

## Chapter 8

1951-1953

1951

As always, the New Year started with us wishing each other “Happy New Year” in the hope that the new year would be better than the old. But who knew what it would bring us.

In the first week of January, it froze, but not severely except for one day when the temperature fell to eleven degrees below zero. Then there was a thaw, and until the end of the month we had mild weather with plenty of rain. The temperature varied from one or two degrees below zero at night to four to six degrees above zero during the day. All through the month, people were ploughing whenever the weather permitted.

February 7. Baker Bohumír Bayer at No. 72 was ordered not to sell bread to self-sufficient workers on the land.

February 8. There was a call-up. 18 out of Těšany’s 22 boys were taken.

February 10. The weather was almost springlike. Daily temperatures were 2–6–8 degrees above zero. The snowdrops were in flower, and the sallow was already growing catkins.

On February 26, the free sale of bread, pastries, and flour was again prohibited, and a coupon system was reintroduced.

People had taken advantage of the favourable weather to plough and to dig in the vineyards, and at the end of the month some were even sowing spring wheat.

Frost started to take charge in March, and snow fell on Sunday March 4 and lay for several days. The frosts were not severe, 5–6–7 degrees below zero, but field work was delayed until the end of the month because after several days of frost the rains came. And so, despite the mild winter, sowing did not start until March 28.

On Friday March 30, the inhabitants of the streets served by the new water main, which had been constructed during the winter, started to draw water from it.

From April 7, bull-keeper Josef Drtil at No. 60 was not allowed to put his bulls to cows, because in future cattle were to be inseminated artificially. An “Insemination station” had been set up on the state farm at Žabčice, where stud bulls were kept from which the semen would be taken. There would also be trained men with motorcycles, who would go around the Židlochovice district from their base at Žabčice and perform the insemination. In the villages, it was announced that anybody observing that his cow or heifer had come into season should report it to the council office at 6 o’clock in the morning, from where they would telephone to Žabčice.

April 13. The apricot trees came into bloom.

April 22. Members of the Socialist Youth Federation brought round printed invitation cards, inviting people to the May 1 celebrations in Židlochovice.

April had been dry and warm. There was a little rain in the middle of the month, and on the very last day there was a thunderstorm.

Although people had been urged daily for several days beforehand, by loudspeaker and by printed invitations, to make a good showing at the May 1 celebrations, only a few people caught the bus.

May 7. The loudspeakers announced that by government order there were new arrangements for home pig slaughter in 1951. From the first pig slaughtered, 7½kg of rendered lard would be taken for public consumption, from a second pig 9kg, and from a third 12kg.

May 15. The son of land-holder Oldřich Vystavěl was arrested by the “National Security Corps” and taken to Brno for questioning, because on Sunday May 13, for amusement while tipsy, he had abused the communists. He returned after perhaps ten days, having been sentenced to four months in prison. He would have to serve this during the winter quiet season, two months in January and February 1952 and the rest in 1953.

May 31. The X-raying of the lungs of every citizen from fifteen years upwards was started. The object was to establish the state of people’s health in the fight against tuberculosis.

The whole of May had been wet and cold. As a result of the rain, the planting of maize and potatoes went slowly, and continued throughout the month. In the last week, hay was cut for drying. It had

done very well, as had all the other cereal crops.

From June 1, the station of the "National Security Corps" was brought back to Těšany from Měnín. It was accommodated in the manor house.

Also from June 1, the mill of my brother Josef in Dubňany was nationalized.

In June, a loudspeaker announcement invited those who had a delivery quota for a pig, or who could supply a pig to the free market, to deliver it straight away, and if it weighed more than 120kg they would receive 120 crowns per kilogramme for it. There was a shortage of pork, because people had had to deliver their corn to the last grain and so had kept few sows and growing porkers. It followed that there were also few sucking pigs, and since February it had been forbidden to sell sucking pigs to local inhabitants. People were allowed to sell pigs only to the co-operative, from where they were taken to state farms and to a "Standard Agricultural Co-operative". Even those who had fulfilled their meat delivery quotas were not allowed to buy them. The price for a sucking pig had been 60 crowns per kilogramme, and was now increased to 90 crowns.

June 20. Forced labour was instituted for singling the beet on the manor estate. Almost every house was given a work assessment (written), according to which they had to go to the state farm from June 21 onwards and perform forced labour, or as the people called it "robota", until discharged. On the assessment, it was written that anybody not complying could be fined up to 100,000 crowns, or imprisoned for three months.

As a result of the frequent rain and the lack of manpower, the singling and hoeing of beet was significantly behindhand, and the fields were full of weeds. Before they started to thin out the beet on the state farm, they had to cut the grass with scythes.

All those who went to work on the state farms received breakfast at 11 o'clock and a field lunch at 2 o'clock.

The first half of June had been very wet, and so the hoeing and weeding of beet had dragged on a long time. By the end of the month, the state farm still had not thinned it out. And the village council, which had allowed several fields lying fallow to be ploughed and planted with beet, still had forty measures to be singled.

Towards the end of the month, the weather improved, and people were daily exhorted by loudspeaker to go and single the beet on the state farm.

July 3. From this day, baker Bohumír Bayer was not allowed to sell bread to people. He had to deliver it to the two "Včela" stores, from where people could either buy it or exchange flour for it.

July 13. The harvest started.

Since February, it had been forbidden to sell sucking pigs, but on July 24 it was announced that anybody who did not have a pig should go and report at the council office.

July had been dry up to the last week, when there were thunderstorms and showers. The harvest proceeded quickly, and three tractors with reaper-binders came from the pool at Pohofelice.

