

Chapter 4

1945

[Many of the personal details in this and some later chapters – house number, age, number of children – were initially left blank, and were filled in afterwards.]

1945, January to March

Immediately after the new year came an order that our village had to send a number of boys to dig trenches. On January 9, Bohuš Vahala went from No. 46, Frant Dostal from No. 54, Frant Boháček from No. 70, Mirek Dostal from No. 238, Josef Horák [no number given], Lad'a Suchánek from No. 173, Jožka Komínek from No. 315, Karel Turek from No. 281, Alois Příbyl from No. 4, and Martin Josepik, farm boy at Božena Turková's at No. 45. And around Brno, trenches were being dug which ran along the river Cezava between Žatčany and Telnice to Měnin, but these were being dug by boys from Bohemia.

January 10. The bus stopped running because of lack of fuel. Workers had to go to work on foot. Those who had cycles rode, as long of course as their tubes and tires were in good order. New ones were not to be had, nor permits to obtain them.

Children no longer went to school, because there was no coal to heat the classrooms. The teachers called them in at least once a week and gave them work to be done at home, so that they were not totally neglected. But the children were in truth neglected [this passage would seem to read more naturally with a "not" inserted, but it isn't in the text] because they had to spend several hours each day learning German. And they also had to go from house to house collecting old metal, iron, copper, brass, bones, paper, and old clothing, and taking it to the school.

In the second half of January, there were snowstorms, and each house had to provide one person for forced labour clearing snow.

Again, it was strictly ordered that electricity be conserved, and from 6.30 in the morning to 9.30 in the evening the power was cut off. The cinema did not open until 10 o'clock, but it was always packed. It played four times weekly, on Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday, and Thursday.

The German doctor at Hodonín, Dr Revera, extended Jara's convalescence to February 15. And when he received orders to go to the concentration camp in Germany, he did not go, because the front line was already almost in our back yard. English bombers were now far from rare. We often saw them, and even more often we heard them dropping their loads on Bratislava or Vienna. So we thought that there was no longer any need for Jara to go to prison, and meanwhile he hid here. But the Germans did not look for him. Perhaps they had other things to worry about.

March 8. There was a requisitioning of horses. Three were taken from Těšany, from Matouš Horák at No. 16, Josef Vahala at No. 240, and Jaroslav Vahala at No. 223.

The winter was neither long nor unduly cruel.

March 15. Field work started.

March 20. There was a requisitioning of cattle. Everyone who kept cattle had to present them in front of Rotnágl's tavern at No. 151. Cows were selected one by one to a total of 100. Some people had to give up a cow even though they had only the one, and those who had less than 2ha of land were not allowed to keep a cow. This requisitioning did not apply to the Germans.

1945, April 1 to April 15

Easter fell on April 1 and 2. The front line was getting closer, we heard rumblings and noises like distant thunder, and in the evening we saw a fiery glow in the sky.

During the week after Easter, German soldiers started to trickle along the main road from Klobouky, and also German civilian refugees with their families in waggons. The Germans in Těšany also started making preparations for travel. They covered hay waggons with boards, and put arches on top so that they could pull canvas over them. They had brought nothing when they came, but they wanted to take as much as possible away with them. The families of our Těšany prisoners had heard nothing from them since January.

More and more soldiers were passing through, and people were frightened and were making hiding

places so that they could stow away corn, lard, clothing, and other things.

April 7. In the morning, soldiers stationed themselves at the exits from the village and took horses and harnesses from those going to work in the fields, and they took pigs from the manor courtyard. Next day, estate manager Růžička, seeing the greed of the Germans, sold off a lot of pigs to the local inhabitants without any documentation or permission. The purchasers immediately killed them, and all through the village anyone who had a pig killed it without worrying about an official permit. The same day, April 8, Brno was bombed.

People were planting beet and potatoes. Even the local Germans, although prepared for travel, were ploughing and planting. They still believed in a new weapon and in the victory of their leader.

April 9. In the afternoon, 3000 soldiers arrived, and were lodged overnight in the village. There was now an uninterrupted procession of soldiers and support waggons along the main road from Klobouky to Brno, and they drove great herds of cattle with them.

April 10. A lovely warm day. Along the whole of our street, everyone who did not have a cellar was making a shelter by the ditch.

April 11. A great multitude of soldiers arrived, with kitchens and other support vehicles. They were lodged in all the houses and cottages, and in the schools and gymnastic halls. We had a waggon and two men.

April 12. The soldiers in the manor courtyard and in the houses of the local Germans took cows. People with cows had to drive them to a specified place to be handed over, after which they could return home.

Saturday April 14. Soldiers both here and on the roads in the countryside took people's bicycles, particularly from workmen cycling home from work.

One of the soldiers billeted with us was an NCO and came from Magdeburk. My man Franta, who spoke German well, talked with him. He said that he had been twice wounded, which was obvious as he had a limp. We didn't say much about the war because we didn't trust him, but he himself said that "Ivan" would soon be here. The Germans called the Russians Ivan, just as the Russians called the Germans "Fritz".

Sunday April 15. At 7.30 in the morning, we heard firing. What is going on, we asked each other, surely the Russians weren't here already? Then we heard that the German SS had shot five of their own soldiers. These had gone to Šaratský Dvůr in the belief that a Czech was living there, and had asked for civilian clothes. They wanted to escape from the front line, and had had enough of the war. But the manor house was now occupied by the German settler Jílek. He willingly promised to lend them clothes, and then jumped on his motorbike and rode to Těšany. After a while he rode back, and with him the SS military police in two cars. The SS disarmed the soldiers, arrested them, took them to Těšany, tried them forthwith, and shot them near Buček's cross [apparently where the track to Hastrnánek turns off from the main road past Šaratský Dvůr]. Then they dug a hole in a nearby field belonging to Josef Ryšánek of No. 129, threw them in, and buried them.

That Sunday, April 15, the soldiers and their support waggons, who had been here since April 11, departed. With them went all the Těšany Germans, including miller Götzl, and also sweep Veinart, who since his return from prison had been keeping a very low profile. And from Šaratský Dvůr went Jílek.

1945, April 15 to April 23

[Although the general direction of the Russian advance in 1945 was from east to west, the country to the east of Těšany is hilly, and the manoeuvres that follow appear to have been part of a left hook which exploited the easier country to the south-west. Locally, therefore, the Russian penetration was from that direction.]

During the afternoon of April 15, Russian aircraft circled above Těšany, but they did not drop any bombs. They then turned to the East, and started to fire on Šinkvice. The thunder of artillery fire was now incessant.

That night, from Sunday to Monday April 16, we slept in the shelter. In the morning, at 8 o'clock, we heard the noise of approaching bombers, and immediately we dived into the shelter. Then we heard explosions, and the news spread that Eduard Langášek, land-holder at No. 33, 35 years old, married with two children, Bohumila Charvátová, locksmith's wife at No. 283, 40 years old, mother of two children, and Antonín Nádeníček, tailor lodging at No. 283, 24 years old, married with two children and a third expected, had been hit by shrapnel from exploding shells and killed.

