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Life in the Refugee Camps

July - December 1945

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We lived in the Liechtenstein refugee camp near Judenburg, Austria, from July 1945 to April 1948. This picture of Judenburg is from a postcard of that time. In the background is Mt. Zirbitzkogel, which is almost 8,000 feet high.

Saturday, June 30, 1945

Yesterday, on the holy day of St. Peter, we were transported in open-air trucks from the tents and make-shift shelters at Vetrinje to an old military barracks in Judenburg, Austria (about 50 miles north of Slovenia and about 130 miles southwest of Vienna.)

My father was in these barracks 45 years ago, when he served in the Austrian emperor's 17th infantry, back when Slovenia was part of the Austro-Hungarian empire. When he was here, he bought a book called "German Without a

Teacher," and with that book, he learned flawless German in 3 years. When he came back to our home in Žiri, he brought that book with him. Almost 40 years later, I learned German from it myself (in 1938). (And my son John used it almost 30 years after that.)

Last night, the 23 people in our group slept in a small room which was so crowded that two of the men had their legs sticking out through the doorway. But, for the first time in almost two months, we had a real roof overhead and a real floor underneath.

Since I am the only person in our group who has some management experience, and since the rest of the group knows even less German than I do, I have become our group's leader. Our group includes my fiancée Cilka, her brother-in-law Mire, my sister Mici and our friends (almost all men) from our home village of Žiri, Slovenia. We all left because we refused to cooperate with the Partisans (the communists) during the war. Now, the communists are in power, and if we return, we face imprisonment or death. Here, we are safe, but we have no idea how long we will stay, or where we will go next. (Many years later, in 2002, a friend of mine gained access to the archives of the Communist Party in Ljubljana, where he found a list of people to be eliminated. My name was on that list.)

Today, June 30, 1945, we began life in new surroundings. Our room is part of a large military barracks housing hundreds of other refugees. These barracks are located near the Mura River, which divides the British-controlled zone of Austria from the Russian-controlled zone. Two months ago, Austria was still part of Hitler's Third Reich; now it has been divided among the Allied Powers. Our camp is in the British zone. Across the Mura, we can see a red flag with a hammer and sickle, and Russian soldiers in their barracks.

During the war, Britain, Russia, America and France were all allies against Germany and Italy. Now, people are saying that war will soon break out between Britain and Russia. If it comes to that, we have hope that the communists might be driven out of Slovenia and we can return home.

Along the river Mura, there are a large number of graves decorated with flowers. These are the graves of Cossacks whom the British tried to turn over to the Russians. I saw some of these Cossacks a few weeks ago, as they were being transported through Celovec near Vetrinje. The British guarded them closely and treated them

like criminals. The Cossacks were in a long line of trucks which was led by a British tank. In between each truck was a military vehicle with a machine gun. When the column of vehicles arrived at the bridge across the Mura, the Cossacks saw the blood-red Russian flag with the hammer and sickle waving on a tall flagpole on the other side of the river. Rather than being turned over to the Russians, the Cossacks chose to cut each other's throats and they jumped into the deep waters of the Mura. The local people pulled their dead bodies out of the water, buried them along the banks of the river, and decorated their graves with flowers.

I believe these Cossacks were part of General Vlasov's army. (Mark Wyman provides this history about General Vlasov in his book "DPS: Europe's Displaced Persons, 1945-1951": *"Vlasov, a rising Soviet general praised for his heroics in the defense of Moscow in late 1941, was captured the following summer near Leningrad. Harboring a longstanding bitterness against the Stalinist regime - which had seized his father's land earlier - and angry over what he felt was abandonment of his forces in the swamps near Leningrad, Vlasov urged his Nazi captors to permit him to organize other prisoners from the Red Army. His aim was a partnership with the (Germans) to defeat Stalin and set up a new, non-Communist regime in the Soviet Union. Formed at a time when defeat of the USSR still appeared possible, the Vlasov army drew on longstanding hatred of the Soviet leadership among thousands of members of the Red Army. Most probably considered themselves true patriots."* Wyman's book goes on to say that, in June and July of 1945, the British forcibly returned 22,500 unwilling Cossacks and Caucasians to the Russians in Austria.)

In Vetrinje, we were usually hungry and always worried about our next meal. That is one of our main concerns here - what will they feed us, will it be enough, will it be edible? Will there be

ways to go outside the camp to get our own food?

The British have encouraged self-government among the refugees, but we have not had time for elections. So the British have hired certain refugees to run the camp, based on their apparent experience and knowledge of languages. Our camp is run by Rene Podhorsky (a knight and a former Yugoslav naval officer), Dr. Est, Dr. Erman, Janez Levičar (a former judge), Venčeslav Šešek, Viktor Pip and others. Most of them were attorneys or judges in Slovenia, but Pip was a teacher. Although German is the official language here in Austria, all of them together do not know enough German for one.

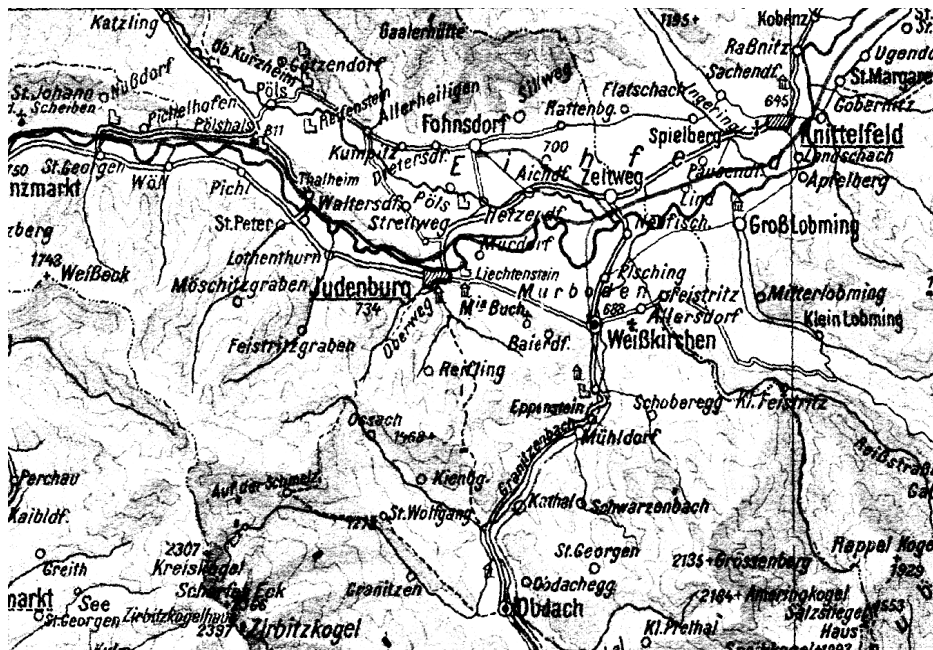
At 8 a.m. this morning, I reported to the camp

offices with a list of names of everyone in our room. At 8:30 we had breakfast, then a large gathering for everyone in the camp courtyard.

For our first day, we each received carefully measured amounts of food: 9 grams of butter, 400 grams of bread and 400 grams of soup.

Sunday, July 1, 1945

We went to Mass at 5:30 a.m., then breakfast at 8. On the steep, rocky cliffs above the camp, we can see the ruins of an old castle. We hear that it is owned by the dukes of Lichtenstein, who are related to the Liechtensteins who owned the monastery at Vetrinje. They are a different branch of the family and they spell their name without the first "e".



This 1937 map shows the area which is within about 10 miles of Judenburg, Austria. Refugee camp Liechtenstein is located just to the right, or east, of the city of Judenburg. Refugees were allowed to move freely within 10 kilometers (about 6 miles) of the camp. We often walked to neighboring towns. The dark way line running from left to right is the Mura River. The names with numbers next to them are mountains with the numbers being their height in meters.

Today, the camp leadership began moving all the refugees from our initial temporary rooms to more permanent quarters in Camp Liechtenstein, located on the Mura River, just east of the city of Judenburg. Sir Podhorsky was yelling at everyone and threatening to arrest anyone who tried to occupy a barracks on their own. But everyone scattered about and began claiming the best rooms for themselves. Our group held back. In the end, we were assigned the only barracks left - it was #27 - an empty room which had been used to store linens. All the other barracks have beds and other furniture, but ours has nothing.

Our room is actually one-half of a barracks building. Our room is about 18 feet on each side, still too small for 22 people, but much better than what we had yesterday.

Monday, July 2, 1945

It turns out that we actually got the best room in the camp - people in the other barracks couldn't sleep because their beds were full of bedbugs. But our room has no bedbugs!

Even so, I did not sleep well last night - the bare floor was hard and I didn't have a pillow. This morning, there was no breakfast. For lunch, they gave us a small helping of cabbage and potatoes, no meat.

It rained all day, so for the first time in 20 years, I played some chess and lost every time. I played with Mire, Cilka's brother-in-law. Some members of our group think I am too friendly with Mire. He was a Partisan before he became a Domobranec, and some people don't trust him. But I think he's the only one who knows how to get us what we need, and how to divide things fairly.

Tuesday, July 3, 1945

Last night we were surprised when a stream of

water began flowing from the roof right down to where we were sleeping. We moved ourselves aside and set up a pot to catch the water. But the pot filled quickly and had to be repeatedly taken out and emptied.

It was cold today - we could see new snow on the mountains to the north. We went up on the roof and looked for the leak, but we couldn't find anything. (Months later, we found the leak far over on the other end of the roof. Somehow, the water flowed across the roof under the sheet metal covering.)

I went to Mass at 8 a.m., then walked the short distance into the city of Judenburg to look for books or newspapers, but I couldn't find any.

Karel brought me a steel-frame bed from somewhere, but I gave it to Marija Lazar, a 50-year old woman in our group whom we call "mother." We now have 19 in our room, and only 3 have beds.

Wednesday, July 4, 1945

I slept better last night, Cilka slept worse. This morning, they had us all walk past a doctor - this was our medical check-up!

In the afternoon, we walked up to the castle ruins, then to Murdorf and back.

My back is feeling stiff as a board.