August 6. The vineyards were attacked by mildew. Winegrowers were spraying again to control it, even though the early varieties of grapes were already ripening.

August 10. The harvest was complete. The corn had been gathered, those who only had a little land were threshing it direct from the field, and the threshing machines had gone to thresh the stacks. This year the corn had grown very well but had yielded poorly, grains were few but there was plenty of straw. People said that the blame lay with the wet weather at the time the corn came into flower. So once again some people were not threshing as much as they had to deliver.

August 15. The loudspeakers announced that milling permits were being issued, but only to those who had completely fulfilled their delivery quotas.

August 27. The funeral was held of village elder Petr Polešovský of No. 217. He had lived to the age of 91, and had served Těšany as shepherd for thirty years up to 1918. Then, even when he was no longer shepherd, people used to call him to their sick animals, which he treated like a veterinary surgeon.

Threshing was proceeding very slowly. The five threshing machines were still unrepaired and the binders broken, so people had to bind the straw by hand, and during the threshing four of the electric motors burnt out. This had never happened when the machines had individual owners.

August had been wholly dry apart from one shower, and it was clear that the yield of early and semi-early potatoes would be poor.

September 12. In the middle of the day, a fire broke out in the house of Štěpán Sýkora at No. 156, and spread to the neighbouring house No. 186 of Frant. Buček.

September 19. Threshing in our village was completed. Every day, people were being called to the council offices, where they were faced by officials from the region and workers from the factories in Brno. Both then applied pressure, our people heard nothing but “deliver the quota, deliver the quota”, and they were not in the least interested in the explanation that somebody had not threshed that much corn or that if he fulfilled the quota he would have nothing left to grind for himself. They even subjected some people to visits at home, where they searched for what they called concealed corn.

September had been dry, with no rain until near the end, and temperatures during the harvest period nearly always rose above 30 degrees. In the fourth week, there were light showers, and it became noticeably cooler. Potatoes and maize were harvested, but the yield of both was very poor.

On Saturday September 29, we had the first wedding in our family. Brother Tobiáš married his son Alois to Jaroslava Kolaříková, daughter of Jarolín Kolařík of No. 260 and of Žofie, born Příbylová, from No. 61. The wedding was a very merry one, the whole family was invited, and everyone took part in this notable day in the lives of the young people.

In October, ration coupons for potatoes were instituted as during the war.

On October 1, brother Jaromír at No. 100, until now employed in the office of the local agricultural co-operative, took up work in heavy industry. According to government decree, 78,000 administrative workers had to transfer to production either in the mines or in heavy industry. Our Jaromír was one of them.

October 7. A gathering of grapes was announced. In one section of the vineyards, many of the grapes were shrivelled, but the shrivelled grapes were very sweet. Elsewhere, the grapes were healthy, but not as sweet as in other years. Therefore some growers who delivered healthy “Blue Portugal” grapes received 11 crowns per kilogram for grapes with 14% sugar content, but only 9 crowns for grapes with 13% sugar content. For blue, red, and Chrupka grapes with 16% sugar we received 15 crowns per kilogram, and for white grapes with 17% sugar we received 20 crowns.

Our Jaromír’s grapes were almost wholly shrivelled (the shrivelling only affected the Blue Portugal grapes), and had a sugar content of 20%. Growers knew that when grapes shrivelled, the water evaporated but the sugar remained, so the shrivelled grapes had less juice but were sweeter. For his shrivellings, Jara received 19 crowns per kilogramme.

Our own crop was large, 30 cents of beautiful healthy grapes. As in the preceding year, we were allowed to make 300 litres of wine for our own use.

On Sunday October 21, a “Standard Agricultural Co-operative” was formed in Těšany. The members of the co-operative were teachers, the school caretaker, some workmen, and two householders. [The “workmen” are “dělníkú”, which is used for general workmen or those in factories. The word “zemědělci”, workers on the land, although widespread in the text (I have translated it simply as “people”, or even as “we”, wherever the context makes the meaning obvious), is noticeably absent here, and it will be confirmed in February 1953 that this absence is significant.]

There was no rain during the whole of October, and the drought was severe. People could neither sow nor plough. The potato harvest was late, and likewise that of turnips and sugar beet. The yield of these crops was poor. Sugar beet this year yielded 30–40 cents per measure, and on the weed-grown fields of the state farms not even that.

From November 1, breeding cows were again brought to Těšany. Artificial insemination had not proved successful, and so the bull stud of Josef Dřtil at No. 60 was reopened.

In November, we could not buy salt freely. If we wanted salt, it was added to the sugar coupon, ¼kg per person per month. Likewise matches, one box per month.

From November 1, village chairman Frant. Křepela of No. 32 was deposed, because he had not been sufficiently severe with people in the matter of fulfilling delivery quotas. His place was taken by Barnabáš Sedláček of No. 266. The new chairman was a road-mender, and also tilled a few measures of land.

From November 1, my brother Josef’s mill at Dubňany was officially closed. He would now receive corn from people two days in the week and would exchange flour for it, but the flour for the exchange would be supplied to him from the mill at Ratiškovice [a village a few kilometres to the east]. During the other four days in the week, he would be employed in the local agricultural co-operative. His son Květoslav was assigned as a mill hand to the mill at Ratiškovice.

At the start of November came the long awaited rains. People ploughed and sowed assiduously

throughout the month, and the favourable weather gave hope that the winter wheat would germinate and grow before the frost came.

People who had been renting fields gave them up because of the impossibly high delivery quotas, and went to work in the factories in Brno. The owners then offered the fields for free, and finally Mrs Gusta Hofírková from Újezd (born Chalupova at Těšany No. 23), who owned a 20-measure field in Těšany which this year had lain fallow, had it announced over the loudspeakers that if somebody would rent her fields and bring them into cultivation she would even pay them. At other times, people had fought over tenancies and outbid each other, and now so many beautiful fields were lying fallow (people said around 200 measures).