And soon the planes came and bombed again, and shattered the house of Josef Král at No. 303. Josef Král himself, Marie Turková at No. 282, and Anna Menšíková at No. 301 were all wounded by shrapnel. Then the secondary school was badly hit by a bomb, and in the village the house of Jos. Ryšánek at No. 49 and the barn and cowsheds of Stanislav Ledba at No. 124.

Around noon, my brother Franta came running up to us in the shelter and announced that it was a miracle he and his family were still alive. They had dived into shelter at the last moment, when the planes were snarling above them, and perhaps the planes saw some movement on the ground and started to fire at it. Their shelter was not sufficiently strong, and they were truly lucky that they were not hit.

People were terrified and were escaping to the vineyards, and Franta decided that he too would go there with his wife and children. My man went with them, and also Doba and his wife. I picked up a suitcase already prepared with food and clothing, and followed them with my friend Alžběta Vahalová from No. 46. Under our vineyard and under that of neighbour Ledba from No. 9, two shelters were hollowed out in the hillside. In these we found refuge, and in the worst moments there were 22 of us in each shelter. We were so squashed up that we could not all sit down, so we took turns in standing. So passed the day of April 16.

[I haven't been to the Těšany vineyards, but from what I have seen elsewhere I imagine that these "shelters" were not special constructions but ordinary single-proprietor wine cellars, small chambers dug horizontally into the hillside with a door, a semicircular cross-section, and probably a brick-lined ceiling. These provide a cool environment for the storage of wine in normal times, and in times such as are described here they will have provided cover against anything short of a very near miss by a bomb or heavy shell. "Escape to the vineyards" will therefore have needed no further explanation.]

April 17. As soon as dawn broke, we climbed out of the shelter to the high balk above, and from here we saw tanks moving towards Těšany along the road from Hustopeče and across the fields from Nové Dvory. [I am assuming that "Nové Dvory" (plural) is the same as the "Nový Dvůr" (singular) which is marked on the modern 1:50,000 map four kilometres to the south-west.] There was a battle of perhaps an hour, after which the Germans retreated. We saw them digging in in the fields and meadows to the north.. By 7 o'clock in the morning the Russian Cossacks were masters of Těšany.

Some of the Russian soldiers were good, they offered their hand to our people and greeted them like true Slav brothers. But some behaved like wild uncivilized barbarians. They looted, they stole, they raped women, and above all they had a lust for watches and for gold. The cottages were empty, people were in cellars, in shelters, or in the vineyards. Soldiers came to the cellar or shelter and asked "Are you German?", and when the frightened people said No, they asked "Do you have the time?" People willingly showed their watches so that the soldier could see the time, and as soon as the soldier saw the watch he put one hand on it, pointed his submachine gun with the other, and said "give time, give quick, quick" ["or I fire" has been added later]. Others wanted "děnky" (money) or a woman.

After the occupation of Těšany, the Cossacks took several Germans for interrogation, and found that one of them was a "Vlasovec", that is a Russian who had surrendered to the Germans and had then fought against Russia under the leadership of General Vlasov. This infuriated them. They beat him with their rifle butts until he fell down, then they made him get up again and open his mouth, and shot him straight through it. Then they called civilians from the shelters and made them dig a grave, and put the Vlasovec into it face down. All this was because he had been a traitor to his country. This happened in front of Veronika Vrbová's at No. 114.

In the vineyards, after the Russian occupation of Těšany, a German telephonist and artillery spotter came and established themselves on the high balk directly above our shelter. We below could distinctly hear what they were saying to direct the fire of the guns, though we didn't know where the gunners were. In Těšany, as far as I know, there was one gun by the ditch in our orchard, and a second opposite Valentin Hnilica's at No. 130 and by the wall of František Vahala's at No. 198. A third was in the garden behind Mrs Chaloupová's at No. 24. Whether there were more, and where, I do not know.

The German observer could not see the gun by the wall of No. 198, but he knew that someone from around there was firing. Therefore the German artillery kept up a constant fire on that part of the village, but the shells fell some metres nearer on the flats at No. 132 where estate workers were lodged. These were totally destroyed, together with the adjacent house of Josep Juříček at No. 126. A second block of flats for estate workers, across the road at No. 222, was severely damaged.

Then German aircraft circled above Těšany and dropped incendiary bombs, destroying the houses of Fr. Křepela at No. 32 and Josef Vahala at No. 166, and also Josef Rotnágl's tavern at No. 151. This

had been rebuilt from its foundations only ten years before.

People congratulated themselves that the battle of liberation had not lasted long and that it had not been as bad as in other places. Land-holder Jaroslav Dostal even hung up a banner on No. 67.

However, the Russians who occupied Těšany were only a weak unit, and their commander was constantly telephoning for reinforcements. At the time, the front line ran from Nové Dvory to Nykolčice, from where the Russians were attacking Šitbořice. But the reinforcements did not arrive (the reason lay in the Nykolčice cellars and the full barrels of wine in them), and the Germans took good notice of this. They still held Moutnice to the west of us, Borkovany to the east, and even Šitbořice to the south. They started to attack, and the observer above us said that in two hours Těšany would again be in their hands. And by 5 o'clock in the evening the Germans were indeed once more masters of our village.

After 5 o'clock, several of us from our shelter went home, Doba, our Franta the carpenter, I myself, and many others. Likewise the people who had the shelter below us. All along the track, there was one shelter after another. We all escaped as if somebody was driving us.

On the main road, a little after the bridge, stood a burnt-out car. By the ditch on the bank a little further on lay a Russian Cossack and a Cossack cap. The north bank was furrowed with trenches.

I threw something to the animals, picked up some bread and a jug of milk, and went once again to the vineyards. Grandma was in Jara's cellar. [This would appear to be a reference to the writer's husband's mother, who had lived with them since 1920.]

In the morning, when the Russians came, Jara, full of enthusiasm, had welcomed them like everyone else. But a Russian, when he saw him, immediately shouted, "You are a German!" Jara was wearing green trousers from outdoor army uniform. He had bought his uniform when he finished his military service, and he still wore the trousers during the winter. The Russian wanted to shoot him, but others, including Eduard Novotný from No. 103, confirmed that these were not German trousers but Czechoslovak army trousers from the first republic. Jara somehow slipped away, and rushed home to change.

After the departure of the Russians, Jara too fled with his wife and children to the vineyards, where he had made himself a shelter in the balk. And not just Jara, many other people escaped to the vineyards after the experiences of this alarming day.

I went back to the vineyards with my brother Franta the carpenter. Doba decided to stay home in his cellar, and his wife stayed with him. Their son Alois came to the vineyards with his friends.

Thus, that evening, I saw our little house for the last time.

After their return, the Germans dug themselves in on the Strážky hill to the south, and in the village they went from house to house seeking and taking whatever they thought fit. They killed pigs and hens, and women whom they discovered in cellars had to get out and cook for them.

The next day, Wednesday April 18, nobody could go into the village. Shells burst, bullets whistled around. German machine-gunners dug themselves in opposite us on Rotnágľ's hill. A large stack of straw was burning on the manor estate. Russian planes flew over us and clearly saw the swarms of people on the track, but so far not a single shot had fallen here.

