

MY LIFE IN
TOTALITARIANISM
1941-1991

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TOTALITARIANISM
1941-1991

The Unusual Career
of an Electronics Engineer

Peter Staric

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Contents

| | |
|--------------------|----|
| Introduction | 21 |
|--------------------|----|

PART 1

Occupation

| | | |
|------|--|-----|
| 1.1 | Italians Arrived | 37 |
| 1.2 | German Stukas Destroyed the Ljubljana Broadcasting Station | 43 |
| 1.3 | Anti-Imperialists Front Established | 47 |
| 1.4 | New Situation in High School (Realka) | 49 |
| 1.5 | Radio Amateurs' Activities | 53 |
| 1.6 | Secret Radio Station | 56 |
| 1.7 | Mutual Killing Has Begun | 60 |
| 1.8 | Brother Rudi Returns from Split | 69 |
| 1.9 | Sent to Italian Concentration Camp Gonars | 72 |
| 1.10 | Arrival at the Camp | 77 |
| 1.11 | Epidemics of Dysentery | 85 |
| 1.12 | The Visit of the Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli | 90 |
| 1.13 | Some Fellows Dug a Tunnel and Escaped | 92 |
| 1.14 | For Cold Weather Lice had Spread | 94 |
| 1.15 | Transfers to Campo Monigo, Treviso | 95 |
| 1.16 | Released from the Camp! | 99 |
| 1.17 | At Home Again | 101 |

| | | |
|------|--|-----|
| 1.18 | TB | 105 |
| 1.19 | The Ultimate Polarization; Germans Arrived | 115 |
| 1.20 | Allied Air Raids..... | 123 |
| 1.21 | Last Year of German Occupation..... | 129 |

PART 2

End of War; Communists Introduced “People’s Democracy”

| | | |
|------|--|-----|
| 2.1 | Partisans Arrive in Ljubljana | 139 |
| 2.2 | Dissolution of Slovenian Army | 146 |
| 2.3 | Return to Ljubljana; End of My Military Service | 153 |
| 2.4 | Sanatorium Golnik; Return to Civilian Life | 160 |
| 2.5 | Studies at the University..... | 165 |
| 2.6 | Terror Sets On..... | 174 |
| 2.7 | Struggles for Life..... | 189 |
| 2.8 | Professional Work..... | 194 |
| 2.9 | Moved to another Apartment and Again to Sanatorium | 197 |
| 2.10 | Graduation and Working as Engineer..... | 205 |
| 2.11 | Introducing Personal Cars in Yugoslavia | 214 |
| 2.12 | Mountaineering..... | 218 |
| 2.13 | Traveling Abroad..... | 230 |
| 2.14 | Decision to Work Abroad..... | 243 |
| 2.15 | The American Interlude..... | 251 |
| 2.16 | Back Home in Ljubljana Again..... | 267 |
| 2.17 | Working at Iskra Again; Tito and the Communists Stepped on the Brake..... | 273 |

| | | |
|------------------------|---|-----|
| 2.18 | Marshall Tito Dies | 286 |
| 2.19 | Twenty Months of Mobbing | 289 |
| 2.20 | Working at Jožef Stefan Institute | 297 |
| 2.21 | Moving to Milan Vidmar Institute; PhD Thesis..... | 308 |
| 2.22 | Struggle for independence of Slovenia | 311 |
| Epilogue | | 327 |
| Bibliography | | 341 |
| Short Life Story | | 345 |
| Index..... | | 347 |
| Figure Captions..... | | 351 |

* The English pronunciation of the specific Slovenian or Serbian fonts is:

č as ch

ć as tj

š as sh

ž as zh

The author's name Starič should be pronounced as Stahrich.

To my children,
Miroslav and Zorana

Comments to Figures and Sources

Since this is the book of my life, I have mostly included the photos of my family, of me and of my friends. However, I have added some pictures of the war time in Slovenia, of our mountains, of my hometown Ljubljana and of the Italian Concentration camp on the Adriatic Island Rab, which are relevant to my narrative.

To prove every important historical event I have mentioned, by quoting the source in brackets, e.g. [32], would not be appropriate in a book of this sort. I have done this only in some very important cases, where I have written the full book title. The reader can find the particulars in the Bibliography. Since many Slovenes, who live in USA, Australia or UK might read this book I have quoted also the relevant Slovenian sources. Besides, I am preparing the Slovenian book, where I will include the same Bibliography.

Preface

Most war memories are biased, depending on which side the writer is, as well as on the freedom of expression during the time of writing and publishing. The last is valid for the totalitarian systems, which were introduced after the war under the influence of the Soviet Union. Since in Yugoslavia we had such system, here the narratives of the victorious side were mostly published from 1945 until 1990, when Yugoslavia began falling apart. However, several years before the disintegration, the stories of the defeated side began appearing sporadically, with increased frequency in newspapers and magazines as truncated and censored as they were. With very rare exceptions, the authors of any side stood firmly on their positions: they were good guys, and the others are the bad ones. In rare cases, the authors admitted some “small irregularities or mistakes” on their own side, but I cannot recall reading about any credit given to their adversaries.

Within the frames as drafted above, two basic pictures came to expression. On the first one, Germans, Italians, and other occupiers were painted as bad guys. The Slovenian counterrevolutionaries (Vaške Straže and later Domobranci), who joined them, were displayed still worse. They were shown as traitors, and in history, numerous cases explained what happened with the traitors! The other picture showed the (Slovenian) Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna Fronta* or OF), which was initiated and led by the communists, in the worst light. They were Stalin’s puppets and criminals, who took the advantage of occupation and the suffering of the nation as a lever to seize the full power after the war (which they did). Each side kept blaming the other one for many cases of torture and execution of their adversaries as well as of the entirely innocent people, including children. Even now, as the communist system is gone, the same accusations are either published or heard back and forth, time and again. So far, I have had enough experience to tell that people who are blinded by communism, fascism, Nazism, or even by chauvinist nationalism are capable of committing the worst possible crimes. Unfortunately, such crimes were committed on the territory of my country, Slovenia. And about six hundred mass graves have been discovered so far, in which about one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand people murdered after WWII were buried. These

mass graves were spread all over Slovenia. Several decades after the war, everything seems normal on the surface. But whenever we went out, especially when hiking in forests and valleys, the awareness of the proximity of these graves, many of them still not discovered, cause an uneasy and depressing feeling. Maybe this was why I prefer going higher up in the mountains of our eastern part of Alps, where the hard rock prevents digging any graves, so there was no reason for such bad feelings.

It was difficult for a foreigner, who did not know the war circumstances here, to take side in our postwar world's struggle between the former partisans, who had brought the revolution here and the "counterrevolutionaries"—those few who survived and their numerous relatives. This was especially difficult because the voice of a third, impartial, or, let us say, equidistant side was almost never heard. Now, after so many years, it is possible to judge the circumstances during the war more objectively. Those partisan doctors and nurses, who treated the wounded fighters under impossible circumstances and the partisans, who crisscrossed our mountains and forests from 1942 to 1945 in cold winter, starving, yet fighting the occupiers, deserve full credit. They joined OF to drive the Italians and the Germans out of Slovenia. Almost all of them did not have the slightest idea of the communist revolution planned by their leaders at the time they joined the movement.

It was also difficult to ignore the reasons of the other anticommunist side. Already after June 22, 1941, when Germany had attacked USSR, the communists in the Liberation Front began shooting not only the real traitors, who were very few, but also and mostly the political adversaries, including their close relatives, way before any action on the anticommunists' side had begun. This happened mostly in the towns whilst the situation in the country was still worse. There, the partisans kept forcing the farmers to give them shelter and food. (In many cases, both were given voluntarily.) When the occupiers learned of this, the farmers had to suffer whilst the partisans withdrew to the forests. Sometimes, the partisans attacked the Italians or the Germans, totally neglecting the question if the result of their attack was worth the consequences. At the retaliation, the enemy troops burnt whole villages, executed the adult male population, and sent the rest to the concentration camp. To avoid such unnecessary suffering, the anticommunists asked the occupiers for arms in order to defend themselves, thus forming the "village guards" (Vaške Straže). They were better armed and increased to twelve thousand troops; they were renamed as "home guards" (Domobranci) in September 1943 when the German troops came here, "replacing" the Italians. Under the surface, the hope of Domobranci was the arrival of the western allies (British and American troops) to Istria and further to Slovenia. In this case, the communists would have no chances, and then Domobranci expected to get the possibility to turn their arms against the

Germans. When the Germans learned of this plot, they sent the leaders of this idea to Dachau and forced Domobranci to swear the loyalty to SS and their Fuehrer, thus making them sworn traitors. And this had become the reason for their great tragedy.

In April 1941, time when the Italian, the German, and the Hungarian troops occupied Yugoslavia, I was fifteen years old. Since we were educated in a patriotic spirit, I was sympathetic to OF. However, when I realized that the struggle against the occupiers was only the means for the communists to seize the full power, I became badly disappointed. I was against Domobranci, against the communism in OF, against the Italians, and against the Germans. All of them were guilty of terrible crimes—against us, Slovenes. In this mess, only the western allies had retained my full sympathy. (If I would know how Churchill and Stalin had bartered their “zones of influence,” where Yugoslavia was split 50:50 among them, I would be disappointed in them as well). I was glad when the Russians were pushing the German troops back toward Berlin. On the other hand, I believed the German news of how the Soviet troops were raping the German women and plundering their property. I was afraid what would happen when these wild troops came here. (In the northeast Slovenia, the Russians troops behaved not much better than they did in Germany.) All these facts plus tuberculosis, which I had brought from the Italian concentration camp, were the reason that I did not want and also could not join either OF or Domobranci. But I, nevertheless, contributed as much as I could to help our struggle against the occupiers: I kept unblocking radio receivers and building shortwave radios. Of course, my work in the warm and safe apartment, with regular meals, as scarce as they were, could not be compared with the armed struggle of the partisans. However, I also fought my own, invisible, life-and-death struggle with TB, for which then there was not any effective medication available. Like any young person, I too did not think of grave consequences in case the occupiers would learn of my radio activities. Later, when the cases of arrests, torture, executions, and internment became known, there was no way out, and I also did not want to withdraw. I kept working, but I was afraid and became more cautious.

The following narrative was written as I, in my late teens and later as a young man growing to my late eighties, was seeing the situation. To clarify my story when needed, I have included some information, which I have learned after the war, sometimes even several decades later. Whenever it was possible and convenient, I specified the postwar source of the information. Since the Slovenian version seems to be printed first, I have also included the Slovenian sources. Because I started writing sixty years after the war, I could not avoid looking to the past as an adult person. It would be wrong to write only of sad and horrible matter, for sometimes funny events also happened. I have also

written about some good people, though they were on the enemy side—this was a taboo for decades after the war. Besides, I have also written about some purely personal/familiar/professional events, which form an important part of my life. By deleting them, the story of my life would appear too much truncated.

Even as I was basically sympathetic toward the liberation struggle, I kept my ideological distance from OF as well as Domobranci. I did not want taking part in the revolution, for this was against my belief. Hopefully, such position enabled me to write the story from an impartial point of view, which is my primary intent.

Acknowledgments

The initiator of writing my narrative was my former colleague of Tektronix, Inc., John Addis. He convinced me to write my entire life story because—he thought so—it would be interesting for English readers. To soften me, he promised to edit my English, which he did until I wrote some 80 percent of the text. Then I had to pay my full attention to the professional book, *Wideband Amplifiers*, which interrupted the writing of the present book for over ten years. On the other hand, I was also tired of writing my full life story, for who would be interested in many details of my life, which are important only for me? After the work on my professional book was over, I got another idea to complete the first book—I shrunk it to the time span of fifty years, beginning with the arrival of Italian occupiers in 1941 and ending with the disintegration of Yugoslavia in 1991, when Slovenia became independent. Then we abandoned the totalitarian communist state by introducing a multiparty system. In order to make the book understandable for English readers, who do not know much of this small part of the former Yugoslavia, I have added an extensive introduction, describing the time from my early youth until the disintegration of the former (prewar) Yugoslavia. Since many important events happened after Slovenia had become independent, I have concluded my narrative by an equally extensive epilogue.

In writing, I have often consulted my more experienced friend, journalist Viktor Blažič, to explain to me some complicated circumstances.

Besides John and Viktor, my late brother, Jože, also offered me essential help to bail me out of the Italian concentration camp (at the end of 1942) and also brought me back to my feet in the years after. Without his brotherly help, there would be no one to write this narrative.

To all three, I express my very sincere gratitude.

Introduction

For most people, their memory reaches back to some four years of age, and I belong to this average too. The first thing I remember is how I was savoring the beef soup with millet dumplings, which my mother knew to prepare so well. I was the youngest son in the family of six children—with three boys and three girls. Rudi was the eldest, and Jože, the second eldest. The sisters who followed were Adela (nicknamed Mimica), Draga, and Ana (nicknamed Ančka). Since I was born with a celiac disease and could not digest milk, I was crying all nights and thus became a menace for the whole family. At that time, the medical science was not so far to diagnose and cure my problems. Besides, my parents did not bring me to a doctor, for it would be too costly. My father was a master room painter, who had troubles often to keep the job in the years just following WWI, even as he was a very skilled and diligent worker. So my mother, who was a seamstress, contributed much and sometimes all to make the ends meet. At the age when I became aware of myself, Rudi was already in Vršac, where the parents had sent him in his late teens, because he became “unmanageable.” In that provincial town, near the Yugoslav-Romanian border, he had been accepted to a military musical school. Rudi had musical education already, because my father had paid a teacher for both of my brothers to learn playing violin. While Jože learned his lessons diligently, my father had to search around to find Rudi often, when the teacher had arrived. Later, music became the profession for Rudi, whilst Jože had graduated as a civil engineer. Since study at the University of Ljubljana was expensive, Jože earned the necessary money by playing in different bands and also in the opera of Ljubljana. In addition, my father played accordion and double bass. So I grew in a musical environment, which made me a lover of music from my early childhood.

We were dwelling in a flat in Zelena Jama (Green Pit), which was the suburb of Ljubljana, in an apartment of three rooms and a kitchen. The house, where we dwelled, was near a road, and the main railway track from NW Yugoslavia to SE Yugoslavia was just some 100 m away. In between the road and the track,

there were meadows, where some neighbors had left their chicken. Since each group had its rooster, I occasionally saw the fighting between them. I had three friends from the neighbors: Artur, Miro, and Zdenka. Artur was the son of a German officer, who had remained in the brass band of Yugoslav Army after WWI. Because the parents of Artur were German, he had some difficulties to speak Slovenian, but he was learning fast. Miro was a very bright fellow, and Zdenka was the granddaughter of the house owner, whose family had occupied the ground level, leaving us the apartment upstairs.

When my father was about to finish the work in picturesque Cooperative Bank, across the street of Hotel Union, in the center of Ljubljana, he had run out of cash. So he went to the person who had placed the order to get some advance payment for buying colors and finishing the job. However, he was refused on the ground that his companion had already exhausted all advance payments. My father got the same answers when he visited some other customers. So he had taken his bicycle, driving to his companion's home at Fužine, which was a couple of kilometers away from Ljubljana. The companion was not at home, and his wife had told that he would come in the evening. Later also, he was not at home, because he went to the Ljubljana railway station, my father had been told. When my father arrived there, he had seen his companion from far. By noticing my father, the companion jumped in front of a running locomotive to be cut into pieces.

It came out that my father was too credulous in trusting his companion because he was very religious and visited the church regularly. Much more often than churches he kept visiting also pubs, because he liked booze and gambling. So he had squandered all money, which was needed to run the business. After his tragic death, my father had to pay all debts, and the tax office had confiscated all his earnings. In order to avoid this impossible situation, he gave up his own business to get employment at a building contractor as a master. In these difficult times, I was born.

My mother had two sisters, who dwelled on the territory inhabited by Slovenes but occupied by the Italians after Austria had to withdraw for being defeated in WWI. She decided to visit them together with me when I was four years old. I still remember the photo of both of us in her passport. So we were off from the Ljubljana railway station. This was my first journey by the railway. The now-historical railway track was built in the years 1900-1906 by Austrians. We had left Yugoslavia at the entrance of a 6,327-m-long tunnel at Bohinj. At its exit, there was already Italy. At the time of our visit, the Italians were suppressing the Slovenian minority, which predominantly inhabited that

area.¹ The speaking and singing in Slovenian were forbidden, Slovenian books and newspapers were banned, and so were the Slovenian clubs. Numerous Slovenian cooperatives and some Slovenian banks perished as well. Slovenian family names were Italianized, even on the gravestones. However, being so young, I did not notice all this. The last part of the railway track ran in parallel to the beautiful turquoise Soča River (Ital. *Isonzo*). Our first stop was in Kanal (Ital. *Canale d' Isonzo*), where my aunt Beti dwelled. In this small sidling, she and my uncle ran a small hotel—which was almost totally destroyed during WWI—the butchery and sawmill. On the lower stream of the Soča Valley, twelve offensives between the Italian and the Austrian troops had taken place at the cost of about four hundred thousand million of lives, mostly on the Italian side. For the locals, this meant destructed homes, population evacuated from the war zone, and a great loss of the most active male population. However, ten years after the war, everything seemed to be rebuilt again and so was the hotel of my aunts. The only destruction I remember was, when we partly ascended Kanalski Vrh, a tiny village on the way was all ruins. Many years after, when I became a mountaineer, I ascended several mountains along the Soča Valley, where numerous relicts of this enormous slaughter could be still found.



My mother, Franja Starič, born Grablovic, at the time of her wedding



My father Jože Starič in his young years

¹ The Austrian census of 1910 was the following: The population of Julian March (Trieste, Hinterland, Istrian Peninsula) and the Islands of Kvarner Bay (mainly Cres and Lošinj) were 266,614 Slovenes, 179,773 Croats, and 356,495 Italians; the last inhabited mostly the coastal towns at the Adriatic Sea. According to *London Agreement of 1915*, Italy had occupied all this territory after WWI.

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When the visit in Kanal was over, we continued by train to Trieste to see the aunt Mici. She was the widow with three children: Carlo, Mario, and Valeria. Then I saw the Adriatic Sea and many big ships for the first time.³

² The Austrian census of 1910 was the following: The population of Julian March (Trieste, Hinterland, Istrian Peninsula) and the Islands of Kvarner Bay (mainly Cres and Lošinj) were 266,614 Slovenes, 179,773 Croats, and 356,495 Italians; the last inhabited mostly the coastal towns at the Adriatic Sea. According to *London Agreement of 1915*, Italy had occupied all this territory after WWI.

³ Later, in 1936, my aunt Mici and her grandson Remo visited us in Ljubljana. I still remember how she claimed that the best times of Trieste were when this northernmost port in the Adriatic was in the possessions of Austrians. Then the trade was flourishing. After WWI, when the port became cut off from Austria, all this big trade had been shrunk very much. She spoke Slovenian, Italian, and

We had also visited the Castle Miramar. The castle was built in 1856-1860 for the Austrian archduke Maximilian, the younger brother of the emperor, Franz-Josef. However, he did not enjoy this sidling very long time, for in 1864, he departed to Mexico, where he had become the emperor. This too did not last more than three years when he had been shot by the troops of Juárez



The first photo of me,
when I was 3 years old



With my mother,
being 9 years old (in 1933)

At return, we arrived back in Ljubljana in the middle of the night. So my mother had to carry two big cases in the dark night, almost 2 km from the station to our home. I do not remember seeing a living soul all the way. Soon after we came back, my mother sent Mimica to Kanal, which was agreed with my aunt Beti, who had no children. Being there for three years, she learned Italian. Besides, she completed a sewing class sponsored by an American firm, Singer & Co. So she became a skilled seamstress when she returned in 1931. Then my aunt got her (only) child Jožica, so she could not take care of Mimica anymore. My sister also learned Italian cooking very well, thus introducing a pleasant change in our diet.