Onions were withdrawn from free sale, and would in future be available only on coupons. Apples were also placed on coupons, and were available only to children.

December 12. As on the second Wednesday in every December, there was a market. Several traders came, and set out their wares. But an official from the district office at Židlochovice, who had come to the village council, ordered the traders to pack up their goods. "The business of the private sector cannot be tolerated." Then he ordered each trader to pay a fine of 200 crowns, and they were relieved that he did not confiscate their goods as well.

Once again came Christmas, which was called the Festival of Joy, but it was celebrated more as if it was All Souls' Day. There was no firing of guns on Christmas Eve, it was as if joy had died.

The weather in December was without frost until just before Christmas, when light frosts started, but immediately after the festival there were fogs and rains which continued until the end of the year. The corn which had been planted during November and at the start of December had sprouted well and was already green. Likewise ploughing had been completed, except for those fields which the tenants had given up and nobody wanted to take over.

Before the new year, those who had not fulfilled their delivery quotas were again called into the council offices, where officials from the regional council leaned on them to make up for the deficiency by substituting additional pork. Thus, for example, an incomplete milk quota could be made good by substituting pork in the ratio of 1kg of meat for 2 litres of milk.

1951 had brought us an increase in the delivery quotas of all agricultural products, and we all had to tighten our belts.

## 1952

As from time immemorial, we started the New Year by wishing each other good fortune, in the hope and longing that the new year would be better than the old.

But as soon as January 4, it became obvious that the new year would not be better. On that day, ration coupons for January were issued. According to a new order, coupons were issued only to those without land and to those who tilled not more than 2½ measures of land. Those who tilled more than 2½ measures had no right to coupons for meat, for milk, for bread, for flour, for butter, or for eggs, whether their family had two members or ten. They were classed as self-sufficient. However, those who had more than 2½ measures of land and went to employment received ration coupons without restriction on the numbers in their family.

Those who had over 2½ measures of land received coupons for sugar and soap. The sugar ration was 1kg per month, and those who were in employment received 1.50kg. The soap ration was one cube of weight 10dkg per person.

These coupons, and also clothing coupons, went only to those who had completely fulfilled every delivery quota. We did not receive them because we had not fulfilled our milk quota (it had been set at 1,100 litres, and because our cow had been ill we were 500 litres short).

January was wet up to January 20, with temperatures varying between 1–2 degrees below zero at night and 6 above zero during the day. After January 20, it started to freeze more sharply. Snow fell on January 28, and on January 29 the temperature fell to 17 degrees below zero.

February 3. Ration coupons for February were issued, and as in the previous month not everybody received them. There were scenes at the council office. One group wept and others cursed and swore, saying that things were worse than they had been under Hitler during the war.

From February 15, village constable František Ledba of No. 9 stood down. His place was taken by Ludmila Viktorinova from No. 101. We now had a female constable in Těšany.

At the end of January, the snow had started to lie, and more was added to it in February. On February 15, towards evening, there was such a blizzard that the workmen's buses from Brno did not arrive. Some got stuck in snowdrifts on the way, and others did not leave Brno. The blizzard continued throughout the night, and on Saturday February 16 those who had had to stay in Brno came from the station at Sokolnice on foot.

On Saturday evening, the snow left off, and the council immediately called people to clear the roads. This clearing continued all night and through into Sunday morning. The snow continued in great flurries, and was still falling.

On Monday February 18, people still could not get to work because the roads were not completely clear, and people were exhorted to send one person from each house to clear them.

February 19. The buses started running normally again.

February 21. A thaw set in, and until the end of the month the temperatures were 1–2 degrees below zero at night and 3–4 degrees above zero during the day. The thaw was very gentle, and the great masses of snow disappeared without causing floods or inundations.

In February, clothing coupons were issued, but only a very few who worked on the land received them. If they had not fulfilled some delivery quota, they did not receive coupons.

This March, people had even greater problems than last year with pig slaughtering. Many who had not completely fulfilled their delivery quotas had to go twice, three times, or even more to the regional office before obtaining a permit. In some cases, even ten visits did not suffice. They were not permitted to slaughter, and were ordered to surrender their pig for general consumption. The delivery quota for rendered lard after a home slaughter was increased to 7½kg (the previous year it had been 5kg), and 9kg in the case of a permit for another slaughter in the same year. [According to the entry for May 7 above, these rates had in fact been in force in 1951.]

March 18. There was a call-up, or as we say in Těšany, "hasenda". Thirteen boys were taken, and all were found fit for military service. [The word "hasenda" is not in my dictionaries, but it would appear from Vermouzek that the occasion was a somewhat ceremonial one.]

The weather throughout March was very unfavourable. On March 5, it started to freeze, and night temperatures varied between 6–10 degrees below zero. On March 9, it was 11 degrees below. From March 18 to March 21 the nightly frosts became lighter, and every afternoon people went to the fields to sow. Then the weather again worsened, rain alternated with snow, and the temperatures varied between 1–2 and 7 degrees below zero. This continued until the end of the month.

The unfavourable weather continued during the first week of April, but on April 7 it was possible to continue with sowing and with pruning the vineyards.

April 15. The first thunderstorm arrived, the nightly frosts ceased, and the apricot trees blossomed in the warm days.

April 30. There was an animal inspection. Many land-holders were found to have unregistered pigs. At Matěj Chalupa's at No. 44, they found a tub containing meat from a pig slaughtered without a permit. The meat, lard, and other products were confiscated and taken to Židlochovice.

