, liberation was within reach."*³³

The confusion was great. Orders were followed by counter-orders. It wasn't until 9:00 PM on April 26th, 1945, that the marching columns set off into the night. In the morning, they reached the entrance of the Würmtal shortly behind Gauting. At the Königswiesn, to the right of the road, there was a former wood storage area where drifted wood was collected, an island surrounded by the Würm. This was the resting and overnight place. The group of about 2,000 prisoners who had marched from Allach was already waiting there. This group contained the largest part of the Kaufering/Landsberg prisoners.

*"A little later, the call went out: 'The Dachauers are coming!' And indeed, behind the bankside bushes, we saw the gray snake of columns slowly approaching, and shortly thereafter, the mountain slope was swarming with zebras, as if it were just a large anthill that a disturbing hand had stirred up."*³⁴

On the evening of April 27th, 1945, the groups marched on to Wolfratshausen. In the following days, a grave was found at the resting place. The mayor of Gauting reported this to

³² ITS Document 1.1.6.0 No. 82090418 – List of evacuees on April 26th, 1945

³³ Zwi Katz, From the Banks of the Memel into the Unknown – A Youth in the Shadow of the Holocaust, Allitera Verlag

³⁴ Hermann E. Riemer: Plunge into Darkness, Bernard Funk Verlag, Munich, 1947.

the district administrator of Starnberg. The dead man was buried on May 7th, 1947, in the cemetery in Gauting (Section 17, Row 1, Grave 17)³⁵ as an unknown concentration camp prisoner. When the burial period expired, the grave was reassigned in 1961. The irony of fate! In front of the cemetery of Gauting stands a death march memorial, and every year citizens gather in front of the memorial to remember what happened, without knowing that behind the walls, 50m away, lies a forgotten dead man of the march.



Photo 7: The old log drift at the exit of the Würmtal shortly before Gauting. The Würm meanders around an island; on this island was the first camp site after Dachau or Allach. Source: Roletscheck, April 2023.

In the next municipality, Leutstetten, the mayor reported the following:

*"A prisoner was found dead in the field of the municipality of Unterbrunn. A man, he was buried on the spot by representatives of the municipality of Leutstetten. The municipality has notified the International Information Office for the former Dachau concentration camp of the existence of the grave, whereupon the body was exhumed. Personal details were not determinable; only the tattooed prisoner number 10 468 was found."*³⁶

The found number brought no clarification. This number was assigned twice in Dachau, and both number holders were released before the war. So far, I have not been able to clarify where and by whom the dead man was reburied. The march continued to Starnberg and on towards Wolfratshausen. In Percha, two prisoners were shot by the accompanying guards and buried in the municipal cemetery. On April 11th, 1958, the two dead were exhumed and

³⁵ Grave index of the municipality of Gauting, Gauting Archives.

³⁶ ITS Document, 84599550

reburied in Dachau on the concentration camp memorial site, Terrace E, Row 4, Graves 491 and 492.³⁷ In Aufkirchen, three unknown prisoners were shot by accompanying guards and buried in the cemetery. With a letter dated April 22nd, 1955³⁸, the municipality reported that "due to extraordinary space constraints," the graves in Aufkirchen were dissolved and had to be reassigned. No plaque or sign indicates these unknown prisoners, whose remains still lie in the earth today! Then it went to Dorfen. Here, an unknown prisoner, who died of exhaustion, was buried in the cemetery. He was exhumed on April 11th, 1945, and reburied in Dachau on the forest cemetery, Terrace E; Row 3, Grave 413.



Photo 8: The single grave in Dorfen. It was lovingly maintained by a private individual. Photo taken in the early 1950s, Source: Castles and Lakes Administration.

Wolfratshausen was reached on the evening of April 28th.