In September 1931, when I was seven years old, I began visiting the elementary school, which was in the neighbor suburb, Moste, just about fifteen minutes' walking distance from our home. We had a very kind and pretty young teacher; she knew well how to motivate us for learning. Since I still have the school report, here are some interesting details. The learning was from Monday to Saturday inclusive, and the subjects were: religion (taught by a priest), reading, writing, Slovenian language, mathematics, history, drafting,

German very well. She had taught Remo German but not Slovenian because (and unfortunate) this language had had no future in Italy.

singing, gymnastics, and handwork. In addition, our behavior was given mark. I got an equivalent of four “As” and six “Bs” and an “excellent” for behavior. Next year, we moved to Moste from where I needed just five minutes to the school. Then my parents inscribed me to the gymnastic organization Sokol (Falcon). The origin of Sokol was Czechoslovakia, and in Yugoslavia, it became an all-state organization. Beside regular gymnastics at Sokol, there we were educated on patriotism and on love for the Serbian king Alexander I.

In summer, when it was warm, we were allowed to visit the school barefoot. During the summer vacations, we went to the 3-km-distant River Sava, where I learned swimming. Usually, I went there with a schoolmate. When I became a good swimmer, I usually swam about 1 km downstream to return walking. The left bank of Sava was wilderness, covered by fine river sand with bushes. Many girls had lost their virginity there. I knew Sava from my early childhood because my brother Jože had visited the river very often in all times of the year, and he had taken me with him. I remember the spring time when there were many flowers: primroses, violets, crocuses, and pussy willows. In those times, the river was clear, so we could even drink it.⁴ Jože, who had completed the real gymnasium (we called it “Realka”), began studying civil engineering at the university in Ljubljana, of which the main building was just across the street of Realka. Since the Serbian assimilation procedure was advancing, the students often protested. When this happened, the university building was surrounded by policemen, and Jože spent occasionally some nights and days in the building to which the police had no access. (It was very much different after WWII.) I could not understand what all this was; I just noticed that my brother did not come home for one or more days and nights.⁵ Years later, I learned that the University of Ljubljana was a “thorn in the heel” for Belgrade, and the Serbs made several attempts to truncate or even disband it. Such attempts became rare after 1929, when the rector Milan Vidmar had visited

⁴ It was quite different after WWII, when the paper mill at the contributory Sora began discharging its waste in the river. In winter, when the water level is occasionally very low, Sava had a dark brown color. I remember that someone has mutilated the inscription Reka Sava (River Sava) at the bridge by crossing *S* and replacing it with *K* to read Reka Kava (*kava* means coffee in Slovenian). The riverbed, which was sometimes white for the chalkstones, became coated by a brown slush. Needless to say that bathing and swimming in Sava and Sora has eased altogether.

⁵ Much later, I learned of the reasons for these protests. For example, on May 20, 1932, the Slovenian students protested because the students in Belgrade required from those in Ljubljana to communicate with them only in Cyrillic, either in handwriting or in typing, even if the letter is written in Serbian.

the king in Belgrade, asking him for permission that the Slovenian University would be renamed to King Alexander University; the king had permitted.



My sisters Adela (Mimica) at left,
and Ana (Ančka) in 1933



My brother Jože,
civil engineer, in 1945

Since Jože had played in the opera also, he had often exercised some passages at home. So I had been acquainted with the music of “Pagliacci” by Ruggiero Leoncavallo, “Il Trovatore” by Giuseppe Verdi, and “Coppélia” by Léo Delibes. He had also played some other compositions like the “Romance in F Major” by L. van Beethoven and the second part of the “Violin Concerto” by P. Tchaikovsky, some compositions of Fritz Kreisler, and the like. In the years when I began tinkering with radio, I heard these compositions in full harmony, and they appeared to me as well-known “friends.” Jože also brought home a guitar; I learned how to accompany some songs by this instrument. When I was eight years old, my father had bought me a mouth organ, and I learned to play it too. At ten, I was sent to the musical school in Ljubljana, to learn violin in order “to advance the tradition.” Though I was one of the best students in the class, the next year, I had to stop visiting that school because the recession had shrunk the incomes of my parents too much. Then my father moved for six months to work in Belgrade. I still attempted to continue playing violin, with the help of Jože, but eventually I quit.

In Moste, we had a cinema just across the street. I remember seeing there the black-and-white film *A Farewell to Arms* based on the novel by Ernest Hemingway, which I had read many years later in English. (After WWII, the same novel was shown in a color film.) In that cinema, we had also some interesting free lectures by different professors. Anton Grad, who was my

professor of Slovenian and French language when I began visiting Realka almost ten years later, gave a lecture on French revolution. Professor Pirnat gave a lecture on his sailing tour in the Mediterranean where he was shown many interesting color slides of Greece, Turkey, Egypt, and Spain. Occasionally, a stage play was given there. (In one of them, Jože had to play a gipsy melody behind the stage as an interlude, being accompanied by a guitar. In that same one, I played my mound harmonica to create some sort of a “playback” for the actress on the stage.) So we had a rich cultural life in the suburb.

Like any boy of my age, I went through different hobbies. In my case, they were drawings and paintings, collecting lead soldiers, carving little boats of pine bark, chess, collecting stamps, reading the western novels of Old Chatterhand, Winnetou and Old Surehand by Karl May, making linocuts, building cranes and machines by using the wooden erector kit “Matador,” building airplane models (at that time, the nice kits with exact plastic parts were not known yet), and making small electro motors. This last had aroused my interest in electricity and further in radio.

On October 9, 1934, our king visited France. After the king disembarked in Marseilles, an assassin had shot him dead as well as the French foreign minister Louis Barthou, who was sitting next to him in the car. Since immediately after shooting the furious public had lynched the murderer, it was impossible to tell who had organized the assassination. The clue was that the Croatian or, maybe, the Macedonian nationalists were behind this, but the foggy traces led also to Germany, Italy, and even England. Since we were educated to love the king, we were sorry, and Yugoslavia was mourning several days.⁶ Then Alexander’s son, prince Peter, who should succeed him, was still minor, so Knight Pavle Karadjordjević, who was the cousin of the assassinated king, had taken the regency.

⁶ We, the young people would not mourn if we would know that the king had left the state in catastrophic economical circumstances, for which he himself was the guiltiest. Already on January 6, 1929, he had dissolved the parliament by introducing his dictatorship, which almost cemented the Serbian hegemony. In the year of his death, that part of Yugoslavia, which was under Austria before WWI (Slovenia, Croatia, and the northern, flat, and fertile part of Yugoslavia), has contributed 1.18 billion dinars to the state budget, while the much larger rest of the state and Belgrade contributed only 723 million dinars. (This and the following data are from *Slovenska kronika XX. stoletja 1900-1941*, published in 1997.) Then fifty-nine Serbs, eighteen Croats, and four Slovenes were employed in the ministry for foreign affairs. The picture was worst in the ministry of finances where 151 Serbs, fifteen Croats, and only six Slovenes were employed; in the National Bank, there were thirty-six Serbs, two Croats, and three Slovenes.

Normally, after four years of the elementary school, we continued the education in gymnasium, which was for eight years. However, that school in Moste had eight classes to give the so-called "middle-school education." Those who completed it could become the apprentices for different trades, for example, cabinetmakers, plumbers, mechanics, merchants, and the like. Since we dwelled in Moste, my parents left me studying there where I had completed six classes. Then our family moved to the center of the town where I had lost the right for that "middle school" in Moste. The only possibility to continue my schooling was to start visiting a gymnasium, which were several in Ljubljana. This had caused a peculiar situation for me. If I would pass two differential examinations in French and mathematics, I would be allowed to jump over the first two classes of gymnasium, continuing in the third. However, my parents did not have the money to pay an instructor for me. So I was simply inscribed into first class of "Realka," which was then the school where the pupils were prepared for the university study of technical professions. In this way, I had lost two years in relation to other boys of the same age.

Since I had already learned much of the subjects, which were taught in the first two years, my study was very easy. Being accustomed to such easy learning, I continued in the same way in the third class. The net result of this sloth was the non-passing grades in mathematics and history at the end of the school year. I had to pass the special examinations to be allowed to continue in the fourth class, which I did successfully. Already in the second class, I inscribed to Boy Scouts.

The pupils of gymnasiums had the curfew from 9:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m. Once I went to a recital of the violinist Sottens. The introductory composition was played by the symphony orchestra of Musical Academy of Ljubljana. I do not recall what they were playing, but it was for me the first time to listen to a live performance of an orchestra. This made such a deep impression on me that I became an addict to classical music for the life. After the orchestra had left, the violinist began his recital, accompanied by a pianist. The concerto ended at about 9.30, and when we were walking out, I noticed Professor Zavrtanik, so close to me, that I had to greet him. He answered the greeting, but I was not reprimanded by being out after 9:00 p.m. and not being accompanied by my parents.

At about this time, my sister Ančka had met her boyfriend, Ivo, who played accordion very well. When his father bought him a larger and better instrument, he had given the old accordion to Ančka to learn playing. Instead of my sister, I had learned to play this instrument. Brother Jože, who also possessed an accordion, which he had kept in the apartment in the country where he worked and dwelled during the weeks, had brought me some musical literature, which I learned diligently.



In the cellar, just under our class was a chemical laboratory of the university. Once, when Professor Zavrtanik has given the lecture, suddenly there was a tremendous explosion under us. The whole class was shaken, and we heard how the splinters of glass were thrown out on the courtyard. Since it was summer and our windows were open, we could hear this too. Professor Zavrtanik had continued his lecture as if nothing happened, and we remained sitting. Soon after that, another weaker explosion followed. Zavrtanik kept talking. After some ten minutes, we heard the siren of the fire brigade, which arrived to the stage and started their fire engine to quench the fire under us. However, Zavrtanik continued undisturbed until the bell announced the end of the lecture, and then he left. Immediately after that, we ran out of the class to see what happened in the cellar under us. However, we could not go all the way down because the whole cellar was flooded with water, knee-high. We just could peep through the windows from the courtyard to see the complete laboratory destroyed as if a bomb had exploded there. Now I think that Zavrtanik might have had some worst experience from the WWI front because twenty years ago, he was just of the right age to be drafted.

Some thirty years later, I met a chemistry professor to whom I mentioned this event. Then he told me the details of this explosion. Under us was a laboratory of the same size as our class. A single man was working there, and some gas burners were lit already. He decided to bring a big glass balloon of ether from the magazine. Unfortunately, whilst carrying that big flask through the lab door, he stumbled on just about 1-cm-high threshold, so the flask had fallen on the

floor of the lab. He had no time to see if it has broken, for he immediately closed the door and ran around the corner, when there was a *bang!*

In the third, I became a radio amateur. My tutor was Drago Zrimšek, who had graduated from the Technical Middle School in Ljubljana. Dwelling close, when we were still in Zelena Jama, he was the friend of Jože in their school years. Besides, he was fond of my sister Mimica, but nothing came out of this friendship. When grown, Zrimšek had owned a radio shop in the center of Ljubljana, where he and his employees were selling and repairing Philips radios. Since he was a radio amateur himself, he understood my needs and possibilities well. He had taught me radio and their reparation and radio transmitters too. He was a “Ham,” by running his own amateur station; he had connections with the whole world. At that time, the Morse code had been used predominantly. Since already then the radio technology was developing extremely fast, he had collected a lot of obsolete parts, which were excellent for use by a beginner. And since I was a penniless boy, he was very generous in giving these parts away, together with the circuit schematics and instructions of how to assemble them.

At first, I built a detector, which was just enough for receiving the local station, Radio Ljubljana. To my regret, that station, which was about 16 km away from our home, had only 5 kW power. To hear its transmissions well, it had to be all quiet around. So I was listening mostly in the evenings, in bed, before sleep. At that time, only classical music was broadcast. In these quiet nights, I became acquainted with the composition of Mozart, Beethoven, Dvořák, Verdi, Rossini, Schubert, Strauss, and so on. Later, I built receivers with several electronic tubes where, instead of headphones, a loudspeaker could be used. I had also built a single-tube transmitter, but I was more interested in the experiments with it than with long-distance connections, which I had never established. The most of long-distance connections was to my friends Marjan and Rado, who were living within a radius of 500 m and had run similar radio transmitters. Our “connections” were not by Morse code but by sound. For this purpose, we inserted a cheap coal microphone (from a telephone apparatus) in the antenna circuit. The modulation quality was excellent. However, we had to be careful not to touch the microphone with the nose. If we did so, we created a HF spark, which was nasty but harmless because the transmitter had only about 3 W output power.

Since the transmitter was interesting for the physics class, I agreed with Professor Ahlin to bring it in the school. The experiments, which we both had shown, were apparently interesting for my classmates. Professor Dolžan, who taught us biology, zoology, and human anatomy, had organized the circle where we, the students had prepared the lectures of our free-time activities. So we had the lectures of chemistry, machine engineering, airplane models, and so on; and I had one of the electronic tubes. He was very strict and critical of our lectures, which had to be prepared well.



In the middle of these activities on the September 1, 1939, the WWII had erupted when Hitler had attacked Poland. According to the secret agreement between Ribbentrop and Molotov, on September 17, the Russian troops had invaded Poland from the East. Eventually, Hitler and Stalin had occupied each half of this unfortunate country. Hitler had started with small and even greater steps. At first, he occupied Saarland in 1936. Since the French did not react by force, he had occupied Austria in 1938, declaring *Anschluss*. On the film news, we saw how the citizens of Vienna had greeted him en masse. Then he had instigated the riots of the German minority in Sudetenland, which was part of Czechoslovakia. To help settling the dispute, the English Premier lord Neville Chamberlain came to Munich to discuss the matter with Hitler and his Italian ally, Benito Mussolini. The shortsighted chamberlain had yielded to all Hitler's demands, so Czechoslovakia had to give up Sudetenland. (When the war broke out on the September 1, W. S. Churchill said, "In Munich, we admitted to the shame in order to avoid the war. But we have got both.") However, this was not enough for Hitler. In January 1939, his troops occupied Prague and the whole Czech part, forming a marionette government in Slovakia. Then French and British finally realized that any agreement with Hitler was void as long as he was stronger. Since coming to power on January 30, 1933 (the Germans named this *Machtergreifung*), he had formed the strongest army in Europe.

We were following the news of how Hitler had occupied Norway, then Belgium, Nederland, and Luxemburg. In June 1940, his troops had occupied France, coming via Belgium where the defending Maginot Line, which the French have built at the border of Germany, did not reach. Then the British managed to

evacuate most of their troops from Dunquerque, but their heavy ordnance could not be saved. In the months to follow, the British towns became subject to German air raids. The most devastating raid was in the night from November 15 to 16, 1940, on Coventry, when 568 citizens were killed, 863 seriously and 393 lightly injured. Occasionally we were informed of the German persecution of Jews, but the enormous amount of this genocide became known as late as the war ended.

In parallel, Hitler had widened his influence toward east-south; Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria were already practically occupied. He was pushing toward Greece, which Italy had attacked, but the Italians could not claim a great success. There the Greek as well as the English resisted relatively well. Hitler's occupation of Greece would make him and his ally, Mussolini, the masters of the north half of Mediterranean plus of the Dardanelle-Strait. The last would also suit his ally, Stalin, who kept supplying Germany with the necessary raw materials (ore, oil, wheat, etc.) to help running Hitler's war machine.

Having the Axis troops on almost all their borders, whilst the British, then the only one who kept resisting Hitler, were far away, Yugoslavia had no much chance. In order to prevent the state to be occupied, the Knight Pavle had selected the lesser evil and signed a pact with the Axis Powers. This happened in Vienna on March 25, 1941. Already the next day, the demonstrations against the pact had erupted in Belgrade, which were eventually spread all over the state.

The day of March 27, 1941, has a special meaning to me. Let me start with Professor Zavrtnik, who taught us Serbo-Croatian language. This was an artificial language, invented to make the assimilation of the non-Serbian nations easier and smoother. His lectures were nasty for several reasons. First, we felt suppressed by being forced to learn this language, six years total (for me, it was eight years), whilst the Serbs were not taught any language of another Yugoslav nation. Second, we had to write in Cyrillic, which we hated. Third, we had to learn many Serbian "heroic" poems by heart; otherwise, we would not get a passing grade. Fourth, Zavrtnik required us to write some lessons from the textbook whilst he was examining the students before the table. And the last, we had to have open windows at his lectures, even in winter when we were allowed to wear our coats. Though it was already March, it was still cold outside and—for the open windows—also inside in spite of the central heating. Since my place was near the window, I began shivering when the lesson was over. So I decided to drive my bicycle to about 500-m-distant School Polyclinics, where they found I had fever 38°C and pneumonia. The doctor prescribed me a sulphamide (antibiotics did not exist yet) and sent me straight home. Riding my bicycle again, I somehow arrived to home, which was some 2.5 km away from Polyclinics, and went to bed immediately.

As usual, I put my headphones on to listen to radio. The speaker had reported of the demonstrations in Ljubljana; the university students were

protesting against the pact. I ceased listening when I noticed the patterns on the wall began rotating, and the fever rose to 40°C. Then my parents bought the medication. After taking it, my status had improved in some days.

The news at April 6 was fateful—Hitler's bombers had attacked Belgrade, thus pulling Yugoslavia into WWII turmoil. Since the war was not declared, people did not know that the attack was imminent, and there were many casualties as well as much destruction. In the last week before the arrivals of the Italians to Ljubljana, we could see a total chaos of the Yugoslav Army. About five minutes walking distance from our home, the military magazines were located. The citizens of Ljubljana began looting the abundant food supply and tools stocked there. Instead of trying to make the order and to spread the goods evenly among the population, the Serbian soldiers just screamed on the people. So we were scared whenever we saw someone in the uniform. In this way much goods were spoiled or abandoned. I remember carrying a flat wooden case of about twenty-five tin cans of goulash, but I could not exit the building because of too much crowd. So I had opened the case and just managed to take about six cans, whilst the crowd had taken the rest. Later we arrived more organized, with a small cart, to take a bag of 80 kg of white flour. Since the last month, the bread as well as oil, butter, and meat had been rationalized; this was big loot indeed. Besides, in the last two months, only corn bread was on sale. I had also taken an ax, which served me good for the next twenty years to split firewood or lignite, which we got instead of black coal during the war and several years after.

The Yugoslav Army was defeated within fourteen days. When our state was attacked, the rebellious Croats had quickly established their "Independent State Croatia" with the previously planned support of Germans and Italians. This had accelerated the defeat very much. The young king Peter II had left in time (with some of his golden bars) by a circuitous flight to London. Some members of the royal family and of the government accompanied him. After the capitulation, our state had been parted between Germans, Italians, Hungarians, and Bulgarians. The ultimate fate the aggressors decided for us, Slovenes, was either assimilation or annihilation.

At the beginning of the occupation, all our family, except that one of Rudi, was in Ljubljana. My father was employed as a master room painter. Jože was working as a civil engineer, leading the construction of the road Vrhnika-Logatec, where he had kept his position during the occupation. Mother and Mimica worked at home as seamstresses, whilst Draga and Ančka were employed as hairdressers. Rudi had happily changed his employment at the king's Guard orchestra just about three months before the German attack. He had moved, together with his family of two children, to Split in Croatia, where he had played in the opera. All of us had survived the occupation.

PART 1

Occupation

1.1 Italians Arrived

On April 11, 1941, the first Italian troops arrived in the capital. In the afternoon, I met the battalions of *Bersaglieri di Sardegna* marching along the main street in Moste, the eastern suburb of Ljubljana. All of them were much smaller than me—at sixteen years I was already 187 cm tall (now, being eighty-six, I have shrunk to 183 cm). They wore helmets decorated with cocktail feathers. Since all the feathers were of equal olive green color, I started reflecting how they could breed so many cocks of such an unusual color. They probably dyed them. Their rifles were substantially smaller and lighter than those of the Yugoslav Army, and each had a permanently attached thin bayonet, folded back along the hinge at the end of the barrel. On their backs, they carried collapsible bicycles, their wheels only some 60 percent the normal size. The tires were not inflatable but made of full rubber, round, about one-inch thick. In addition, the seats were not spring-mounted. *Well, military service is tough, no matter where.*

More troops with mules, motorcycles, and trucks followed. A fully equipped and armed Yugoslav soldier appeared on the pedestrian walk, probably going home. He was in plain view of the marching troops, pretending to ignore each other. What a nice example of a peaceful coexistence! Later, a marching Italian soldier asked where the Serbs were, and it seemed they were afraid of them.