April 1. Květa from Žatčany started two years of military service. [This item is out of sequence, and appears to have been written later and squeezed into a convenient blank line.]

As last year, the May Day celebrations were held in Židlochovice.

May 8. We sowed hemp. This year, people have been ordered to sow hemp and to plant vegetables, namely carrots, parsnips, peas, garlic, gherkins, tomatoes, cabbages, and Brussels sprouts. The state farms were planting medicinal herbs, liquorice, and various other drugs.

Another free trade had vanished, that of the "Lime merchants". From time immemorial, they used to come from the Moravian Karst [a limestone region to the north-east of Brno, famous for its caves and caverns] and carry lime through the towns and villages in waggons covered in white canvas. From early spring until winter, they would go through the villages and invite people to buy their products, calling out in a sing-song voice "vápno, vápno, vápínko váp váp". ["Vápno" is lime, the other words are derivatives, and it is possible to imagine the way in which a merchant crying his wares from a wagon would exaggerate and elongate the long "a"]. From my girlhood, I remember Mr Travníček from Ochoz, who always called "vápno vápínko pěkné bílé pargálove kupte vápno" [Ochoz is a village in the Karst some ten kilometres north-east of Brno, and "Lime, limey limey, fine snow-white lime, buy my lime" would seem to be a rough equivalent of his chant]. And now we had come to the point where these lime merchants were not allowed to hawk their lime through the villages. Lime, like

everything else, was under the control of the state, and now the coal depots sold it. Delivery lorries went through the villages, and a representative of the depot divided the lime among the people. The lorries came only infrequently, and so there was a shortage even of lime.

May 20. There were 5 and in some places even 6 degrees of frost, which completely scorched the vineyards, maize, beans, potatoes, gherkins, and tomatoes. On the three following days, May 21, 22, and 23, there were still 2 to 3 degrees of frost. People ploughed back the frost-bitten maize and planted afresh, likewise the beans and gherkins, but the same could not be done with the tomatoes because the seedlings which had been kept were also frostbitten. And this year people had large delivery quotas of tomatoes, 4–6–8–10–12 cents depending on how many hectares they were cultivating.

May 24, Saturday. Brother Jaromír started to pull down the family home, No. 100, which he intended to rebuild from scratch. The house had been renovated by our father in 1903, when he had put a new front wall, with new windows and door, on the old foundations, but had kept the old roof (which had been put on after the fire of 1876).

May 27. While digging out the cellar which Jaromír wanted to have under the new house, they proved the truth of something which family tradition had handed down from generation to generation. This was that there had been pits from which people had dug gypsum (plaster) in the place where No. 100 now stood. Now that the house had been pulled down and the hole for the cellar dug out, the truth of the tradition was plain to see. The brickwork of foundations one metre broad went down to a depth of 1.20 metres (which was the depth to which the cellar was being dug), and an end to it was not in sight. Further witness was provided by the multicoloured layers of earth with which the pits were filled. From this, it was clear that our predecessors had started to build from the bottom of the pits, and so had filled them up. The walls to the depth mentioned above were made from unfired bricks. It was interesting how masonry softened by long ages in the ground was beautiful to dig, and to see the multicoloured bricks from which it had been constructed. Some were yellow, others grey or even coal-black depending on the material from which they had been made. It was also interesting to see the kind of mortar which had been used to bind them.

The first third of May had been very warm. Rains came after May 10, and it got very cold up to the five-degree frost of May 20. After that, it remained very cold and wet until the end of the month.

June 4. My husband had an operation on his prostate, which had been giving him trouble for a long time.

June 18. At 9 o'clock, there was a great thunderstorm with hail. There was not a great deal of damage around the village, but the vineyards were badly hit, and vines already backward after the frost were damaged anew by the hail.

June 23. My husband came home after a four-week stay in hospital. He had come safely through his operation.

Almost the whole of June had been very cold and wet, and field work, weeding of beet and hoeing, was badly behind.

July 1. Rudolf Liška of No. 41, teacher at the local secondary school, was named chairman of the village council in place of Barnabáš Sedláček of No. 266. The election, or by another name nomination, was done by the committee of the communist party.

July 7. The vines damaged by hail were again backward, and the growers were pruning and applying the first spray.

The harvest started on July 16. The corn was of a good height but had been badly beaten down by thunderstorms and rain, and damage in the fields near the vineyards was from 50 to 70 per cent.

July 25. Threshing started. It was announced over the loudspeakers that threshing would be charged by the weight of corn threshed, and not by the kilowatt-hour as previously. In the first instance, 30 crowns would be charged for each 100kg threshed, and the final reckoning would come later.

The weather during the first two-thirds of July had been very favourable, and occasional rain had greatly helped the late-sown root crops and hay. The second cutting of hay was better than the first. The third part of the month was dry and without rain.

August. Thanks to the favourable weather, the harvest had gone quickly and smoothly, and there was already little corn left to be taken to the threshing machines. Throughout the harvest, an official from

the region was present at the council offices, and if somebody wanted to cut his corn with a reaper-binder, or to thresh it, he had to announce the fact at the council offices, and the official noted it down and gave further instructions.

The loudspeakers were continually announcing that people should hurry up with the threshing, that delivery quotas must be fulfilled by August 25, and that anyone who had not delivered by that day would receive a price 15 per cent lower. People were therefore threshing night and day, but in spite of all their efforts the work was going very slowly. The machines were unrepaired, and so were unable to process as much corn as when they had private owners who kept them in order.

The corn had done well, with lots of straw and plenty of grain. Even so, not everyone could fulfil his quota, because these had been set higher than in the previous year.