*"It was already dusk when the path led downhill in winding serpentine. This time, a forest hill was chosen for the overnight stay. On a signpost, I could read the name of the place: Wolfratshausen. A peculiar name, one of those that sticks in your memory, an unknown place, somewhere far away, where the wolves held council..."*³⁹

Wolfratshausen was a crossroads. Anyone who stayed on the "wrong path" was at the mercy of the SS guards. Some were lucky, as they were in the warm within a few hours and free the next day. How did that happen? The front in Bavaria had collapsed, and there was virtually no militarily organized resistance anymore⁴⁰. US troops crossed the Lech on the morning of April 28th and streamed to Munich and the Alps to cut off the German troops coming from Ingolstadt from their way into the mountains. It was a race against the clock. The 17th SS Panzer Division received the order to keep the Alpine passes open and to stop the US troops at Weilheim, Kochel, Bad Tölz. The 17th SS

Panzer Division was at that time the largest military unit in southern Germany. This motorized behemoth now crawled through Munich on April 28th, along the Isar, Loisach, and Würm towards the south. In the middle of it, the marching columns from Dachau clogged the

³⁷ Bavarian Memorial Foundation Munich, cemetery file Percha.

³⁸ Bavarian Memorial Foundation Munich, cemetery file Aufkirchen

³⁹ Zwi Katz, From the Banks of the Memel into the Unknown – A Youth in the Shadow of the Holocaust, Allitera Verlag

⁴⁰ Joachim Brückner, "End of the War in Bavaria 1945" 1987 Rombach GmbH + Co Verlagshaus, Freiburg im Breisgau.

roads. A nightmare for every military coordinator. Shortly after Wolfratshausen, the transport leader of the prisoners from Camp XI, Obersturmführer Hans Baumgart, met a general who was trying to bring order to the chaos. He ordered Baumgart to march on to Buchberg and to take quarters in the foreign workers' settlement of the Dynamit Nobel factory (Geretsried) located there. He was to stay there until further notice. Thus, almost all 1,500 to 2,000 prisoners of the former Camp XI came to Camp Buchberg and were finally liberated there.



Photo 9: Buchberg Camp I was used for foreign workers of DAG Montanwerke Geretsried. The large stone house in the middle is today the town hall of Geretsried. Undated photo, Source: City Archive Geretsried.



The other prisoner streams were brought along the Loisach to Bolzwang, today Achmühle, the next overnight place. About 2 km before the resting place, an unknown prisoner was buried next to the road.

"On April 28th, 1945, the train of misery of the 'Dachauers' came to our Expositurgemeinde, namely to the forest near Achmühle and Bolzwang, and could not go any further. About 7000-8000 prisoners lay there on the bare ground, in bitter cold, completely exhausted, close to starvation - they had received almost nothing to eat on the whole march from Dachau to here - most of them had thrown away their blankets on the way because they could no longer carry them, on their bodies they wore blue and white striped trousers as thin as shirt fabric without underwear, a jacket of the same kind with large painted letters 'KZ', mostly just rags. Instead of socks, dirty rags were tied around their feet, instead of

Photo 10: Single grave on the Wolfratshausen-Beuerberg road. The grave was exhumed on August 3rd, 1950, and reburied in the mass grave in Bolzwang. Source: Undated photo Castle and Lake Administration.

including true devils in human form, worse than their dogs, which they had with them as their companions!"⁴¹

The prisoners had to camp here on absolutely unsuitable ground for the next two days to keep the roads open for the military troops. Some provisions were delivered from the nearby HJ camp near Königsdorf by truck and distributed.⁴² The SS forced farmers to pick up the dead to bury them in the cemetery in Degerndorf.

"There were 28 dead, not counting those who had already been buried somewhere on the spot by order of the SS. While the farmers were busy loading the dead, the SS men threw a still-living person onto the wagon with them! When the farmers refused, "we won't take him, he's still alive," the SS explained: "He'll kick the bucket by the time you get up there!" (to Degerndorf). The dead were then laid close together on the north side of the church in our cemetery - a picture of horror: 28 corpses of starved or beaten people, whose thighs were hardly thicker than the wrists of normal people, freshly bleeding on their heads, hands or another part of the body, all traces of rifle butt or club blows (one of the prisoners had been beaten so badly on the fists that wrists and knuckles were exposed!). The faces distorted by pain and hatred and the fists clenched in death, ready for revenge, were eerie! Presumably, most of these dead were Ostarbeiter, Russians, Ukrainians, Poles, etc. But nobody knows their names, origin, status, age and nationality. According to estimates, the age of most of them was between 18 and 25 years. While soldiers of the Luftwaffe, who were quartered in our village on the retreat, saw this picture of horror and declared: "We are laying down our arms, we are not fighting for something like this anymore!", a Nazi bigwig, who was also quartered in the village, found "the matter not so bad, even if it should not occur in this form"."⁴³