I saw all this when returning from Polje, a village some 10 km east of Ljubljana. On the previous day, there were huge explosions caused by the German Stuka bombers, and I had taken my shabby bicycle to see the place. It was an area in the middle of a small forest where the army had kept the ammunition stock. Since I had never been there before, I could not say how high the buildings were because everything was leveled to the ground. In addition, the forest around was badly damaged. On the former entrance of one house, I found a dead hare. From one of several underground buildings, someone kept throwing activated hand grenades. Fortunately, I heard the

bangs in time to avoid being hurt. It was always hard for me to understand why most of our youth like so much to play with such things, for such bangs do not attract me at all.

On the next day, the posters and newspapers brought the messages of the occupational authorities: *Noi Ordiniamo!* as well as in Slovenian language. Pictures of the hated Mussolini and of the king Vittorio Emanuele accompanied the news. In Moste, there were two entrepreneurs of German nationality: Mergenthaler had a tannery and Narbeshuber an electromechanical shop. The first one spoke faultless Slovenian, whilst Narbeshuber could never get rid of his heavy German accent. My mother occasionally sewed shirts for him, and I always got a hefty tip when delivering the finished underwear. When radio became my hobby, I occasionally asked him for some material; he was very friendly and showed me his scrap where I could always find the suitable thing. To our surprise at the day of occupation, both guys displayed the hated German flag with swastika. However, the flags did not hang the full day; soon an Italian officer came and ordered to remove them at once. This was the only Italian deed we liked.

The governor of Dravska Banovina (a former district of Yugoslavia, now Slovenia), Marko Natla en, the bishop Gregorij Rožman, and some other guys who kept top positions went to Rome to express loyalty to the occupiers, earning the scorn of majority of Slovenes.⁷ Our popular painter, Hinko Smrekar, whose specialty was political satire, displayed a picture of a huge ass, belonging to Mussolini, with Natla en (his name means *stuffed* in Slovenian) spreading the buttocks to crawl in, Rožman and the other guys queuing. The Italians soon learned of his masterwork and arrested him. Later, he was shot as one of the first hostages. There were also some other more upright guys than Natla en. On the day the Italians arrived, the former mayor, Ivan Hribar (then ninety years old), who had great merit for rebuilding and modernizing Ljubljana after the devastating earthquake in 1895, committed suicide. Wrapping himself in a Yugoslav flag, he jumped into River Ljubljanica where he drowned.

The new masters introduced the summertime (we did not have it in Yugoslavia) and curfew from 9:00 p.m. until 6:00 a.m. During one night, a big bronze monument of King Alexander I, riding the horse, disappeared from the Central Park Zvezda (Star). The marble monument of King Peter I, also riding

⁷ Much later, I read that they first met the advancing German commander, begging the whole Slovenia to be occupied by the Germans. Since the Italian fascism caused so much suffering to Slovenian population of the Julian March, they deemed Germany was a better choice. Apparently, they were completely ignorant of the fact that the Germans are much worse. Since the German commander was not authorized to any negotiations, they went to see Mussolini in Rome.

the horse, which was placed on the staircases in front of the townhouse, had disappeared as well. However, the old monument of our poet France Prešeren and the other cultural monuments survived untouched up to the end of the war. The Italians soon annexed the newly occupied territory and named it *Provincia di Lubiana*, the governor being a fascist *Alto Commisario* Emilio Grazioli.

Since the Germans destroyed our 5 kW broadcasting station⁸ in Domžale (decided to stay in the German occupational zone with the River Sava as the would-be border), we were dependent on foreign news only. We listened to shortwave stations of BBC and the Voice of America, where the transmissions were in Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian language. In gymnasium, we learned German, so we could also understand the transmissions of the Swiss radio Beromünster, operating on medium waves, as well as the German transmissions of BBC. Soon the Italians brought a small 300 W medium wave radio transmitter to replace the destroyed one. This became the new broadcasting station, Radio Ljubljana or *Lubiana*, as the Italians named our capital. Soon they replaced this transmitter with a 700 W typified version called Biga. (Recently, I saw a thick book describing the design and the construction of such transmitter.) The program was mostly in Slovenian language; the announcements were also in Italian, whilst the Italian news was transmitted directly from Rome. Being without a transmitter, the Slovenian personnel became jobless, but most of them were hired again. They got an Italian inspector, Dr. L. Casolini, and a technical director, A. Aballe, who, as a technician, managed the engineers who had fateful consequences, described in a later chapter. The musical program became overfilled with Italian songs: . . . *la luna, fortuna, cuore, dolore, fiore, amore* . . . Those who liked Italian operas could hear the famous singers Beniamino Gigli, Mario del' Monaco, Tito Schippa, and so on to their heart's desire. The program of classical music remained mostly the same as before; we only heard more Italian performances. I remember hearing several classical works conducted by maestro Tulio Serafini. Italian and German films were shown in cinema theaters. In addition, some long-forgotten American westerns were shown, where Tom Mix, Ken Maynard, and George O'Brien spoke Italian. I remember seeing those films when I was very young; since they were mute, it had to be simple to add the Italian speech. The news showed German and Italian conquests, the bombing of London, Mussolini's and Hitler's speeches, and so on. Even as the future looked gloom at the time, we were sure the Axis powers had to eventually lose the war.

⁸ This bombing and its consequences are fully described in the next chapter. The bombing happened just on the same day when the Italian troops arrived to Ljubljana.

The Italians placed some additional directional signs on important crossings. Their alphabet does not have the letter Š (*sh*), so they replaced it by *S* to write the name for suburb Šiška as *sisca*. Someone wrote a *V* in front and a *T*! at the end to make VSI SCAT!, which means *all (go) pissing* in our language. The new masters often wrote *duce* (like *Fuehrer* in Germany) under the picture of Mussolini. We changed *C* into *P* to read *dupe* (which means *ass* in Serbian). Occasionally, they proudly wrote *noi vinceremo* (we will win). We added *vederemo* (*we will see*, in Italian). Such were at first our little practical jokes to relax the stress caused by the new arrivals.

The Yugoslav currency was exchanged into lire, firstly at a rate of 100 dinars (din) for thirty lire, which was soon improved to 100 din/38 lire (lit). The last meant a devaluation of lira by 15 percent. Our nice silver coins of ten, twenty, and fifty dinars were gone, being replaced by the nickel lire, which were subject to galloping inflation. We continued eating corn bread of which we got 250 g daily. In order to keep the bread together, some potato flour was added. Our bag of white flour, we managed to save from the military magazine, was dwindling fast. Only spaghetti made of whole meal flour were on sale, rationalized of course, like butter, cheese, oil, meat, sugar, tobacco, and so on. However, oranges were plenty, and they were not expensive.

The occupiers had three sorts of soldiers: *regio esercito* (king's army), *alpini* carrying very long rifles, and *fascists* wearing black shirts and black caps with a tassel on a long string. Besides, there were *carabinieri reali* in olive gray uniforms with characteristic Spanish hats and ordinary policemen, who wore black uniforms. A brass band military orchestra arrived in Ljubljana, and they played very well. Their orchestra was unusually large containing saxophones also—that was mostly unusual then in our brass bands. Contrary to most Italians, they were tall. Their conductor marching in the front waved a big and fancy stick, which he occasionally threw up and always caught precisely, without looking on. Since we had electric tramcars in town, once the stick hit the wire, its path was disturbed, so the conductor missed it. From then on, he did not throw it anymore.

The numerous songs of *amore*, we heard on radio, were soon put into practice. The Italians, famous lovers, were hungry of girls. Since they (mainly the officers) were good-looking, the response was soon found. Needless to say, we scorned those girls who were dating the Italians. As a byproduct of these activities, venereal diseases began spreading. When treated, those unfortunate girls got the injections not in their buttocks but in their calves, with about a three-inch wide bandage over, to be easily seen through their stockings. This was the warning sign to leave them in peace! The Venus's Priestesses among them, who had the greatest "turnover," could at least claim they did

not shamefully abandon the struggle like the Yugoslav Army did. They kept carrying on their specific form of “bacteriological warfare.”

Sometimes, true love relations also established, occasionally resulting in a marriage after the war. Once I was in a shop for underwear, an officer was buying a bra for his girlfriend. Since he could not tell the exact number, he asked to align several sizes on the table. To recall his memory, he closed the eyes, gently cupping each one with both palms to select the proper size.

My father got the order to paint the rooms of a house in the suburb Vi, where the first and the only one military brothel in Ljubljana, with the girls “imported” from Italy should operate. When I brought him lunch, I saw the business in the upper floor had already begun, even as the ground floor was not finished yet. A long queue of soldiers was out, speaking loudly as the Italians do. Later, I was told that one poor guy, almost in front of the queue, found that he had not enough money. So he went down the line, asking if anyone would lend him the difference. The very last agreed to give him the money, providing both exchange the places. When I was in the Sanatorium Golnik after the war, I met one of those soldiers from the town Pula (before the war this was Italy, now Croatia), and he told me these girls could stand up to eighty customers a day! I insisted this could not be possible, but he said one of the girls told him so. My father working in the ground floor saw some of the girls occasionally coming down in their “working dress” (undressed).

The occupiers started using our public facilities. With the arrival of summer, they swam in the pool of our largest public bath, Ilirija. Since they used a lot of brilliantine to keep their hair in form, the surface of the water soon became a nice nutrient medium for all sorts of bacteria, even as the water has been exchanged every week. An unusual skin disease spread, and we called it Ilirian disease. Those of us who swam in the River Sava were spared of that rash. As usual, we also swam across the river, neglecting the left bank, which was now under German occupation. Once a German patrol arrived, asking us what we were doing there. We just told that we were swimming across as we did all the time in the past to dry and to warm up. Anyhow, we had our dress on the other bank to where we would return. The guard fatherly advised us not to come there again; a Gestapo patrol might arrest us all. Of course, we did not obey, but fortunately, we never met any patrol again.

Frankly, the Italians, proud of their *cultura romana*, which they had brought to us, “barbarians,” behaved relatively mildly if compared with the other two occupiers. The Germans, who occupied the greater, northern part of Slovenia, seizing the most of our industry, were much worse. Their allies Hungarians, occupying a small northeastern part of Slovenia, were no better. On April 26, 1941, when Hitler came to Maribor, he ordered, *Macht mir dieses Land wieder deutsch!* (Make me this land German again). Already in the first days of the

occupation, the Germans forbade Slovenian language, closed all schools and cultural societies, Germanized our family names, and seized and destroyed all Slovenian books—either in private ownership or in the public libraries and bookstores. On the basis of the lists prepared by the *Kulturbund* (the organization of Germans in the first Yugoslavia), they sent in exile professors, priests, teachers, intellectuals, and anyone who might oppose the “new order.” Whole families were expelled to Serbia and Croatia. Those who were considered the most dangerous were arrested and sent to the concentration camps, their wives to forced labor, and their children to “reeducation” in Germany. Even as the Italians were different, we considered them the enemies, and our attitude was soon displayed in more serious ways than just by mutilating the Italian signs.

1.2 German Stukas Destroyed the Ljubljana Broadcasting Station

At the same day when the first Italian troops arrived to Ljubljana, just about noon, a swarm of nine Stuka⁹ bombers arrived from the north; they were flying rather low. I saw these infamous planes for the first time. When they were above Ljubljana, they made a sharp turn eastward, toward the 16-km-distant village, Domžale, where our broadcasting transmitter was located. On that fateful day, I still remember radio Ljubljana transmitting the third movement of the ninth symphony by Ludwig van Beethoven but cannot tell if this was just before the bombing. However, I do not remember hearing the last movement with the German song *Ode to Joy* by F. Schiller. Soon after the planes turned toward Domžale, the transmission of radio Ljubljana ceased, and the rumors were spread—the station was bombed.

Since at that time we did not know of any would-be demarcation line between the German and the Italian occupational zone, I decided to see what happened with our transmitter.¹⁰ Two days later, I took my bicycle and rode to Domžale, a village on the other side of the River Sava, thus belonging to

⁹ The Name came from *Sturzkampfflugzeug*, which means *dive bomber*.

¹⁰ About a year before, when I started tinkering with the radio, I had visited that transmitter for the first time. It was built in 1929 as the German reparations after WWI. The operating engineer Milavec led me through all the rooms and explained transmitter operation. His kind gesture had an important influence on my later decision to become a radio engineer. (The term *electronics* was not known yet at these times.)

German occupational zone. By the way, I did not see any German soldier. Already from far, I saw one of both 120-m-high antenna towers tilted. When I came closer, I found the wooden transmitter building completely destroyed and burnt. The blast, but not a direct hit, damaged a part of the wooden building of the station keeper also, which was some 50 m away. All around were several bomb craters. Since the level of the ground water was rather high at that area, all craters were filled with water up to some 1.5 m under the rim. The ruins of the station gave sad view. Only the heavy machinery, for example, the big diesel motor generator, some other electrical motor generators, and transformers were still standing on their concrete foundations, and all the rest was burnt down. For a souvenir, I took some small porcelain insulators from a HF coil.

The feeder to the T-antenna, consisting of six parallel wires, arranged circularly with spacers on equal intervals, was dangling free, and a boy holding its end was swinging on it, being fixed 120 m high. Later, when the feeder was free, I tried to do the same, but I got a violent electric shock. It was static electricity; however, I wondered why, as the sky was cloudless. Since I did not want to miss the opportunity, I connected the feeder to ground by a metal bar, causing an almost one centimeter long spark. Finally, when the antenna was completely discharged, I could swing as well. Both towers, which were composed of massive steel bars, had a ladder inside, and the boys were climbing up and down the undamaged tower. Climbing the other tilted tower might be too risky.



With my sister Draga, in summer 1943



My friend the dove

Since the T-antenna was 120-m high and both towers had many anchoring wires, the diving bombers had to release their bombs too high to hit precisely. If they would dive under the antenna, sideways to avoid hitting the central feeder, they themselves would be damaged by the blast. Thus, the bombs were spread around the area, one hitting also the big concrete block holding the anchoring wire, and the tower tilted.

Since not a single shot had been fired when the Italians arrived in Ljubljana, I saw here the first violent deed of the enemy—a bad forecast for the future. I was depressed when I returned home. Later, I built the insulators from the destroyed transmitter into a shortwave transmitter. However, this was another story.



TB patients in June 1943; the author is 2nd from the left, with the members of the Ovsec family. On the left is Jelka, the right half are, Jože & Anda. Jože, came from the concentration camp just a month ago, so his hair is still short. Anda has died in 1944, Jože in October 1945, just 2 months short of his 22nd Birthday.



The auto-portrait (color, oil painting) of Jože Ovsec,
painted in the last year of his life

1.3 Anti-Imperialists Front Established

The events of this chapter were fateful for all which has followed in Slovenia—up to present times. As seen with today's knowledge, the communists here wanted to get a review, which political groups intended to resist the occupiers and what their plans might be. Though we were attacked and occupied by the Axis powers, the communists here were not allowed to do anything against Stalin's ally Hitler. The same was valid for the French communists, who kept away from the national struggle for a whole year from June 1940, when France was occupied by the Germans until June 22, 1941, when Germany attacked USSR.

Toward the end of April, Ivo, the boyfriend of my sister, An ka, and his friend, both communists, visited our family. They told us that the Anti-imperialists Front was established. They kept explaining that there was no sense to resist Hitler. At that time, Hitler and Stalin were still on friendly terms. The whole Central Europe, except Switzerland and a hefty part of the Mediterranean North Africa were already occupied by the Axis powers. So the term *anti-imperialists* could be applied solely to the British, who were then the only ones still resisting Hitler in Europe. It was hard for me to understand this term, for we too were against Hitler. After the war, we learned that the Anti-imperialists Front was established on April 26-27 in the villa of Prof. Josip Vidmar, in a quiet suburb of Ljubljana, where the rich people dwelled. The founders were the representatives of all political groups: communists (who were the initiators of this meeting), Liberals, socialists, and Catholics. For the time being, there seemed to be no decision yet of any armed resistance against the occupational troops. This fact was made very foggy after the war until today.

However, in a couple of months after the German troops had attacked the Soviet Union, the Anti-imperialists Front was renamed Liberation Front (*Osvobodilna Fronta* or OF), their founders declaring an immediate armed resistance against the occupational forces. Since this was more palatable to us, there were few Slovenes who would not support the organization. Unfortunately, this was not the main aim of the communists; their ultimate objective was to make use of the national struggle in order to become the sole ruler after the war. In the following years, we could observe how the liberation struggle was gradually transformed into a revolution according to Soviet pattern. Now as the Soviet Union became an ally, we did not mind when the first signs of OF becoming red were shown; the enemy of my enemy was my friend! The only thing, which was important for us, was to drive the occupiers out of our country. But more and more signs, especially the occasional murder of the patriots, who did not like communism, revealed that the national struggle was just a camouflage for the revolution. Red Army became the most important in OF, and Stalin was considered God Almighty. Such an attitude reminded me of that cartoon with Natlačen stuffing himself into Mussolini's ass. Who knows what a picture Hinko Smrekar would have drawn toward the end of the war or some years after if he would still be alive?

1.4 New Situation in High School (Realka)

Besides the abolition of the Serbo-Croatian language, there were no substantial changes in the school program immediately after the occupation. Already in the first days in each class, the pictures of Benito Mussolini and the King Vittorio Emanuele replaced the pictures of the Yugoslav King Peter II Karadjordjevi. Frankly, I was glad the Serbo-Croatian language had been dropped. All professors and the director had retained their posts, but I do not remember seeing Professor Zavrtanik, who taught us Serbo-Croatian, anymore. Professor Gergorin, who taught us German, declared that the old German handwriting—to me, similar to a slanted seismogram—we had to write in has been dropped. Needless to say, we were as happy as we were for the Cyrillic script and the Serbo-Croatian language being removed from the curriculum. Years later, I learned that this script and print were abolished in entire Germany on Hitler's order. He did not like to be seen wearing spectacles, and he ordered all letters to him to be rewritten on a special typewriter with larger fonts. Such letters may still be seen on some reproduced Nazi documents signed by Hitler. Since only slightly more than two months remained for the end of the school year, the new authorities did not bother to make any other changes for the time being.

However, it was all different on the streets of Ljubljana. The tables with the Italian translations of the street names were soon fixed everywhere, and some streets were renamed. E. G. Aleksandrova ulica (Alexander Street, named after the first Yugoslav king Alexander I) was renamed into *Via 3 Maggio* (the Street of Third May). On that day, the Italians officially annexed the newly occupied Slovenian territory, naming it *Provincia di Lubiana*. All shops and other enterprises had to bear the Italian titles on the first place. This was our first lesson of Italian, where we learned that *negozio* meant shop;

macelleria, butcher's shop; *trattoria*, pub, and so on. As soon as the new radio station started operating, the course of Italian language was transmitted daily. As already mentioned, all announcements on radio were in Slovenian as well as in Italian language. All this, combined with our frequent encounter with the Italians and four years of the related French language study, which we learned in gymnasium, made us learn Italian very fast. In addition, some Italian books of radio became available. Since they were interesting, I bought them and—besides their pure technical matter—I also learned some Italian.

When the next school year started in September, the new arrivals let us feel who the master is. Instead of French, we had to start learning Italian, and for our class, this task was entrusted to the Italian Professor Ferraris. When he entered our classroom for the first time, we noted he was smaller than any of us, the XXL-size pigskin briefcase he was carrying emphasizing his smallness. We were all standing silent as usual when the professor entered the class. His bespectacled face had a dark suntan; he had to come somewhere from the southern Italy, probably from Sicily. His view was investigative, like a circus tamer assessing the beasts he was sent to tame. In short, he did not appear as a sympathetic figure for us; he was a representative of the enemy.