Thursday, July 5, 1945

Again, no breakfast. We lay in bed till 9, then we made some tea. For a change, lunch and dinner were both good and filling. Lunch was bread with canned meat, butter and cheese. Dinner was soup with barley and milk.

Friday, July 6, 1945

Again I lay in bed till 9. Since there is no

breakfast, I feel hungrier if I get up early.

At 9:30, I attended a meeting of the leaders from each room. People are complaining that food and other things are not being divided fairly, and they blame the camp leadership. The refugees who have been appointed and paid by the British to run the camp (Podhorsky and the others) refuse to give up any power. People are having frequent arguments.

Saturday, July 7, 1945

We got breakfast today for the first time in a week - coffee with sugar. Lunch and dinner were also better: rice soup with meat for lunch, barley and milk for supper.

We went to litanies in the camp hall this evening. I saw bedbugs crawling out of the cracks in the floor and dropping down from the ceiling onto their unsuspecting victims.

Mire returned from the neighboring town of Obdach with 4 liters of milk.

We were pleased to hear today that the Russian soldiers, who are still in their barracks across the river, will be leaving on Monday. Since they are allied with the communists in Yugoslavia, they make us all nervous. We've also noticed how backwards the Russians must be. I noticed one soldier who was pushing a woman's bicycle with his right hand and holding a watch in his left hand. I think he had probably never seen such things before. People say that a Russian brought a large wall clock (which he had probably stolen) to a watchmaker and asked him if he could make two watches out of the wall clock.

When the Russians occupied Judenburg towards the end of the war, they went into homes and stole whatever they wanted. The townspeople began to blame the Russians every time something was missing. Even though the

townspeople were social-democrats, they prayed and promised to make pilgrimages to the shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Weisskirchen every Saturday if only the Russians would leave.

Sunday, July 8, 1945

Again, no breakfast. We had rice soup for lunch and only about 5 grams of butter or cheese for dinner. People are angry.

In the afternoon, my sister Mici, my fiancée Cilka, our friend Franc Kokelj and I went for a 5-hour walk along the Mura River. Across the river, we saw Russians, with clothes like we had worn 5 years ago, playing a harmonica, like the Serbs do.

Monday, July 9, 1945

It's two months since we became refugees.

Pavel Kokelj, Mici, Mire and Petelin left this morning to work for a farmer in Obdach. Mici soon returned, but the others came back later with full containers of milk (which they had earned for their work).

This afternoon, some of the refugees played soccer with the British on a field near the camp. New refugees arrived at the Murdorf refugee camp located less than a kilometer east of here - Croats and "Volksdeutscher" - Germans and Austrians who had settled in Yugoslavia and were now being forced out.

Tuesday, July 10, 1945

The Russians are leaving their camp across the river. We hear reports that Yugoslavia will soon conduct "completely free and open elections." We don't believe it.

Although I don't agree with all the complaints, I and many others signed a resolution against the camp leadership.

Today, Rev. Roman Malavašič somehow managed to publish the first issue of his camp newspaper “Dom ob Muri” (“A Home along the Mura”). It includes world news, reports from home, and camp news. There are 10 individually typed copies which are being shared and carried from one barracks to the next. Here is an excerpt from this first issue (by Rev. Malavašič):

“This will be our daily newspaper, a way to connect all Slovenians in the Liechtenstein refugee camp. If you would like to submit an article, there is a box which is nailed to the wall of my barracks which will gratefully accept all signed submissions. Authors’ names will not be published and will remain confidential. Due to the shortage of paper, this newspaper will be limited to a very small number of copies. If we cannot obtain enough paper, we will have to stop publishing.”

Wednesday, July 11, 1945

Some members of our group are making beds out of steel or wood. They obtain the materials wherever they can. Most of the beds are bunk beds, with one on top of the other.

In the other half of our barracks is a young family with a small child. They’ve run electric wires through our room to theirs so they can use a small electric stove to heat milk for the child. The wires are steel, without insulation. At night, they glow. (At first, we were afraid these wires would cause a fire, but they didn’t and we soon got used to them. Usually, we hardly had enough electricity for light, so the camp authorities soon prohibited using electricity for heating. But nobody paid attention to the rules!)

Thursday, July 12, 1945

Three members of our group went to work for a farmer in Weidmansdorf. They returned with some food in the evening, very satisfied. They

like working, and the rest of us like sharing their food.

Friday, July 13, 1945

Today, we saw an airplane flying over for the first time in 2 weeks. When we were in Vetrinje, they were flying over every day, sometimes very low. We hear that the Yugoslavs shot down some planes that had flown into Yugoslav territory without permission.

Saturday, July 14, 1945

I lay in bed till 8 a.m. Mire served coffee with milk. He gets some milk every day when he goes to work for a farmer in Obdach. Later I worked for 5 hours building new latrines. My back was getting better, but now it feels worse.

We received reports today from the refugee camps in Spittal and Lienz, that the conditions are much worse there than here.

This evening, I began attending an English language class. Since I had already studied some English in Kranj, and since I have time here for studies, it’s going easy for me.

Sunday, July 15, 1945

We attended Mass in Judenburg at 11 a.m. - there was Slovenian singing.

In the afternoon, I went with the Kokelj men (Franc, Pavel and Cene) to Wolmerdorf, where we talked with a farmer regarding work. He gave them a liter of cider and asked if they would stay with him permanently. Our men said they prefer to work with him on a temporary basis so they can continue to be enrolled as residents in the refugee camp. They want to be part of, and kept informed of, all developments regarding the fate of the refugees.

When I asked the farmer how much he would pay, he said he would pay me something, but he would only give the Kokelj men food - as much as was allowed under the government rations. I told him that I wasn't planning to stay. I asked him if he would provide work clothes for the men, and he said he would try to get some at the *Wirtschaftsamt* (the government work office). We still have only the clothes we carried with us. What will our men do if they wear out their clothes working and cannot get any replacements? We left the farmer without an agreement.

Monday, July 16, 1945

This afternoon, Cilka and I went to see the movie *Die Terra Zeigt*. It would not have been worth seeing even if it were free. We argued about being late. She says she will never go to a movie with me again!

Tuesday, July 17, 1945

One of the men in our room argued with me about how we had divided up the soap. A few days ago, we were given some pieces of poor quality soap. We decided to give those pieces to those of us who had no soap. Today, we got some better quality soap, and the people who got soap earlier want some of this soap, too.

Mire and I resolved to never again try to decide who gets what in our room. No matter how you do it, someone always thinks they are being cheated. I want to stop being the leader for our room, but there is nobody else who is willing to do it.

Wednesday, July 18, 1945

From 8 - 10 a.m., the camp authorities conducted a census, which will be used to determine how much food and supplies will be provided to each room. The men who have been going to work on the farms each day had to

stay in the camp.

A farmer came to the camp office and demanded that his workers come to work. Šušteršič, a former captain in the Domobranci, told the farmer he was acting like a Nazi. Šušteršič said: "We were on the winning side in this war, not you. You can't order us around anymore."

Some of our men work on the farms 16 hours a day and all they get is some food. What will our men wear when their clothes wear out?

Thursday, July 19, 1945

I received letters today from our former neighbor Silva (who is living with relatives in Austria) and from friends in the Spittal and Lienz refugee camps. It sounds like conditions in Spittal are better than here, worse in Lienz, and much worse back home in Slovenia.

Silva writes that my brother Vlado is in a communist prison, and my mother is in the hospital with a broken arm. Nobody knows what happened to my sister Julka, nor my brothers Jože, Janko and Stanko. Janko, my youngest brother, was in the German army in Russia, and we haven't heard from him for over a year. Stanko is a priest, and we assume we will probably never see him again. My sister Mici, who is here with me in the refugee camp, is in complete despair.

Friday, July 20, 1945

This morning a group of us walked across the hills to a nearby village. We hoped to get some milk, but could not. We did find four mushrooms in the woods, which we traded for a loaf of bread.

Cilka's brother-in-law Mire went on a trip to Celovec yesterday. We get his food rations while he's gone, so we have enough to eat for

now.

This afternoon, a fire started in a workshop in the camp. The fire spread to four other buildings. I helped put out the fire and saved what we could.

Saturday, July 21, 1945

Everyone in our room has a bed now, except for me and Cilka. She's upset with me because I always take care of everyone else first.

The Russians across the river seem to be leaving. Hundreds of British vehicles are driving to and from the Russian zone night and day.

Sunday, July 22, 1945

We went to Mass in town at 9 a.m. This afternoon, I went for a walk in the nearby woods with Mici and Cilka.

Radio London frequently reports how bad things are in Yugoslavia. Here in the refugee camp, things seem to be getting better.

Monday, July 23, 1945

This afternoon, I tried fixing the leak in our roof. I wasn't able to fix it completely, so I drilled a hole in the bottom of a wall and inserted a pipe so the water could drain out.

Tuesday, July 24, 1945

This evening, the refugees put on a concert which was intended for the British. They didn't show up, so we enjoyed it ourselves.

Wednesday, July 25, 1945

I worked on the new latrine and received a double ration of food. Without extra rations like this, we would not have enough food.

Mire returned from a week-long trip to Celovec. He said that my brother Jože is alive and well in Feldkirchen (Austria). I was already beginning to think that he must be dead, so I was very glad to hear that. Mire said conditions in the Spittal refugee camp are worse than here.

Thursday, July 26, 1945

Franc Zupan (Jerry Zupan's brother) began teaching a course in German. A number of us signed up for it. Franc wants to teach an intermediate level, but my group needs a beginner's level.

The authorities gave us our first cigarette rations: 2 cigarettes per day per person. Many of us don't smoke, but we like the cigarettes because they can be traded for things we need.

Friday, July 27, 1945

On one of my long walks in the surrounding countryside, I found a large pile of about 15 damaged *Fokke-Wulf* warplanes in the woods along the Mura. This was near an airfield which the Germans had used during the war. Someone or something (maybe a bomb?) had created a large hole in the ground, and the Germans had hauled these planes into this hole. Apparently, they were so damaged in the war that the Germans decided they were no longer useable.

A group of us went back to where I found the damaged warplanes. We managed to remove 7 fuel tanks (each one had held about 50 - 80 liters) from those planes and we carried them back to the camp. These fuel tanks are made out of a soft aluminum which we can cut and fashion into excellent pots and washtubs.

