

Yugoslavian POWs

During the Second World War, Yugoslavia initially declared its neutrality. However, under pressure from Berlin, in March 1941, it joined the Tripartite Pact, what led to a military *coup d'état*. In response, the Third Reich expanded its initial plan to invade Greece to include an attack on Yugoslavia, which began on 6 April. After eleven days of fighting, Yugoslavia formally surrendered. Some 340,000 Yugoslavian soldiers, de facto Serbs, were taken prisoner by the Germans, as soldiers of other nationalities, especially Croats, were quickly released. By the end of the war, there were more than 120,000 of them.

The recent research findings do not allow a detailed reconstruction of the fate of the Serbian prisoners-of-war in Stalag VIII B Lamsdorf. The first of them came to the camp as early as April 1941 in a number of more than 2,100 men. For some of them, however, their stay in Lamsdorf did not last long, as they were sent to Stalag VIII D Teschen. Others were moved to the worst part of the stalag, to the so-called Russian camp (*Russenlager*). There, their sector was adjacent to the Home Army soldiers from the Warsaw Uprising, who remembered various details about this group, such as the fact that some of them played cards with a knife to punish cheating players. The Serbs were treated worse than the French, British or Belgians, but in a similar way to the Poles.

The Serbs, around 700 in number, left the camp as a result of the evacuation of the place at the end of January 1945. In total, about 4,500 Yugoslav citizens passed through the Lamsdorf POW camp complex during the entire war. The final number of the dead (several cases are known) and the place of their burial are unknown.