We were ordered to greet all professors with *saluto romano* (Roman greeting) when they entered and when they left the classroom, and all professors had to do the same. This meant to stand up and stretch the right arm, some thirty degrees above the horizontal. The pictures showing the correct fascist greeting were hung on the walls of the corridors, but they were soon torn and mutilated, and one was even marred with human excrements, which someone bothered to bring from the toilet. Professor Ferraris attempted to make friends by delivering some free tickets to see the Italian cinema performances, but very few boys accepted them. Those who did told us that some antique American westerns were shown, which were not interesting when compared with contemporary films we were used to. He tried to hire us to join the *Gioventu Italiana del Littorio* (a fascist youth organization), where we could get new uniforms, with no success. He had great difficulties pronouncing our names. In the next class, there was a boy whose family name was Žarko Zavrl (who later became my colleague as an electrical engineer). Since the professor never pronounced his name correctly, he never stood up when called. So he avoided completely to being called before the table, and at the end of the semester, the professor simply gave him a passing grade.

When looking back from today, I am sorry for that professor. He was sent here to teach us Italian, which he intended to do. Unfortunately, his very presence here was something we were against. Being a professor, he was probably well educated. As almost all Italians, he might be too proud of their *cultura romana*, being totally ignorant of our *cultura slava*, if I also use the Italian

name, of which *we* were proud. Maybe he was sent here for punishment! Who knows if he had to do all these additional things, which increased our mutual antagonism? After the war, when the totalitarian system was introduced in Yugoslavia, I saw too many people behaving just the same way, being afraid to lose their employment.

Saluto romano was a steady matter of friction between us and Ferraris. We tried to avoid it because this was not *our* greeting. Some Slovenian professors, after relaxing the hand from *saluto romano*, waved backward scornfully.

Once, to annoy Ferraris, I wrote, "Today we have a nice weather" in Serbian-Cyrillic and let the ticket circulate. My classmates quickly understood the point and gave the ticket to each other. Of course, Ferraris soon noted the "conspiracy" and confiscated it; since he did not know to read, he saved it. We had also some sorts of quiet demonstrations, for example, to stand up in the middle of teaching on the December 1; on that day, when in 1918, Yugoslavia was founded. Ferraris became furious. After one minute, we quietly sat down, and again he had the reason to write something on his notebook.

Two posters of *saluto romano* were hung in the gymnastic hall, and they too did not last long. They were replaced with new ones, hung several meters high, where we could not reach them. But we made simple slingshots and bombarded them with small paper rolls soaked with ink. It was hard to hit them so high, and most "projectiles" missed. However, the numerous dark spots around clearly demonstrated what the real target was. The sign of our resistance was OF (Osvobodilna Fronta = Liberation Front) with the symbol of Triglav (the name means "three heads"); the highest Yugoslav mountain was often written on the walls in Ljubljana. Someone using the red-hot poker engraved this sign on the lower, wooden part of the wall. (Instead of central heating as we had in the classes, the gymnastic hall, which was in a separate building, had two big stoves). Since the communists were ruling OF, someone ascended to the top of the climbing bars, drawing a sickle and a hammer on the wall.

Once, when we were playing volleyball, I sent the ball directly toward the combined picture of Mussolini and King V Emanuele. The disengaged picture dropped down, the glass being smashed. When we put it back in the frame to hang it again, we noted the picture of King Peter II Behind, with Professor op saying, "It will not last long!"

Once in the winter, an Italian General came just when we stood in line to start our gymnastics hour. op ordered, "Mirno!" (*Attention!*), and then, "Pozdrav!" (*Salute!*), which meant we had to great with *saluto romano*. Since many of us did not raise the hand, op had repeated the command. Then all, except my classmate next to me and me, raised the hand. The general approached us two and said quietly, almost fatherly, in a spotless Slovenian,

“When the command is to salute, you must salute!” We were so much baffled by his Slovenian speech that all of us obeyed when the professor gave the command for the third time.

Well, the greeting procedure was over, but this did not mean the end of this big brass visit. One of the general’s adjutant pointed the marred pictures of *saluto romano* high under the ceiling, the “engravings” of OF and Triglav, the sickle and hammer sign high on the other wall, and then the damaged picture, with the telltale glass splinters. For a while, the general discussed with both the adjutants, and then all three had left, without asking to be greeted again.

Next day, our gymnasium was closed, and the Italian soldiers occupied it. Our classes were moved to a distant Catholic boarding school in the suburb Rakovnik and soon after to a near gymnasium in the suburb Bežigrad. This was a very modern building, erected just before the war, and I remember, when my father was painting it. The professor’s staff remained the same. In this building, my study was continued until the end of the school year 1941/42. Toward the end of the school year, we should have a gymnastic performance on the *Stadion* nearby. Since this would be under the auspices of the fascists, we objected. Then we got a questionnaire, where our parents should decide of our participation. Since the fascists might cancel their auspices, which meant we would not have any reason to resist, my parents wrote that they had left the decision to me. Finally, the whole performance had been cancelled.

I was wrong to think that the telltale signs in our gymnastic hall were the reason for confiscating the building for the Italian Army. Some other gymnasium buildings were occupied at the same time, the education being continued in different makeshift rooms spread on all (im) possible places in the town. For example, the gymnasium that my future wife Cveta was visiting was closed as well. At first, education continued in a big hall of an insane asylum, some 700 m away. Later, her class was moved to a small dining hall (which was out of business for lack of food) in the cellar of the School Polyclinics.

1.5 Radio Amateurs' Activities¹¹

The 700 W broadcasting radio station “Biga” was not the only one that the Italians installed in Ljubljana. Soon they installed six 5 kW shortwave transmitters to jam the Allied radio stations. My tutor in radio Zrimšek had a radio shop in Ljubljana, and there five transmitters were built, copying the model that the Italians brought here. My friend Darine, who was also a radio amateur, was employed in today’s government building in the center of Ljubljana, where these transmitters were being installed. Although powerful, their construction was relatively simple. They were CW transmitters, modulated by the poorly filtered power supply. The task of Darine was to switch them on before a Slovenian or Serbo-Croatian transmission of BBC or the Voice of America or Radio Moscow transmissions began and to keep them tuned exactly to the same wavelength. Since the frequency of the jamming transmitter was not stable, the Italians operated the monitoring receivers, which were placed about 1 km away. Whenever the jamming frequency drifted too much, they phoned Darine, or some other technicians who were in service, to correct the tuning. Those of us, who knew German, preferred to listen to Allied transmissions in German. They were jammed as well, but since the jamming transmitters were far away, we could hear those transmissions much better. With the outdoor antennae, the reception could be improved, for we could orient them so that the jamming would be minimal. But the Italians forbade them in the first days of the occupation.

Due to war shortage, it became gradually difficult to buy a radio receiver. However, in the first year of the occupation, the parts to assemble them, were still available. An Italian firm, *Geloso*, sold nice kits for all-band radio receivers and also issued the *Bollettino tecnico Geloso*, with the detailed assembly

¹¹ This chapter could not be written without some important technical details, which I tried to keep at minimum.

instructions and excellent drawings. The Italian radio-tube factory, FIVRE (*Fabricca italiana di valvole radio elettriche*), in Pavia, kept supplying the civilian market with the necessary tubes. I assembled many such receivers, and a carpenter was making beautiful cabinets for them. In this way, I earned some money. Within one year, it became more and more difficult to buy the radio parts as well. Then my brother, who as a civil engineer, was allowed to travel outside of Ljubljana and purchased the missing parts in the shops of Udine, Gorizia, or Tarvisio. Even so, gradually it became impossible to collect all the necessary parts, and we radio amateurs started building simple three-tube, regenerative, single band, shortwave receivers, where the headphones were used instead of the speaker. Since the listening to the “enemy” broadcasting was strictly forbidden, the Italians going on the street might hear when someone would tune to an Allied radio station because of the characteristic jamming tone superimposed. To close the windows in a hot summer day might also be a telltale sign for them. So the use of headphones was an excellent remedy. Some ten years ago in the early days of radio, people were using detector apparatuses with headphones. So there were many old and long-forgotten headphones available. Some people asked me to arrange their normal receiver so that the speaker could be switched off and the headphones used instead.

When the Italians could not find the clandestine radio station “Kričac” (Screamer), they confiscated all radio receivers, and Kričac ceased transmitting. The confiscated receivers were stocked in the big old building named Cukrarna. There, the Italian officers had an abundant supply of receivers of the renowned firms like Philips, Telefunken, Mende, Radione, Siera Radio, Hornyphon (no print mistake!), and so on. After some months, the authorities allowed the owners to get their receivers back, providing they did not “disappear” whilst in the stock. However, the authorized shops had to block all but the medium wave band. In addition, the rotation of the tuning mechanism was blocked to allow only a slight tuning around the local station frequency. Then we made simple adapters with a single mixer tube to transpose the shortwave stations to the medium wave. To prevent the interference, we detuned the main receiver from the local station, which was possible.

In 1943, Mussolini was sacked, and the Germans came to Ljubljana. Since no allied medium-wave station could be heard in Ljubljana, they allowed the tuning blockade to be removed—the operation being entrusted to special well-supervised shops. Then we found another solution: we carefully cut the lead seals by jigsaw, spread them in two halves, and removed them. Now we could restore the original status of the receiver. Then we cut away the shorting wire across the shortwave oscillator coil. Since the knob of the range switch was removed and its hole in the cabinet was covered, we fixed an inside lever

on its shaft. This change allowed turning the range switch by a ruler with a hole, to be inserted through the slot between the back cover and the cabinet.

The final work was the most peculiar one. We put the seals back, carefully squeezing them with pliers, the jaws enwrapped in textile. Then we soldered the opened rim together. However, the soldering tin was shiny, disclosing the tampering. So we wetted the shiny part with hydrochloric acid (HCl). After some days, when the shiny parts were etched enough, we washed the acid away, and—providing the job was done carefully—it was hard to detect any tampering. In the last two weeks of the occupation, I simply cut off the seals and restored the original status in many receivers. Then the Germans were too busy organizing their safe withdrawal, so I did not know of any radio amateur to be arrested for such “criminal” deeds.

Whenever someone came to me for such a forbidden job, I did not want to know either his name or his address. If the Italians (and later the Germans) would find what I was doing, they would arrest me. They might certainly torture me to tell the names, but I would not tell much. I am glad I was never subject to such a hard test, where I might betray some relatives, friends, and acquaintances, if the pressure would be too hard for me to bear.

1.6 Secret Radio Station

The “Screamer” was built in the autumn of 1941. A young engineer, Rado Luznar, started building it in a seminar room of the technical faculty, where the students drafted their programs and studied. Even as the transmitter grew, as it were, before their eyes, they did not know what it was or for what purpose it was built.

Luznar was an introverted man and did not speak much. He completed his work in attics. For secrecy and easy transportation purposes, the transmitter had three separate parts: a power supply, a modulator, and a transmitter.¹² The first two parts would not be suspicious if the Italians would discover them, for they could be considered as an audio power amplifier, which was not forbidden to possess. Due to strict secrecy in OF, even Luznar himself did not know for what purpose his transmitter would be used or who would operate it.

When the transmitter was ready, they first checked how far and how well it could be heard. On October 29, 1941, they transmitted counting numbers (in Italian). Some members of OF in different parts of Ljubljana were informed of the transmission. At first, they transmitted on a wavelength of 25 m.

The first regular transmissions intended for the Slovenian population was on November 17, 1941, on 31.5 m wavelength from the home of a student, Milan Osredkar. At the beginning, he transmitted the ticking of an old alarm clock as if to say, “Our time is coming!” Then some news followed. We were eager to hear these transmissions, and even the frequent greetings to Stalin did not bother us. The text for the transmissions was reviewed by Boris Kidri, a communist who obtained a very powerful leading position in OF and in the

¹² They were later fixed into wooden boxes; the largest were for the modulator and for the power supply ((18 × 16 × 14) cm each) while that one for the transmitter was (14 × 12 × 13) cm only. For this writing, I have got the detailed data, the circuit schematic, and even a photo of the “Screamer” from Dr. Osredkar.

government after the war. The transmissions were on Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays in the late afternoon, restricted to fifteen minutes only. The only exceptions were some national holidays when the operating staff risked transmitting a full hour.

The station was called *Radio Osvobodilna Fronta* (Radio Liberation Front). Besides Osredkar, the participants were the engineers, Marjan Vesenjāk and Drago Hartner, who, in February 1942, joined along with a female student, Vida Tom. Since she was the most innocent looking, she took the risk of transporting the transmitter in some very critical situations.

The first Italian document concerning this clandestine radio station bore the date 27 November 27, 1941. However, in the document, three stations were mentioned: *Osvobodilna Fronta*, *Zrinjski* (transmissions in Croatian), and *Šumadija* (in Serbian), which operated in about the same wavelength. But other two stations were English sponsored and transmitting from the territory of Israel.

From then on, the cat and the mouse chase were in full swing—sometimes akin to those *Tom and Jerry* cartoons. However, there was no fun; the guys who operated and transported the transmitter shared an incomparable real risk. The Italians employed more and more cars with high-frequency direction finders (HF/DF) accompanied by buses with soldiers, ready to attack any place deemed to where the transmitter operated. Eventually, some twenty cars with HF/DFs were looking for that “damn Screamer” but without success.

The transmissions were moved from one place to another in Ljubljana, seldom operating from the same place twice. People who operated the “Screamer” would probably have been arrested or shot without the help of two engineers, both employed at Radio Lubiana—Miloš Brelih and Božidar Magajna, who were also the members of OF.

Brelh challenged the station director, Aballo, that the Italians would never find the transmitter. To prove his point, he wrote some differential and integral equations, which the director could not understand. (An expert would quickly find they were nonsense). Then the director showed Brelih a typical car with HF/DF and explained everything.

Brelh quickly realized that the HF/DF was made especially for vertically polarized radio waves. (The reason was probably that almost all British shortwave broadcasting transmitters had vertical tower antennae. Of course, they were outside Italy, but if they were located close enough, they could be destroyed by airplane attacks.) Fortunately, the “Screamer” already used a horizontal antenna, and Brelih suggested keep using it.

Even before the “Screamer” started operating, the Italians had forbidden all outdoor antennae. Since most houses in Slovenia had roof with a 45° inclination, which meant very roomy attics, the outside antennae were moved

to the attics. In addition, the “Screamer” operated this way. The next Italian countermeasure was to switch off the electrical power in different parts of the town in order to locate the transmitter. This possibility was anticipated in time by the guys operating the “Screamer.” They arranged the power supply so that the batteries took over when the line voltage was off. The operation was so perfect that not even the slightest “click” was heard once the power went off. For the same purpose, the speaker had a kerosene lamp for light.

Since the batteries were too heavy for easy transporting, another solution was found. Guys who operated the electrical power distribution station in Ljubljana knew which part of the town would be switched off so they would convey the information in time to the transmitter operator.

With so many direction finders, the Italians came once very close to the station along with their armed guards. Since the transmitter had to be moved to another location for the next transmission, Vida Tom (the female student) packed it with two nets, stuffed among some vegetable and onions, and carried it away. She passed the car with HF/DF, but the Italians did not realize just how close they were to the transmitter.

On another occasion, the part of the town where the transmitter was hidden was surrounded by an Italian blockade. Then Miloš Brelih simply took the car of Radio Ljubljana, bearing the inscription EIAR with the Italian heraldic insignia. He drove through the Italian blockade, ignoring the threatening Italian guards, loaded the transmitter, and transported it through the blockade to the next location. The Italians also arranged some monitoring receivers in different parts of the town to help find the transmitter. Fortunately, Božidar Magajna at Radio Lubiana saw the map and entered the places of the monitoring receivers on to another map for OF. Now the operators of the “Screamer” could avoid transmitting in the vicinity of a monitoring receiver.

Due to different sizes of the attics where the antennae were hung, the wavelength of the “Screamer” had to vary from 20 m to 40 m, but later the most of the transmissions were on 25.7 m.

Finally, the Italians simply confiscated all radio receivers. So the last transmission of the “Screamer” was on April 5, 1942. Later, the transmitter was sent to the liberated territory to be used for other purposes.

Let me write an epilogue of the above story:

Rado Luznar, who built the transmitter, perished in a German concentration camp, presumably in Buchenwald. Marjan Vesenjāk fought in the resistance and was killed in combat.

Milan Osredkar was sent to the same concentration camp, Gonars as I (both without any trial), but back then, we did not know each other. Being in another department, he dug a secret escape tunnel along with fifteen other members of OF. However, when the tunnel was ready, only eight guys managed

to escape before the guard sounded the alarm; Osredkar was the ninth and had to stay in the camp with the others until the capitulation of Italy in summer 1943. Then he joined the OF troops (partisans) in the country as did the eight fellows who escaped earlier. After the war, he graduated and obtained a PhD degree. Later, he became a professor and the head of the Jožef Stefan (research) Institute in Ljubljana, where I worked for six years.

Vida Tom also joined the partisans in the countryside. She was later sent to Ljubljana with a small 30 W American transmitter. Her task was to establish the connection with the OF headquarters on the liberated territory by coded Morse messages. Even though she changed the place of transmissions, she was caught in October 1944 by the Germans just after ending a transmission. Gestapo subjected her to horrible torture, including breaking of all her fingers, one by one. However, she did not betray anyone, so all the suspects were given ample time to hide underground. After liberation, she completed her studies to become an electronics engineer. She married my professor of electronics, Dr. Dušan Lasič, whom she had met as the leader of SPARD (an acronym for Slovenian Partisan Radio Works). In the early seventies, all three of us became good friends and ascended several mountains together. She died in 1997.

Drago Hartner and Miloš Brelih joined the partisans in the countryside. Božidar Magajna became a professor of acoustics after the war, and I was his student. All the participants of the “Screamer” were already deceased.

1.7 Mutual Killing Has Begun

In order to explain the necessary background for the readers, who want to understand my narrative, I had to describe some facts of which I was informed either by the current newspapers or many years after the end of war. After the collapse of totalitarian systems in the Soviet-block countries, USSR, and Yugoslavia, many books were published, which were, or would be, forbidden before 1990. My sources are mostly the Slovenian books and documentary films, shown on our TV.

The first skirmish between the Italians and the Slovenes happened on May 13, 1941, on Mala gora (Little Mountain) in the vicinity of town Ribnica. There, in a lonely hunters' cabin, three members of the secret organization TIGR¹³ were hidden: their military leader Danilo Zelen, Anton Majnik, and Ferdo Kravanja. They might be betrayed if one considered that three Slovenian gendarmes and four Italian carabinieri were in the patrol. Zelen was killed, whilst Majnik and Kravanja were captured. However, Majnik managed to escape already into the forest and badly hurt Kravanja some weeks later, from the Ljubljana hospital. Still later, both joined the partisans and still later were killed by them.

¹³ The name of the organization TIGR is the acronym of the towns Trst, Istra (Peninsula) Gorica, and Rijeka (in Italian, *Trieste, Istria, Gorizia, Fiume*). It was established in 1927. After the WWI, the Italians were "rewarded" for joining the Allied forces in 1915, by part of Austrian territory *Friuli*. However, they also occupied much larger territory named Julijska Krajina (Julian March), which was predominantly inhabited by Slovenes and Croats. Soon after the occupation in 1918, the new masters began suppressing all other nations in the newly acquired territory. The assimilation pressure became severe especially after 1922, when the fascists under the leadership of Benito Mussolini had seized the power in Italy.