Saturday, July 28, 1945

This morning we took baths in a nearby barracks. Then we worked on cutting and

hammering the warplane fuel tanks into pots.

Radio London reports that the British Labor Party defeated the Conservatives in an election. This could mean a big change in British foreign policy, which may determine what will happen to us. Right now, we have no idea how long we will stay in this refugee camp, or where we will go when we leave.

Sunday, July 29, 1945

We went to Mass at 7 a.m., and then back to the airplane graveyard to get more aluminum.

Monday, July 30, 1945

Mici and Cilka were in the woods today, where they gathered 3 liters of blueberries. They traded the blueberries in town for 2 kilos (about 4 pounds) of bread.

This evening, I was the referee at a soccer match between the British and the refugees. I don't think I was a very good referee.

Tuesday, July 31, 1945

We had another soccer match this evening. The British won 2 - 1. This time, the referee was a Brit - I think he did a decent job.

Back in our room, Rafael Žakelj proposed that, whenever one of us

is gone for a day, that person's food rations should be divided equally among the remaining people in the room. Up until now, the person who was gone could decide who would get his rations. Does this mean that those who work will also have to share the extra rations they get for their work?

Wednesday, August 1, 1945

I was awakened at 6 a.m. by the rumble of 20 British 40-ton tanks passing by. We don't know what they're up to. At 7 a.m., I went to confession, Mass and Holy Communion.

I've been studying English 3 - 4 hours every day (one hour in class and the rest on my own), and German for a few hours every day.

Thursday, August 2, 1945

20 heavy tanks rumbled by again this morning.



These are some of the pots and washtubs which I made in the refugee camp out of the aluminum that we tore from damaged warplanes. This picture was taken 50 years later in America, where these items continued to be very useful.

Their weight is damaging the roads.

Cilka's brother Rupert returned after a week's visit to Delach.

We heard reports that there was a sudden conclusion yesterday to a conference at Potsdam which included American President Truman, British Prime Minister Atlee and Russian Premier Stalin. The purpose of the conference was to make decisions about the post-war future of Europe. We don't know what they decided, or how it will affect us.

Friday, August 3, 1945

Mire and I brought an aluminum fuel tank out of the woods and sold it for 10 Havana cigars and 10 Reichmark. Why get a job if we can make money like this?

The leaders from each room (including myself) met with the camp leadership to discuss complaints about the way the camp is being run. The camp leadership rejected all requests for change.

Saturday, August 4, 1945

I studied all day - English in the morning and German in the afternoon.

16 people showed up for a chess tournament. Mire won in the first round.

Because of one case of scarlet fever in the camp, the camp will be under quarantine for 10 - 20 days. No one will be allowed to come or go.

Sunday, August 5, 1945

The quarantine which was announced yesterday is not being enforced.

Cilka, Mici and I went to the town cemetery to see if we could find the graves of some members

of my father's infantry unit who died here in 1917, but we couldn't find them. In 1917, my father was part of the Austrian emperor's army for the second time (the first time was right at the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th). The Slovenians in the emperor's army had such a reputation as excellent fighters that they came to be called "The Ironmen." Both my father and Cilka's father were on the Italian front in World War I, and Cilka's father was killed there in 1916, when Cilka was only 2. At that time, there were many Slovenians being killed by the Italians on one front and the Russians on the other front. When General Svetozar Boroevič ordered a group of Slovenians from Judenburg to the Italian front, some of them refused to go and ran away into the woods. Seventy of them were found and lined up in a row. Every tenth one was separated out and shot dead as an example to the rest.

This evening, we heard good news from London: there will be an amnesty in Yugoslavia, the British will defend their interests against the Russians, etc.

Monday, August 6, 1945

I received news that my parents are back in our home town of Žiri. My brother Ciril is preparing for an exam at the Cooperative Union in Ljubljana and visits our parents often. Our brother Vlado is still in prison.

Tuesday, August 7, 1945

The camp authorities are trying harder to enforce the scarlet fever quarantine but some people are still coming and going.

People are hopeful there will be a revolution against the communists in Yugoslavia.

Wednesday, August 8, 1945

This evening, we listened to former Yugoslav King Peter on Radio London. He announced that he will again take control of the Yugoslav government because Tito is not fulfilling his promises.

Russia has entered the war against Japan - at the request of the Americans and the British.

A new atomic bomb destroyed the 11 square kilometer city of Hiroshima in Japan. This new bomb is 20 million times more powerful than the explosives we know. This is a huge revolution in technology.

Friday, August 10, 1945

I did camp work for 6 hours. We had black coffee for breakfast, rye dumplings for lunch, and rice and potatoes for dinner.

Japan has surrendered without conditions.

Saturday, August 11, 1945

Now we have 4 cases of scarlet fever in our camp.

We hear that Tito has proclaimed King Peter to be a war criminal and is demanding that he be punished. (Peter has been the head of the Yugoslav government in exile, which has opposed Tito and the communists.)

Monday, August 13, 1945

Mire left by bike for Celovec and Spittal. He took some bread with him. We will get his food rations while he is gone, if we can eat them. Some people eat two rations, but that's sometimes too much for me.

Tuesday, August 14, 1945

Last night I had a nightmare about some pigs behind our home in Žiri. My father killed a

large one, but it suddenly turned into a human being. I also dreamed about a flood - all bad signs!

Wednesday, August 15, 1945

Today is the holy day of the Assumption. At 7 a.m., we went to Mass at the camp chapel, then at 10 a.m., we went to the church at Maria Buch. There was a large crowd in the church.

The war with Japan officially ended at 1 a.m. last night. World War II is finally over - after 5 years and 11 and a half months.

Thursday, August 16, 1945

We had expected that war would break out between the British and the Russians, but it hasn't happened. This is bad for us, because it means the communists will probably stay in power in Yugoslavia.

The camp authorities have been asking many of the refugees where they want to go. Most people say they want to go back home when Tito is no longer in power. Mire says he wants to go to America. They didn't ask me and Cilka.

Friday, August 17, 1945

I traded 120 cigarettes for a new Italian blouse for my sister Mici. It doesn't fit her, but she will make the necessary alterations.

Saturday, August 18, 1945

Fric Natlačan and Mire returned from Celovec with good news. King Peter has established a new Yugoslav government in London. The new government, along with bishop Rožman and general Rupnik, have been invited to a meeting in Rome. We have hope that things will be better!

I received my first letters from my brothers Jože in Feldkirchen and Ciril in Slovenia. Our brother Vlado, who is a doctor, is still in prison and working as a doctor taking care of the other prisoners. Our friends Janez Homc, Mirko Zajec and Franc Kogovšek, who were with the Domobranci, were killed after the war by the Partisans near Škofja Loka. (Janez Homc is the person I helped save from the Partisans the night the Partisans took me away.) Chaplain Kunstelj was tortured in terrible ways; the Partisans put a crown of thorns on his head and cut parts of his fingers off each day. We hope these reports are not all true.

Sunday, August 19, 1945

I am continuing to study English 2 - 4 hours a day, and German 2 hours. Cilka and the others in my group have given up trying to learn grammar.

Monday, August 20, 1945

On Radio London, we listened to a fierce attack by a British minister against Tito. He said the British cannot stand by while new dictators take over the Balkans.

Tuesday, August 21, 1945

Today we were vaccinated for typhoid. I felt drunk all day. Is it the bad food or the vaccine? This evening, we had potato soup - mostly water.

Wednesday, August 22, 1945

We are all sick from the typhoid vaccine. It seems the strongest among us feel it the worst.

We had watery soup (no potatoes or meat) for lunch, mush for dinner.

Thursday, August 23, 1945

There was a meeting for all Slovenians in our camp this afternoon. Two Partisan officers were there from Yugoslavia to encourage refugees to



This is a picture we received in the refugee camp in the summer of 1945, along with the following note from our relatives: "This is the grave of a group of Domobranci who were tortured and killed by the Partisans near Škofja Loka after the war ended. The Partisans forbid any names on these graves. Until recently, the families of these men were not allowed to care for these graves in any way. This grave includes Janez Homc, Štrajt from Sela, and others." You can imagine the sadness and anger we felt when we received this picture.

come back home. When they said our safety would be guaranteed, we all laughed. When they were asked about the Domobranci who were slaughtered by the Partisans, they said they knew nothing. They said we have two months to return home, or we will lose our citizenship. Not a single refugee applied to go back with them. As the Partisans were leaving the camp, a large crowd sang patriotic songs. The crowd also shouted out support for King Peter and condemnation for Tito.

This afternoon, we got our second round of typhoid vaccine shots. This one is worse than the first round. Goga, who was a policeman in Slovenia, refused to go, but Mire convinced him that we all need these shots.

Friday, August 24, 1945

Dr. Basaj and other members of the Slovenian government in exile visited our camp today. They spoke to us in the camp hall from 9 - 10:30 p.m. I believe Dr. Basaj, when he says we will have to wait here 4 years.

Dr. Basaj visited our workshop and our room, and complimented us on our work and cleanliness.

A new arrival from Slovenia reported that the Partisans had killed all the Domobranci from Št. Jošt and Rovte.

Sunday, August 26, 1945

This afternoon we went to the church at Maria Buch. On the way back, we gathered barberries which we will use to make vinegar.

Monday, August 27, 1945

We hear that 150 Jews will be arriving in our camp.

The quarantine due to typhus and scarlet fever

has been lifted after 4 weeks. Now we can go in and out of the camp through the main gates.

Tuesday, August 28, 1945

The British major in charge of our camp is very interested in all the things we've made out of airplane aluminum. He asked if we could make him a pot, a ladle, a coffeepot, and other things.

Wednesday, August 29, 1945

50 Croatian refugees arrived today, and we hear there will be more. The authorities will be setting up some new barracks on a field outside the camp.

Friday, August 31, 1945

Bedbugs appeared in our room again.

