

Belgian POWs

Despite Belgium declared its neutrality at the start of the Second World War, it was invaded by Germany on 10 May 1940. After less than three weeks, it surrendered and the majority of Belgian soldiers - approximately 200,000 - were taken prisoner.

The command of the VIII Military District envisaged a uniform national composition of individual POW camps for privates and non-commissioned officers, hence the Belgians sent to this particular district were to be housed in Stalag VIII A Görlitz (now Zgorzelec). However, in April 1941 they were sent to Stalag VIII B Lamsdorf. Their stay in this camp did not last very long, as later that year they were sent back to the stalag in Teschen (now Český Těšín) in a number lower than 500.

Under guidelines, the camp authorities were to treat the Belgians not as enemies of the Reich. Generally, it was stated that different rules applied to prisoners-of-war of the Western powers than to Polish prisoners. Flemish Belgian POWs were also discharged, as they were to be treated 'in a privileged manner' from the outset, while Walloons were not to be mistreated in captivity. The camp authorities of Stalag Lamsdorf tried to comply with these directives.

In total, at least 747 Belgian prisoners-of-war passed through Stalag VIII B Lamsdorf. No deaths were recorded in this group.