Now, let me tell more of that secret organization TIGR. It was being established already in 1927 on the former Austrian territory of Julijska Krajina (Julian Marsh or *Venezzia Giulia* in Italian), which the Italians occupied after the WWI. This territory was inhabited mostly by Slovenes and Croats (some five hundred thousand souls after the war). Just in larger towns, for example, Trieste (*Trst* in Slovenian), Pirano (*Piran*), and Pola (*Pula* in Croatian), the population was either predominately or almost exclusively Italian. Soon after the occupation, the Italians started the forced assimilation of the local populations. In due course, the Slovenes and the Croats had lost 488 schools, about four hundred cultural clubs (some locations where they had meetings were burnt), about the same number of libraries (many burnt as well) and organizations, some forty newspapers, and over two hundred cooperative societies and financial institutions. Some seven thousand farmers' properties came to auctioneer's hammer, and over hundred thousand people had to emigrate for political or economical reason. All Slovenian and Croatian names were Italianized, the population was forbidden to talk or sing in their native languages, and even the names on the gravestones were Italianized. The Italian teachers severely punished the children who would dare speaking their native language. A case is known where the Italian teacher spat into mouths of Slovenian pupils because they were speaking in their mother's language. It was known he had tuberculosis!

When, in 1922, the fascists came to full power, the pressure increased. Whoever resisted the assimilation, no matter how passively was severely beaten by fascists, who often forced the victim to drink a full glass of castor oil, sometimes mixed with gas. People were arrested, severely tortured, and sentenced to long terms of jail or sent to confinement in the southern Italy. The man in Dutovlje (Slovenia, close to Trieste), from whom I kept buying wine, told me that the fascists interrogators pushed sulphur crystals behind the fingernails of his grandfather and burnt them. His grandmother came home with burns from the cigarette butts all over her body. In his English book, *Life-and-Death Struggle of a National Minority: The Yugoslavs in Italy* (first edition published in 1936 by Yugoslav Union of League of Nations Societies, Ljubljana, second edition in 1945 by Ljudska Pravica, Ljubljana), Professor Lavo ermelj extensively described the circumstances in Istria and Venezia Giulia after the Italian occupation.

The above facts were the reason that the organization TIGR was being established. This was the most secret organization, resisting the Italians already before the WWII started. They did sabotages on those Italian institutions, which were directed against the Slovenian population.

The newspapers did not report of the skirmish on Mala gora, nor was this ever reported after the war in Yugoslavia. The OF, which was led from the very

beginning by the communists, would not admit that there were some Slovenes who began the armed struggle *before* OF started fighting. I learned of the Mala gora incident in 1995, when the book *Tigr v boju za domovino* (*TIGR in the Struggle for the Fatherland*) was published, after Slovenia became independent. Majnik joined the partisans, and he became very popular. Once in 1943 in the night, when he went out of a pub in Ribnica, somebody shot him. A single shot was heard. Since no enemy troops were near, the only possibility remained this was the deed of the communists. When he was found next morning, his face had been smashed beyond recognition. However, the local people nevertheless recognized him by his dress and especially by the fancy buckle of his belt, carved by himself. In a similar strange way, Kravanja was also being shot.

I remember that (it was sometimes in summer 1941) the news spread that the Germans were burning the village Rašica, which was just some 10 km away from Ljubljana on the hills across the River Sava. I went to the Castle Hill in Ljubljana from where I could see the village was burning. At that time, the Germans shot some Slovenes too.

The first incident, which was reported in the newspapers, happened in Ljubljana after Germany had attacked USSR on August 13, 1941. Then the Slovenian police agent, Viktor Jagodic, accompanied by two Italian agents attempted to arrest a communist. Instead of surrendering, the man started shooting, killing Jagodic, but he too was shot dead by both Italian agents. Soon after that, the occupational authorities began tightening the screw. On September 14, the death penalty was being declared for possession of any arms. Ten days later, some security precautions were published; "dangerous" individuals will be sent to confinement.

On October 7, the Extraordinary Court in Ljubljana sentenced three men to death for sabotaging the Ljubljana fair. This harsh sentence was later reduced to twenty-five years of jail. Two days later, an article was published in newspaper, requiring to listen to the war news (of course not those transmitted by BBC) standing in attention. Needless to say, we did not stay in attention when listening to any news.

On November 7, the more strict measures against *banditismo* were published. The first struggle between the Italians and the partisans in *Provincia di Lubiana* took place at Lož and Bezljak, where three Italians were killed, twenty-three wounded, and seven missing. The house where we dwelt was just some 70 m away from the mortuary of the military hospital. So we could see from the windows how many coffins were carried into the funeral wagon. However, it would be too dangerous to look through the window. We went to the attics, where we lifted a tile to peek through.

After the funeral wagon was loaded, the procession went to the main street and then via Vodmatska Street, where we dwelled, and further to the

cemetery, which was some 2 km away. Besides the field reverend, some officers and soldiers followed the wagon. They were carrying a battered flag, which was worn out already in the Ethiopian war (1935-1941). The fascists accompanied the procession on the pedestrian walks on both sides. Whoever would not greet the funeral with *saluto romano* would be severely beaten. They occasionally followed people who tried to hide into houses to avoid the greeting and beat them. In the other side of our duplex, there was a family whose grandfather always went out to the edge of the pedestrian way to salute the funeral; I could see him from our window in the second floor. How disgusting was to see him standing there alone with his *saluto romano*, whilst the whole street was being empty! Even those Italian prostitutes in Vič had more self-esteem—they adamantly refused the fascists. And here, this guy . . . Well, then I realized what the true difference between a prostitute and a whore is: the first is the profession and the second the character! After the war, his behavior became very much different, and then I could repeat this statement.

In autumn 1941, my friend Marjan and his father were sentenced for possessing shortwave radio receiver and transmitter (similar to what I had as well, for we were naive enough to continue experiments in the shortwave communication, even after the occupation). However, Marjan and his father did not betray me. I was told when the trial would take place, and I went to see the court procedure, where I saw my friend for the last time before the war ended. As a penalty, both were sent to confinement to different places in southern Italy. After the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, the fate sent the father and the son to different banks; the father became a major of the Domobranci, who collaborated with the occupiers, whilst the son became a major of the partisan secret police OZNA. In addition, Marjan's younger brother had joined Domobranci.

On October 21, the technical faculty was closed, and twenty students of electrical engineering, who were then in the seminar, were arrested for possessing the OF newspaper *Slovenski Poročevalec* (*Slovenian Reporter*). When there was a trial, their professor Milan Vidmar appeared at the court to defend them. His defense was so effective that all of them were acquitted for lack of evidence.

In December, large articles appeared in the newspapers; at *Tribunale Speciale* (Special Tribunal) in Trieste, some sixty Slovenes were accused to be the members of the secret terrorist organization "Tabor." The verdict was published on December 15. Nine were sentenced to death, twenty-three to thirty years of jail, and the others to different jail terms or to monetary penalties, or both. The death penalty was reduced to life imprisonment for four; among them was Prof. Lavo ermelj. (I still have the popular book of nuclear physics, which he wrote some years after the war. This was my first book from where I got the

basic knowledge of the subject.) Professor Čermelj was accused for supporting TIGR. Now I guess that the main reason for his punishment might have been the publishing of his book *Life-and-Death Struggle of a National Minority*, where he described (already in 1936!) all the cruelties of the Italians and the fascists in suppressing the Slovenian and the Croatian population in Julian March. (This book was not mentioned in any report of the trial.)

In several articles reporting from the process, there was nothing of the interrogation procedure. In the aforementioned book of TIGR, Bogomil Hvala described what all he had to go through:

"Two months I was jailed in a dark underground room, without any window on bare boards, five days without any food or water. They took my socks and removed all the buttons from my clothes and underwear. From lying on the boards I got painful wounds on both hips. Day after day, they lead me to the upper floor where they interrogated me. They beat me with cowhide until I lost the conscience and then they splashed me with cold water, forcing me to sign the record. I was just shaking my head. My palms and fingers became a single burning wound. I could not hold the pen, but I would not sign even if I could. With a ruler, they pressed all my fingers behind the nails so that the blood ran out. They glued laps on my beard chest and on other places of my body, and when the glue dried, they tore them so that all the hair was pulled out, and I was bleeding all over. The torturers Perla and Locastro kept forcing me to sign the record. They were roaring on me, pulling my hair. When I could not stand up anymore, both torturers towed me down to the cellar where they threw me to the floor. Since they could not get any information from me, they started beating me the next day and Perla repeated: "Facciamo un' altra tirata!" (Let's do it once again). And they kept screaming: "Sign! Confess!" . . . And so on . . .

Mirko Brov told:

"They lead me in the torture room. Already seeing the rack and the bloodstained walls it was horrible for me. There they kept torturing me the full day and in the evening, they started again. Even after such a terrible day and night, I did not confess anything. They kept torturing me for continuous eight days and nights. I have lost the conscience many times. All my body became a single wound and because of being beaten so severely I lost my hearing. Inside of my mouth, the skin peeled off. After eight days they lead me to the Castle Corroneo . . . I was sentenced to thirty years of imprisonment. In the jail, I learned how the others were tortured. Adolf Uršič of Kobarid could not bear all this torture and became insane. His insanity occurred occasionally. Since the wardens thought he was malingering, they led him in the torture room and dressed him into a straitjacket. They tied him to the iron bed, put a blanket over and kept beating him until he died."

Dear reader, this is just a small fragment, and we may guess that the fate of the other accused was more or less similar. This was *La giustizia italiana*! We

could not avoid thinking of how the torturers acquired their “vast experience” during many years of the Italian occupation of Julian March.

On December 19, we read the report that in Vrhnika, the partisans killed a father and a mother, suspects to work with the occupiers. As a retaliation, on that same day, at court martial, eight Slovenes were sentenced to death for their cooperation with the OF. Soon the reports like this became more frequent.

January 8, 1942, brought us a new decree from Italians: all skis had to be handed over to the occupiers! At the end of the month, personal documents for all males from fifteen to fifty years were being introduced. Just before the carnival, we were informed that wearing any masks or costumes was forbidden as well.

In the German occupational zone, some two hundred partisans of Cankarjev battalion intended to spend the winter in a lonely village Dražgoše, in the hilly part of Slovenia, some 33 km NW of Ljubljana. However, the Germans learned of this and sent three thousand troops to destroy the partisans. Then the snow was about 1.5 m high there. The struggle lasted from January 9-11, 1942. Eventually, the poorly armed partisans retreated in the hills behind the village, at the cost of seven dead and eleven wounded. The German losses were twenty-seven dead and several more wounded. For this, the Germans killed forty-one adult males, sent all remaining eighty-one villagers to the concentration camp, and burnt down the complete village. More or less, similar pattern of partisan-occupiers warfare was repeated many times all over Slovenia.

A similar incident of this sort occurred on October 10, 1943, on the road between today's Italian/Slovenian border Pass Predel (1156 m) to the Village Strmec (962 m). There, the partisans killed a single German officer riding his motorcycle. As revenge, the Germans killed sixteen men of the village, whom they burnt down completely. The other villagers (women and children) were disbanded. They had found shelter at friends or relatives in the lower Village Log pod Mangartom (651 m) or elsewhere.

On the February 23, the Italians completed their barbed wire fence around Ljubljana. In this way, the whole town had become some sort of a concentration camp. The exit or the entrance was allowed only by a special permission *lasciapassare*. From our family, only my brother Jože, who was a civil engineer, was allowed to go out where he continued building the road Vrhnika-Logatec. Soon after that, the first round-ups had begun. The Italians were filtering out only the known OF members, whilst the rest were sent home on the same day. From April 1, any use of bicycles either to ride it or to walk by was forbidden too, except for people with special permission.



With my wife Cveta in 1950

From the start of 1942, more and more Slovenes were killed by the partisan *Varnostno-Obveščevalna Služba*—VOS (Security and Intelligence Service). It was hard to believe so many traitors were among us. For example, how could a three-year-old girl, who was killed by VOS in Brezovica on April 10, together with her mother and father, be a collaborator or a traitor? From February to April, thirty-eight persons were killed by VOS, not only men but also women and children, and in addition, more of them were being attacked and hurt by VOS. For many of them, the only “fault” was that they wanted to fight against the occupiers outside OF, just because this organization was being ruled by the communists. Already toward the end of 1941, the communist leader Boris Kidrič distributed a proclamation that anyone who would fight the occupiers outside OF would be punished by death!

During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939), the communists desecrated Catholic churches and killed many priests and nuns. This was the reason that Pope Pius XI condemned the communists in his circular *Divini Redemptoris* (1937). He had forbidden any cooperation with communists to all Catholics. Since the majority of Slovenian population were farmers and deeply religious, this became the second reason for killing those who were against communism, even as they did not like the occupiers. At the university in Ljubljana, there

was an organization of Catholic students, *Straža v viharju* (Guard in Storm),¹⁴ which also opposed communism. They were on top of the VOS list, and at first, the students Franc Župec and Jaroslav Kikelj were being shot on March 2 and 3, respectively. An industrialist and entrepreneur August Praprotnik was killed by VOS already on the February 21. Gradually, it became clear that treason and collaborationism were not the main ground for killing. Besides a few real traitors, it became obvious that the communists were removing mainly their political opponents.

While the killing continued, the Italians began sentencing the captured members of OF to death. At the beginning, we read only of the regular court martial procedures. However, when, on April 29, the partisans attacked a train near Radohova vas, killing two Italian soldiers and hurt several more, General Mario Robotti, the supreme military commander of *Provincia di Lubiana* became furious! In retaliation, the Italians killed six hostages. From then on, we could read more and more reports of hostages being killed. Robotti once wrote a remark on a report of a partisan sabotage: "Si amazza troppo pocco!" (We do not kill enough!) It was no better in the German zone; for example, in Frankolovo, the Germans hung on ninety-nine hostages because the partisans killed one single German officer. The worst was in Serbia, where in Kragujevac and Kraljevo, approximately four and three thousand hostages, respectively, were killed in September and December 1941. For each German killed in the struggle, they killed hundred Serbs! The Germans emptied all higher classes of gymnasiums, students, and professors and shot them.

The partisans kept sabotaging telephone lines, trains, railway bridges, and so on. Due to extensive killing by VOS (from the spring, on almost every day, someone was killed), the situation was created, which forced those who originally intended to fight independently against the Italians and the Catholic opponents of communism to seek the protection at the occupational forces. Instead of fighting against the occupiers, the first group turned to collaboration, and many of the second group joined. So on one side there were partisans in the forests and hills, fighting against the Italians, the Germans, and the Slovenian anticommunists. And on the other side, there were the anticommunists and the people who meant the circumstances mentioned forced them to collaborate! All this split us Slovenes so much that even today (in 2011) we are far from any reconciliation.

The attacks and sabotages of the partisans became increasingly more frequent. And the Italians kept shooting hostages for whom they always

¹⁴ This organization of the university students in Ljubljana was established already in 1935. Then they also began publishing, at first, the biweekly and, after 1936, the weekly review named *Straža v Viharju*.

declared to be the proven helpers of the OF, their members, or communists. The names of those hostages who were shot were published in the newspapers and announced in numerous posters, displayed in the town. However, with so many people shot, the Italians soon run out of such “convenient” suspects. Instead, they simply started taking people from the street, indiscriminately to shoot them as the hostages.

Once, my father, whose work was to paint the house which was the prewar Italian Embassy in Ljubljana, did not return home. Next day, his boss asked at our home if he was sick, just to find that he simply “disappeared.” When my father returned after two days, he told that the Italians arrested him on the street and put him in jail together with some other people, who were selected for the next group of hostages. Only the fact that he was painting an Italian building saved his life. Since he was the master, leading the job, the work ceased. So the Italians themselves started investigating why he did not report to work. With the help of my father’s boss, the Italians eventually found he had been arrested and released him. When the next group of hostages was being shot, my father remembered several names of the people he had met in the jail.

On May 26, 1942, the priest Dr. Lambert Ehrlich became the victim of the VOS. In the middle of Ljubljana, an agent of VOS shot him dead. Ehrlich was a great Slovenian patriot; as such, he was the initiator and leader of the organization “Straža v Viharju.” The primary objective of this organization of the university students was to resist the threatening communism. As usual, his assassins declared that he was a collaborator. The most significant “collaboration” he did was the eight-page-long memorandum he sent to the occupational supreme command. In his writing, he condemned the shooting of hostages and the villagers for the deeds of the communists, the sending of innocent people to concentration camps, and so on. Instead, he proposed to form the domestic police forces to defend the rural population against the communists and stop their bloodshed. The most significant was his reproach that the occupational authorities had already *annexed* the occupied territory, introducing the regulations, which were in harsh violation of the Hague Convention. By writing this alone, he had risked his life, for the Italians could sentence him to death by shooting. However, the Italians did not shoot him, but a Slovenian assassin had ended his life. By considering the hard facts, he was not killed for being a collaborator but as a leader of the anticommunist movement.

1.8 Brother Rudi Returns from Split

In January 1942, my brother Rudi returned to Ljubljana. He was being employed in the opera of Split, a town at the Adriatic coast, which was then in the Italian occupational zone. He was handsome, tall, with dark curly hair, and he was a very good musician with an immense musical memory. In the orchestra, he played violin. Anyone in King's Guard Orchestra who played a string instrument had to learn to play a brass instrument for parades, and so on, so he played tuba and some other brass instruments as well. By leaving Belgrade in February 1941, he avoided being bombed in April that same year when the Germans indiscriminately bombed the town for three successive days, causing great destruction and seventeen thousand deaths.

Since he did not like being in Split, he decided to move to Ljubljana, where he expected to get employment at the Radio Orchestra. Rudi, his wife Slava, son Jože, and daughter Vera packed everything and embarked a ship to Zadar, where they spent the night. During all their sailing, they were much afraid of sea mines. The next day, they continued to Rijeka, and from there, they took a train to Ljubljana. It was already dark when they had arrived to our home. We had an apartment of two bedrooms and a kitchen. Needless to say, how cramped we were: parents, six children, and three grandchildren (also the son of my sister, Draga) packed in just two rooms! Fortunately, my brother Jože, who was a civil engineer, came home only on the weekends because during the week he worked in the country. Rudi soon found a house on the same street, where he moved with his family.

I still remember how Rudi was practicing the violin concerto by Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy. So I heard this concerto for the very first time as played by violin solo. Much later, I heard it with the orchestra to sense the full

harmonization of this magnificent work for the first time. He was accepted in Radio Orchestra right away, and soon his seat was next to the concertmaster. At that time, I began visiting the evening symphony concertos, which were held in a big hall of the Hotel Union. The main conductor was Drago Mario Šijanec. I was introduced to Dvořák's Slavonic dances, Beethoven's sixth symphony, Liszt's Hungarian rhapsody, Brahms and Tchaikovsky's violin concertos, Chopin's first piano concerto, and so on. I remember when the thin and small violinist, Viher, was playing the Brahms concerto in D-major. Strangely for me, he was also playing the orchestral part, but at the end, he could not return to the podium to earn a second applause. By spending so much of his energy, he collapsed as soon as he had left the stage. Then a German tenor Dr. Pölzer, an MD (he had sung "Tannhäuser" by R. Wagner in the Ljubljana Opera), who was there, helped him to his feet again.

Since Rudi needed more money to support his family, he also played at the small orchestra at the country's music band (there he played euphonium) and also in the opera orchestra. Two days of the week, he had to play from the morning until the evening and just had enough time to move from one place to another. However, he had inexhaustible energy—physical, mental, and sexual. (He could be a serious rival of J. F. Kennedy.) He cut a wide swath in the forest of women whenever he went. His political orientation was communism. My sister Mimica and brother Jože, who were against it, had often arguments with him. Mimica could not accept Rudi's claims that we would see when the Russians will come to make order here. At first, the Italians came, and then the Germans to make order here, and now we had to expect the Russians to do the same; why didn't we make order ourselves? I too could not accept his views concerning the Russians and Stalin, but I did not interfere.

Since Rudi played in the Radio Orchestra, he was allowed to possess an unblocked radio to hear music from everywhere. Once he was listening to Radio Moscow, where they were playing the famous "Slavonic March" by Tchaikovsky. A part of this march is the former (Tsarist's) Russian anthem. However, instead of this part, the Soviet orchestra played something else. This was too much even for my brother: "It was like somebody would hit me on the head with a hammer," he complained.

