

## Stalag IX-A (9-A)

Following is courtesy of Wikipedia

Stalag XI-A (also known as Stalag 341) was a German World War II prisoner-of-war camp (*Stammlager*), located just to the east of the village of Altengrabow and in the south of Dörnitz in Saxony-Anhalt, about 90 km (56 mi) south-west of Berlin.

In September 1939 it again became a prisoner-of-war camp, and was designated Stalag XI, before it was renumbered Stalag XI-A in November 1939. The camp housed Australian, French, British, Belgian, Serb, Russian, Italian, American, Dutch, Slovak and Polish POW, all in separate compounds, and served as the centre from which most of the POW were assigned to *Arbeitskommando* ("Work camps"). On 1 January 1945 more than 60,000 POW were registered there.

On 25 April 1945, one of the last airborne operations of the ETO, code named Operation Violet, took place. Six teams composed of officers and men of Commonwealth, French and United States armed services and under the command of Major Worrall were to be dropped near the camp to assure the protection of the PoWs, to assess the humanitarian need of the PoWs and to ensure a peaceful handover of the camp into Allied authority. However the teams were scattered during the drop and all members were soon captured and transferred to the Altengrabow camp. There, the new PoWs urged the Camp Commandant, Col. Ochernal to cooperate and a radio link between the camp and SHAEF, then SAARF Headquarters was established.

"On 2 May Worrall received word from SAARF Headquarters that Col. Ochernal had struck an agreement with the Commander of the American 83rd Infantry Division, MG Robert Macon, then headquartered at Zerbst: Macon would provide the trucks necessary to begin the evacuation of POWs to Zerbst, and Ochernal would provide safe conduct for travel."

"On 3 May seventy trucks loaded with rations and thirty ambulances complete with medical teams arrived at Altengrabow to a tumultuous greeting from the POW's. Also in attendance were some forty war correspondents attached to the American Ninth Army who were shepherded by an enthusiastic Public Relations Officer eager to see the liberation of the camp portrayed as an all-American show. The evacuation proceeded with the American, British, French, and Belgian POWs being evacuated first. The Americans had promised to provide a twice daily shuttle service until all of the Western POWs were evacuated. On the afternoon of 4 May the Russian Army arrived at the camp, and the atmosphere changed considerably."

"The balance of the Western POWs, all Frenchmen, were allowed to leave, but the Russians angrily blocked an effort to evacuate a group of Poles who had asked to be repatriated to the West, as well as a group of Italian POWs. The following morning, Worrall, over his protests, was told by the Russians that he and the other SAARF personnel had two hours to get their gear together; then they would be evacuated to the American lines. The Russians would handle all camp-related matters from that point on."

After the war the area was taken over by the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSFG) and was the headquarters of the 10th Guards Uralsko-Lvovskaya Tank Division until 1990.

#### Deaths

The first Soviet POW arrived in mid-1941, and in November a typhus epidemic broke out in the Russian compound, which remained under quarantine for several months. The number of deaths incurred, assumed to be substantial, are as yet unknown as investigations of the area since the 1990s have discovered no burials, apart from a number of Italian POWs, whose remains were returned to Italy for interment. Since 2006 the *Förderverein Gedenkstätte Kriegsgefangenenlager und Sammlung Truppenübungsplatz Altengrabow* have been dedicated to researching the history of the site, and raising a memorial to the prisoners of war who died there.