Here are some notes describing the 22 people in our room:

1. Andrej Andreuzzi: Like most of the rest of our group, Andrej was a shoemaker back home. Here, we don't have the proper tools or materials for shoemaking, but Andrej always finds work. He works from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. He produces all kinds of things, charges more than the others for what he produces, and it's not the best quality. He'll sell you a small ladle or a bowl for 2 kilos (about 4 pounds) of bread. Every Saturday, he does haircuts and shaves. The barber in town charges 1 RM, but Andrej charges 2 RM or 1 kilo of bread and a quarter kilo of bacon. For 1 RM, the barber in town will kiss you when he's done, but Andrej doesn't even say "thank you." But Andrej is very generous in other ways. He has an electric cooker and an iron which he found in the city dump, and he's always willing to share those.

2. Franc Demšar: He's the hardest worker, and the most entrepreneurial. There were a number of people in the camp who had brought

unmatched shoes which they had taken from a shoe factory. Franc gathered all these unmatched shoes, found or made proper matches for complete pairs, and traded them with the local farmers for food. The authorities put him in prison for a month when they found him selling these shoes farther than the allowable distance of 10 kilometers from the camp. When he was in prison, Cilka baked him a loaf of bread. Although he was starving, he was upset with us because he thought it was a waste of good flour.

3. Janko Demšar: He's the shortest in our group, and the most talented for languages. He doesn't know any jokes, but sometimes he can be very funny. When Levičar (a tall, former judge) told him that short people are not as smart as tall people, Janko replied: "But short people are also not as foolish as tall people." Janko hates the Partisans and the Italians with all his heart, the Partisans because they killed one or maybe two of his brothers, and the Italians because they mumble too much. Back home, Janko was a bricklayer.

4. Feliks Istenič: He walks in a stiff manner and appears to have a stiff mind as well, but is actually smarter than the others. He's somewhat hard of hearing and always thinks people are talking about him. Once, when the others were discussing the day's world news, he appeared to be listening carefully and then suddenly shouted "You lie!" and threw a knife towards Cene.

5. Karl Erznožnik: Karl never stops working. He produces beautiful pots and brings firewood from the woods for everyone. He does more for the common good than anyone else in the camp.

6. Mici Erznožnik: When we began to produce

lacework for sale, she was our most dependable lacemaker. Karl and Mici got married before the war began. When they became refugees, they left behind their own house in Žiri. (Their first and only child, Jolanda, was born after we were in the refugee camps for a couple years.)

7. Vinko (Cene) Kokelj: Cene is a tireless worker on the farms and in the workshops, but not good at detail work. To him, the most important thing is to have work; the pay is secondary. Back home, Cene had his own farm.

8. Franc Kokelj: Franc is a young man who doesn't say much, but when he speaks, he has the wisdom of someone much older. He's so



These are people from Žiri, Slovenia who were in refugee camp Liechtenstein near Judenburg in 1945-46. Most of these people (other than the Primožič family) lived together in barracks #27. Standing, from left to right: Anton Žakelj, Karl Erznožnik, Vinko Kržišnik, Anže Žakelj (Anton's cousin), Jakob Podobnik, Janko Demšar, Franc Kokelj, Mire Kolenc, Vinko (Cene) Kokelj, Franc Miklavčič, Pavle Kokelj, Feliks Istenič, Rudolf Primožič. Sitting: Marija Primožič with a child, Cilka Gantar (Anton's fiancée), Marija Lazar, Mici Žakelj (Anton's sister) with a Primožič child on her lap and Mici Erznožnik. Photo by Marjan Kocmur.

even-headed that it's hard to get him upset. He works with ease and gets more done than do others with difficulty.

9. Pavel Kokelj: Pavel is Franc's brother, but the exact opposite. He's loud and gets upset about the smallest things. Once, he was having an argument with Weber about a balinca game and he grabbed Weber so hard by the chin that Weber spit out 3 teeth. He does everything with force. He likes to look at the local Austrian women, but then he says "Ah, she's nothing like my Annie."

10. Mire Kolenc: Mire is Cilka's brother-in-law, a butcher by trade. He butchers his words, too, but somehow he says things in a way that keeps you from being offended. He has a troubled past: he smuggled and traded contraband, and he was a Partisan before he became a Domobranec. He still loves to trade and deal.

11. Franc Kopač: Franc came to the camp from a hospital in France, where he had been in the German army. When he arrived, he seemed so exhausted that, at first, we brought food to his bed. But when we realized he wasn't really that sick, he had to work like the rest of us.

12. Vinko Kržišnik: Vinko is an excellent cook and tailor and very good at making jokes..

13. Marija Lazar: We call her "Mama" because she is the only older woman in our room. She has a deadly hatred for the Partisans because she believes it was their fault that the Germans killed her husband. She likes Italians, which often leads to an argument with Janko Demšar. She knows Italian and is studying German because she has no intention of going home while Tito stays in power. When she's walking in the woods, she is constantly gathering mushrooms, berries and anything that she can trade for something more useful. She dresses poorly herself, and if she can get any clothes or

anything useable, she sends it to her family in Slovenia.

14. Gregor Jereb: Gregor is the complete opposite of "Mama" Lazar. He sits or lays on his plank bed and grumbles about everything. If he sleeps a full day and night, he still complains that it's too noisy in our room for anyone to get a decent rest. Sometimes, we joke about getting him married to "Mama," and he protests loudly .

15. Franc Miklavčič: Franc is a carpenter and he uses his skills well here in the camp. He makes suitcases out of old cupboards. When people were complaining about food not being divided equally, he built a scale to measure the weight.

16. Jakob Podobnik: Jakob is a large man, but not very healthy. He's hardworking and resourceful. He figured out how to make a drill which made it easier for us to make baskets. He found a timing device from an unexploded time bomb, made clock hands for it, put a frame around it and hung it on our wall. It's a 24-hour clock (instead of the usual 12), but it works.

17. Pavel Podobnik: Pavel is Jakob's brother, and much healthier. He's a shoemaker, a patient man who does not complain about our fate as refugees. Now and then he mentions his Marička back home. He promised her that he would return in two years (which he did, but of course, in 1945, nobody really knew when they could go home).

18. Janez Vončina: Janez is a shoemaker, a peaceful man who always carries out his duties without complaint.

19. Anže Žakelj: My cousin Anže is a quiet man who doesn't speak often and, when he does, he makes mistakes. He has a particularly hard time pronouncing German names of Austrian towns. For example, he always says *Weitpirchen* instead of *Weisskirchen*. For a

while after we arrived in the camp, he went to work for an Austrian farmer, but then he got a job as the person who keeps the wood stoves going in the camp kitchen. It hasn't bothered him that, sometimes, he has had to tear down new barracks just to get enough wood to keep the stoves going. The important thing is to make sure we have enough to eat.

20. Rafael Žakelj: Rafael is always calm, quiet and good-natured, except when he has too much to drink. At night, we often hear him talking in his sleep. Once he began singing in his sleep: "Over yonder, behind the Turkish hill," and then louder and louder, "there our young men will fight for us." When he finished with a loud flourish, everyone in the room began laughing, even though we each thought that the others were still sleeping. During 1944, he worked with us in the shoemaker's cooperative, which was located in Mrs. Zupan's building in Kranj. In the camp, he often says "I'm going to go back and work in Kranj. I know Mrs. Zupan will take me back." (Later, he did go back, but he learned that Mrs. Zupan died in a car accident the day after the war ended.)

21. Marija (Mici) Žakelj: My sister Mici is a good, strong worker, but a bit clumsy. It's a good thing our pots and bowls are all aluminum and not breakable. She's so strong that, if Janko Demšar (the little one in our group) gets in the way, she just picks him up and moves him aside.

22. Anton Žakelj: I come from a family of 8 children: two sisters (including Mici) and 6 brothers. Three of the brothers, including myself, were trained as shoemakers in my father's home shoemaking business (which was typical in our hometown of Žiri). I then went on business school to study accounting and management. My other 3 brothers are doctors: Stanko is a priest and doctor of theology, Ciril is a doctor of law, and Vladimir is a doctor of medicine. Before my brothers became doctors, there were only 3 other doctors from Žiri in the

history of our village.

Saturday, September 1, 1945

Today, they gave us too much food for lunch. I ate it all, but now I don't feel well. Does this mean they're getting ready to move us somewhere else?

Sunday, September 2, 1945

We went to Mass at 7 a.m. and 9 a.m. Mici and Cilka found about 20 mushrooms in the woods.

From 4 - 5 p.m., we went to the church in town to pray the litanies and the rosary in Slovenian.

Monday, September 3, 1945

I went to English class for probably the last time today. Recently, I've been the only one showing up, and sometimes the teacher hasn't come.

Tuesday, September 4, 1945

We were in the woods all morning, gathering material which we could use for bedding.

Wednesday, September 5, 1945

Our camp leader Podhorsky quit because of poor health. Jože Est will be our new leader.

People are saying that 40 out of 80 Red Cross relief packages are missing their most valuable parts such as the cigarettes and chocolate.

For lunch, we had 3 kinds of food, but very little of it.

Thursday, September 6, 1945

Today is King Peter's 23rd birthday. We went to the 8 a.m. Mass, and some people complained that the priest didn't mention the King's birthday. Some people support the King because they were officers in the Yugoslav army, and some support him because he represents older, better times. Most people oppose the monarchy, mostly because King Alexander (Peter's father) really was a poor leader.

For lunch, we had rice soup (mostly water), mashed potatoes and cabbage - all too little.

We listened to the radio, waiting for a speech from King Peter, but there was nothing.

In the evening there was a concert to celebrate the King's birthday. Attendance was good, but the concert was too short.

Saturday, September 8, 1945

Today is the Holy Day of the Nativity of Our Lady. At 7 a.m., some of the children in the camp had their First Communion. In the evening, there was a solemn liturgy and concert in the chapel.

This afternoon, Cilka and I rode bikes through



In the refugee camps, we were often hungry and we were worried that the future might be even worse. The soup was watery and sometimes had more mouse droppings than vegetables. We supplemented camp food any way we could. In the fall, we went to fields which had already been harvested and we found potatoes which the farmers had missed. I don't have a picture from Austria, so I'm using a picture from Belgium, from the archives of the University of Minnesota.

Zeltweg to Knittelfeld. Zeltweg was not damaged much in the war, but Knittelfeld was almost totally destroyed. They say that the British found a bazooka with "Knittelfeld" inscribed on it and that's why they decided to destroy the city. Cilka and I met an Englishman and tried talking with him, but my English didn't go well.