Shrapnel from a shell burst severely wounded Havel Mandelik of No. 101 and Jan Tichy of No. 106. They were together in the cowshed when a shell burst, killed a cow and a sow, and injured them. They died of their wounds two hours later.

Thursday April 19. There was constant firing from all possible weapons. Planes roared, dropped bombs, and strafed all day and long into the night, and people could not leave their shelters. The machine-gunners opposite us on Rotnágľ's hill fired without a break. It was not possible to see when they were supplied with food and ammunition, perhaps at night.

Friday April 20. Things were truly bad for us. We had no water, and nobody could go into the village. This was a fateful day for Těšany. Attacks followed one after another, and the cannonading never stopped. It was a cold and showery day.

A German soldier came to us in the vineyard. He carried an anti-tank gun on his shoulder, and put it on the ground beside the shelter. He had no greatcoat, and was shivering all over. He spoke to us in Czech, and was apparently a Silesian. He asked whether somebody could give him some civilian clothes so that he could escape from the front line. But the men said that they couldn't, they had only the clothes they were standing up in. "Never mind, I'll steal something for myself in the village." Then he said that the Russians would soon be coming.

In the afternoon, Těšany was ablaze on all sides. The Germans, seeing the impossibility of defending it, evacuated it and set it on fire. In spite of all this, we were lucky that the Germans had had little ammunition. Twice they had sent to Křenovice for more, and had come back empty. The train which should have arrived at Křenovice with ammunition had failed to turn up, because the partisans had dealt with it.

People who had been hiding in cellars during the frightful shelling ventured out, and went into the blazing buildings to release the terrified animals.

Our house burned – it started to burn after 8 o'clock in the evening. My brother Doba drove the animals into the back garden, and fed them at night when the shelling had stopped.

Today, April 20, Josef Dosoudil of No. 296, 41 years old, was killed by shrapnel.

My brother Pavel and his family didn't go to the vineyard, but sheltered in the cellar of the painter Filip Svoboda opposite at No. 231. When everything was on fire on this fateful Friday, Svoboda's house burned above them, as did the houses on each side and his own barn and cowsheds. The main road was being strafed by the advancing Russian army, and Pavel crawled across the road on his stomach under this terrifying fire. By good fortune, he got home safely, untied the animals, and released them from the burning cowshed. But he risked his life in vain. Both cows, together with a heifer, were killed by gunfire during an air attack ["and a calf and three pigs" added later].

Frightened cattle and pigs released from the burning buildings were running through the streets and back gardens, and among our citizens were some conscienceless people who were not afraid to take advantage of the situation. Not only did they round up other people's animals and drive them home, they went to deserted houses and stole.

Saturday April 21. The Russians were already in the outskirts of the village, and were fighting from house to house. We below the vineyard had our nerves shattered, and we were cramped all over from the constant squatting. We all suffered from thirst, and he who has not experienced it does not know how precious a drink water is when there isn't any.

It became obvious that the Germans were retreating when they turned people out of some of the shelters in the vineyards and occupied them themselves. Among those turned out were our Jara with his wife and children, Anežka Vahalová and her three children from No. 98, and Jan Horák and his wife and two sons from No. 150. All had been in one shelter. And still more people were turned out of neighbouring shelters. Some went to Šinkvice, others to Šaracký Dvůr, and some, including Jara, Vahalová, and the Horák family, set out across the hill back towards the village. They crossed the fields to the ditch, and went along it to the iron bridge. Then from the iron bridge, again by the ditch, perhaps a hundred steps before the bend in the brook by the main road, where they had to stop and crouch in the ditch, and wait until evening when the shelling lessened. In the evening they arrived safely at the mill, where they stayed until morning.

Meanwhile we in the vineyard had not only no water but very little food, just a few biscuits, a little bacon, and some crusts of bread. Every evening we said our rosary together, and prayed to God for release from this suffering.

Sunday April 22 arrived and to start with everything was the same, the machine-gunners on opposing sides were firing like mad.

Before noon, a procession of people started to stream out of the vineyards. The Germans were apparently turning them out of all the shelters. A line of people joined in from the track below us, and likewise everyone from our two shelters. The Germans were firing behind them, and the Russians in front. Těšany was already in Russian hands, and the inhabitants, seeing so many people streaming away from the vineyards, asked the Russian officers to stop firing for a moment because up there were many of our civilian people. The officers, having verified the truth of this through their field-glasses, notified their commander, and he did indeed stop the firing while the people crossed.

My man and I stayed on our own in the shelter. Franta didn't want to move, with our house burned down we had nowhere to go, and sooner or later the front line must pass over us. And so after seven days and seven nights we could stretch our limbs, and at night, harassed and exhausted, we even slept. But not for long.

The machine guns were active all night, and we could clearly hear them as they called to each other, "Hold out until the last minute." Then, when it was starting to get light, shouts could suddenly be heard from the opposite side, and at that moment the barking of the machine guns ceased and we could hear dull thuds. Franta looked through a hole in the shelter door at a man creeping towards a machine-gunner, but he thought it was a soldier whose turn it was to take over the gun. But when the gunner

began to shout, and the other killed him with a rifle butt, we knew that the Russians had come.

We both looked through the hole in the shelter door, and in the gloom we saw many men in long coats below Rotnágl's hill and below us, and also stretched out across the fields to the west. Then we heard our first Russian words, "Go to the back, go to the back." Perhaps they had captured some German, or were sending somebody lightly wounded to the rear.

Then, when it was completely light, firing started from Těšany from weapons of all kinds, what time it was we did not know. Suddenly the firing started to intensify until it changed into a fearful cannonade, and aircraft roared in to add their quota. Franta shouted at me to cover my ears, it was shell-fire. The ground above us trembled, and in horror we imagined ourselves leaving this world. The fire landed higher above us on the back vineyards and on some fields nearby. The horror of this cannonade lasted from an hour and a half to two hours.

The Germans retreated from the vineyards towards Bošovice, and from Rotnágl's hill and the fields to the west towards Šinkvice.

Through the vineyard of Jaroslav Dostal of No. 67, German tanks had gone to fire on Těšany, and now after the shelling Russian tanks went along the same road in the opposite direction. The track below us was full of soldiers, and along the track two tanks and two guns were moving towards the vineyards.

Then the soldiers saw us from the track. Franta waved to them with a white handkerchief, and perhaps three of them came up to us. They were all young boys, and immediately they asked if we were Germans. When we said that we were Czechoslovaks, they replied that among them was also a Czechoslovak, and one of them shouted something down. Then a soldier ran up behind them and said to us that he was a Moravian, that he came from Podvorov in Moravian Slovakia, that he had been a "Partisan", and now had been fighting with the Russian army for two years. [I cannot trace the name Podvorov in this form, but the map shows a pair of very similarly named villages, Starý (Old) Poddvorov and Nový (New) Poddvorov, some three kilometres south-east of Čejkovice.]

We had a few cigarettes which we shared out and we asked them if they would like some food, we could offer them biscuits and bacon but our bread had already gone. But they said that they had plenty of food and didn't want anything. To our question as to whether we could go home, they said yes, but to be careful of flying bullets.