This year, as during the German occupation, we in Těšany would be taking our corn to a mill elsewhere, because the mill of Ludvik Dobrovolný at No. 1 was closed. Těšany was assigned to the mill at Žatčany. Several other mills in the neighbourhood had been closed, and brother Antonín was milling for nine villages.

This year, there were again permits for crushing, and permits for grinding and crushing were issued only to those who had fulfilled their delivery quotas. The cost of a permit, whether for grinding or for crushing, was 30 crowns at the council office. All crushers in the village were officially sealed except that of Jos. Horák at No. 216, which was made available to people who had fulfilled their delivery quotas and had obtained a permit.

Workmen who had more than half a hectare of land did not receive August coupons for bread, flour, and bakery products. Previously, workmen had received coupons if they had perhaps two hectares.

August 25. This had been designated as the last day for delivering corn, and by 10 o'clock in the evening all delivery quotas had to be fulfilled. But even though people had been threshing night and day, on Sundays and on feast days, not everyone had succeeded in threshing enough. And so, after 10 o'clock in the evening, there was an inspection of those who had not fulfilled their quotas.

The inspection went first to Jos. Chalupa at No. 23 (who had served a sentence of three months in prison for not fulfilling his quota the previous year), and took from his granary all the corn which he had kept for sowing and grinding. The same night, there was an inspection at Frant. Rotnágl's at No. 27, and here also they cleaned out the store-room.

The next day, August 26, they took corn from Frant Pacas at No. 88, Edvard Langášek at No. 48, and Frant Langášek at No. 203. These were not willing either to put the corn into sacks or to take it to the co-operative, and so the inspectors themselves bagged up the corn and loaded it on a waggon. They then had to push the waggon to the co-operative, because people refused to lend them draught animals. People were indignant and grumbled bitterly, saying that things had not been not so bad even under Hitler and that was during the war.

A great boon to older people was the old age pension which many were now receiving (700 crowns per month), because providing for the older generation had always been a cause of quarrels within families. This was particularly so at present, when the delivery of the quota would leave many people without even any seed corn. Now old people were no longer thrown back on a retirement provision from within the family.

August had been almost wholly dry. Threshing was completed, and the village had fulfilled its prescribed quota.

September. As in every year, the children went back to school, and those who had left school before the holidays started learning a trade. But not one apprentice went to a private master as previously, because there were no free businesses.

So the would-be apprentices could not choose the occupation which most appealed to them, and shortly before the end of the school year they were presented by the labour office with a list of vacancies in various fields. The largest number were in the mines. Other places were few, and not everybody got one. Among the girls, not one went into dressmaking, hairdressing, or confectionery, but they went as locksmiths, lathe operators, and bakers. Boys and girls alike had to live communally in hostels, and were allowed home only once a month.

September 3. Mothers of children of school age went to school to sign a petition that religion be taught at school. Previously, this had not been necessary, because religion had been a part of the school curriculum just like any other subject.

September 7. It was announced that because the village had fulfilled its corn quota, corn could now be crushed for animal feed without a permit. So the crushers were unsealed, and made available to us.

September 15. We delivered our poultry. For geese and ducks, we received 33 crowns per kilogramme (last year 43 crowns), and for a 4kg unfattened goose we received 132 crowns (newly hatched goslings had been at 250–300 crowns).

September was the month of winemaking, but no grapes would be gathered in Těšany this year. The vines, attacked by frost and then battered by hail, were unable to bear a crop. Growers looked sadly at the vines, and judged from their condition that there would not be any crop next year either.

September had been cold and wet, and the potato and maize harvest was markedly delayed.

October 15. It was announced over the loudspeakers that those who had killed a pig on the black during the winter (for a wedding) had been sentenced. Marie Bučková of No. 42, land-holder, had to pay 10,000 crowns, her son Pavel Buček, of the same address, 3,000 crowns, and Josefa Bučková, of No. 135, also 3,000 crowns (this last penalty had been reduced because they said she was on social benefit).

October had been very cold and wet, and so the harvesting of potatoes and maize was still not finished.

Sunday November 23. Around 9 o'clock in the morning, a fire broke out in the house of Rudolf Malý at No. 159. The efforts of the fire brigade and the inhabitants prevented the fire from spreading, and even a part of the house was saved.

If wives wanted to go to Brno to sell fattened geese, ducks, or eggs, it wasn't enough to get a certificate from the local council as in the previous year. They had to have a certificate of fulfilment of quota from the district office at Židlochovice.

Towards the end of November, both in our village and in the entire neighbourhood, there was an outbreak of foot and mouth disease, which was so severe that seven cows had to be slaughtered. As a result of this infectious disease, the taverns, the cinema, and even the church were closed. This was so that people from the infected houses would not come into contact with others and spread the disease.

The weather during November had been very unfavourable, with constant rain and towards the end of the month also frosts and snow. Field work was delayed, and some people had still not finished lifting beet. Preparation for winter wheat was also very backward, and two-thirds of the fields were still to be ploughed.

On December 22, the public places such as the church, taverns, and cinema were reopened, on the condition that the inhabitants of the houses affected by the foot and mouth disease would be well-disciplined and not go into them. The disease was widespread throughout the region, and goats and pigs were affected as well as cattle.

December 29. The two-year-old son of Alois Novotný at No. 47 fell into a water butt and drowned.

On New Year's Eve, December 31, brother Antonín in Žatčany reached his fiftieth birthday. We all went to the celebration, even Josef from Dubňany, and in good health and friendly merriment celebrated this important day in his life.