Another 39 dead were buried in a mass grave on the Loisach on the spot. After the war, survivors of the march erected a tombstone in honor of the dead. Of the 40 buried, 18 of the prisoner numbers were known, five names were mentioned on the tombstone.

⁴¹ Expositus Ludwig Betzinger in Peter Pfister, The End of the Second World War in the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising.

⁴² Washington National Archives DC RG 338_B289F04, statement Fritz Degerlow.

⁴³ Expositus Ludwig Betzinger in Peter Pfister, The End of the Second World War in the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising.



Photo 11: Chaim Grusin (middle) with his two sons Israel and Icik. All three were on the march and were liberated in Waakirchen. After liberation, they lived in the DP Camp Föhrenwald and maintained the memorial stone at the mass grave in Achmühle. Source: Undated photo Collection Israel Guzin, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum NY.

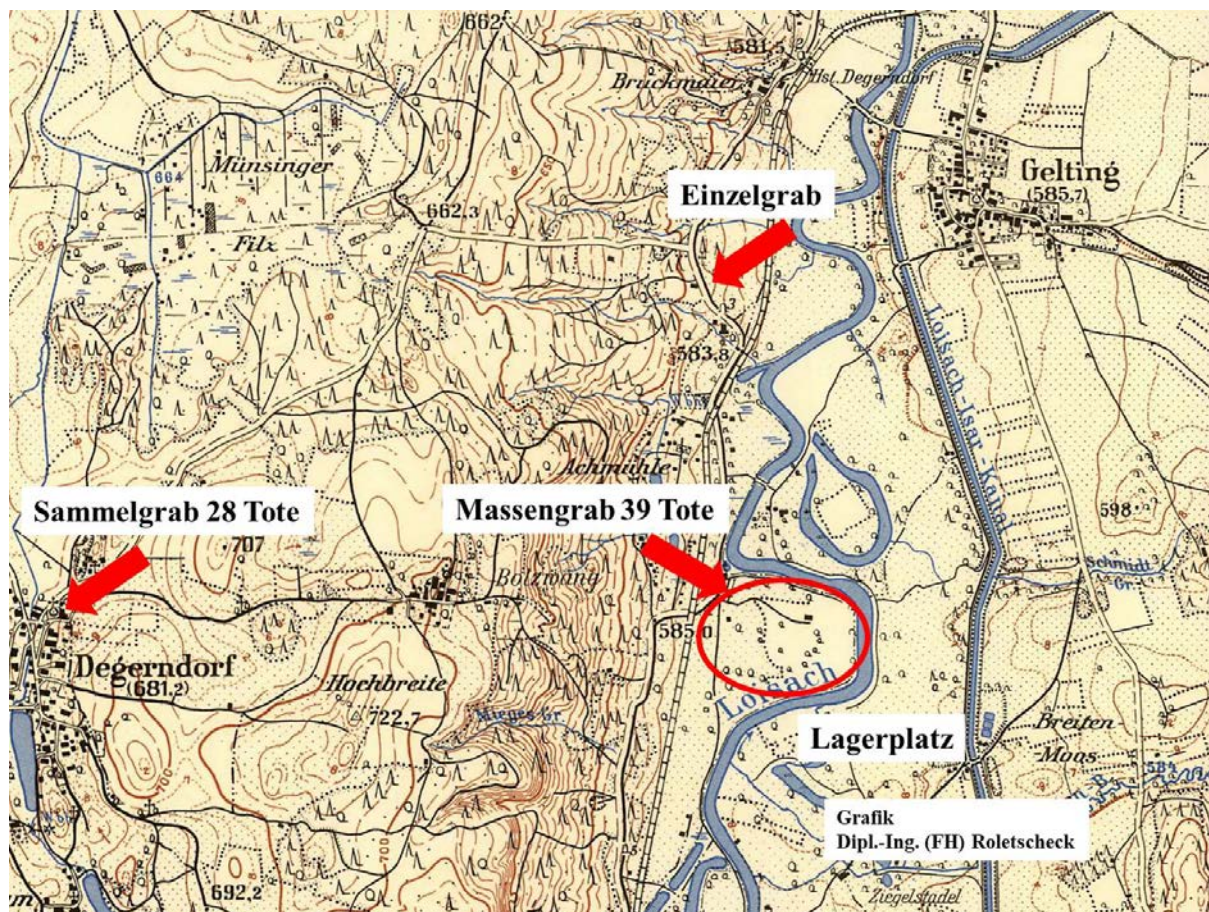
The inscription reads:

"Here rest those who were tortured by the Nazi regime and died on the march to Tyrol on 30.04.45. Zackheimer Isedor, Kameron Leib, Isralschtamm Ersä, Bakstanski Lazar and Lewin Aron."



Those mentioned by name came from Camp X Utting. Among those with prisoner numbers was Samuel from Günzburg. He came from Camp III.

Photo 12: Zackheim Isedor was born on March 10, 1913, in Kaunas, Lithuania. He arrived at Utting, Camp X, on August 18, 1944. He died in Bolzwang between April 28 and 30, 1945. Source: Central Database of Names of Holocaust Victims.



Map 4: Graves in the Bolzwang-Achmühle area, Map Bayernatlas – Time Travel Sheet 759 from 1933.

*"In Königsdorf I received the order from an SS Brigadeführer - police president of Munich - name unknown - to hand over the Russians & Poles to the American troops immediately, but to continue marching with the German and Jewish prisoners towards Bayrisch Zell, as there should be provisions again. On April 30, the German and Jewish prisoners (approx. 3000) marched into a camp between Königsdorf and Bad Tölz."*⁴⁴

The selected prisoners dragged themselves on to Königsdorf over the Loisach bridge, which was blown up by soldiers after they crossed it. From now on, the marching columns of prisoners were behind the German troops, who were trying to build a defensive line in Bad Tölz against the spearheads of the US troops, who were following. In the area of the peat plant in front of Königsdorf, two dead were buried. Then it went on along the state road 2064 to Bernwies, Unterbuchen, Wolfsöd and Fischbach. In this area, a night camp was set up again. On April 30, the prisoners were driven on through Bad Tölz to Reichersbeuren.

"Thousands of prisoners from the Dachau concentration camp, wandering skeletons, brutally treated by the guards. Nine⁴⁵ of them are buried in the cemetery. Their names and their identification numbers could no longer be determined. Some of them had died of exhaustion, others were simply shot by the guards when they could no longer go on. For example, a

⁴⁴ Washington National Archives DC RG 338_B289F04, statement Fritz Degerlow.

⁴⁵ Five were found in Reichertsbeuren and four in Greiling. The dead in Greiling came from another evacuation march from Munich, which met the marching columns from Dachau and Allach in Reichertsbeuren.

*prisoner who had fallen ill had gone from the road into a farmhouse and asked the farmer for something to eat, and she gave him something. But to make matters worse, there were also some SS men in the house, who scolded the woman in a very mean way and told her that she should actually be shot because she had given something to such a "criminal". And then the SS men called their command post to ask what they should do with the prisoner. The answer was: Kill him. They carried out the order immediately behind a bush near the property and simply left the dead man lying there.*⁴⁶

On January 13th, 1960, seven of the nine unknown dead were exhumed. The last two had to remain in the cemetery because it was not possible to separate their bones from others later buried in the same grave. In the reburial file, skull injuries were found on two of the dead, which could indicate a shooting. The prisoner number 91972 was found on another.⁴⁷ This number was assigned to Bender Moses on August 18th, 1944, when he came to Camp X Utting. He was born in Tauroggen (Lithuania) in 1921. He was reburied on the KZ - Ehrenstätte Dachau Leitensberg, Grave 7652. The march continued in the direction of Waakirchen. Shortly before the village, everyone set up another night camp. The field name of the place was "Schopfloch".