So, after eight days, we picked up our suitcases, left the shelter, and went home.

Hardly had we come to the start of the track when we saw a dead Russian soldier lying beside the road. A little further on there was another, and before I reached Těšany I counted six. They were all young boys. At the sight of them I could not suppress tears, at the thought that for our freedom they had laid down their lives. Now they were going to rest thousands of kilometres from their Russian motherland and would sleep their eternal dream in the bosom of our dear Moravia, whose earth would lie lightly on our Slav brothers.

Further on, we met waggons with soldiers going at a gallop towards the vineyards. There was a cannon in the hop-garden close to the brook, and a little further by the estate flats were machine guns which were firing on the vineyards. By the ditch opposite No. 300 lay a German soldier with his head in the water. He must have been dead for some days, because his body was already swollen.

We came to our street, everywhere full of soldiers, tanks, cars, and lorries, and there stood a vehicle of gigantic size and height. The whole upper surface of the vehicle seemed to be made of nothing but harrows. We asked what it was, and were told that it was the legendary Russian "Katyusha", which could fire many rounds each minute. The Germans apparently fear these Katyushas more than anything, and call them "Stalin's Organs".

Our street was changed beyond recognition, from the burned-out buildings chimneys pointed to the sky like fingers raised in warning, and opposite our house triangles of charred gables rose up from the remains of barns.

Thus we came home, but not to a home, rather to a burnt-out grate. It was Monday April 23.

1945, April 23 to April 30

All that was left of our house were the bare smoke-blackened walls and above them the chimneys. Everything else had gone, front door, windows, doors, the usual domestic appurtenances, chests of corn and barrels of wine in the store-room, agricultural equipment in the shed outside, coal, and wood. A thin trickle of smoke still rose from the ashes. The barn, with the cowsheds within it, was separate from the building in front and remained intact. The door to the barn was wide open, and inside stood

two pairs of horses with waggons. When the soldiers standing by the horses saw us they came up to us and immediately asked, "Is this your house?" We said Yes. They then asked who had done this, was it a German, and again we nodded. "The Germans did the same everywhere in Russia. It doesn't matter. You have hands, you have legs, you build yourself another." A cannon stood by the ditch in our garden, the fences on each side were broken down, and the three great cherry trees which had stood on the banks of the ditch had been chopped down and lay on the ground because they would have interfered with the cannon fire. There were soldiers everywhere, and the field beyond was full of tanker lorries. Soldiers in our garden were attending to the cannon, and a second group were sitting under cover playing on an accordion and singing.

In the afternoon the German aircraft came again, but the Russians fired at them with everything they had and they only just reached Těšany. They dropped their fiery loads at the very edge of the village, and burnt the houses of postman Jarolím Kolářik at No. 260 and land-holder Leopold Ledba at No. 268. These were the last front line fires in Těšany.

The soldiers in our barn moved out towards evening and took the cannon with them, but during the night others came and slept in the barn.

And for the first time in eight nights we slept at home, even if it was only in a cowshed where we had heaped up some straw in a corner.

April 24. Soldiers everywhere, some coming, some going in the direction of Šaratský Dvůr.

Immediately after dawn, the constable came with the order that anyone who had cows must help ferry ammunition towards the front line. So we had to provide a cow (even though she was wounded in the udder and blood was seeping from one teat) and a waggon. Our neighbour Josef Kostrhon at No. 108 had to harness up a second cow.

Early in the morning, a field kitchen arrived in our yard. We had nowhere to cook, we had neither food to cook nor anything to cook it in, and the kitchen stove had been burnt and twisted by the fire. We ate what kind people gave us. The field cook was a good man, and when he had supplied the soldier whose gig was ferrying food to the front line, he called to us, "Come and help yourselves, come and eat." With these words he offered us the remains of the goulash soup with beef and potatoes, which we gratefully accepted. He cooked again next day, April 25, and again gave us something to eat, but then he went forward behind the front line and we did not see him again.

On the afternoon of April 24 they brought in Alois Sedláček from No. 123 dead, and Alois Rychlík, the son of my brother Doba, wounded in the leg. Like many others, they had been turned out of the vineyard shelter by the Germans, and had sought refuge in the cellar of Šaratský Dvůr. They had just come out when a shell burst nearby, and one shell splinter killed Sedláček and another wounded Doba's Alois. Sedláček was 32 years old, married with two children.

April 25. Soldiers were continually arriving and going forward, and we asked them whether anyone was left in Russia, there were so many of them here. They replied, "There are lots more of us at home."

Almost every house in our street was being used as a field hospital, the Jeřábeks' at No. 99, our Jara's at No. 100, Martin Dosoudil's at No. 102, our neighbour Jos. Kostrhon's at No. 108, and many others. Our Franta's at No. 119 was a store for medical supplies, opposite it at No. 203 was an operating theatre, and the adjoining barn at No. 270 had become a mortuary. Our Doba's also was being used as a field hospital, and soldiers and sisters of the Red Cross were billeted in the buildings which were not being used as hospitals.

Among what they called "soldáty" were many women, and not just sisters of the Red Cross but telephonists, doctors, automobile drivers, laundresses, and even ordinary soldiers who fought in the front line alongside the men. Some were even aircraft pilots. Many of them had medals for bravery on their chests, and some had ranks such as sergeant and in one case major.

But our girls and women were afraid of the Russian soldiers and did not trust them, and with reason.

All this annoyance and violence could be blamed on the distillery – 300cl bottles of spirit 90 degrees strong, which they called "špirt". And soldiers, who when sober were as good as children, once they had drunk "špirt" became evil. They drank this strong liquor undiluted. I regularly watched a soldier down an eighth of a litre, then drink a mug of water, and then eat an onion.

And besides "špirt" they looked for wine, and they took with them barrels of wine from the regions where the large wine cellars were. These Russian soldiers were masters at finding places where people had hidden stores and clothing. They poked into the ground with bayonets and swords, and if they struck something hard they knew that something was there. Then in the morning the owner found his

hiding place looted. And when soldiers were billeted in a house, they took everything they could see, be it clothing whether men's, women's, or children's, material, dishes, shoes and boots, photograph albums, musical instruments, basins of lard, meat, flour, bicycles, motorcycles, cars, radio sets, corn, in short everything that could be taken away.

Russian soldiers were allowed to send parcels to their families in Russia, and so they were constantly sewing little bags and sending them home filled. Of course they could not send everything, but with one hand they took and with the other they gave.

My brother Pavel had a hiding place in the foundations below his shed, where he had clothing and underwear. The painter Filip Svoboda, of No. 231 opposite, also had clothing there, and grocer Valentin Slaný had a lot of reserve stock and more clothing. A lorry with soldiers was parked outside overnight, and in the morning everything was gone. Pavel was left with just what he and his wife and children were wearing. We too lost the clothing and underwear which had been with us for eight days in the cases in the vineyards. The first night after our return, a soldier climbed into the pigsty through the window from the garden, and everything which had been in the cases was lost.