The weather at the start of December had been frosty with snowstorms, and temperatures were 7–10–12 degrees below freezing point. In the first days of December, some people were still finishing harvesting beet. The frost eased before Christmas and was followed by wet weather, with temperatures varying between 1–2 degrees above zero during the day and 2–3–4 degrees below at night. All field work was halted, and a good half of the fields were still unploughed and had not been prepared for the spring.

We had experienced little delight in 1952, but many trials and tribulations. There was much hardship among those who worked on the land (in the heart of the village, among the land-holders). Almost all were buying bread on the free market, and many were also buying flour, for which they had to go into Brno. Flour on the free market could not be had elsewhere. An individual could not however buy more than 5kg.

Land-holders who had fulfilled every delivery quota received coupons for 1kg of sugar per person and 10dkg of soap. Those working on the land who received coupons could be counted on the fingers of one hand, because if somebody had a shortfall of say 50 litres in his milk delivery he received neither ration nor clothing coupons even if he had completely fulfilled all his other quotas. And so many people had to buy both sugar and soap on the free market [prices on next page].

- 1952, 1953 -

Item		Price with coupons (crowns)	Without coupons
Bread	3kg loaf	24	48
Flour	1kg	18	38
Sugar	"	15	140
Soap	"	40	120–150
Eggs	each	3	8–10–12
Coffee	10dkg	(coffee not on coupons)	150
Tea	1dkg		16
Milk	1 litre	[figure missing from text]	15
Margarine	1kg	38	280
Butter	"	80	360
Rice	"		300
Lentils	"		100
Beans	"		80
Bicycle			2800–3000
Domestic sewing machine			15000
Motorcycle			60000
Bricks, fired	1000		5000
Cement	100kg		500
Radio receiver			5000–8000–10000–14000

The prices of textiles and clothing were the same as in the two preceding years.

The prices for farm produce were almost the same as in preceding years. Wheat 395 crowns for 100kg, rye 370 crowns, barley 371 crowns, potatoes for industry 70 crowns, potatoes for eating 80–90 crowns.

### 1953

The New Year started with music from the loudspeakers, and a reminder that we were entering the fifth year of the five-year plan and everyone should redouble their efforts in order that it be fulfilled.

January 12 and 13. All those who had not fulfilled their delivery quotas for 1952 were summoned to the council office and fined, with imprisonment in the event of non-payment. The greatest shortfalls had been in milk and eggs, and the fine for each litre of milk short, and for each egg, was ten crowns. Many people were sentenced to heavy fines (Josef Chalupa of No. 23 to 25,000 crowns, Frant. Pacas of No. 88 to 20,000 crowns).

January 21. The names of 93 people who had not fulfilled some delivery quota, and would therefore not be receiving coupons for sugar, soap, and clothing, were posted at the council office.

Up to January 25, people had been allowed to slaughter pigs at home even if they had not fulfilled all their delivery quotas, but after January 25 pig-slaughter would be allowed only to those who had fulfilled their quarterly meat quota.

January 26. It was announced over the loudspeakers that the Těšany mill was closed for good, and that in future it would be necessary to go to Žatčany. With official permission, the mill had been in operation during the peak period from October to the New Year. [This would seem to imply that there had been some relaxation in the closure reported in August.]

From February 1, there was a reduction in the sugar ration. The basic ration was reduced from 1kg to ½kg. Workers in employment, who had been receiving 1.50kg, now received 1.20, and children, who had also been receiving 1.50kg, now received 1.40kg up to age 12 and then 1.30kg to age 18.

February 13. Miller Ludvík Dobrovolný of No 1, and land-holders Matěj Chalupa of No. 44 and Tobiáš Štěpánek of No. 195, were designated and publicly announced as kulaks. [My English dictionary defines “kulak” as “a peasant working for his own profit in Soviet Russia”. “Denounced” has become the standard abbreviation for “designated and publicly announced”, but it seems appropriate here to provide a literal translation.]

People had the same troubles with pig slaughtering as in the previous year, and this year the most valuable portion of the skin had to be surrendered from each slaughter.

February 19. During the evening, Těšany was visited by a large number of gentlemen from

elsewhere, who split up into groups and went through the village on a recruiting campaign for the standard agricultural co-operative. But in the whole village, they did not succeed in obtaining a single new member. [This is the last that the writer says about this first "Standard Agricultural Co-operative" in Těšany, and according to Vermouzek it was formally dissolved in 1954.]

February 25. Ration coupons for March were issued, and two households living in the same house were treated as one. Perhaps the two households were living completely separately, for example a retired couple living with the younger generation but not cooking in the same kitchen. Or again, perhaps two workmen's families had each been tilling two measures of land in order to keep a pig for their needs. In the past, both families had had the right to coupons for flour, bread, and everything else, but now, after the combination into one family, they had together four measures and so did not have any right to ration coupons even though the family might have ten members. And so the village was everywhere full of lamenting, weeping, and cursing.

In January, the frosts had not been severe, only 2–4–5 degrees below zero. There were heavy frosts on only two days, 16 below on January 21 and 14 below on January 27. In February, temperatures varied between 4–6–9 degrees below, with 14 below on February 9. On February 11 there was a snowstorm, and thereafter temperatures were 4–6 degrees below.

At the beginning of March, people started to serve prison sentences for non-fulfilment of quotas. They had been inflicted with fines of many thousand crowns, and imprisonment followed when they could not pay. It did not help one land-holder to explain that he had not fulfilled his milk quota because his cow had died, nor another that he had not delivered all his eggs because his poultry had been killed by fowl pest, as had been officially confirmed by the research institute in Brno where the hens had been sent for examination. The quotas had to be fulfilled.

March 14. At 11 o'clock in the morning, the President of the Czechoslovak Republic, Klement Gotvald, died. He died suddenly and unexpectedly, and the rumour went around that his death had not been natural.