Mire returned from a trip to Feldkirchen with shoes, saccharin and cigarettes.

Sunday, September 9, 1945

This afternoon, Cilka and I rode bikes along the Mura River to Knittelfeld. We found a tent which the British had abandoned, and we

brought the material back.

Monday, September 10, 1945

Jakob returned from the hospital. He's not getting enough vitamins and protein. His legs swell up during the day and then get better each night.

Now we're getting more and better food.

Tuesday, September 11, 1945

We got a double bed for me and Mire, but there's not enough space in our room for it. Almost every one else is sleeping in double bunk beds. Mire and I will have to continue sleeping on the floor. Our room is about 18 feet on each side, just too small for 22 people.

Wednesday, September 12, 1945

It's colder and rainy. There's new snow up in the mountains.

Mire left for Spittal this morning. He loaned me 300 RM and 3.5 lire. I spent much of the day helping build new barracks.

This evening, I listened to Tito on the radio - for the first time.

Thursday, September 13, 1945

Representatives of the Red Cross and the new United Nations relief agency (UNRRA) visited our camp. They were especially interested in the workshop where we make our pots and other things.

Rafael and Štrajt harvested some tobacco plants. They have the leaves hanging everywhere to dry.

Friday, September 14, 1945

We received tobacco ration cards which we will be able to turn in for 45 cigarettes during the next 3 weeks. I will trade mine for bread and other things.

Last night I finally slept in a bed - for the first time in 4 months. It felt good.

We set up a small stove in our room and got some firewood.

Saturday, September 15, 1945

I've written down 500 English verbs and I still don't know them all.

Franc and Rafael agreed to go cut firewood and were given "new" shirts.

Monday, September 17, 1945

Karel and Mici moved to a neighboring barracks, where they can have their own room.

Mgr. Škrbec and some other people from the Spittal camp arrived for a visit. The Monsignor said we will have to wait 5 - 6 years before we can return home.

Tuesday, September 18, 1945

This morning we went to a medical exam. It was hot today!

We received some straw for our beds. The bedbugs are biting us every night.

Wednesday, September 19, 1945

Yesterday we received too little food for lunch, today too much.

5 men from our group volunteered to work on building new barracks. I didn't because I'd rather concentrate on studying English and German.

Thursday, September 20, 1945

Everyone in our room has stomachaches. We had rice today - plenty of it - for lunch and dinner.

People say that British tanks are lined up all along the border with Yugoslavia. Tito has drafted everyone including women up to age 27.

Fric Natlačen says he would rather return home and be executed than to stay here for 6 years.

Friday, September 21, 1945

Mire returned from Spittal with some saccharin and 3 used military coats. He gave one each to Cilka and Mici.

Saturday, September 22, 1945

Again we had rice for lunch and dinner - we're getting sick of it and would be glad to get some potatoes and cabbage.

Our wall clock, which one of the men in our room made from a time bomb, is working well. It runs about 30 minutes slow every day, but that's not important.

I traded 40 cigarettes for 4 kilos of bread. People say that we will get 120 cigarettes each next month. We'll see.

Sunday, September 23, 1945

We went to Mass at 9 a.m. and then to church in Fohnsdorf at 2 p.m. We prayed the rosary and the litanies.

We hear that the foreign ministers of the 5 major powers met in London but couldn't reach any agreement.

Monday, September 24, 1945

It's been raining night and day, and snowing up in the mountains. We started burning wood in our stove. I've made it to the 30th lesson in my English book.

Tuesday, September 25, 1945

Last night I was sick and throwing up some old canned meat that we had yesterday. I stayed in bed all day today.

People say that a war will soon begin between the Anglo-Americans and the Russians. The Anglo-Americans will take over Yugoslavia and Hungary.

Wednesday, September 26, 1945

I feel better today.

We hear that Dr. Krek announced that, next year, we will celebrate King Peter's birthday back in our own homes. People usually avoid me because I'm such a pessimist. But this news makes even me feel hopeful.

Today's issue of the camp newsletter "A Home along the Mura" reports that people in Germany will be making cooking pots out of military helmets. Their production adviser will be an engineer from the Liechtenstein refugee camp.

Thursday, September 27, 1945

The foreign ministers from the major powers are still meeting - and still no success after 14 days. One of their biggest disagreements is what to do with the Balkans.

Saturday, September 29, 1945

The British are providing extra food (milk, sugar, cocoa, apples and other things) for mothers and their children. For most of the

refugees, the British provide 700 calories per day per person. For themselves, they provide 3,000 calories.

We've been getting a small amount of white bread every day and rice twice a day. We're sick of rice. How we wish we could get some potatoes!

Sunday, September 30, 1945

Today we got some rye bread, rice soup, a small amount of potatoes and cabbage.

The camp newsletter published the answers to a puzzle that was in last week's newsletter regarding 3 black people and 3 white people who were crossing a river.

Monday, October 1, 1945

This morning, Mire left by train to visit Spittal. I went to Mass, the first time in a while on a weekday. I am becoming less religious.

People say that King Peter and Dr. Krek will visit our camp this Thursday.

Tuesday, October 2, 1945

An old friend, Janez Trček, visited from Celovec today and tried to convince us to go back home with him to Slovenia. We gave him such a sharp "no" that he stopped talking. He slept in our room and went back, not sure if he should return home.

Wednesday, October 3, 1945

I worked all day on building a new barracks. We got our first snow.

Thursday, October 4, 1945

General McCreary visited our camp. People say that King Peter was in the Austrian city of Graz.

Friday, October 5, 1945

We heard that the British were burning old German uniforms in Wolfsberg. Cilka and two others from our room took a train there and returned with pieces of cloth, old shirts, pants and coats.

Saturday, October 6, 1945

People who are doing full-time camp work received a payment of 120 RM for the month and extra food and clothes.

We hear that the camp at Št. Vid was moved to Villach. They may be moving our camp soon as well, if we don't return home to Slovenia first.

Every night I dream about returning home. But when I arrive home (in my dreams), I see Partisans who are looking for me. I always run away up a ravine near our home, up towards Žirovski Vrh. Now I understand Aškerc's ballad about the fugitive king.

Monday, October 8, 1945

More than 40 refugees, including 8 from our room, took a train to Wolfsberg, hoping to find more of the used German uniforms that we got last Friday. But this time, most people returned without even a patch of cloth.

Wednesday, October 10, 1945

Another general visited our camp this morning.

As I often do, I walked past the farm fields to the woods. On the way, I noticed that the farmers were harvesting potatoes. They used some type of machinery to rake the potatoes out of the ground. I noticed that they sometimes missed some nice potatoes on the ends of the fields. So I went back to the camp, got a sack and filled it with so many potatoes that I was hardly able to bring it back to our room!

While I was digging potatoes, Cene, Franc and Rafael were in the woods cutting firewood. In the evening, many of us went to Murdorf to see and hear the Ukrainians perform a program of dance and song. It was marvelous, well worth it.

Thursday, October 11, 1945

This morning, Mici, Cilka and I, and about 15 other refugees, went back to the nearby farmer's field, where I had found the leftover potatoes. We found about 25 kilos (over 50 pounds) which had been missed in the harvest. In some places, the plow had missed whole rows. It was such a delight to see those potatoes!

Mire returned from a 10-day trip to Celovec, Spittal and other places. He brought back more saccharin, but he refuses to sell me any.

Friday, October 12, 1945

We dug more potatoes all day today and found about 50 kilos (over 100 pounds). At one time, there were 35 refugees in one field digging with all kinds of tools, ranging from wooden sticks to pickaxes.

Saturday, October 13, 1945

I dreamed about home all night.

This evening, there was a commemorative ceremony in the camp for the Domobranci who were slaughtered by the Partisans. People had constructed a beautiful background with a cross and 5 columns.

This afternoon I tore my only work pants while I cut firewood.

Now that there are more cigarettes available, their price has fallen from 2 RM each to 80 pfennig. Now a kilo of bread costs 15 - 20 cigarettes.

Sunday, October 14, 1945

We're eating potatoes 4 - 5 times a day, but we're still hungry. We don't have any butter or meat to go with the potatoes. It's not true that you can gain weight from eating potatoes.

We only have one small stove in our room with room for one pot, so we have to take turns cooking. My sister Mici thought that Janko Demšar (the shortest member of our group) was spending too much time cooking and eating at the stove, so she just picked him up and set him away from the stove. "Give the others a chance, too," she said. But Janko disagreed: "I need more food, so I can grow up like the rest of you." We all laughed.

Monday, October 15, 1945

We dug potatoes for three hours this morning, until the farmer chased us away. This is the first time we were told to leave. Even so, we managed to dig 50 kilos.

Mire refuses to dig potatoes. He rode his bike to Wolfsberg to see what he could trade.

Tuesday, October 16, 1945

Levičar asked me today if I wanted to work in the camp office, but I wasn't sure if he was joking.

We have potatoes cooking on our stove all the time. Even though we are now getting some rye bread from the camp kitchen every day, it's not enough.

Thursday, October 18, 1945

This morning, Cilka and I walked our bike to a field about 3 miles away. We dug about 90 kilos (almost 200 pounds) of potatoes and brought them back in sacks on the bike. When Cene saw our potatoes, he was amazed. Earlier,

he had worked for a farmer all week for one sack of potatoes, and then he had to carry it about 12 miles back to the camp. When he arrived, he looked like one of Jesus' martyrs.

Rev. Roman Malavašič fixed a watch I had brought with me. When you wind it, it doesn't run as long as it used to, but he says it's worth more than 1,000 RM.

Friday, October 19, 1945

Rev. Roman said a Mass for my brothers. Mr. Levičar said they don't have a job for me at the camp office because a person who was going to leave decided to stay.

Saturday, October 20, 1945

One of the men in our room received a letter from his wife in Slovenia. He and two others in our room are feeling more and more homesick and thinking about returning.

Our camp newsletter "A Home Along the Mura" celebrated 100 days since it began publishing. It began with 10 copies per issue but now produces 100 copies each time.

Sunday, October 21, 1945

This afternoon, Cilka, Mici and I walked about 7 miles to Pöls, where we saw some old Roman ruins. Along the way, we saw some large farms, each one like an entire village owned by a single rich individual. We returned tired and hungry and missed a play that was performed in the camp.