In addition to all the mentioned musical occupation, Rudi also organized a Schrammel Quartett. They had the rehearsals in our kitchen; Rudi played the first violin; Ivo, the boyfriend of my sister An ka, the accordion; two other fellows, the second violin and guitar, respectively. However, before they were honed for a public performance, Ivo was arrested by the Italians and sent to the Gonars concentration camp. So the whole project failed.

Since the concertos of the radio orchestra were broadcast live, mostly after the curfew, any member of the orchestra had special permission to be out after 9:00 p.m. This was convenient for Rudi to fulfill some of the activities, which I mentioned before. In the late hours on weekends, my father and all three sons were playing cards. Rudi was a passionate card player, having a quick temper, which—together with smoking—became the reason for his premature death after the war.

1.9 Sent to Italian Concentration Camp Gonars

Italian concentration camp? Were there any? The world knew of German concentration camps Auschwitz, Dachau, Mauthausen, Treblinka, Bergen-Belsen, and so on. They still stand today as a reminder of the Nazi cruelties and people keep visiting them. The late German president Willy Brandt knelt in Warsaw Ghetto, which was indeed some sort of a concentration camp, to show his compassion for the numerous victims there. Contrary to this, the concentration camps with wooden barracks, to where the Italians were transporting Slovenes already since 1918 and especially during WWII, when they were the German allies, did not exist anymore. The only reminders for their existence are the numerous names of people who died there, engraved in the gravestones of the local cemeteries. On the detached cemetery of Gonars, which was arranged especially for dead victims of the concentration camp, there were several monuments with 453 Slovenian names. All of them died in the years 1942/1943 during the Italian occupation of Slovenia, and the majority of them were teenagers. If one would look for the barracks where all these unfortunate boys and men had died, one would not find any. Since I am one of the more fortunate, who returned from that camp alive, let me tell you the full story.

On June 25, 1942, the school year for the boys in gymnasiums had ended. Next day, just after 5:00 a.m., two Italian soldiers knocked on the door of our apartment. When they entered the room where I was sleeping, one looked on my face, where my beard did not grow yet, concluding, *Ancora bambino* (still a child). But the other one asked me to stand up. Being seventeen years old, I was already much taller than him. He ordered me to dress and go with him. Fortunately, they did not search our apartment for any items, for they might discover a shortwave radio transmitter, which I kept in a big wooden case. My

mother gave me a piece of bread, which was made of rotten corn flour. Since it tasted like mothballs, I could not eat it. The rain was pouring outside, and I took an umbrella.



The complete Stari family,
with parents, children, their spouses and grandchildren. (1955)

On the street, there was a truck, which I had to enter. Several other boys and men from our street, including my eldest brother Rudi, were already in. When the truck was full, we were transported to the courtyard of the military barracks in Ljubljana. We were ordered out to form a line. In the front, an officer was checking our personal documents. Rudi, who was just before me, showed his "Italian" identity card from Split. "Ma Ostia, c'e un Italiano!" said the officer, directing him toward the exit to freedom.

Since I had the same name, I expected I would be released too. Unfortunately, my identity booklet was different. The officer gave me the booklet back and showed me to the other direction, where a truck with a tarpaulin was standing. After some steps, I tried my last chance by squatting down and retightening my shoelaces. Then I stood up and followed my brother toward the exit, without looking back. At that moment, it started pouring cats and dogs, so I opened my umbrella. When I was almost at the exit, a soldier approached me, asking in plain Slovenian where I am going. "Out," I answered.

“No, no,” he said. “You should go there,” he said while directing me toward the truck. He also ordered me to close my umbrella—strange order when it was raining cats and dogs. My former classmate Oskar was already there, and he had to give his identity booklet to a soldier who pushed it through the slot of the tarpaulin. The slot widened for a while, and it was apparent someone from there was checking the card and Oskar. At first, I did not understand this double-check, but much later, I realized that the guy behind the tarpaulin was looking for some members of OF, who were on the *wanted* list. They retained the documents, and the soldier showed us into the building.

At first, we were just two of us in a room almost as big as a gymnastics hall. Since there were some round-ups in the past and almost all the captured people were left free on the same day, we expected that sometimes in the afternoon we should be home again. (We had no idea of the secret military order that all men from fifteen to fifty-five years, especially students and intellectuals, guilty or not guilty, should be arrested and sent to the concentration camp). More and more people dripped in, and before noon, the room was full. Then an officer entered and made a threatening speech. “We will show you who we are.” He shouted, “Ljubljana will tremble,” and so on. Even then, we did not believe something bad would happen to us. There was not any court procedure! How they could arrest us just so, without any reason?

In the early afternoon, we were ordered to move into several smaller rooms, across the courtyard. After a while, each of us got two small loaves of white bread. White bread! I already forgot how it tasted! Since I was very hungry, I ate one loaf immediately and after a while the second one too. Some hours later, we were ordered out to a place surrounded by barbed wire. The rain was over, and the sun was shining again. We were called by name to the other narrow exit. Now we are free to go home, we expected. Instead, two *carabinieri*, who were standing at the exit, chained us two by two. We had to wait in line outside, guarded by numerous soldiers who unfolded the bayonets on their rifles. Some soldiers approached and searched us thoroughly. Knives, cigarette lighters and doses, fountain pens, and also some golden rings, watches, and so on were gone. When the chaining and searching procedure was over, we were ordered to march toward the nearby main railway station. On each side, there was a cordon of soldiers with their rifles ready to shoot and soldiers with bayonets on in the front and behind. For the first time, we started suspecting our fate might not be an easy one.

After the arrival to the station, the soldiers helped us ascending the wagons. They were not rough with us. Since they probably knew which fate was waiting for us, they even might have some compassion for so-young boys chained two by two for no apparent reason. It was difficult to ascend the platform of the

wagon, which was intended for transporting animals, with the chain biting in the wrist, but we managed it. I even managed to climb up with my umbrella. Then the door was closed and locked. We pulled ourselves up to the small grided windows under the roof peeking out. Then my “chain-mate,” Oskar spotted his father, who was the stationmaster, approaching the wagon. He called his father, who—after seeing him—began crying. It was strange for me to see an adult man crying. Oskar’s father had lost his left arm in an accident on the marshalling yard, and he was really a poor figure to see. He reached for the wallet and pulled out all the money, fixing it on his stationmaster’s sign (on a stick) and stretching it toward the window so that Oskar could pick it.

Since it was difficult to hang on the widow being chained, we soon jumped down to seat on the floor. After a while, when the train was full, it started moving toward the west. I wonder what feeling Oskar’s father had, when he had to give the sign for the departure of the train in which his own son and only child was being transported to the concentration camp.

The chain around our wrists pinched at every movement, and I decided to get rid of it. Then I had very narrow hands like those of a gynecologist. So I narrowed my hand as much as possible and pulled it forcibly out of the chain, without scratching my skin too much. Now it was easier to peep through the window to see where we were heading. The small Slovenian towns like Verd, Borovnica, and so on passed away, and when it was night, we supposed we were somewhere near Trieste. It was hard to judge the environment because of an almost total black out. Only the names of the stations we were passing were lit because they were deep under the roof. The names of the stations after Trieste were unknown to us.

During this entire journey, the train stopped occasionally, and we chained us again being afraid of possible checkup. Since no human skin could withstand such a frequent abuse, we eventually left the chain on, and both of us tried to get some sleep. Once Oskar moved and pinched me with the chain so that I jumped up. Unfortunately, my trousers were attached to a splinter on the pavement; the jumping caused a big cut in trousers and underpants. However, later in the camp, nobody paid any attention to such unmoral dress.

Finally, the train arrived at the destination; it was a lonely station Bagnaria Arsa with no other buildings anywhere around. The soldiers helped us out again, and we were proceeding via a road through the cornfields toward a distant village, Gonars. It was pitch-dark, the rain started pouring again, but we had an umbrella, and fortunately, there was no one ordering us to collapse it. We were moving unorganized, like a heard of cattle, seeing a guard only occasionally. How much opportunity to hide into the cornfield and escape? But we still had some strange feeling that our captors would soon realize they

were doing us injustice and we would be released. On the other hand, we were in an entirely unknown environment, and nobody knew where to go to get some shelter, food, and helpful people. After some time, we passed a village (probably Fauglis) via the main road. People were sleeping there, just one woman, who apparently had to visit the toilet, opened the window of it looking down. Still later, we finally arrived at the concentration camp, which was about 1 km away from the village and a few more from Bagnaria Arsa.

1.10 Arrival at the Camp

At the entrance of the camp, the soldiers removed us from the chains. Slowly, the morning approached. After the sunrise, we were called according to the list prepared before our departure from Ljubljana. Even as we were almost without any guard all the way from the station to the camp, no single one was missing! Whoever had any lire had to exchange them for the camp money. For larger sums, a receipt was given. The officers asked who spoke Italian, and several men stepped forward. They were asked of their profession and those, most educated, like professors, engineers, merchants, and so on were selected for capos. Next, we were sent to the barbers, where only two of them shingled some six hundred of us with the old, good, hand-driven clippers! They probably had a cramp in their hands after some hours when they finished the job. After being shingled, we had to undress completely, and a doctor-prisoner checked our pubic hair for crabs, using a short, pencil-like stick. Then we took a shower. Each of us was ordered to bind his dress in a bundle, with a numbered cord, separating the leather items and shoes. The dress went to the steam disinfection. When we got it back to dress again, we were all sort of uniformed—all cut to a shingle and all wearing a wrinkled dress!

Next we got our aluminum canteens, and each of us was being assigned a four-digit number, which we simply engraved (by a stone) on the canteen cover to remember. We got some 400 grams of black bread and a peace of cheese (some 20 g). This was better than in Ljubljana, where we got just about 250 g of corn bread daily. At noon, the cooks brought the containers with vegetable soup. From far, I saw how a boy, who was just receiving his soup, got an epileptic attack. He dropped down, spilling the soup, and I still could see his jaw opening widely and closing several times. People next to him helped him to prevent him biting his tongue.

When the soup was given, the capos were always served first. Each got two full ladles of thick part of the soup from the bottom of the container. Then the

cook caught all the fat from the surface to pore over. The rest was for us. In average, each of us got a leveled spoon of cooked rice or macaroni with some more spoons of cooked vegetables (potato skin, beet leaves, peas, beans, and pumpkins with which they usually fed pork). We got the same soup for the dinner. The only value of the soup was that it was hot, and it contained some minerals. Each morning, we got some black ersatz coffee—no sugar, of course. Bread and cheese were the only valuable food, which we got. After a week, the daily ration of bread was being halved. Once a week, we did not get any cheese, but in the evening, we got plain beef soup and a peace of meat instead. The meat was sometimes so tough that it could be successfully used as the material for a gasket. In average, we got some 800 calories a day. With the money, we could occasionally buy some fruits or cakes. Occasionally, cigarettes were also given equally to anyone. The smokers protested because the nonsmokers (who exchanged them for food) got the cigarettes as well.

The camp Gonars was some 700-m long and some 80 m wide. The part where we entered was called Alpha, and there were the buildings for disinfection, camp management, and bath. The next part Beta was divided from Alpha by simple barbed wire fence, and there were sixteen double and one single-length barracks for about a hundred people each, a latrine, a washing room, and a canteen. Next was the kitchen area where we usually got our soup and coffee. Still further was the Gamma section with three double and one single barrack where they put us in. At the very other end, there was an infirmary.

On the first day, when we were passing Beta, a skinny boy in shorts with the legs like toothpicks called me from the crowd of the earlier prisoners, who were watching us from the high platform. Since I did not recognize him, he told he was Ivo, the boyfriend of my sister Ana, being arrested some months earlier. “Oh, indeed, but you are so terribly skinny,” I answered. (He was a strong boy when he was visiting our home).

“You will soon become the same,” he answered. He was right!

All the mentioned departments were divided by simple barbed wire fence, and the communication between them was allowed only by a special permission. Department Gamma had its own latrine and washing room. In the camp were several water reservoirs on some 8-m-high towers. The most interesting was the barbed wire fence around the camp. From inside out, there was at first some 25-cm-high single barbed wire. We were told that the guards on four 10-m-high towers and the other in the guard booths would shoot without warning if anyone crossed it. About one meter outward was some 5-m-wide elaborate mess of barbed wire, ending with an about 5-m-high barbed wire fence. Along this fence were some 20 m spaced candelabras with lights shining down to the fence. The small guard booths were also spaced some 20-m, all around the perimeter. They were occupied only during the night. Since they

were open toward the camp, we could see the guards sleeping in a strangely distorted, standing position when the morning approached. When the first checkup was coming, the guard who was awake started trampling the wooden pavement to awake his companions. A cornfield surrounded most of the camp, and far away, we could see the village Gonars with a typical Venice-style church.

Our barracks had bunk beds, four men up and four down. Anyone got a normal-size mattress filled with straw and two thick new blankets. Up above me, there was a couple of “Don Juans,” who discussed their sexual adventures to such a detail that I got my thorough theoretical sex education already in the camp.

At 6:00 a.m., the trumpeter sounded his wake-up melody. At first when we stood up, we all went piss, and all of us wondered how much water each of us had in his bladder—much more than at home. Then we washed ourselves, and soon after that, each of us got a cup of hot ersatz coffee. Then we went back to lie down until some time later the trumpeter called again for the *apello*—the morning checkup. We had to stand in three lines, and an officer checked if we were complete. Since occasionally someone was in the infirmary, the capo reported of the absent men. Some hours later, we got our bread and cheese. At noon, we got the soup and the same in the evening again. Then it was another *apello*. At 9:00 p.m., the trumpeter sounded *silenzio*, and nobody was allowed to stay out of the barracks, except those who had to go to the latrine. Since our barrack was some 100 m away, my umbrella proved very precious in case of rain. I left it near the exit, and anyone who used it brought it carefully back again. Bread and cheese were distributed in the barracks, but we got our soup and coffee in the fenced place between Beta and Alpha, where the kitchen was located.

The reader may conclude that the circumstances were much milder than in the German concentration camps, where hungry prisoners were forced to work, being beaten and abused in different other ways. All this caused an accelerated deterioration of their physical condition, causing death in some six months. The Germans ran an accurate statistics and even calculated the average life span for the prisoners. However, by considering the malnutrition we were subject to, the ultimate result in Gonars was the same. We Slovenes were destined for either assimilation or annihilation. It seemed we were in the second group. Just the procedure lasted longer than in German concentration camps. In order to save the calories, we rested as much as we could.

On the first day, we met some fellows who were already in Gamma. We expressed our hope to be sent back home, when the Italians would realize it was a mistake. However, these fellows who were arrested one or several months earlier told us that they too had the same idea, but in time, they abandoned any hope for an early return.

The transport, which arrived the next day, was being stopped and attacked by the partisans. Some people joined them, some escaped, and the rest arrived in the camp, convinced that they would soon be released. (Some ten years ago, I was told that the partisans gave the liberated people two chances: either join them or get back home. Those who opted for the last offer never came home, but they were led to a secret place and “liquidated,” which means killed.) The third day was my name day, St. Peter and Paul. My colleagues ironically expressed their “best wishes” to me. Still new arrivals kept pouring in, and soon it was no more places in the barracks. For those who came “too late,” the A-tents for eight persons each were erected. Since Gamma was soon full, a similar tent area was being built in Alpha as well. The very last arrivals were some handicapped people, with crutches, one without legs, on his hand-driven cart, and also the famous old Čika Sava (Uncle Sava), who exhibited his strength on different pub courtyards by bending iron bars, and so on. There was also a guy who could not even stand but just squat. I met him often in front of cinema union in Ljubljana. He was always spotlessly dressed, with tie and hat, greeting the passersby. He never asked for anything, but people nevertheless gave him some money, which he thankfully accepted. The next day these unfortunate people were sent back to Ljubljana.

After one week, we got postcards to write home. My card, on which I wrote in Slovenian, arrived home about one month after I was released from the camp. Someone suggested me a tailor, who repaired my thorn pants and underpants, to stop displaying my naked bottom in the camp. Since the tailor had no thread, he skillfully removed some threads from the fabric at the inside seams to patch the trousers perfectly.

Our obligatory work was the airing of blankets once a week and mattresses once a month. Occasionally, it was our turn to clean the latrine and sweep the barracks, which had to be done every day. Those who were stronger ran the hand pump of the water reservoir. (The other reservoir in Gamma had a gasoline engine pump). They got some extra soup for their work. Soon they too became so weak that two guys had to run the pump lever, using both hands. Less and less volunteers applied for such work. After some months, we ran a bet promising a piece of bread or cheese to anyone who would move the lever ten times back and forth in succession. If he lost, he should give the bread or cheese. Needless to say, no one was interested. (Some thirty years later, when I saw an equal pump in a mountain cabin, I was surprised how easy it was to run it with a single hand).

Once when I had to clean the latrine with another guy, we had to carry a container with some seventy liters of water (80 kg + the weight of the container = about 100 kg). We were completely exhausted after this work.

Since our muscles were reduced so much, our spines suffered a permanent damage, for which I have occasional difficulties until today.

The capo of our barrack was Cvenkl, who was an Austrian colonel in WWI. Then the Colonel Macchi,¹⁵ the commander of the concentration camp, was his prisoner on Isonzo (Soča) Front. Apparently, Cvenkl was very correct to Macchi, and now, Macchi kept inviting Cvenkl to his rooms for dinner or so. Later, we found that this connection was very useful for us too. The colonel had warned Cvenkl of a traitor in our barrack. One evening, when we were in beds already, Cvenkl told us of the guy. Even as he did not tell his name, he described him so well that we knew who he was. Apparently, his denunciations ended in the colonel's wastebasket. Once we threw a blanket over him and beat him. Then the guy, who was just slightly under twenty, wrote home, and his parents sent him the uniform of the fascist youth organization, GIL! He started wearing it—in the camp! Needless to say, we again put a blanket over him and beat him severely. However, he stubbornly kept wearing the uniform. All soldiers in the camp were Alpini, who hated fascists, and he got many hits whenever they met him. One soldier even yelled, "How could you wear such a uniform? Those guys have sent you here!" Since even his captors did not express any respect for his new dress, after about one week, he stopped wearing the uniform. He never put it on again, even in the late autumn, when the weather became very cold.

During the warm summer, the personal hygiene was on a relatively high level. The washing facilities were a long horizontal tube with holes from where the water ran permanently into a long concrete sink underneath. All this was surrounded by 2-m-high planks and covered by a roof some 3.5 m high. The problem was the soap because the one we got in the camp was practically useless. Doing a laundry was more problematical, for we had only the underwear, which we put on in Ljubljana. Soon we got each a nice new shirt and long, old-fashioned underpants with cotton tapes for the ankles. Then we could finally wash our underwear. In the first evening when we got our new underwear, we all put this on and walked out on the "promenade," the central place in Gama. A funny view—several hundred people, all in white Long Johns and gray shirts, walking up and down!

Venerable beards were grown until Macchi ordered all those who did not grow a beard before being imprisoned should get them shaved off. A mystery was how this was checked, but all the young people had to get shaved. (My beard did not start growing yet). For those who did not have a razor, the barber did the job. Some guys asked to be shaved over the skull in order to strengthen

¹⁵ Later, I read in several books that the supreme commander of the camp was Vicedomini, but that Colonel, whom I saw in the Camp was Macchi.

their hair. Since most of them had relatively scarce hair, after two weeks, their scalp looked like a hairbrush. Toothpaste and toothbrushes were practically nonexistent, for very few of us had taken those utensils when being arrested. The shortest remedy to get rid of toothache was to let pull the tooth out. The dentist in the infirmary was very skillful in this.