March 16. Growers started to prune the vineyards.

March 21. Antonín Zápotocký, previously Prime Minister, was elected President.

The temperatures at the beginning of March were 5–7 degrees below zero at night and 4–7 degrees above zero during the day, and people started sowing on March 9. But on March 13 the frost intensified to 10 degrees, and there was a fall of snow. A thaw set in after March 20, and although there were still 1–4–5 degrees of frost at night the daytime temperatures rose to 10–16 degrees above zero. People started to sow once more. The last frost was on March 26 and temperatures were above 20 degrees until the end of the month, but no rain came.

April 3. The apricot trees came into bloom, and on April 4 people started planting sugar beet and early potatoes.

April 20. The spring wheat was germinating very badly, because nearly two thirds of the fields had not been ploughed until the spring, and since sowing there had been no rain. The soil had dried out, and the seed in it was dry.

April 29. We sowed flax. This year, our village had been ordered to grow crops which until now had not been customary, namely to sow flax and to plant tobacco.

April had been warm and dry, but rain came on the last day of the month.

May 9. There was a five-degree frost, which scorched the vines and also the fruit in the gardens.

May 28. My husband tripped over some steps in the yard and broke both his arms, the left at the wrist and the right at the elbow. He was taken by ambulance to the hospital on the "Golden Hill" in Brno, where they put both arms in plaster and sent him home. The plaster would be taken off after five weeks.

Most of May had been dry.

From June 1, there was a currency reform, with a replacement of all paper money and copper coins. At the same time, the coupon system was terminated, and in future all goods apart from coal and wood would be on free sale.

Every citizen who did not use wage-earning labour (kulaks and tradesmen who were still working independently) received new money for up to 300 crowns in the ratio 5:1, that is for 300 old crowns he received 60 new crowns. All other money was exchanged at the rate of 50:1. Money deposited in savings banks was exchanged at the rate of 5:1 up to 5,000 old crowns, then at 6.25:1 up to 10,000 old

crowns, then at 10:1 to 20,000 old crowns, then at 25:1 to 50,000 old crowns, then at 30:1.

The previous banknotes had been for 5,000, 1,000, 500, 100, 50, 20, 10, and 5 crowns, with copper coins for 1 crown, 50 haléř, and 20 haléř. The newest coins were of aluminium, and older nickel coins for 1 crown and 2 crowns were still circulating. The largest new banknote was for 100 crowns, then 50, 25, 10, 5, 3, and 1 crown. Copper coins were for 25, 10, 5, 3, and 1 haléř.

In connection with the currency reform, there were new prices for all provisions and manufactured goods in the shops.

Item		Price (new crowns)
Bread	1kg	2.80
Roll, 60g	each	0.40
Rough flour	1kg	6
Fine-ground flour	"	5
Pearl barley	"	5.20
Lump sugar	"	14
(sugar had sold at 15 old crowns for 1kg)		
Beef	"	25–28
Pork	"	26–29.40
Veal	"	20–32
Salami	"	20–23–28–32–40
Rendered lard	"	36–40
Butter, first quality	"	44
Butter, selected	"	51
Table margarine	"	24
Edible oil	"	30
Milk, summer price	1 litre	2
Milk, winter price	"	2.40
(this was milk brought from the creamery in Brno, pasteurized and at least semi-skimmed)		
Eggs, summer price	each	1.10
Eggs, winter price	"	1.70
Potatoes	1kg	0.72–0.84
Marmalade	"	8
Table salt, packaged	"	2
Coffee beans, roasted	"	300
Tea	50g packet	13
Beer	1 litre	1.40
Rum, 40%	"	68
Wine	"	30

Manufactured item		Price (new crowns)
Printed cotton for ladies' everyday aprons and clothes	1 metre	17
Material for men's shirts	"	22
Coarse cotton for bedding	"	35
Linen for bedding, 136cm wide	"	47
Cloth for men's suits, 140cm wide	"	200
Ladies' dress material, 130cm wide	"	96
Ladies' dress material from artificial cotton, 90cm wide	"	47
Man's suit, medium quality	each	530
Man's winter coat, medium quality	"	630
Lady's cloak, medium quality	"	620
Man's shirt, medium quality	"	70
Track suit bottoms for adults	pair	58
Ladies' stockings from artificial silk	"	22
Ladies' nylon stockings	"	108

(continued)

Manufactured item		Price (new crowns)
Men's cotton socks	pair	5.80
Men's walking-out shoes	"	168
Men's working shoes	"	120
Ladies' shoes	"	[left blank]
Soap for washing clothes	1kg	16
Toilet soap	100g tablet	3.20
Cigarettes, "Partisan"	10	1.80
(the previous price was 10 crowns for 10)		
Radio receiver, cheapest	each	940
Bedroom suite (not highly polished)	"	3600
Domestic sewing machine, folding into its table	"	2300
Bicycle	"	560
Motorcycle	"	12000
Fired bricks	1000	700
Cement	100kg	100

This currency reform affected and beggared not just people of property, but also workmen who had toiled and saved over a number of years either to build a house or to equip their children, and again those who had saved some crowns in reserve before going into retirement. Also, all money which had been in blocked accounts since 1945 lost its value.

It was easy to calculate how dear goods were according to the old currency when we received 2 new crowns for 100 old crowns. Similarly, workmen's wages were reduced to a fifth. All taxes and duties owed to the state were reduced by 5:1, but what the state owed to someone was reduced by 50:1.

And so, in less than ten years, people had been twice deprived of their savings (in 1945 and now again eight years later).

The first two thirds of June had been almost dry, but after June 20 there were thunderstorms and rain which continued until the end of the month.