Monday, October 22, 1945

We're getting less food from the camp authorities. Without the potatoes we had dug, we would starve. Are they trying to use hunger to force us back home?

Tuesday, October 23, 1945

Mr. Levičar, a former judge, and part of the camp leadership, is visiting our room every day. Mire and the others in our room criticize him regarding the corruption in our leadership. Levičar must wonder if we're really communists who are inciting the others in the camp. We are an unusual group - we have about 20 men who could be fit for military duty. Many of our men were with the Domobranci, but left them before the Domobranci were sent back to be slaughtered in Yugoslavia. No other group was able to save so many of its men.

Thursday, October 25, 1945

The camp food was better today - there was some flour in the soup. Is the camp leadership maybe beginning to eat the same food as the rest of us?

The camp newsletter reports that Tito's General Milovan Djilas replaced Milan Grol because Djilas proposed that the votes of dead partisans be counted in the new government. Grol had proposed that Yugoslav refugees, who are in foreign countries waiting for King Peter to return, be allowed to vote.

Friday, October 26, 1945

Today was a day of arguments: Mire argued with Levičar, smokers argued with non-smokers, and Cilka argued with me. She says she works while I take it easy in bed and study my languages. Even so, we went out together to dig potatoes, and in an hour and half, we dug three backpacks full. They were nice big ones.

Cilka is upset because I'm always studying and taking care of other people instead of paying attention to her. I can't find a decent, legal job. Cilka's brother-in-law, Mire, travels around, smuggling and trading, but I do not want to get involved in the black market.

Saturday, October 27, 1945

Last night, 3 of the men in our room were out traveling overnight, and we knew the authorities would be checking the rooms. So we made 3 life-size puppets and put them in the empty beds. When the inspectors came, they thought nobody was missing. They didn't notice that 3 of the beds had puppets.

Mici and I walked to Weisskirchen, where we dug up 3 sacks of potatoes in 2 hours. We traded 100 kilos of potatoes for 8 biscuits, a can of milk and a can of meat.

Some of the refugees have started cooking potatoes to make brandy, which they can then sell for a good price. Somebody asked me: "What about you? Why don't you cook some brandy, too. Then you can really make money!" I was so angry that I blurted out, "By God, we may all die from starvation. I am not going to destroy good food to make alcohol!"

This evening we had a heated discussion about getting our revenge when we return home. "Mama" said she would get even with the people who killed her husband. Felix thought she was talking about him, and he became very upset.

Sunday, October 28, 1945

We went to Mass at 7 and 9 a.m. In the afternoon, we saw the movie *Gräfin Dormier*.

The 2 Tominc brothers arrived from Št. Jošt, without any good news. They said the British are having problems with the Jewish refugees. The refugees stole a car and all the materials and food in the warehouse. They're striking and demonstrating every day. They (the Jewish refugees) went up to the ruins of the Liechtenstein castle and replaced a German swastika with a Jewish star.

Monday, October 29, 1945

This morning I went to town, where I met with Mittoni, a merchant who is interested in our bobbin lace. He gave me 5 spools of white thread, 1 kilo of peas and a lot of hope that we may be able to earn some pay - with honest work.

Tuesday, October 30, 1945

The British asked the camp office to send a worker to the *Göring Werke*, a former German weapons factory. I don't know why, but they picked me. A Scot came in a truck and picked me up before 10 a.m., and then brought me back at 4 p.m.

When I arrived at the factory, there was nothing for me to do. I walked around - it was very large, but empty and clean. I talked with a cook and asked if he needed any help, and he said he didn't. I watched him clean a large, greasy baking pan. He poured in some gasoline, lit it, let it burn and then he wiped the pan.

I learned that, at the end of the war, the Russians took all the machines and almost all the materials from the *Göring Werke*. They filled 3,000 boxcars full and took everything back to Russia. The cook said that even 300 boxcars would have been a lot. One of the machines was so large that they had to tear down a wall to get it out. The only thing that I saw in the factory today was a small pile of forged steel for making airplane machine guns.

On the way to the *Göring Werke*, I saw the *Steyr* factory, where they make scythes. I knew that the Austrians exported a lot of *Steyr* scythes, but the factory seemed too small to produce enough for exports. (Fifty years later, *Steyr* scythes were still being sold at Smrekar's Hardware in Cleveland.)

I tried talking in English with the Scottish truck

driver who took me to and from the *Göring Werke*, but I had trouble understanding him because his every other word was a word that I had not heard before. Later, I tried to find that word in two dictionaries, but I couldn't find it. I decided to ask my English teacher. She is a nice young lady who has been going to England every summer to learn English while she works as a maid. But just before I was about to ask her, I talked with my one of my classmates about it. He laughed and said, "Don't you dare ask her about that word!"

Wednesday, October 31, 1945

From 8 a.m. to noon, I looked for potatoes in 5 fields, but found only 15 kilos. All the fields have been cleaned out.

My brother Jože arrived from Feldkirchen. Mire left again, this time on a trip to Feldkirchen.

Franc Zupan (Jerry Zupan's brother) began teaching a course in English, and 15 people signed up.

The British major moved 10 vehicles from the Jewish camp to ours because he's worried the Jews will steal them.

Thursday, November 1, 1945

Today is All Saints Day. We had special prayers and singing at the cemetery in memory of all the Slovenians who have died.

Tomaž and Dora (who had been our neighbors in Žiri, but are now living with relatives in Feldkirchen) arrived by train for a visit. They will stay overnight.

The Jewish refugees were moved to Murdorf.

Friday, November 2, 1945

My brother Jože left with Tomaž and Dora to return to Feldkirchen. Tomaž and Dora said they will probably get married soon.

Cilka thinks it's about time we got married, too. We've been engaged for many years. And, in two days, she'll be 31, and I'm already 38. But I think she's speaking too much from her heart and not using her head. It makes no sense to start a family now. How can we provide for children when we have nothing?

Saturday, November 3, 1945

Our camp is now run by UNRRA, the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency. We are getting more bread, real coffee, and some meat.

From 9 a.m. to noon, I worked at the *Steyr* factory. I tried talking with some Englishmen, but I couldn't understand them.

We were saddened and angered today by the news that the British handed over Generals Rupnik and Nedič, and bishop Rožman, to the Yugoslavs. Members of the Yugoslav government in exile in Graz and Salzburg were arrested. Bad news!

Sunday, November 4, 1945

We went to Masses at 7 and 9 a.m.

This morning, the symbol of the "Black Hand" appeared on the door of the neighboring barracks, which is the residence of the camp's chief cook. Someone painted it on overnight with a paint that will not wash off. And on the door to the assistant cooks, someone wrote: "Villa of the Gluttons."

The camp leadership suspects that someone from our room is responsible, probably Mire. But Mire says, "This is the work of cowards! If I find someone stealing food, I will paint a black

hand right on their face!”

Because of the leadership’s suspicions, everyone in our room got only half the usual ration of butter or cheese today.

(Later, I learned that our chief cook really was dishonest and deserved to be criticized. One time, the well-known gymnast Fric Natlačen was visiting in the chief cook’s barracks. For some reason, I needed to go get him. When I got there, I noticed that they were eating a veal roast. The chief cook tried to explain to me that he needed to bring the food back to his room because his wife was sick. I don’t know whether that was true, but I do know that the rest of us hardly ever got enough meat for ourselves.)

(I didn’t write this in my diary, so I don’t know exactly when this happened, but I recall that about this time, people complained to UNRRA that the refugee leadership was getting their own food in the kitchen, instead of waiting in line with everyone else. UNRRA sent a letter to the refugee leadership, telling them they had to get their food the same way as the other refugees. The leadership posted that letter next to the window where we all got our food, so everyone could see it. But the letter was in English and nobody understood it! I don’t think our leaders understood it either, because they kept on going to the kitchen and helping themselves.)

Karl Erznožnik’s wife Mici cooked him some dumplings and corn mush today for a special treat.

Monday, November 5, 1945

Franc Kokelj (one of the men in our room) has had a prayer book, 4 sheets and 2 shirts which he found along the road last May when the Partisans attacked a group of refugees. The refugees left everything they had and fled. Today Franc learned that these things belong to the Povirk family, and he returned them all to

Mrs. Povirk.

It’s now 6 months since we left Slovenia!

Tuesday, November 6, 1945

Cilka and I dug potatoes from a field near Weisskirchen for 4 hours this morning. We got 50 kilos (over 100 pounds). We gave them to Cene Kokelj in exchange for a can of meat, one-fourth kilo of bread, a small bit of bacon, and a little margarine.

UNRRA (the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Agency) officially completed their takeover of the camp yesterday.

The food is getting worse again.

Wednesday, November 7, 1945

Janko somehow obtained an accordion. Janko, Jakob and Karel are playing it often.

Thursday, November 8, 1945

Our wall clock, which Jakob had made from a time bomb 54 days ago, stopped working. We tried winding it and fixing it, and it just won’t work.

Friday, November 9, 1945

Mire returned from 10 days of traveling.

Every evening, all the refugees from our home town of Žiri gather in our room. First we pray the rosary, then we play chess and other games. Judge Levičar and Fric Natlačen (the gymnast) also visit every day. Even though Natlačen’s mother lives in nearby Knittelfeld, he has enrolled as a refugee in this camp. When we pray, Levičar just sits quietly on a bunk.

After we pray, we (especially the men) often play “spank the judge.” (In Slovenian, this is

called “biti rihtarja.” In this game, one person sits with an upturned hat in his lap. Then the person to be spanked bends over and buries his face in the hat so he can’t see who spanks him. After he gets his spanking, he has to guess who did it. If he guesses right, the person who spanked him has to be the next one to get spanked. If he guesses wrong, he gets spanked again until he guesses right.) In our group, the person who is spanked most often is Janez Levičar, who is very good-natured. Back in Slovenia, he was a real judge.

When Levičar is bent over with his head covered, all our big “cannons” gather behind him. The person who spanks him immediately jumps behind the rest. Levičar can’t figure out who spanked him, so he has to get spanked again and again. Sometimes he’ll say, “Oh my gosh, that one hurt!” but he never gives up.