Things were no better in Borkovany, Šitbořice, and Moutnice. In Moutnice on April 22, the day of the liberation by the Russian army, soldiers told 21-year-old Františka Šulcová to get out of the cellar and go with them. She never returned to her family. In the morning she was found dead, bruised all over, her clothes torn, and with seven bullet wounds. The unfortunate girl had resisted being raped, and the infuriated soldiers had shot her.

But the soldiers were not allowed to do all the things described above. If someone complained to the commander, the soldiers were severely punished.

April 26. The constable banged the drum, and again announced that anybody who owned a cow had to go and help ferry ammunition to the front line. There were no horses in the entire village apart from a few foals. Some had been taken by the retreating army, the rest by the advancing army.

The constable further announced that all men of fifteen and over had to go to the district office with spades and shovels ready to bury the corpses of the dead German soldiers. These were buried in the fields where they lay, so that after the fields were ploughed there would be nothing to mark where a German grenadier lay dreaming his dream, one who until his last breath had believed that Germany would be victorious over the whole world.

April 27. Today was the funeral of Jan Tichý of No. 106 and Havel Mandelik of No. 101, who had been killed on April 18. Because of the shelling, it had not been possible to take them to the graveyard, and people had temporarily buried them at home in the back garden. Also killed had been František Král of No. 92, and the last was Stanislav Drtil, who was found dead in the vineyards. Drtil was 21 years old, Král 68.

The constable banged the drum and announced that all men and girls over the age of fifteen had to go to the district office, where they were divided into groups. Some of the men had to go to the cemetery to dig graves and to the memorial to fallen soldiers of the Red Army, the remaining men and some of the girls were sent to Nové Dvory to prepare an airfield, and the remaining women and girls went to the field kitchens to peel potatoes.

There was also a temporary airfield at Těšany, and airmen were billeted in the village. We had so far been sleeping on straw in the cowshed, there was a dearth of food, and the cow was gone so we had no milk. People were still sleeping in cellars because all the habitable buildings were occupied by soldiers and field hospitals.

The rumble of the front line and the thunder of heavy weapons had gone further away, but we knew nothing about what was happening on the Anglo-American and French fronts. We could not listen to the radio because there was no electricity. The power lines were cut, some of the pylons had fallen, and others had been broken off and lay in pieces on the ground. We knew only what the soldiers told us. They had their field press, and a daily newspaper for Russian soldiers was printed at the house of Frant. Kana at No. 98.

No work was being done in the fields, because everywhere was full of unexploded shells, mines, anti-tank grenades, and other munitions. The fields were furrowed with trenches.

People were burying animals which had been shot near the front line or killed by shrapnel.

April 28. The passage of supply trains ceased, there was less motor traffic, and the number of soldiers in the village slowly diminished.

April 30. The field hospitals moved out so as be nearer the front line, and only the lightly wounded remained here.

1945, May 1 to May 9

May 1. There was an election for a new village council or “national committee”. Elected were Eduar Langášek (hitherto mayor) as chairman, and also

Filip Svoboda	No. 231	Dr Jaromír Toman	No. 265	
Jaromír Rychlík	No. 100	Eduard Novotný	No. 277	teacher
Vinc. Chaloupka	No. 122	... Foit	No. 201	teacher
Vinc. Straka	No. 227	Pavel Hanousek	No. 295	teacher
Frant. Špeta	No. 298	Oldřich Kusý	No. 117	chauffeur
Josef Vahala	No. 210	Antonín Svoboda	No. 80	
Josef Horák	No. 167	Josef Sedláček	No. 128	
Frant Štěpánek	No. 2	Frant Vahala	No. 154	
Bohuslav Novotný	No. 47	Rudolf Liška	No. 41	teacher
Filip Vahala	No. 274			

Straight away, on May 3, the new council conducted a census to find how many cows were left after the passage of the front line.

May 4. The village council was declared invalid, and a new council was elected from three political parties.

The Chairman was again Eduar Langášek

Communists		National Socialists		People's Party	
Alois Horák	No. 273	Frant. Rychlík	No. 105	Jos. Dosoudil	No. 242
Frant. Špeta	No. 298	Tobiáš Novotný	No. 236	Jar. Rychlík	No. 100
Filip Svoboda	No. 231	Frant. Rychlík	No. 119	Alf. Turek	No. 297
Josef Sedláček	No. 128	Filip Vahala	No. 274	Ant. Svoboda	No. 80
Vinc. Chaloupka	No. 122	Šimon Nehyba	No. 272	Filip Dosoudil	No. 10
		Rud. Liška	No. 41	Pavel Hanousek	No. 295

The same day, somebody spoke to the Russian commander about Dr Ed. Mikulášek and his collaboration with the Germans during the occupation. The Russian commander sent for him and interrogated him, but released him on the guarantee of Dr Toman that he was an honourable man. But when further proofs and witnesses of Mikulášek's baseness had accumulated, the commander sent soldiers for him. However Mikulášek was no longer there. Being conscious of his guilt, he had fled with his wife. The commander arrested Dr Toman in his place, but after a week-long investigation let him go.

May 7. The new village council conducted a census of building material, particularly roofing tiles, and allocated it to those who had been bombed out so that they could make their buildings habitable again.

Today we moved from our former accommodation in the cowshed to my brother Franta the carpenter's at No. 119, where the soldiers had just moved from the house into the empty workshop. Two days earlier, our neighbour Kostrhon's cow had come back from ferrying ammunition to the front line, and had brought foot-and-mouth disease with it. The stench had made the cowshed intolerable, and we were glad to get away from it.

We didn't have much to take with us, a little clothing that had been buried in the barn, a pot of lard which had been buried in the garden and was still there, and a couple of kilograms of flour. We were almost beggared, but there were people who had been enriched by the war, who had ignored the bullets and taken advantage of the absence of citizens in shelters to steal what they could, even to take spirits from the distillery. And now, in exchange for this so-called “špirt”, they were buying from the soldiers clothes, boots and shoes, material, and whatever else the soldiers had seized.

Our Jara lent us a wardrobe and a bed, Alžběta Vahalová of No. 46 gave us a plate and a mug, Františka Novotná of No. 134 a plate and spoon, Julie Lišková of No. 41 a pot and pan for making soup. And so, thanks to God and to these good people, we were able to cook something for ourselves.

May 9. Before dawn, at perhaps 3 o'clock in the morning, I was woken by firing. What was happening, was the front line coming back again? I woke my man, and he ran out into the street. The street was full of soldiers who were firing into the air and shouting, "War kaput, Hitler kaput!" We all got dressed and the street was already full of people, and at 4 o'clock in the morning constable Ledba banged the drum and announced that it was peace and there would be a great celebration, and we were to decorate our houses with banners and at 10 o'clock everyone was to go to the war memorial. Nobody slept during the rest of the night, people stood around in small groups and talked with delight of the defeat of arrogant Germany.

I went straight to my sewing machine and started sewing banners (I still had my sewing machine, the Germans had been taking them for the army and I had hidden mine in the pigsty). And those who didn't have anything to sew made little paper banners, and stuck them on their windows.