*"I wrap myself in a blanket, which I have incomprehensibly kept, and fall exhausted into a deep sleep. When I open my eyes the next morning, there is a thick layer of snow above me, and I am surprisingly warm. Only now do I think of the grains I captured during the first escape attempt. They were the prerequisite for my last effort and provide the warmth that surrounds me now. Because of the unusual warmth, I don't feel like getting up, but then I hear strangely excited voices: 'The guards ... the guards ...!' I start up in fright: 'What's with the guards, what are they doing?' - 'They are nowhere to be seen! They have disappeared!' The guards were really no longer to be seen. We were filled with hope, but after all the years in the ghetto and concentration camp it was so unbelievable, and until the arrival of the Americans we were not really free. After a while, a private car with a Red Cross flag on the roof appeared on the road. To this day it is incomprehensible to me why and where it came from so suddenly. How longingly we came out of the forest in orderly rows and were led to the next village. It was a long procession, because as it turned out, several Dachau marching columns were camped in the area. To our right I noticed a crowd of prisoners who were busily making their way over something. I was amazed and didn't understand what it was supposed to be. We were a long column, and by the time we got there, the pile and the mystery had been solved: There were two horse carcasses lying in the field, of which only the skeleton remained! The whole meat of two horses was torn away with bare hands within a few minutes. In Waakirchen, as the place was called, we were housed in a barn. I didn't want to be in an enclosed space anymore and sneaked around outside. From afar, a dull noise of chains could be heard. I hastily hid not far from the country road coming from Bad Tölz. Excited and worried, I peered onto the road. A tank stormed forward quickly in the curve, and a huge black man sat on top. The Americans had finally arrived! There was no more doubt, we were finally liberated."*⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Reporter: Pastor Johan Evangelist Schwarz in Peter Pfister, The End of the Second World War in the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising.

⁴⁷ Bavarian Memorial Foundation Munich, cemetery file Reichertsbeuren.

⁴⁸ Zwi Katz, From the Banks of the Memel into the Unknown – A Youth in the Shadow of the Holocaust, Allitera Verlag.

In this last night in captivity, 16 prisoners died. Some of the bodies were not discovered until the summer because they had hidden in the undergrowth of the resting place.



Photo 13: Collective grave in the Waakirchen cemetery. Source: Undated, Castles and Lakes Administration, File Waakirchen Cemetery.

On May 2nd, the time had come: The last prisoners of the evacuation march⁴⁹, which had started in Türkheim, were liberated in Waakirchen by US soldiers of the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion⁵⁰, which at that time was assigned to the 4th Infantry Division. The survivors were taken to Bad Tölz and housed and cared for there in the SS-Junkerschule.

⁴⁹ Reporter Pastor Georg Hunklinger in Peter Pfister, The End of the Second World War in the Archdiocese of Munich and Freising

⁵⁰ The 522nd Field Artillery Battalion was a unit of the 442nd Regimental Combat Team (RCT), primarily composed of Japanese Americans, during World War II. The battalion was known for its effectiveness and speed in delivering artillery support, particularly during key battles in the European Theater. They were also instrumental in liberating the Dachau sub-camps and assisting survivors of the Dachau Death March



