

## Stalag VII-A (7-A)

*Following is courtesy of Wikipedia*

Stalag VII-A (in full: *Kriegsgefangenen-Mannschafts-Stammlager VII-A*) was Germany's largest prisoner-of-war camp during World War II, located just north of the town of Moosburg in southern Bavaria. The camp covered an area of 35 hectares (86 acres). It served also as a transit camp through which prisoners, including officers, were processed on their way to other camps. At some time during the war, prisoners from every nation fighting against Germany passed through it. At the time of its liberation on 29 April 1945, there were 76,248 prisoners in the main camp and 40,000 or more in *Arbeitskommando* working in factories, repairing railroads or on farms

The camp was opened in September 1939 and was designed to house up to 10,000 Polish prisoners from the German September 1939 offensive. The first prisoners arrived while the wooden barracks were under construction and for several weeks lived in tents.



Barrack 3 of the guard of Stalag VII-A  
in 2013



British, French, Belgian and Dutch soldiers taken prisoner during the Battle of France started arriving in May 1940. Many were transferred to other camps, but close to 40,000 French remained at Stalag VII-A throughout the war.

British, Greek and Yugoslavian prisoners arrived from the Balkans Campaign in May and June 1941. A few months later Soviet prisoners started arriving, mostly officers. At the end of the war there were 27 Soviet generals in the prison.

More British Commonwealth and Polish prisoners came from the North African campaign and the offensive against the Italian-held islands in the Mediterranean. They were brought here from Italian PoW camps after the Armistice with Italy in September 1943, including many who escaped at that time and were recaptured. Italian soldiers were also imprisoned.

The first American arrivals came after the Tunisia Campaign in December 1942, and the Italian Campaign in 1943. Large numbers of Americans were captured in the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944.

Among the last arrivals were officers from Stalag Luft III who had been force-marched from Sagan in Silesia (now Żagań), Poland). They arrived on 2 February 1945. They were followed by more prisoners marched from other camps threatened by the advancing Soviets, including American officers who had been marched from Oflag 64 in Szubin, via Oflag XIII-B, under their senior officer Lt.Col. Paul Goode.

During the 5½ years, about 1,000 prisoners died at the camp, over 800 of them Soviets. They were buried in a cemetery in Oberreit, south of Moosburg. Most died from illness, some from injuries during work.

On 1 August 1942 Major Karl August Meinel was shifted into the Führerreserve, because on 13 January 1942 he wrote a critical report to General Hermann Reinecke on the segregation and execution of Russian prisoners of war in Stalag VII-A by the Gestapo and the Sicherheitsdienst SD (security service) of the Reichsführer SS (Heinrich Himmler).

### Liberation

Stalag VII-A was liberated on 29 April 1945 by Combat Command A of the 14th Armored Division. A German proposal for an armistice was rejected, followed by a short, uneven battle between the American tanks and retreating German soldiers for control of bridges across the Amper and Isar rivers. The German contingent included "remnants of the 17th SS Panzer Grenadier and 719th Infantry Divisions...who had no tanks or antitank guns, and were armed only with small arms, machine guns, mortars, and panzerfausts". Large numbers surrendered, as did the camp's 240 guards. The American force learned of the existence of the camp and its approximate location only a few hours before the attack. Because so many Allied POWs were in the area, the U.S. artillery, a major factor in any attack, was ordered not to fire, and remained silent during the attack. According to official German sources, there had been 76,248 prisoners at the camp in January 1945.