

# CONDITIONS AT STALAG 9B FOR AMERICAN POWS, 25 DEC. 1944—1 APR. 1945

Near Bad Orb, Germany  
By Pete House

**Stalag 9B was considered by many as the worst of the worst of Germany's Stalags where American POWs were held. The first Americans arrived on December 25, 1944 (Christmas Day) after being captured in the Battle of the Bulge. Stalag 9B was supposed to be used only to classify POWs and send them to regular camps. In fact the privates and Pfc's. never left. Officers were kept until January 10 and non commissioned officers sent out on January 25. Jews and some others left on February**

**1. In two reports by the Swiss Red Cross, they reported how horrible the conditions were. They report on bad food, filthy barracks, poor health conditions, and lack of clothing.**

**2. To my knowledge, it was the only Stalag to actually send Americans to a slave labor camp (350 were sent Berga an der Elster, February 8).**

**3. In 1944 The Holocaust Museum in Washington had an exhibit that listed Stalag 9B as one of Hitler's Concentration Camps.**

**4 Red Cross Packages were never issued to the Americans. When American troops arrived in Bad Orb after liberation, many packages were found in the town. The Serb POWs shared with us one time and we received 1/4 a package per man. NOTE: The 12 pound Red Cross Food Package was supposed to provide for one man's needs per week.**

**5 No clothing was provided. Many of us only had field jackets, no overcoats, gloves or hats. And the camp was very**

**cold, on the top of a mountain.**

**6 Towards the end we had to carry water up to the American Compound and it was only for cooking — No drinking water. Food ration dropped to a bowl of thin watery soup and three tinny potatoes about the size of a walnut a day.**

**7 About the only medical supplies provided by the Germans were paper bandages and a chalky type of diarrhea medicine. While in the hospital for jaundice they had nothing with which to treat us.**

**8. It was probably the only Stalag where POWs were possibly deliberately murdered! I believe that the Russian POWs at 9B were murdered before and after we arrived. Although I don't have any hard evidence I offer the following :**

**a. Twice while at 9B I was deloused. Each time we were showered in a very. high ceiling room with shower heads at a normal height and others up near the ceiling. The doors were very thick and looked like refrigerator doors—seals on alt sides. The first time we took off our clothes in an anti room and put them into some sort of an oven. I thought the room might be used as a bakery, but there was nothing else in the room. The oven opening was about waist high. In my memory it seemed like one of the ovens for burning bodies found in concentration camps. My field jacket was scorched from the heat. The second time there was no oven. Our clothes were placed in a room where sulfur was burned to kill the bugs. At the time I wondered about these strange facilities.**

**b. There was a small group of black British South African Soldiers that brought the daily food ration to our compound. I got to know their sergeant. He told me that the Germans used the Russians on the farms and factories in the valley below. When they did something wrong, they were brought back to the camp and seemed to disappear. He thought they were murdered.**

**c. When we arrived at 9B on Christmas Day, there seemed to be a large population of Russians in the compound next to us. They cooked our food until we got the Germans to allow us to do our own cooking. And the food improved. By the time the British Non-Corns arrived, the Russians had disappeared. Of course they could have been shipped out.**

**d. The Germans had an area outside the camp on the side of a mountain as a grave yard. While on a grave digging detail I found a trench nearby that looked like it was for a mass grave. About half had been covered over as if it was filled. It is my guess that the Germans simply killed all the Russians and buried them there. I believe that today there is a memorial there for deceased Russian Soldiers.**

**e. I have heard that orders went out in March to kill all the American POWs. There probably were earlier orders to kill both Russians and Jews.**

**f. The commandant had previously worked at a POW camp on the Eastern Front for Russian POWs. It is common knowledge that the Germans murdered most of their Russian prisoners.**

**[STALAG 9BJ 1/2/97 PH**

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