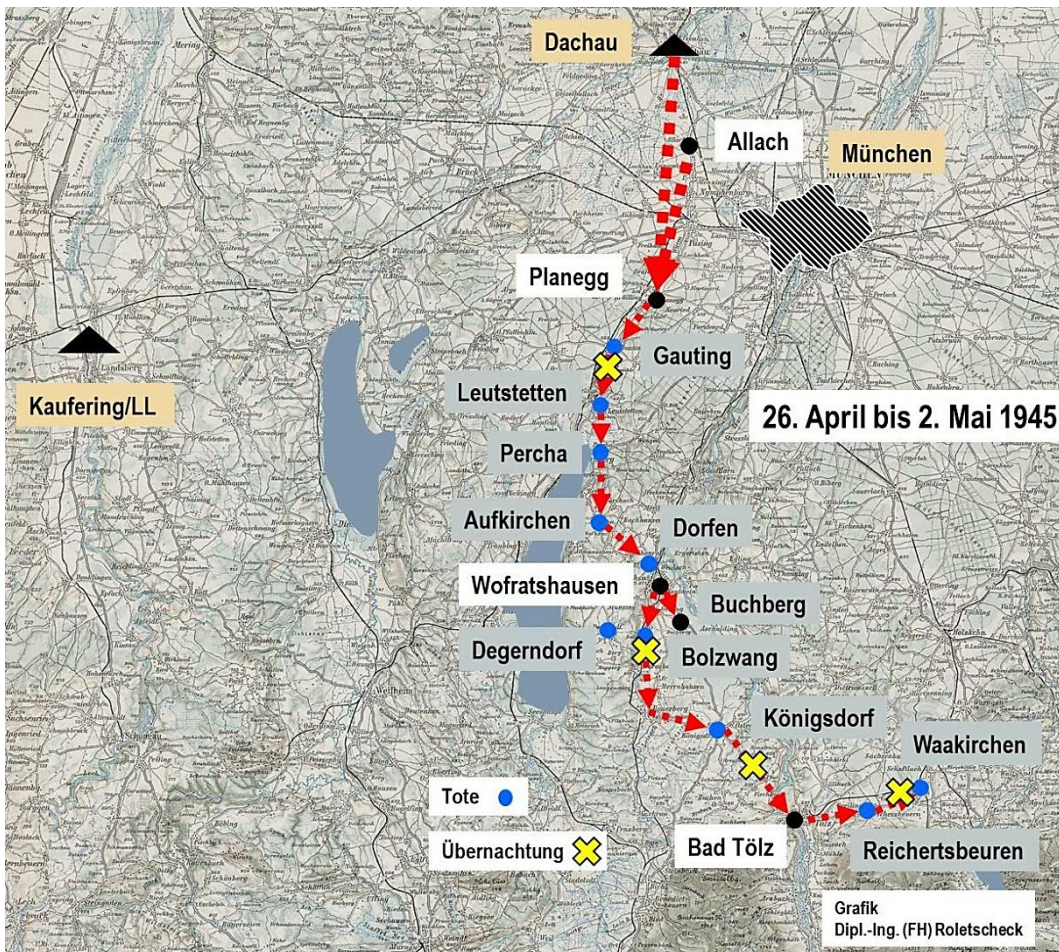
Photo 14: On the day of liberation, May 2, 1945, in Waakirchen, inmates with members of the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion. Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Eric Saul.



Photo 15: On the day of liberation, May 2, 1945, in Waakirchen, inmates with members of the 522nd Field Artillery Battalion, the GI right is Georg Oiye. Source: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, courtesy of Eric Saul.

Summary period from April 26 to May 2, 1945

Within six days, 6,887 prisoners from Dachau and about 2,000 prisoners from Allach were brought to Wolfratshausen on foot. 1,500 to 2,000 prisoners were taken to a foreign workers' camp in Bernburg and handed over to the Americans on April 29, 1945. 5,300 to 4,800 prisoners had to set up camp in Bolzwang next to the Loisach for two days. 3,000 presumably German and Jewish prisoners had to march to Bad Tölz on April 30 and on to Waakirchen until they were finally liberated on the morning of May 2, 1945. 85 people died in the process. They were buried on the road, in municipal cemeteries or in mass graves. Eight of them are known by name who came from the Kaufering command. How many of those buried as unknown came from Kaufering, we will never know. We must also not forget that in this present work only a part of the evacuation marches from Dachau was considered!



Map 5: March routes from Dachau or Allach to Waakirchen, Bavarian Atlas.

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