



Five Years Behind Hitler's Barbed Wire: A Diary of French Officers in a German Prison Camp, 1940-1945

Henri Natter, Adam Réfrégier, Jacqueline Vautrain Collins

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On July 3, 1940, 5,000 exhausted and hungry French officers reached a high plateau of the Moravian Mountain range in Austria. Prisoners of war of the Third Reich, they had arrived at Oflag XVIIA, a quad of grim looking barracks encircled by barbed wire, their new home for the next five years.

Determined to maintain their dignity and show their "fierce will" to resist, they immediately organized and within a year created a dynamic community, complete with a university, library, newspaper, theater, orchestra and sport teams. More than 20 clandestine radios connected them with the outside world. In 1943, they executed the largest Allied POW escape of the war with 132 escapees, twice as many as the famed "Great Escape" from Colditz. Seventy years after their liberation, this translation with commentary of two officers' diaries reveals a never before told story of struggle and triumph.

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