Some evenings, we dance and make music with mouth organs, pans, brooms, combs and any other “instruments” we can find. Our accordionists are terrible.

Saturday, November 10, 1945

Last night, snow fell and turned everything white.

Trček, Štrajt and others got letters from home. The letters make them think: should they go back home or not?

This evening, three young men broke into a room in a different part of our camp. They shot and killed dr. Sekula Drljević (the former foreign ambassador from Macedonia) and wounded his wife.

We hear there are riots in Graz. We saw police vehicles rushing from Judenburg toward Weisskirchen.

At 10 p.m., 8 Englishmen began searching the

entire camp. We had inspection at midnight.

Sunday, November 11, 1945

Mrs. Drljević died in a hospital. People say that Dr. Drljević was in charge of a refugee camp during the war. He treated the refugees very poorly, and now some of them have had their revenge. People also say that the Austrian police found a large amount of gold and money in his room.

This afternoon, we listened to J. Preželj, who had just escaped from the communists in the northern part of Slovenia. He believes they would have killed him, and he warns the rest of us to not go back. In spite of news like this, it looks like some of our friends in the camp will go back home: Tone Trček, Štrajt, Janez Pesek and Andrej Andreuzzi.

Monday, November 12, 1945

Someone delivered a truckload of turnips. They taste good, but they’re not filling.

Mire bought some meatbones for 15 RM. That gives enough fat for our potatoes for a week. He also traded a pair of shoes for 8 kilos of flour, 1 kilo of bread and a little bacon.

Tuesday, November 13, 1945

From 8 - 10 a.m. and 2 - 5 p.m., I cut firewood with Domenič, a Croatian. Before the war, he bought a number of pairs of shoes from my father by mail order, and he still remembers our home address.

I received letters from my brothers Stanko and Janez, saying that they are alive. Even though the letters are very short, I am very happy to hear the news.

Wednesday, November 14, 1945

This afternoon, we went to see a movie about the Kroll circus. This was the first time they showed a movie we liked.

In the evening, we listened to a lecture by Dr. Hanželič about education and upbringing.

Thursday, November 15, 1945

Mici made a pattern for bobbin lacemaking. I used that to make 3 copies. Cilka is beginning to make some lace, using the thread I got from Mittoni (a merchant in town) a couple weeks ago..

This afternoon and evening, Dr. Hanželič continued with his lecture regarding education and upbringing. This led to a lively debate in our room. Mire praised the lecture, especially the part about a religious upbringing, but Andrej and Rafael disagreed.

Friday, November 16, 1945

This morning, UNRRA gave us some tobacco ration cards and then two blankets each for Cilka, Mici and me.

Saturday, November 17, 1945

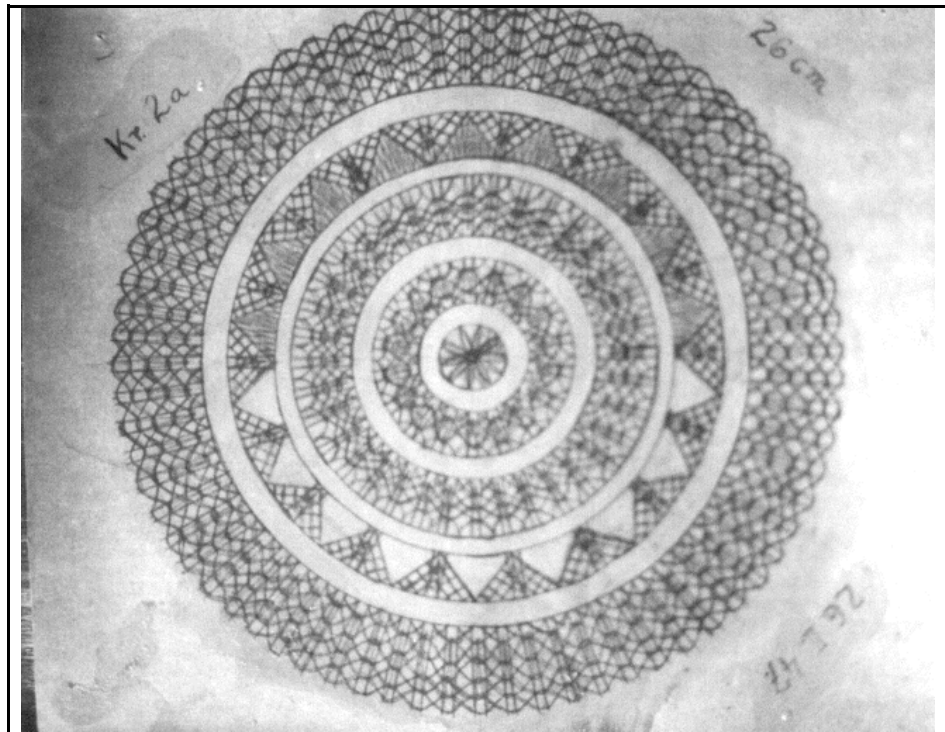
This morning, I delivered 25 pieces of

bobbin lace to Mittoni. He paid me 67 RM, 2.5 kilos of peas, 4 spools of thread and some pins which Cilka and Mici will use to make more lace. Everyone was happy.

I have experience and training as a business manager, so it works well if I handle the business duties while Mici and Cilka do the lacemaking. (In a few months, our lacemaking business grew to the point where we had 15 women making lace, and I was selling everything they made. My brother Jože helped with the designs and with a formula to calculate the value of each piece based on the time required to produce it.)

We listened to a final lecture by Dr. Hanželič.

Sunday, November 18, 1945



This is an example of the bobbin lace we made in the refugee camp. I drew some of the designs myself. My fiancée Cilka and sister Mici were among the first to begin making lace in our camp, and eventually we had 15 women making lace, which we then sold in the nearby towns.

We went to Masses at 7 and 9 a.m. In the afternoon, a large group of us went up into the woods and cut some trees for firewood. We saw 3 deer and a rabbit.

In the evening, we went to the nearby Murdorf camp, where we watched the Ukrainians perform a concert of song and dance. A heavy frost outside turned everything white.

Monday, November 19, 1945

This afternoon, Tone Trček left quietly to return back home to Slovenia. A number of others will soon follow him. My friend Janez Pesek really wanted to go back home, but he couldn't make up his mind. I said to him, "If you really want to go, just go! Here you will just continue to agonize about a decision." "OK, I'll go!" he said.

This evening, we listened to a concert in the camp's assembly room. Dr. Suhadolc arrived with news from Ljubljana about my brothers: Stanko is in Ljubljana, Janko is alive, Vlado is working in a hospital, Ciril is working as an attorney at the cooperative union.

Tuesday, November 20, 1945

I went to Mittoni's to

get something special for my sister Mici's birthday, but all they had was 3 spools of thread. You can't even buy biscuits anywhere.

Wednesday, November 21, 1945

Tomaž Pivk, Dora Jereb and Vinko Gantar arrived from Feldkirchen. Tomaž and Dora want to get married here in the camp, among their friends.

I finally obtained a package of biscuits which I gave Mici for her 27th birthday. I also got her some macaroni, but it was burned.

Thursday, November 22, 1945



In the refugee camp, we used wood for all of our heating and cooking. All the wood had to be cut and split by hand. The man sitting in the picture is wearing a suit because that may be the only clothes he had. When we left our homes, we took only our best clothes, and only what we could carry on foot. We didn't receive any other clothes from the camp authorities until many months after we arrived. I don't have a picture of woodcutting from Austria, so I am using this picture from Belgium. (This photo is from the archives of the University of Minnesota.)

Today is Cilka's nameday and I gave her 3 spools of thread. In the afternoon, we went to see the movie *Trusca*. Vinko was the only one in our group who liked it.

Friday, November 23, 1945

This morning I cut firewood.

Usually we take a large pot to the food window and they measure out enough food for all 18 people in our room, and then we divide it up in our room. But, today, UNRRA refused to provide food for Mire and Pavle, who are out traveling. UNRRA is stricter about this than the British were.

Saturday, November 24, 1945

This morning, I cut firewood for the kitchen stoves. Then we all went to Tomaž and Dora's wedding. They were married by Rev. Roman Malavašič, with Vinko Gantar and Franc Miklavčič as witnesses. Afterwards, we had a wedding celebration in Karl and Mici's room. Tomaž took our picture, Vinko gave him a picture of Judenburg, and I gave him a box of candies.

Tomaž, Dora and Vinko left at 2:30 to go back to Feldkirchen. We continued celebrating into the evening. Some of the people in our group performed a play called "The Refugee Girl" in our room.

Sunday, November 25, 1945

I slept poorly last night because it was so cold in our room.

Elections are being conducted all across Austria - peacefully.

Franc and Pavle got some meat for their work on a farm. They shared it with the rest of us so we could have some delicious goulash.

Monday, November 26, 1945

We cut down a dead pine tree in the nearby woods and obtained about 2 - 3 cubic yards of firewood.

Tuesday, November 27, 1945

Results were announced from the Austrian elections. The parties that support the Catholic Church had a surprisingly large victory! The communists received very few votes.

I have a bad cold and am staying in bed.



Tomaž Pivk and Dora Jereb at their wedding in the refugee camp near Judenburg, Austria on November 24, 1945.

**Wednesday,
November 28, 1945**

I went to the clinic and saw a Polish doctor. He used scissors to cut off a polyp that had been growing on my tongue for months.

I sold 2 spools of black thread for 80 RM and used that to buy a shirt.

**Thursday,
November 29, 1945**

People are criticizing our camp leadership, but I don't expect any improvements.

**Friday, November
30, 1945**

I went to see a doctor about my diarrhea.

I'm not eating, but I need to go to the bathroom constantly. He gave me 9 tablets.

We heard that the Yugoslavian parliament announced the formation of a new republic and the dismissal of King Peter II.

Saturday, December 1, 1945

I was sick in bed all day.