Before 10 o'clock, we all went in front of the manor house to the war memorial, where people formed themselves into a procession and then walked around the village with music. People cheered and proclaimed the health of the Czechoslovak Republic, Marshal Stalin, and the Red Army. When the procession returned to the war memorial, teacher Fojt said a few words. He said that it was the end of the suffering and oppression of our nation, that it was the end of German raging, that we were free. All the people, men and women alike, were moved to tears, and at the end of his speech, after the proclamation of the health of the republic, we heard the national anthem which had been denied to us for six years. Then the people dispersed in happy anticipation of better days.

And it was a beautiful sunny day, as if nature itself was delighted by the coming of peace.

1945, May 10 to May 31

May 10. There was to be a garrison in Těšany, and soldiers came looking for accommodation. Many inhabitants had to leave their houses for a time, and even Father Antonín Florian the priest had to leave the church house. Hardly any window was left unbroken in the whole village, and instructions were given that they be put in order. The village council, having no better idea, allowed the hotbed windows to be taken from the estate garden and nailed to the window frames on houses where the staff would be billeted. In the other houses, people nailed boards across the windows to serve until they could be glassed in.

Field work was started, though of course only by those who had animals. Some cows had come back from ferrying ammunition with foot-and-mouth disease, some had not yet returned, and the rest were so worn out that they collapsed at their work.

May 12. Five cows collapsed. The total loss of cattle due to the war was 240 in the village and 100 on the manor estate.

The soldiers drove great herds of cattle and sheep here, and to get them to the grazing land they drove them across the fields irrespective of whether these were growing rye, wheat, or hay.

Male members of the village council started doing daily duty in place of the police. This was expected to last for perhaps fourteen days, until the new government had accepted the police into the service of the republic.

Posters were stuck up throughout the village, such as "Treaty with the Allies" and "Declaration of the Czechoslovak Government", and then "Germans out", "Czech soil belongs in Czech hands".

There was still nothing in the shops, nor any transport, and the post was not functioning since the post office had been completely demolished. It was announced that we could send a letter to our nearest relatives saying that we were alive, or if someone in the family had been killed or injured during the battles. This post, for which no stamps were needed, was taken to the station at Křenovice.

Brother Antonín in Žatčany-Třebomyslice survived the battle safely, as did his family, but before the front line reached him he ran to the highest point in the mill several times a day and watched how the surrounding villages were blazing. And on April 20 he saw the fires in his native village, our Těšany. And seeing this destruction he hid and buried what he could, all the belts from the mill, car wheels, reserves of stores and corn. During the battle, he and his family lived in the cellar. The German defence must have been very strong, since around Žatčany they dropped bombs of 200-250 kilograms which dug deep craters and demolished several houses. One such bomb fell perhaps 20 metres from Tonda's mill, severely shook the house and the mill, and created several cracks in the masonry.

In the yard, brother Antonín had laid down a large amount of wood, boards and ceiling beams, for the construction of a new mill. The soldiers of the Red Army took the lot, and used it to construct two bridges across the river Cesava, one towards the station at Sokolnice and one towards Telnice. The

previous reinforced concrete bridges had been blown up by the retreating Germans, and the Russians had taken Tonda's wood to build replacement wooden bridges so that they could continue their advance.

And my brother Josef at Dubňany was in the same state as ourselves. When the Germans saw that they had to retreat, they destroyed and set light to everything just as they did everywhere else. Thus Jožka's mill was burned to the ground, but the accompanying house which he had built in 1940-41 was spared so at least he had somewhere to live.

Monday 14 May. We started to build ourselves a sitting-room in the barn so that we could live at home. Jan Horák of No. 150 lent us 2,000 bricks, and Jiří Jeřábek of No. 99 gave us an old window and some glass. Things were now going very much better with us, thanks to the kindness of brother Tonda at Žatčany. When he heard of our difficulties, he sent to Pavel and ourselves 30kg of flour each, for which we were deeply grateful.

Brother František at No. 119, where we were now living, had suffered damage to his cowsheds. A shell had landed on them and had broken two rafters and smashed a number of tiles, and shrapnel had gone through the cowshed ceiling, but by a miracle the cows were not hit. Doba had suffered no building damage, but his hiding place had been looted.

May 15. Antonín Vozdecký from Šitbořice went in front of a meeting of the village council and accused Fr. Špeta, one of its members, of having informed against him to the Gestapo during the German protectorate. As a result, he had spent three and a half years in a concentration camp. As a consequence of this accusation, Frant. Špeta was expelled from the council, and was taken in custody to the court in Brno.

May 19. Men between the ages of 27 and 35 were called up for military service, and from our family Jara had to report to Hodonín. The Russian garrison was already here, and had taken over the whole of the manor courtyard (its inhabitants had to move out, and manager Růžička was living with our Jara at No. 100). The staff were billeted in the old school, the church hall, and in various houses which had offices, and the soldiers were lodged everywhere else. Jara came back home after a few days of soldiering (his year did not have to join up).

May 20. Neighbour Jakub returned from imprisonment in a concentration camp, and Karel Ardéli from No. 263 and Leopold Vahala from No. 98 followed him three days later. Everybody welcomed them with delight, but as their tales unfolded a shiver went through us at the thought of what hunger they had experienced, what torture, what inhuman suffering, what bestialities had been perpetrated on innocently imprisoned people. The traces of German brutality would remain on their bodies as a visible reminder for the rest of their lives.

May was almost at an end, but people were still planting beet, potatoes, and maize. The corn which had not been trampled by the soldiers' herds was doing well, but many fields were still unplanted. This was particularly true on the manor estate, where no work had been done and all the fields lay fallow. The estate manager offered people fields on hire, because there was not a single horse on the estate, neither were there any waggons. All through the village, all the waggons that were any good had gone, some taken by the Germans and the rest by the victors.

Closer contact with soldiers of the Red Army was causing people to lose their fear, and relations were becoming friendly. Now that the war was over, the soldiers were under strict discipline, and no violence was permitted. The officers of the local garrison arranged musical evenings, and the constable banged the drum and invited lads and girls to take part.

Towards the end of May, the first newspapers appeared. "Word of the Nation" was the paper of the National Socialists, "National Revival" of the People's Party, "Action" of the Social Democrats, and "Equality" of the Communists. Kocourek from Nesvačilka travelled to Brno each day and brought the papers here.

The post office had been totally destroyed in the battle, the telephone line cut, shelves and tables smashed and burnt including all the letters. Now it was being repaired and put back into order so that postal operations could be resumed as quickly as possible. The shops, too, started to have goods for sale. Mrs Marie Chalupová of No. 24 had it announced with the drum that because of her age she was not reopening her shop (which had been in her family for 70 years).

1945, June

At the start of June, planting was still in progress in the fields, and horses had started to reappear. People had gone to Brno to get them, and even to the highlands between Moravia and Bohemia.

In the first half of June, they brought the former German god-almighty, the chimney-sweep Eduard Veinalt, from Brno for interrogation. From a great German lord who threatened everyone with the Gestapo, he had suddenly become a very restrained and frightened man. The citizens, drunk with delight at their newly acquired freedom, put him in a pig cage and paraded him through the village on a waggon. The constable banged the drum, and every hundred paces the waggon stopped and he had to stand up in the cage and call out so that everyone could hear, "Germans out, Hitler was a dog and so was I." A few days after his interrogation, he was taken back to Brno for trial, and there, before he could be brought to judgement, he died. Thus was the ignominious end of the sweep before whom the whole village had trembled.