The wet weather at the end of June came again in July, and thunderstorms and rain continued from July 6 right through to July 12.

July 7. In the moments when it was not raining, people started to cut rye, and immediately it was cut to bind and stook it.

July 20. The weather had slightly improved, and the harvest was proceeding rapidly even without the aid of the state tractor depot. An announcement had been made over the loudspeakers that anyone wanting to hire a reaper-binder from the depot had to pay in advance, and in the new money. Nobody had much new money, and so nobody hired from the depot.

July 27. The weather had again worsened. Thunderstorms and rain continued for a whole week. There were still many stooks in the fields which were already sprouting, and the four threshing machines which were threshing the corn from the fields were going very slowly because they had not been repaired after last year's threshing. This year there were few stooks, because the corn had been sparse and low. The stooks contained plenty of grain, but little straw.

Again, the first cut of hay had been poor, whereas the second cut was very good.

The first week of August was still wet, but then the weather improved, and people brought the last stooks to the threshing machines.

Every day, the loudspeakers urged people to follow the slogan "from the fields to the threshing floor, from the threshing floor to the state" [this is a rhythmic rhyming slogan in the original Czech], so that they would fulfil the prescribed corn delivery quotas as quickly as possible. Although the corn had yielded well, those with larger assessments would find it difficult to fulfil their quotas, which had been set higher than last year.

Threshing this year cost 12 crowns per kilowatt-hour (last year it had been 30 old crowns per 100kg of threshed corn). Therefore many who were threshing wet corn from the fields, or from sodden stacks which had been standing outside, would not make as much from the corn as it was costing them for the threshing.

September. As in previous years, the fulfilment of the corn quota was demanded by the continual summoning of people to the council office, and by inspections which were even carried out at night. Those who had not stocked animals in conformity with the plan were not paid for their corn until the matter was remedied. Furthermore, those who were in debt to the local savings bank (the former Raifaisenka), which was now transformed into a state financial institution and had an office in Židlochovice, did not receive payment for animals, corn, or any agricultural product. These payments were taken by the bank to redeem the debt, irrespective of whether the debtor had other financial obligations.

Further, it was announced over the loudspeakers that those who had fulfilled their corn delivery quota could claim a permit to grind at the council office, but before they received it they would have to pay all outstanding charges, that is for threshing, for bulls and billygoats, for sows [I presume for servicing, though the text definitely has "sows" as distinct from "bulls" and "billygoats"], and the dog tax.

September 7. The potato harvest started. The yield was very good, and only isolated plants had been attacked by "potato shrivelling".

September 18. We collected the grapes. The crop was very poor. We harvested 140kg of grapes. There was no delivery quota this year.

During the second half of September, we harvested the maize, whose yield, as for several years, was not very good.

The whole of September had been without rain.

October 17. On the night between Saturday and Sunday, drunken youths coming from Nesvačilka amused themselves by breaking down the cross which Josef Karaže of No. 35 and his wife Marie had set up in 1887. This act of vandalism bore witness to the moral decay of the young.

October 26. Throughout almost the whole week, the criminal police interrogated the young regarding the breaking down of the cross by the road to Nesvačilka. The cross was of cast iron in a stone base, and had been broken into eleven pieces and the base uprooted from the earth.

The chief culprit was identified as 18-year-old Jos Horáček from No. 145, who admitted the act but refused to betray his companions. He said he would take it on himself. He was therefore ordered to restore the cross to its original state.

October, like September, had been wholly dry. Only on the last day of the month was there any rain.

November 2. People started to sow. During the drought, nobody had sown, and now people were sowing with great misgivings because a result of the drought had been a plague of mice which were eating everything they came across.

People were delivering their quotas of potatoes to the co-operative and receiving 17 crowns for 100kg, and anyone who needed potatoes could buy them from the co-operative at 92 crowns for 100kg.

November 12. Today, civilians up to 50 years old attended a call-up in Židlochovice. My brother Pavel, 48 years old, was adjudged fit for active service.

November 21. Marta Rychlíková, the daughter of my brother Pavel, was married. Her bridegroom was Karel Svoboda from Moutnice.

November 24. After twelve years, there was a happy event at brother Jaromír's at No. 100. The crow came and brought twin girls, who were christened Jaromíra and Eva.

November had been wholly dry. The corn sown at the start of the month grew well, but did not long stay green. After the beet and potato harvest, a great multitude of mice threw themselves on the growing corn, and on several days the sown fields were black with them.

Christmas is the festival of love which expresses itself in gifts under the family Christmas tree. This year, however, the gifts would be small and in some places non-existent, because people had no money. The shop windows were full of goods, but they were dear, earnings were small, and the prices of the agricultural products we were delivering were fixed very low [list on next page].

Item		Price (new crowns)
Wheat, according to quality	1q	78-82
Rye, according to quality	"	64-65
Barley, for malting	"	64.20-82
Barley, for industry	"	56.60-57.80
Barley, for animal feed	"	54
Oats	"	55.20-56.60
Sugar beet	"	12
Pork, as part of the quota	1kg	6
Geese and ducks, as part of the quota	"	6
Fattened geese and ducks, at the market in Brno	"	25-35
Eggs, as part of the quota	"	8.84
Oranges, at the Christmas market	1kg	18
Lemons, ditto	"	12
Apples, ditto	"	6

We had been cultivating 1.89ha of arable land, and from that our delivery quotas for 1953 were corn 375kg, potatoes 165kg, beef 50kg, pork 74kg, milk 250 litres, eggs 529.

Thus ended the five-year plan, of which it had been said many times on the radio, and written in the newspapers, that at its end there would be wealth. But the promised wealth had not come, only more work and less money.