In our barrack, we had a boy Miško Hočevár, who sang some hits, accompanied by his guitar, which he brought with him. Even as he was only some two years older than me, he was already known for his light compositions, which he had sung at Radio Ljubljana. By hearing him singing, we forgot the usual thought on food, which was our steady preoccupation. I saw him many years later playing bassoon in the Slovenian Philharmonic Orchestra. In Beta, there was a choir, led by Samo Hubad, who was later the conductor of the Symphony Orchestra in Ljubljana. (After the war, I heard many concertos, which he conducted). They sang our national songs beautifully. I still meet him occasionally in Ljubljana, and recently, in the autumn of 2007, he has celebrated his ninetieth birthday.

Some people who travelled abroad had interesting lectures of their journeys. Once a fellow, who described his visit to Prague, Czechoslovakia, started describing the meal Czech dumplings he had ordered in a restaurant. He was so much drifted of this food that he could not stop describing the taste, and so on in every detail. Then several of us objected, "Enough, enough! Change the subject!"

A mountaineer invited us to describe the mountains we could see from the camp in direction toward Slovenia. I joined the group, which gathered close to the barbed wire. Strangely, the soldier on the tower did not object. After some 20 km of flat fields, the 60-km-away peak Krn (2244 m) dominated the scene. This was a huge stump (*krn* means stump in Slovenian), near the Soča (*Isonzo*) Valley at Kobarid (*Caporetto*). There were bitter struggles during WWI. (The famous writer Ernest Hemingway described some battles there in his novel *A Farewell to Arms*.) Some twenty years after I was released from the camp, I ascended Krn for the first time. The Austrians dug the caverns, from all three sides of the mountain, joining together some 15 m under the peak. Many Austrian soldiers (mostly Slovenes and Hungarians) died there, and the mountain is still littered by unexploded shells, hand grenades, splinters, cartridges, barbed wire, canteens, human bones, and other relics of that insane slaughter. As seen from the camp, in front of Krn, on the right bank of the river Soča, which of course could not be seen from the camp, there were smaller peaks: Kobariski Stol (1673 m), Matajur (1642 m), and the long ridge Kolovrat. On Matajur, the German Lieutenant Erwin Rommel led his first *Blitzkrieg* after the breakthrough at Kobarid on October 24, 1917. (Actually the breakthrough was initiated by a devastating gas attack, some 25 km upstream Soča at Bovec).

When he became the general of Hitler's army, he wrote the book *Infanterie greift an* (Infantry is attacking), describing his experiences in those times.

After this interesting lecture, I finally knew of my geographic location. My nearest relative was my aunt, who had a hotel in *Canale d' Isonzo* (now Kanal ob Soči), which was some 50 km straight line away. But I would have to cross the first mountain ridge to come there by the shortest route. Mostly Slovenian population inhabited the territory where the hills and the mountains began and further northeast. Anyone who would escape from the camp should just go there, where it would be possible to get some help. The only question was: how to get out?

An about one-meter deep stream was flowing through Gamma. In the camp, it was mostly covered, but some ten meters before the barrack 16b, it came out again, passing through a concrete tunnel some (5 × 2) m under the barrack and then some 5 m to the inside barbed wire fence and after 5 m out into the cornfield. Since I could swim well under water, I started reflecting on how to escape. In the night, I should enter the stream at the inside of the camp, where the guard could not see me, swim under the barrack to the other side, get some air, and dive some 10 m to stop under the small guard's bridge at the way around the perimeter. There I could get the next breath to continue swimming underwater until I was deep inside the cornfield. Then I would have to walk some 100 m right to the road and turn sharply back toward the east. In the first day, I could reach the bottom of the mountains and then good luck! The swimming under water with an intermediate break under the outside bridge would not be difficult. (At that time, I did not think how weak I was already and of all the other problems for being wet in the night, starved and how I would make 50 km long journey, without any food, to my aunt in Canale d' Isonzo.) The stream, which flew about 1 m/s, would add to my speed. However, when I was checking the top of the concrete tunnel under the barrack closely, I found that in its center, perpendicularly to the stream, a line of sharp iron hooks was fixed on the ceiling. They would catch me like a huge fork. Those damn Italians really thought of everything! The nice dreams were over.

Once, the singing chorus had a concerto in Gamma. When they sang *Domovina, mili kraj* (composed by Nedvěd/Praprotnik, already in the nineteenth century) of our homeland with high mountains, green meadows, white streets, villages, and so on, we realized in what environment we were dwelling. Tears came to our eyes, against our will.

The summer thunderstorms in this flat and hot part of Italy were spectacular. It rained cats and dogs. I never saw so frequent lightning before. Beethoven and Rossini would be pleased to see the Mother Nature unleashing her forces. (Maybe Beethoven would realize that the lightning preceded the thunder and correspondingly corrected the second movement of his sixth symphony named

Pastoral). We were safe in our barracks, but the fellows under the tents suffered a lot. In the first month, the small A-type tents for eight people each were removed to make bigger tents for thirty-two people each. The violent wind, which always accompanied the thunderstorm, blew away many tents, suddenly exposing the poor fellows and all their belongings to a pouring rain. With full compassion, we offered them shelter in the barracks. The next day, when the warm sun was shining again, they kept drying their mattresses and blankets whilst re-erecting the tents.

Before the war, when I was a member of boy scouts, our group leader was Bogdan Zega, who also landed in Gamma. When I saw him improving the tent where he dwelled, I could not resist saying, "Bogdan, did you ever consider to camp under such unusual circumstances?" Already in the beginning, Bogdan reinforced the tent so well that even the most violent wind could not blow it away. This tent became so famous that even Colonel Macchi sent a group of officers and soldiers to see it. What a strange satisfaction!

1.11 Epidemics of Dysentery

Since the latrine was only some 80 m away from the kitchen, the flies, which were crawling on human excrements, had a short flight to reach the bread and cheese, which was being assorted in the kitchen. In about one month, the epidemics of dysentery took place. When I had to stay in the infirmary for the swollen uvula, which caused a permanent vomiting stimulus, preventing me to eat any food, I contracted it too. On my second day in the infirmary, I could see the final agony of a young boy Kezele, who was dying from pneumonia. Three days after a few fellows dug a tunnel and escaped (see the next chapter), nobody from Alpha and Beta sections was allowed to go to infirmary. This was fateful for Kezele, who had pneumonia. On the fourth day, he was brought to infirmary, but it was too late for him. He occasionally rose from his bed, stood up, and collapsed immediately. He died during the night. Later, I had to move to his empty bed. Already on the next day, I got the dysentery too. Since there were so many patients with dysentery, I probably contracted it somewhere, probably on the latrine or in the washing room. At first, I kept visiting the latrine frequently, but already at noon, my body temperature rose above 40°C, and I was too weak to stand up. Then I started filling the chamber pot. I wondered how much output a human body could provide with no input as I could not eat anything for about one week. Even if I tried one or two spoons of thick rice soup, which we got in the infirmary, all this passed my body by an accelerated speed to end undigested in the chamber pot. Since I had lost so much of liquid, I was thirsty like hell. But we were told, “Whoever drinks fresh water dies!” The only liquid we got in the infirmary was the ersatz coffee in the morning and also in the evening and, once a day, the opium tincture. Occasionally, some of us got 250 cm³ of physiological liquid (salt water) injected in the thigh, which was painful. In general, the medical personnel had difficulties to find a muscle thick enough to give the injection. The only other medication was *carbo animalis* in dust form, which, of course, needed some

liquid to swallow. For a week, I do not remember much, except that my friends brought me the newspapers cut to the size of toilet paper, of which almost any one of us had a great need.

After one week, my body was emptied and totally dehydrated. Since I still could not eat almost anything, I kept exchanging my daily rations of bread for more durable toasted bread, which some other guys got in their parcels from home. We had the daily visits of a very kind Italian doctor Mario Cordaro. He learned Slovenian so well that he communicated perfectly. He just spoke slowly as if he was assessing every word. Since he spoke so well, I thought he might be of Slovenian origin. The Slovenes in Julian March were forced to Italianize their names, and his original name could be Marjan Kordar; who knows? Anyhow, he could not be a born Italian, because the Italians (like the French) do not pronounce *h*, but Dr. Cordaro pronounced it perfectly; also his accentuation and syntax were faultless. In the book by Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, *I campi del'duce*, there is a quotation of Dr. Cordaro:

"Our work became bestial, since we could not do anything, being aware of our incapacity, either because the sick were not feed by the proper diet, or for the scarcity of medications. The Gonars Cemetery could not accept all deceased, who were several tens a day. So a new cemetery has been arranged."

After I was two weeks in the infirmary, the Slovenian clerk Viktor L., who was also a prisoner, suggested Dr. Cordaro to send me back to the camp. The doctor did not check with me, for until then, I did not stand out of my bed yet. I also did not know that they considered me to be cured. When in the afternoon the order came to leave the infirmary, I supposed this had to be a mistake. I tried to get up to set the matter with Viktor, but I collapsed as soon as I stood up. When the black out perished, a stronger patient (he had "only" tuberculosis), who was consuming my thick rice soup instead of letting me eat, dragged me to the clerk, and I told him I was too weak to walk back to the camp. Even as it was highly unusual to send such weak people back to the camp, Viktor was adamant, and I had to go. When we were out and still on the territory of the infirmary, a guy who was also sent back to the camp supported me to walk. However, when we arrived to the camp territory, the guy had to speed to Beta, and I was left on my own strength. Somehow, I dragged myself to the barrack 16a, where I belonged to, but there, I collapsed again. My friends helped me back to the infirmary. The same procedure was repeated a week later when I collapsed in the evening to be sent back to the infirmary the next day. And the same procedure repeated after one week again, when I was released from the infirmary for good. For a strange reason, it was always Viktor who insisted sending me back to the camp. I still wonder why I got such a "special treatment," for I did not come in any dispute with him neither before in Ljubljana, where I met him only a couple of times in a radio-repair shop of Zrimšek, nor here in the camp.

That guy was a radio technician, and after the war, he ran his own radio-repairing shop in Ljubljana. When I was designing oscilloscopes at Iskra, he had the face to send someone to me, asking if I would repair a defective Philips oscilloscope for him. I told the messenger that I expected he should come personally to see me. He did not try again.

When I was in the infirmary, I once heard a very remote radio playing the "*Carneval des animaux*" by Camille Saint-Saëns. This was the first and the last classical music that I ever heard in the camp. When hearing this, I realized how much I was missing such music.

After the dysentery, my physical condition dropped to the lowest level. People in the barrack, who were not fat themselves, started calling me "Skinny." I had great difficulty to stand up for the *apello*. Sometimes to prevent collapse, I squatted down, which helped. The sun was too hot for me and the shade too cold. I did not buy any fruits when there was the possibility because I could not digest it. It caused me almost an immediate diarrhea. In short, I was a ruin. (After the war, when I learned of the German concentration camps, I was sure, in Germany, they would send me straight to the gas chamber.) Two medical students in the infirmary told me that they were sure I would die, but strangely, I never thought of this possibility. Nevertheless, the dysentery took a great toll among the other prisoners. Especially those fellows from Beta, who were weaker, because they arrived several months earlier, were dying on mass.

My parents sent me a parcel of up to 5 kg approximately every month. Even as they could send the underwear and clothes separately, they packed them in the same parcel. So I got on average 2.5 kg of additional food a month—some 83 g a day if distributed through the full month! I think my parents never made such a simple calculation. Some letters I sent later had reached my parents, and some guys, who were released earlier, reported of my condition. For some strange reason, all this did not move my parents to send me more food once a month when it was allowed. However, my brother Jože started worrying of my fate. He began sending me the parcels with more food, whilst my parents stopped sending them at all.

Concerning the food and parcels, the genuine characters of the inmates came to expression. Usually anyone who got the parcel gave at first some food to his neighbor or friend and to some other fellows who were looking the unpacking and swallowing the saliva. The rest, he consumed himself. Thefts of food were considered highly amoral and were punished severely. If a thief was discovered, he was "sentenced" by the barrack committee. The sentence was up to fifty hits by the belt over the naked bottom! When I got my meager parcel, a boy Ljubo kept molesting me for the food. When I finally refused to give him more, he dropped to his knees. "I beg you like God. Give me something. I will return you hundredfold when I get the parcel!" I was ashamed seeing

someone knelling before me. So I kept giving him the food until the parcel was empty. Later on, he got the parcel. At first, I was waiting for him to fulfill his promises.

Since he ignored me completely, I asked, "You promised you will return me a hundredfold. I would be glad if you return me just as much as I had given to you!" He just looked angrily.

"Go to hell!" Strangely how a communist, like Ljubo, could talk of God and hell?

There was another entirely different character. A guy whom I knew just cursory came once to me asking where he could get some medication because he was afraid he got dysentery. Since at that time my digestive status could be described as "constipation," I gave him all the medication against dysentery, which I just got a day before in the parcel sent by my brother. In addition, I gave him two pieces of toasted bread. He accepted thankfully and left. I did not know in which barrack he was dwelling. Then after about one month, he appeared again and gave me some toasted bread. "You helped me then. Now it is my turn!" He told me with delight that the medication I gave him had cured his dysentery at the early stage.

Each prisoner could probably tell several similar stories. The most difficult was to split the content of a parcel to consume just a small amount every day until the next parcel arrived. To eat just 83 g a day, as mentioned before (or twice as much for those who get a full parcel of food), would be a pure masochism. In general, the food of one parcel was being consumed within ten days. The level of blood sugar in almost any of us was so low that even when the stomach was full, the feeling of hunger was not tamed. Some fellows, who could not resist it, kept eating until they vomit all. More rich parents bribed the authorities, and some guys got a parcel almost every week. Even as they did not have such difficulties as described above, they were the stingiest.

One guy got a parcel, which was full of fresh bread, when it was being sent. However, after some two or three weeks when the fellow got it, the content was full of green fungus. As hungry as he was, he had to throw everything into wastebasket. Another fellow, who saw this, dug the content out again and ate everything! We were expecting he should have severe digestive troubles, but he did not have any.

Once, my sister arrived to Gonars to see her boyfriend Ivo. (Later, I never asked her how she got the permission for the visit.) She had left me a letter where she wrote that I should be glad to be in the camp instead in Ljubljana. I was furious to read this! However, my sister could not write the real reason of her opinion. At that time, Dr. Marko Natlačen was being shot by VOS in his home in Ljubljana. A guy disguised as a priest had come to see him. When

he entered his room, he shot him dead. He barely escaped because Natlačen's son attacked him furiously. At the retaliation, the Italians seized twenty-five hostages at random on the street and shot them in front of Natlačen's home. Later the rumors were spread that Natlačen committed a grave mistake by destroying the list of communists just before the Italians arrived in Ljubljana. More and more hostages were killed, and the Italians simply took people from the street—guilty or not guilty! By considering all this I was indeed safer being in the camp . . .

1.12 The Visit of the Cardinal Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli

In the middle of summer, the news was spread that the cardinal Angello Giuseppe Roncalli from Rome would visit us. We had to clean, and clean, and clean. Finally, on a hot clear day, when we just got our soup, it was announced he was arriving. The internees did not have time to eat the soup, so we had to put the canteens in the barracks and had to stay in lines like we did for the *apello*. Fortunately, this did not apply to us, minors, who could seat in shade under the roof of the open *cantina*. People who had to stay under the bright hot sun several hours kept dropping down for heat. Within some hours, the discipline relaxed completely. People were sitting on the ground, going to latrine and hiding in the barracks.

Finally, at 5:00 p.m., His Excellency arrived. He first visited the infirmary, and at 6:00 p.m., he condescended to see us. Then I understood the reason of this unexpected delay. The cardinal was so fat that his mass was at least triple of mine. Such fat people cannot withstand heat well.¹⁶ Here His Excellency was standing in a grotesque contrast with us, resembling the dressed skeletons. Well, at least, he saw several thousands drastic examples how to stay slim, even by considering that the Italians were exaggerating with our reduction diet. After some religious ceremonies, which I do not remember, the cardinal announced that the pope prayed for us. He let distribute a small bronze memorial medal and a folder to each of us. Then he told that he heard we sing very well. He would like to hear a hymn. The camp chorus never rehearsed such

¹⁶ Example: all large transformers must have oil and forced air cooling; otherwise, they could not dissipate their internal heat, and consequently they could not operate at full power. This is not necessary for small transformers, where simple air cooling is sufficient.

songs. Instead, someone started singing a national song, *Naprej Zastava Slave* (With Slava's Banner Forward!) by Davorin Jenko, which was some sort of the Slovenian national anthem. Since we sung it many times in schools, anyone could join with ardor. The song out of thousands of throats was echoing in the camp and out in the fields! When we finished, he told the song was very nice. I wondered what the Italians would do if they would understand Slovenian.

For the English readers, I have discovered the translation by Andrej Jureta and Alfred L Hardy, from faraway 1885:

WITH SLAVA'S BANNER FORWARD

*With Slava's banner forward!
To shed heroic blood,
For native country's welfare
Let rifle's voice resound!*

*With our weapons in our hands
We'll thunder at the foe
And in blood will claims the right,
which home and heart demand.*

*Mother dear was me entreating,
arms around my neck was winding.
While my maiden near was sobbing:
My beloved stay thou here!*

*Farewell, mother, farewell, maiden!
Now my nation is my mother.
Honor glory—my betrothed:
Fly then, let us, fly to arms!*

We minors were less angry than the rest of the crowd when we learned that each of us was given a gift of one kilogram of fruits. Frankly speaking, the cardinal, who later became Pope John XXIII was the only one who thought there were some unfortunate souls arrested by injustice, who decided to move his huge mass to the camp, neglecting the hot summer day, to visit us. He was not guilty that the camp authorities assembled us six hours too early. I do not remember any representative of Red Cross or any other humanitarian organization ever visiting us.

1.13 Some Fellows Dug a Tunnel and Escaped

At the end of August, we were suddenly called to *apello* in the middle of the night. Just then, my cheek was being swollen badly for toothache! The rumors were spread that some guys escaped the camp via a tunnel. A car should be waiting for them to transport them to Switzerland. The *apello* was for name sake, and, since nobody from Gamma was missing, they sent us back sleeping. We all crossed our fingers for the guys who escaped. Next day, it was known those eight men had escaped from the barrack 33 in Beta. The details I learned some ten years later, when I bought the (Slovenian) book *Teleskop*, written by Ivan Bratko, who was one of the escapees.

Several communists, among them was one member of VOS, who were in the camp, were afraid that they would be discovered, transferred to Ljubljana, tortured, and shot. They had the reason to believe this, for occasionally a Slovenian traitor came to the camp, checking the guys standing at the *apello*. However, they were unsuccessful to identify anyone because the circumstances in the camp changed every one of us almost beyond recognition. The fellows who were afraid to be discovered had probably forged documents at the time when they were arrested. Nevertheless, they decided to dig a tunnel to escape.

The wooden barracks had about half a meter high brick foundation. Some of them were built on a slopped terrain where the foundation was correspondingly higher. The guys selected the barrack 33, which had the foundation on the steepest slope. On one side, the foundation was less than half a meter, but on the other side, it was almost 2 m high. Underneath, inside the foundation wall, there was enough space to fill with the material they intended to dig out of the tunnel. First they (temporarily, of course) removed the mattress and the boards from the bunk bed to reach the floor of the barrack. Then they saw a square opening just under the bunk bed to make the entrance into the “cellar.”

To prevent the others to see what they were doing, they hung the blankets on the bunk bed to arrange a “separate room.” At the same time, some of them made big noise, playing cards. In the center of the barrack, there was a bet; someone should eat several pieces of bread and cheese in fifteen minutes. This too caused big noise. I do not remember anyone did this successfully, for soon he would run out of saliva. Even the water, which he had drunk during the meal, did not help. If he lost, he should return twice. Usually, such bets ended with the contestant vomiting.

To return to the tunnel, the shortest way would be perpendicularly toward the barbed wire fence and out. This trace would run left from the watching tower. Unfortunately, there was only the grass, and the guard on the tower could see them escaping. Some 15 m to the right of the tower, there was a line of trees, followed by the cornfield. First they wanted to dig the tunnel straight to the cornfield, passing the tower just about one meter to the right. They used oil lamps for light, paneled the tunnel with cardboard of parcels, and supported it by 1-m long logs of wood, stolen from the kitchen. But they did not anticipate that the tunnel would run too closely to the candelabra, which started tilting, when they dug close. They had to fill the earth back to support the candelabra and change the direction more to the right. But they dug too much to the right, and later they had to change the direction again to the left to direct the exit safely into the cornfield.