The children were once more going to school, but only the primary school was being used because soldiers were billeted in the secondary school and in the old school. The children from the primary school were taught during half the day, and those from the secondary school during the other half.

The post was already functioning, but it only took letters and money, not parcels. This letter post was taken twice a week to the station at Křenovice.

On the main roads and at crossroads, the German notices giving the direction of travel were being taken down and replaced by notices in Russian. And the notice "Schule" was taken down from above the doors of the secondary school, and the relief of President Masaryk uncovered.

June 12. The village council was again changed. The chairman of the new council was

Leopold Vahala, No. 98 (of the People's Party).

People's Party		National Socialists		Communists	
Jaromír Rychlík	No. 100	Jakub Vahala	No. 108	Dr Lad. Horák	No. 24
Alfons Turek	No. 297	Tobiáš Novotný	No. 236	Karel Ardély	No. 263
Filip Dosoudil	No. 10	Frant. Rychlík	No. 119	Filip Svoboda	No. 231
Frant. Vahala	No. 154	Filip Vahala	No. 274	Frant Štěpánek	No. 2
Josef Kroupa	No. 192	Štěpán Sýkora	No. 156	Josef Sedláček	No. 128
Josef Novotný	No. 261	Šimon Menšík	No. 301	Vinc. Chaloupka	No. 122

The damage suffered by our village during the events of the war was very great, and was roughly estimated at 40 million crowns. The following citizens were burnt out during the passage of the front line.

Ladislav Janoušek	295	house to the ground	Matěj Poláček	21	barn
Josef Sýkora	202	house to the ground	Josefa Konečná	205	barn
Alois Dudek	121	house to the ground	Pavel Ryšánek	22	barn
Frant Štěpánek	2	house to the ground	Josef Mandelik	284	house to the ground
Jaroslav Sodomka	3	house to the ground	Alois Horák	273	house to the ground
Vendelín Sedláček	6	house to the ground	Josef Kroupa	192	house roof
Josef Janoušek	212	house to the ground	Ludvík Rychlík	169	house roof
Alois Žáček	14	barn, dower flat within	Jakub Jílek	191	house to the ground
Jan Konečný	85	house and barn	Marie Příbylová	174	house to the ground
Josef Dostal	86	house and two barns	Josef Král	170	house to the ground
Jan Čermák	87	house and barn	Leopold Dostal	237	house roof
Frant Pacas	88	house and barn	Martin Příbyl	61	house to the ground
Barnabáš Ledba	91	house and barn	Josef Drtil	60	house to the ground
Frant Rychlík	105	house	Frant Petlák	56	house to the ground
Ladislav Štěpánek	128	house roof	Jan Dostal	54	house roof
Veronika Vrbová	114	house roof	Josef Král	52	house roof
Jan Horák	19	barn	Božena Turková	45	barn
Jan Horák	150	barn	Frant Vahala	46	barn
Marie Petláková	181	barn	Josef Pacas	43	house to the ground

(continued)

Citizens burnt out during the passage of the front line (continued)

Pavel Buček	42	house to the ground	Metoděj Přerovský	232	house to the ground
Frant Horák	41	house to the ground	Marie Hnilicová	229	cowshed and shed
Frant Křepela	32	roof	Josef Dušek	245	house to the ground
Eduard Langášek	33	two barns	Josef Chalupa	23	barn
Josef Rotnágľ	151	tavern to the ground	Rozárie Mahovska	234	house to the ground
Frant Sýkora	26	house to the ground	Adolf Menšík	233	house to the ground
Jan Chaloupka	193	house to the ground	Josef Dosoudil	218	cowsheds
Petronila Čermáková	12	house to ground, barn	Petr Polešovský	217	house, c/sheds to grnd
Jaroslav Vrba	11	cowsheds and barn	Frant Dudek	213	house, c/sheds to grnd
Josef Vahala	166	roof	Jan Klanica	238	house, c/sheds to grnd
Vratislav Jílek	142	half house to ground	Jan Suchý	257	house, c/sheds to grnd
Barnabáš Horák	292	house to the ground	Tobiaš Vahala	258	house, c/sheds to grnd
Barnabáš Poláček	253	house to the ground	Leopold Ledba	268	house to the ground
Frant Pavlíček	276	house to the ground	Jarolím Kolařík	260	roof
Pavel Rychlík	247	cowsheds and barn	Frant Sedláček	112	barn
Jan Ledba	230	house to the ground	Josef Král	303	house demolished by a bomb
Filip Svoboda	231	house to the ground			

Many other houses, cowsheds, and barns were severely damaged by bombs.

The church came through relatively lightly. Some plaster was knocked off by gunfire, though the brickwork was not damaged, and some of the painted windows on the north side were broken. But the church linen, the priest's vestments, and the altar vessels were looted.

June 17. We moved back home from our Franta's at No. 119. We had built a sitting-room 4 x 3.50 metres in the barn, and had fitted it up for living in. We had only the most essential furniture. Brother Antonín from Žatčany gave us an old bed and a wardrobe, Josef from Dubňany sent us a small cupboard, and we borrowed a table and two chairs from Franta.

The same day, June 17, saw the departure of the Red Army soldiers who had been billeted on our Franta and in the schoolhouses since May 15. For more than a month we had been in the same house with them, and had experienced various incidents. They were from 20 to 30 years old, and the one wish of all of them was to get hold of wine and "špirt". Then, drunk, they would fight until the blood flowed, and one of them, named Saška, had to go to hospital with a broken head. They were very kind to me, and kept running after me to sew on buttons for them and mend their blouses. When they departed, a sergeant named Žorka came to say goodbye, and gave me a piece of damask two metres long as a memento. "God be with you, mother. In six years, I'll come from Russia to see you."

June was nearing its end. The weather had been favourable, warm and with frequent rain, and we hoped for a good harvest both of corn and of root crops.

1945, July to December

July 12. The harvest started. Favourable weather allowed the work to advance quickly. The estate sold standing corn at 700 crowns per measure, because it still had neither draught animals nor people to do the work. The courtyard of the manor house was still occupied by troops. There was a guard on the gate, and nobody was allowed to enter.

Power workers were restoring the electrical transmission network so that threshing could proceed as quickly as possible.

People from the entire neighbourhood, including Těšany, were moving to the border regions, where they were being installed in former German property. Germans who had not escaped to the Reich before the advancing front line had to go to collection camps, from which they were transported to the Reich. The following inhabitants moved out from Těšany.

Vincenc Frencl, No. 194	Petr Polešovský	Jiří Buček, No. 132	Jan Klanica
J. Gleskač	Fr. Novák	Eduard Příbyl	Pavel Buček
Jakub Jílek	Jan Skříčka	Marie Příbylová (widow)	Marie Goldová (widow)
Fr. Baláš	Fr. Lačnák	Josef Prchal	Pavel Petlák, No. 56

August 19. The last of the troops left Těšany. The inhabitants, and especially the women, breathed a sigh of relief. We had looked forward to their arrival and had welcomed them with brotherly love, but after the acts of violence which they had committed against women whether young or old, and their thieving, we thanked God that they were going.