The British have accepted recent elections in Yugoslavia as a legitimate expression of the people's will, and they are recognizing the new republic. We have no hope that our situation will ever improve. Some of us are thinking that



Tomaž Pivk and Dora Jereb at their wedding in the refugee camp near Judenburg, Austria on November 24, 1945. Sitting, from the left: Mire Kolenc with the accordion, Franc Miklavčič, Dora Jereb, Tomaž Pivk, Vinko Gantar ; second row, from the left: Vinko Kržišnik, Marija Lazar, Cilka Gantar, Anže Žakelj, Mici Erznožnik, Vinko (Cene) Kokelj, Marija (Mici) Žakelj, ??, Franc Demšar; back row, from the left: ??, ??, ??, Pavel Kokelj, ??, Janko Demšar, Feliks Istenič, Karl Erznožnik .

we should go back home and accept our situation, whatever the consequences. Maybe that would be better than staying in this refugee camp, especially for those who have families back home.

Monday, December 3, 1945

A new snow turned everything white. I worked all day, designing the pattern for a large bobbin-lace tablecloth.

Tuesday, December 4, 1945

I sold 100 cigarettes to some Jews for 200 RM. They buy everything and pay well.

The Austrian authorities announced that all Marks will have to be traded for Schillings. We're worried that we will be cheated out of the little that we have managed to save. They say we will each get up to 150 RM worth of Schillings. Anyone who has more than 150 RM will have to hand them in, to be repaid later - maybe.

Wednesday, December 5, 1945

I made a 4-liter pot out of warplane aluminum for St. Nicholas day for my sister Mici. I went to town and bought some biscuits.

Thursday, December 6, 1945

St. Nicholas brought Mici the pot and a teddy bear. Cilka got some biscuits, a chocolate cake and a little heart. I got some biscuits.

St. Nicholas also brought us new staff in the kitchen. The new staff made coffee and white bread. For five months, we complained about the kitchen staff and, now, our complaints finally led to some changes.

Friday, December 7, 1945

Janko went to Graz this morning for work. He returned in the evening and said there was no work, no food and no place to stay.

In the morning, I accompanied Feliks to an X-ray exam. In the afternoon, I cut firewood, and I put together a quick album of lace designs for an exhibition in Celovec.

Mire got new teeth, but they make him sick. Cilka and Mici finished 8 pairs of stockings and sold them for 8 kilos of bread.

Saturday, December 8, 1945

Janez Oblak Sr. and Jr., and Lovro Možina left to return home to Slovenia. We hear that people

will not be allowed to return after the 15th of this month!

This evening, we watched our fellow refugees perform the play "Teofil."

Our new cooks gave us white bread with butter and tea for lunch, and a good thick stew for supper.

Sunday, December 9, 1945

This afternoon, we saw a nice movie about the Austrian Tyrol region.

Monday, December 10, 1945

At 7:30 a.m., the British and Austrian authorities surrounded the camp and began an inspection which continued till 11. Austrian police took 20 meters of cloth from Mire and asked him to come to the police station. Pavle became very upset.

In a nearby barracks, the police arrested 4 people and confiscated 39 liters of home-made brandy, 900 cigarettes, and lots of metal and tools. Three of the people who were arrested were back in their rooms by 11 p.m. The police also arrested 5 Croatians because weapons were found in their room.

Tuesday, December 11, 1945

This afternoon, I had a heated argument with Štrajt. He says we're all the same, we all supported the Partisans during the war. If we had resisted them more strongly, they would not have come into power and we would not have lost our homes.

Some of the people who were thinking about returning home are delaying. Why? The others who left earlier, like Tone Trček, had said they would write to us, but they haven't. That probably means they have nothing good to tell

us about the conditions back home.

Wednesday, December 12, 1945

I've been thinking about what Štrajt said yesterday. He asked me where I was when the rest of our village's leaders looked for me to join them in a mission to Ljubljana to ask General Rupnik to establish a Domobranec outpost in our village. At first, I couldn't remember but, after thinking about it for a long time, I decided I must have been at the butcher's, working on a plan to divide whatever meat we had among the villagers. I forgot to tell my family where I was and people couldn't find me.

Fric Natlačen visits our room every day to play chess with Mire. I also agreed to play some chess with Levičar.

The sun is so low in the sky now that it stays behind the surrounding mountains all day.

People say that Bishop Rožman predicts we will all return home by Christmas next year. The others believe him, but I don't.

Friday, December 14, 1945

I made slippers for myself today for the first time in 13 years. (When I was very young, I used to help my father in his shoemaking shop, but I preferred to move on to business-type work.) I got some soft sturdy cloth for the upper part and leather for the soles. I made wooden tacks to attach the leather soles to the upper parts. It would be better if I could sew them on, but my eyesight is too poor. I need bifocals.

Saturday, December 15, 1945

Yesterday and today we had to exchange our Marks for Schillings. Each person can exchange up to 150 RM (ReichMarks). Anything over that has to be deposited into a

postal savings account, but with no guarantee of repayment. I had 455 RM, so I had to deposit 305 RM. I also had 1,000 RM which belongs to my brother Jože. I divided that among 6 people whom I could trust and who did not have any money of their own. They each exchanged 150 RM and returned the Schillings to me for my brother.

All together, our room turned in 8,925 RM.

This week, I've gone to Mass every morning, and extra prayers in the evenings.

Sunday, December 16, 1945

We went to Mass at 9 a.m. Then Cilka, Mici, Milica and I went into the woods to gather some moss for a Nativity scene. For lunch, we had dumplings.

From 5 - 10 p.m., we argued with Levičar about faithfulness and families. As he often does, Levičar made disparaging remarks about women. Mici and Cilka were offended. Finally, Rafael told Levičar to leave, which he did.

Štrajt and the others who were thinking about returning home have delayed their return again, maybe till spring. The news from home is not good.

Monday, December 17, 1945

Despite yesterday's argument, Levičar visited again and stayed with us almost all day. Why does he come here? Mici and Cilka are offended when he says all women are available to all men. I think he has no morals.

Tuesday, December 18, 1945

I cut firewood and became very exhausted. I went to bed at 7, feeling like I had no energy and with pains in my ribs.

We're each getting 200 grams (almost half a pound) of white bread per day, but not much else.

Wednesday, December 19, 1945

I got up at 9:30, still feeling very weak. A warm south wind melted all the snow today. The women began a spiritual retreat.

People say that, for Christmas, UNRRA will provide each refugee with a coat and a large package of food. We'll see!

Thursday, December 20, 1945

I went to see the doctor, and he said I don't have anything dangerous. Mire is doing my duties, even though he's also feeling sick.

We received new tobacco cards. Mire already smoked all of his cigarettes, 40 of my "Nereta" and 30 of my "Moravia." I saved 80 "Moravia" which I will give to a tailor to make a blouse for Mici.

Friday, December 21, 1945

The camp leadership told me I will oversee the distribution of food in the kitchen tomorrow. They said the previous kitchen staff stole 500 kilos (over 1,000 pounds) of flour. After dinner tonight, they gave me some delicious stew. If only we could get that all the time!

I went to Mittoni (a merchant in town) and sold 20 pieces of bobbin lace for 145 Schillings, one kilo of bread and some peas.

Saturday, December 22, 1945

This morning, another kitchen supervisor argued with the cooks. I stayed quiet. I cooked some of my own potatoes back in our room.

I weighed myself in the kitchen - I weigh 68

kilos (150 pounds).

I'm reading a German novel, "Paradise in the Jungle." After New Year's I will start reading an English book.

Sunday, December 23, 1945

We went to Masses at 7 and 9 a.m. UNRRA gave each person a can of meat and a can of cheese. They also gave each child under 14 some bread, butter, marmalade and other things.

In the afternoon, we went into the woods and cut a Christmas tree.

Monday, December 24, 1945

This morning we set up our Nativity scene. In Slovenia, we always set up a Nativity scene for Christmas. For our first Christmas in the refugee camp, we didn't have a proper Nativity scene, so we hand-colored a picture and set it up with some moss which we gathered from the nearby woods.

America, England and France have recognized the new republic of Yugoslavia, with the condition that it become truly democratic.

This evening (Christmas Eve), we prayed all three decades of the rosary while we walked in procession around the barracks.

Tuesday, December 25, 1945

Last night it rained, and today it was icy. We went to a special Christmas Mass at midnight and another one at 9. this morning. In church, the singing was accompanied by violins.

Today we had lots of good food - soup with noodles, meat and potatoes, and žgance (corn mush) with bacon! It was good, but I'm not used to such heavy food!

Wednesday, December 26, 1945

We went to Masses at 7 and 9 a.m., and litanies at 5 p.m. In

the evening, we watched other refugees perform a play called "The Student," but the acting was terrible.

Cilka's brother Rupert came to visit us. My sister Mici has been angry and upset for some days now.

Thursday, December 27, 1945

Mire left with Rupert on a trip.

We hear on the news that Mihajlovič is on trial in Yugoslavia. The communist government has sentenced many of their own people to death by hanging or firing squad.

Friday, December 28, 1945

I studied English all day. It rained today; there's



In Slovenia, we always set up a Nativity scene for Christmas. For our first Christmas in the refugee camp, we didn't have a Nativity scene, so we hand-colored this picture and set it up with some moss which we gathered from the nearby woods. The Slovenian across the top says, "Peace to People on Earth" December 1945.

no snow on the ground.

To Be Continued

Someone arrived from another camp and said that UNRRA gave them each new hats, coats or shirts. They've done that at other camps, too, but not here.

Saturday, December 29, 1945

My cousin Anže Žakelj got a job in the kitchen, taking care of the woodstove. He's now the 8th person from our group who has a regular job.

Levičar doesn't visit us any more, but Natlačen is often here.

For the first time, I bought *The British Morning News*, which is published by the British occupation authority in Vienna. I can understand half of it.

It's now 6 months since we arrived in Judenburg.

Sunday, December 30, 1945

This afternoon, we saw the movie *Meineid Bauer* - very beautiful!

Monday, December 31, 1945

My brother Jože arrived on a visit from Feldkirchen. He brought with him some biscuits which he had baked himself for Christmas and New Year's. They're really good!

This evening, just as we did on Christmas Eve, we prayed all three decades of the rosary while we walked in procession around the barracks. Then we entertained ourselves by playing various Slovenian games. Cilka and I awaited the New Year in our room. At midnight, someone set off fireworks to announce the New Year. What will this coming year mean for us? Will we still be in a refugee camp a year from now?