September 3. A fire broke out in the back building of No. 3, and burnt it to the ground. The house itself had been burnt during the passage of the front line. The fire then spread to the neighbouring building of Antonín Harašta, and destroyed the roof.

September 14. The grape collection was ordered. This year's crop was poor. Grapes had to be taken to the co-operative at Velké Pavlovice, as in previous years under the "Protectorate". Těšany had to provide 10 cents of grapes. Our quota was 50kg, and we were paid 8 crowns per kg for black grapes and 10 crowns for white grapes.

Sunday October 14. Těšany was greatly upset by the death of 9-year-old Oldřich Langášek. A little beyond the village, by the Hustopece road, stood two German tanks left behind by the battle. The children were always climbing on these, and fooling around inside them. On this Sunday, perhaps four boys were playing on the tanks, and (according to their own account) they found some sort of little cylinder into which Oldřich started digging with a knife. Suddenly there was an explosion, and the lad was so severely hurt that he died later the same day. The other boys were only slightly hurt.

After seven years, we could once again celebrate October 28 in freedom, with joy and without fear. The statue of President Tomáš G. Masaryk was taken out of hiding and set up in its place (there were no celebrations in 1938 because of the seriousness of the times). Early in the morning, the constable came for the village banners which had been hidden with us during the German occupation. Two of these were 3 metres long, and a third was 6 metres long. In the afternoon, after a benediction, a great procession of people and schoolchildren went from the church to the war memorial, where a wreath was laid. Then Leopold Vahala, the chairman of the village council, welcomed all those present and spoke of the significance of the day's formal unveiling of the war memorial, an event which should have taken place seven years before. He then remembered the fallen of the first world war, those who had been tortured to death in concentration camps, and the inhabitants who had fallen during the passage of the front line.

Then Stanislav Pavlíček, director of the secondary school, added a few words. He spoke of the bestialities and horrors of the concentration camps, and of the calvary of our nation under the rule of the Germans. Then the children of both secondary and primary schools sang and recited.

Finally, the chairman of the village council thanked all those whose hard work had contributed to the success of the festival, and then, in front of the whole village, he thanked me for having kept safe the local chronicles (the record books) and the banners mentioned above.

From October 28 to November 4, there was a currency reform. Citizens of the Czechoslovak Republic had to hand in their savings, and each head of a household would receive 500 crowns in the new money. Other money, whether in ready cash or lodged in savings accounts, would be frozen and could not be withdrawn. The exchange was carried out by post offices and financial institutions.

Autumn was very dry. It hardly rained after the harvest, except for some dew. A consequence was an explosion of mice, to such an extent that they ate all the corn which some people had already sown. Therefore sowing was started only after it had rained, in the last week of October and in November.

The manor estate rented some of its fields to inhabitants of Těšany, and leased the rest, together with the two courts (Těšany and Šinkvice), to an association known as "Masosvaz". To the inhabitants, the rent for one measure of land was the price that one cent of wheat would command.

The harvest was in general good, but there was little beet. It had not been planted before the battle, and afterwards it could not be planted because of the shortage of draught animals. Those who had beet had to take it to Jalovisko, from where a little train took it to the sugar factory at Židlochovice. The sugar factory at Sokolnice had been totally destroyed during the passage of the front line. Likewise the malthouse by the station at Sokolnice, which the Germans had converted into an armament factory during the war, had been burnt out and destroyed right to the ground.

On December 10, everything went up in price, including the buses and the railways. A journey from Těšany to Brno by municipal transport, which had previously cost 10 crowns, now cost 24.

Item		Before December 10 (crowns)	After
Wheat	100 kg	220	300
Rye	"	220	300
Barley	"	170	280–300
Milk	1 litre	2.20	5.50
Butter	1 kg	36	96
Sugar	"	7.20	15.20
Salt	"	2.80	7
Eggs	each	1.35	3.60
Beef	1 kg	22	46
Pork	"	34	60
Salami	"	36	86

The corn ration for independent producers was increased from 13kg to 18kg per month, salt 10dkg per month, sugar 1kg 20dkg as before and besides 70dkg of marmalade or 35dkg of sugar, 20dkg of “cukrovine”, and 25dkg of ersatz coffee. Butter 12dkg for adults, ½kg for children to 6 years, 40dkg from 6 to 12 years, 20dkg from 12 to 20 years. The meat ration was unchanged at 75dkg for all consumers over 20 years old, children from 6 to 20 years 95dkg, children up to 6 years 40dkg, meat or meat products per month. Milk for independent producers ¼ litre per person, and by coupon ⅛ litre for adults, ½ litre for children up to 6 years, and ¼ litre for children up to 12 years.

Bread for adults over 20 years 4.60kg per month, flour 1.50kg and 30 5g white rolls, also 15dkg of peeled barley or rye flakes and 15dkg of pasta (macaroni), all available on one bread coupon. There was also an issue to adults over 20 years of ½ litre of spirits for Christmas. The price of 40% rum was 75 crowns per litre, other spirits 110–120 crowns according to type and strength. Matches as before, one box per person per month.

The shops were already full of textiles, and all of good quality. Perhaps they had been hidden during the German occupation. We who had been burned out received vouchers for 24 metres of coarse cotton and 16 metres of ticking. Coarse cotton cost 36 crowns per metre, ticking 45 crowns. There was already plenty of underwear and clothing material in the shops, and shopkeepers were taking little notice of the coupons. Towels, tea cloths, and bedlinen were already off the ration.

On December 1, Jara had taken up a post at the local agricultural co-operative as an accounts clerk. He put his garden and several fields out to rent, and now at No. 100 we had neither a land-holder nor a gardener but an official. Political prisoners, soldiers who had been serving abroad, and people harassed by the Nazis during the occupation were being given first chance at the best places in employment. Thus Jara passed a school certificate examination in three subjects, and immediately took up a post with a starting salary of 2,500 crowns per month.

December 22. Bohumila Skříčková, the former local midwife, died at the age of 84. She had performed this office for 54 years, and in Těšany alone she had brought 1,900 children into the world. She also went to Moutnice and Nesvačilka.

The first Christmas after the liberation of our country was very beautiful. People had brought back coloured rockets, rifles, cartridges, and even machine-guns from the front. On Christmas Eve, the sky was lit up with rockets, which gave out such a glow that the whole village seemed to be bathed in a fairy light, and gunfire as if the battle had returned continued long into the night.

An order came that on December 30 all the fallen soldiers of the Red Army, who had been buried by the memorial and in the cemetery, must be exhumed, placed three in a coffin, and taken to Ořechovo, where there was a communal cemetery for the Red Army. From the general neighbourhood, 68 men and one woman were exhumed. [I suspect that “Ořechovo” is the Czech transliteration of the Cyrillic name which an Englishman would transliterate as “Orekhovo”. There is a city so named some 100 kilometres east of Moscow, but I have no idea whether it contains the cemetery mentioned.]

A stormy year was at its end. The weather was mild, and true winter had not yet started.