The visits of traitors in the camp became more frequent; in addition, they had to escape before the cornfield would be harvested. In the night to August 30, they decided to go, sixteen of them. However, when the eight were out, the guard on the tower sounded the alarm, and the other eight had to run back to the barracks. The escaped guys scrambled in pairs, and all of them had safely reached the liberated territory in Slovenia, even as the Italians had organized an extensive chase. They too could not discover any one of those who remained in the camp. One guy left his canteen with engraved number in the “cellar,” but nothing happened.

The escape was really well organized inside as well as outside of the camp. All together, to dig a 60.4 meter long tunnel and to escape so successfully was a bold and respectful job. To prevent further escapades, the camp authorities removed some bricks from every foundation so that the soldiers could check the inside by torches. In addition, they reshuffled us once every month. My next barrack was 18a, and the next was 19b.

Two days after the fortunate guys escaped, it was my eighteenth birthday. It passed unnoticed by anyone, including myself. Even as I ceased to be the minor, my beard still did not start growing yet.

1.14 For Cold Weather Lice had Spread

With the arrival of autumn, the days became cooler, and it was difficult to keep the usual body hygiene, since the washing room, or better said the washing place, was exposed to cold winds. To wash oneself with cold water to the waist, as I was used to, would surely cause pneumonia, which meant a certain death. To stay in *apello* in the cold weather became more exhausting. With the arrival of October, the first lice were discovered. Within one week, these vermin spread immensely. Before I found the reason for constant itching, I was already full of lice. Being accompanied by a guard, I had to carry my mattress out of the camp to empty the straw into a waste disposal. After I emptied the mattress, I could not move. What a luxury, being out of the camp to see the village Gonars and the pretty autumn landscape as a free man! It seemed to me that the guard understood my feeling. He was not nasty, but after a while, he called me to go back behind the fence. There all my belongings, including the mattress case, were disinfected by steam; the barber shaved all the hair anywhere on my body. The warm shower refreshed me in one way, but it also made me dizzy.

Later, all of us realized how much one's pubic hair contributes to the body's thermal insulation. We had to visit the latrine several times in the night to empty our bladders. On such occasions, it was forbidden to wear normal pants, just the long white underpants, so that the tower guard, who shined us with his reflector, could see us better. Since it was cold in the night, people did not obey this order. When the guards patrol met one with trousers on, they beat him badly. Unfortunately, the "birth rate" of lice kept exceeding their death rate, in spite of disinfection. Two weeks after the disinfection, the situation was like before. Being aware of these vermin, we spent a lot of time killing them. The problem was the seams of the underwear, where the lice laid their eggs. We hammered the seams with a stone, inch by inch, like a scythe. With all these measures, we eventually reached some sort of balance with the pest.

1.15 Transfers to Campo Monigo, Treviso

In November, the camp authorities decided to move us to camps in the south because of the approaching winter. At first, they started moving the men in Beta. The destination was Campo Monigo, Treviso, for the students and the intellectuals and the more southern camp *Renicci* in the *Abruzzi* area for all the others. As soon as the barracks in Beta were vacant, they moved people from the tents. But this was only for a short time. They too were moved away, and finally it was our turn. A day before the departure, we were moved from Gamma to Beta.

During the last night in the camp, I got a high fever. Next morning when we started walking toward Gonars, I was still dizzy. But I forgot my problem as soon as I was out of the camp. It was such an unusual feeling to be out again! I remember when we were passing through the next village, Fauglis. I saw normal people doing things around the house, children were playing, and it was a wonderful golden autumn day. People did not pay much attention to us—meager young men in dirty, wrinkled clothes, full of lice, each of us carrying his belongings in a parcel box. I was walking using my umbrella for support, like Lord Chamberlain. We entered a long avenue with planted trees. They still had some leaves on. The warm colors of the landscape reminded me of the pictures of our impressionist, Matija Jama. When I became dizzy, all around me soon became like the pictures of the pointillist Ivan Grohar, full of small points with pretty colors. I only remember passing under a big *portone*, the entrance of the medieval town, Palmanova. The *portone* was like a smaller version of *L'arc de triomphe* in Paris (which I knew then only from the photos). We went on to the railway station, it was probably Bagnaria Arsa, but I do not remember because I was too dizzy.

This time, the normal passenger wagons were waiting for us. When we entered them, we were surprised to see upholstered seats. The railways would

surely have a big job to get rid of all lice, which we had brought in. In the compartment, there was a boy, Jože Ovsec, who later became my friend. In order to cheer myself up, I attempted telling some jokes, of which I knew many, but he said he was not in the mood to find them funny. Since the wagon was not heated, I started shivering. Finally, the train moved, and after some hours, we arrived at the station Treviso. It was interesting to see different towns and landscapes during the journey. In Treviso, we were transferred to trucks, which delivered us to Campo Monigo. A high concrete wall surrounded the camp with the "obligatory" mess of barbed wire on its rim. In the middle, it was a large empty space. On two opposite sides, there were several big, U-shaped buildings made of bricks. On the third side were the kitchen and the showers. I do not remember what was on the fourth side.

When we arrived at the camp, there was still daylight. We had to stand in lines outside for several hours, and the night was approaching. Around 10:00 p.m., I started shivering so violently that someone covered me around the shoulders with a spare trench coat. Later, we were called by names, and we were finally allowed to enter the buildings. The inside was very nice, paved with hexagonal ceramic plates, the windows had big frames of white Carrara marble, the wooden part was painted white, and the metal parts were chromium plated. We were told that this were the barracks for pilots. The bunk beds were less massive than in Gonars, and the small, thin blanket was far from adequate.

The reception we had to experience was in sharp contrast with the nice building. We were greeted by swarms of terribly hungry fleas. They probably had not had any food for some weeks. My friend, Dušan, said they were attacking in four lines. I objected, for these were the Italian fleas, so they had to attack in three lines, as it was normal in the Italian Army. Since it was so cold, Dušan and I squeezed together on a single bed using both blankets to cover ourselves. The next day, we found that our usual population of lice increased drastically. Our preoccupation to kill all these vermin filled the rest of the day. Within days, I got tired of this activity. Instead, I put them in a glass tube in which my brother sent me vitamin C. However, I had to be very careful when I put a new vermin in to prevent the fleas from jumping out; the hungry beasts were biting like jackals.

At the end of six dormitories, with twenty people each, were washing rooms and individual flush toilets. We saw such flush toilets, where one had to squat instead of sit, for the first time. Someone mentioned that it was Mussolini who introduced such toilets because he could not do it sitting. The showers in the big washing rooms at the upper end of the camp were also very nice; they had individual niches. Here too a lot of marble was being used for the dividing walls. The problem was that the guy who operated the showers could not (or

did not care to) regulate the temperature of the water; either it was way too hot or ice cold. Maybe he did this intentionally.

The food was no different from that in Gonars. The *cantina* occasionally sold the same food as in Gonars—some primitive cakes *Motta* or some fruits. However, here also red wine was available. I did not drink wine, but some people were delighted to buy it after such a long abstinence. Since they had no flasks, they had to use their canteens instead. Unfortunately, they had to empty their canteens to receive the dinner soup, so the wine had to be drunk within some hours. Starved people drinking wine did not need much to be drunk like hell! I heard that someone, who wanted to consume his wine several times in smaller quantities, wrote a ticket: “Do not drink! I spit in,” leaving it beneath the canteen cover, to where he poured some wine. When he returned, someone added, “I spit in too!”

Across the room, two brothers had their bunk beds. The older one was Sandi and the younger Janko, who was a red-hot communist. Janko was often explaining to his brother what changes would be introduced after the war in order to create a pure communism. His ideas were so crazy that Sandi objected and tried to tame his ardor but in vain. Time and again, Janko came with new impossible ideas. Since I was very weak, spending most of the time in bed, I had to hear all this crazy drivel. As revenge, I emptied the glass tube with the starved vermin onto Janko’s bed when he was not there. Nobody noted this, but Janko reacted according to my expectation when he returned. After the war, Sandy became a successful engineer, whilst Janko had made a career as a university professor. Even as his ideas became slightly milder during the study, he was a menace for most of his colleagues and students. Both of them are dead now. When Janko, who died a couple of years ago, was still alive, we had never discussed these times, and also I did not dare to tell him of that glass tube. For his high position as a university professor, he had the habit to speak down to other people. I remember meeting him some years ago on a street, where the conversation was difficult for a 120 dB loud music on a plaza less than some 100 m away. In such case, it helped to understand each other if one saw the other’s mouth. But he kept his head looking forward as if he had a cramp in the neck.

In the first week, we got nice, clean linen bed sheets and one more blanket each. This added some warmth, and in addition, it became easier to catch the fleas. Since the numerous lice and fleas were active throughout the night, I decided to sleep naked in order to scratch myself easier. Each time I had to go to empty my bladder (some six times a night), I dressed, went to the toilet, and came back to undress again, continuing sleep. My physical condition could not improve, and my knees became numb. I tried to warm them by putting the canteen with hot soup between the knees, but it did not help. I got the burns on my skin, but the numb feeling remained.

Once a fellow had lent me a book of radio repair (otherwise, the books of this sort were nonexistent in the camp). When I was browsing through it, I soon became dizzy and very tired. My colleagues, who saw me languishing, suggested that I see the doctor, which I did. The Italian doctor first checked the lungs and heart of another patient. He attached his stethoscope to his chest and asked him to breathe deeply. After some ten breaths, the poor man dropped down unconscious. It looked like he was malingering. The doctor checked his irises by light and left him lying there. Then it was my turn for the same procedure, which ended just the same way. When my black out perished, I was sent back to the camp. The doctor did not tell me what his diagnosis was. His behavior toward us patients was like he was examining animals. Maybe he became numb to see so many sick people day after day, without any normal possibility to cure them. If he had told me I had tuberculosis, it would have caused me more harm than good.

1.16 Released from the Camp!

On December 29, 1942, in the late afternoon, I was informed that I had got a parcel. About one hour later, the capo came to read the list of people to be released from the camp. He also read my name! We should pack within the next hour. I immediately transferred the right for the parcel to my friend Veko. Soon my friends, who were not released, came asking me to deliver their letters to their relatives in Ljubljana. The Italians often searched the prisoners, and such letters caused troubles for the man carrying them before he was released, as well as for his relatives. This is why I refused to take any letter with me. However, I promised to memorize ten addresses and inform the families in Ljubljana of the circumstances in the camp as exactly as I could. In addition to this, I intended to visit the families of all my friends, the addresses of which I knew already. Some guys who were never interested in me asked me to deliver their letters, which I refused. I knew I could surely memorize ten addresses but not more than that. I kept running over them in my mind. When the eleventh friend came, I regretfully advised him to ask someone else from the group to be released.

In the evening, we had to return the shirts and underpants, which we got in Gonars. We threw them on a pile in the middle of an empty room with ceramic pavement. When the Italians came, lifting our underwear with long sticks to carry them away, we realized what pigs we were! Again, I took my umbrella with me to embark on a truck, which delivered us to the railway station. This time the wagons had wooden benches. This might be for the bad experience of railway authorities as we had left so many lice when being transported from Gonars to Treviso.

The wagons were not heated, and we did not get any food or water for the next twenty-seven hours. But the knowledge that we were going home was a strong stimulant. When the time for the meal approached, the Italian soldiers unpacked their food and started eating. Two guys Janez and Gustl, whom I

knew very well, were sitting in front of me. They opened a big case full of toasted bread, cakes, butter, marmalade, canned meat, all sorts of goodies, and started eating. It was enough food for both of them for a full week (even if the Italians stopped giving us any food). However, they did not offer a crumb to anyone, and I was told they behaved the same way in the camp too. Their parents, who were rich, sent each of them a hefty parcel every week. Since the rest of us were used to seeing someone else eating without asking something for the own empty stomach, no one asked them for food. My mother, who was sewing the underwear at Janez's and Gustl's home in Ljubljana, told me that they brought almost full cases of food home. She also told their mother of their behavior in the wagon for which they were reprimanded sharply. After the war, Janez had lost his life in the explosion at the main railway station, whilst Gustl became an electrical engineer. Since he was a communist, his advance was very steep and he was well paid.

It was so cold in the wagon that I did not feel my legs at all. However, when we came to Postojna, the electrical locomotive was replaced by the steam one. Slovenian personnel, who connected all the wagons to steam heating, were replacing the train staff. Soon the pleasant heat spread around us, but my legs remained numb. Toward the evening, we finally arrived at the Ljubljana main railway station. The guards were just for show, and the people were looking at us, happy to see us back again but disappointed by our shabby appearance. I noted my younger friend Andrej Šturm and told him to inform my parents that I had returned, which he did. We were led via the same street to the same military barracks from where we were sent to the camp, just there were some fifty times fewer guards than at our departure. In the barracks, they distributed us into several rooms with practically new bunk beds. However, there were no mattresses or blankets, just bare and rough boards. Lice might be the reason again. Who cares! We will soon be released! We got a thick rice and vegetable soup for dinner, and then we lay down on the boards. The bureaucratic procedure lasted the full next day. In the evening, an Italian officer held a speech for us, more friendly than six months ago. Before we were released in the evening, we again got a hefty serving of thick soup. Outside, a crowd of relatives was waiting for us. I spotted my sister Adela, who gave me some tea from a thermos bottle. We picked a tramcar to ride home. People were observing me with compassion. But I was immensely happy!

1.17 At Home Again

The tramcar was, for us, the only public transportation allowed. It was forbidden to ride bicycles, whilst taxis were rare and too expensive. The tramcar station was some 300 m (900 feet) away from the house where we had the apartment. When we entered Vodmatska ulica (street), it was already dark. Home, sweet home! When going up the staircase, it appeared all so clean to me. Finally, we entered the kitchen, which was the only heated room because the coal and wood were rationed. My mother hugged me, and it was impossible to suppress tears. There was also my sister Draga and her four-year-old son, Rudko, who was also very happy to see me again. I often walked with him before I was arrested.

After the initial “formalities,” my mother prepared a bath in the kitchen, and the rest of our family retreated to unheated bedrooms. When we were alone, I undressed completely, and all I was wearing went straight into the stove. Mother was surprised to see calluses on my hips and, needless to say, my general appearance. (When I checked my weight the next day, I had 41 kg (90 lbs), fully dressed, with shoes on.) At that opportunity, I showed her my glass tube, which was again partly filled with the vermin and told her, “Mother, this is my trophy from the concentration camp!” Mother put her glasses on to see well, and the tube went straight to the “crematory” as well.

The warm bath improved my circulation, and when I put the clean underwear and clothes on, I felt like I was born anew. Then it was time for dinner. It was known in our family that I did not like beans. My sister An ka had suggested earlier in the afternoon bean soup for dinner to check if I was hungry enough to eat it. I did, but not much because the Italians had filled my stomach just before I was released. The evening passed away when I told some experiences in the camp, and it was time to go sleep.

Since the bedrooms were cold, my mother put a flask with warm water in my bed. It was hard to describe my feelings: no vermin, warm and soft bed,

enough blankets—what a luxury! I put my hand on the flask and slept almost immediately. When I awoke in the morning, I was still in the same position, my hand on the (now cold) flask with a big blister on my palm.

As soon as I was up, I started looking for some food. In the next month or two, food was my steady preoccupation, and I kept eating like a silkworm. Fortunately, my brother Jože brought food from the country, and I ate enormous quantities of bread, butter, and honey. Since food was being rationed, without all these “extras,” I would eat maybe only one fifth as much, but I was able to keep stuffing myself. In just two months, my weight increased for about 20 kg. Some relatives, who were better off, had bad consciences because they did not help my parents send me more food. They brought me some food now.

Others who knew me kept bringing food, especially oranges. My uncle who had run a pastry shop regularly gave me the cutoffs of his cakes. His foreman, who was also in the camp and released at the same time, was a very kind fellow. Once, before I wrapped some cutoffs, he said, “Peter, here is some sh*t for you.” And he put a lot of chocolate cream with almonds on top of all! Since nobody, besides my family, owed me anything, I appreciated very much what they did for me. I am especially grateful to my brother Jože, who contributed the most, much more than my father. By consuming so many calories, I felt very warm. Soon I had to sleep naked with only a bed sheet and a blanket in the unheated room; otherwise, it would be too hot for me. Since it was winter, the temperature outside was some—10°C, and inside maybe some +10°C. When I went out, I wore summer clothes and a threadbare trench coat; I did not need any gloves or cap.

Some years before his death, Jože told me that it was he who arranged my release from the concentration camp. When he was working in the country side, where he also dwelled during the week, being a civil engineer, he had an Italian officer as a supervisor. In the evenings, both of them played cards, and slowly they became friends. Then my brother mentioned that he was afraid that I could not survive in the camp because I was sick and very weak. The officer asked if I was a communist, which my brother categorically denied. “Then I will take care that he is released,” the officer said. Thus my brother had saved my life.

Already on the day after my release, I started visiting the families of those unfortunate fellows who were still in the camp to tell them of their sons and of the general circumstances in the camp. First I visited the family of my classmate Brane Archine on the next street. Besides Brane, his two years older brother, Zoran, remained in the camp as well. I told their parents everything. After the capitulation of Italy, both brothers escaped the camp and joined the partisans, and both were killed in combat. When the suburb Moste was being enlarged, a street was named after them: *Archinetova ulica*. But this could not

soothe the sorrow of their parents who died childless. I also visited the family of Sandi and Janko; however, I did not mention about that glass tube with vermin. When I was talking with their parents, I could not resist thinking of those hungry little beasts. They surely attacked Sandi as well, who slept beside Janko. Sorry, Sandi, for this “collateral damage!” Within one week, I managed to visit all the families as I promised to, or they had visited me.

One fellow whom I promised to build a shortwave radio learned that I was home again, and on the third day, he brought me all the material from the list I had given him more than half a year earlier. That same afternoon, I started assembling the receiver—a two-tube regenerative set with rectifier. I was so much immersed in my work that it was late before I noticed that my feet and ankles were badly swollen and my legs became stiff in the seated position. I could not stand up or move anywhere. Then my mother helped undress me, and my father carried me to bed. My father never displayed any compassion to me, but when he returned to the kitchen—my sister told me—he sat at the table, put his head down, and cried bitterly.

Next morning, Dr. Hawlina, who was with me in the same barrack but released earlier, arrived to see me. He prescribed some ointment for my legs. After checking my heart and lungs, he said that I should get my lungs checked by X-rays as soon as possible. Within days, the problem with my legs disappeared, and I soon completed the radio receiver. Since I felt relatively well, I did not go to the School Polyclinic until a month later. There they made a thorough check. My lungs had a big shade on the right side, my nose was infected, and they had to puncture it to drain the puss, and six of my teeth had to be pulled out because they were beyond repair. The puncturing of the nose was a nasty job; it had to be repeated several times in the months and years to follow. (Penicillin was unknown to us at that time). The lady dentist suggested I keep coming once a week to pull one tooth out. When the seventh week arrived, I was already so much used to this procedure that I almost missed something.

I resumed building radio receivers and adapters for anyone who was interested. My brother Rudi had completely disassembled the transmitter the day after I was sent to the camp. Unfortunately, he did not have any skill in disassembling, and he damaged the power transformer beyond repair, for which I was very sorry. I started improving my knowledge of radio, and soon I began assembling normal five-tube multiband heterodyne radio receivers. In 1943, it was still possible to buy all the material in Ljubljana, and I built these receivers to earn some money for myself and help support our family budget.

After one month being at home, I went to the school again. Since I had lost more than one semester, I could not keep abreast with my classmates. Now we had a very pretty black-haired Italian lady to teach us her language.

Even though I frequently studied the Italian radio literature and I could speak relatively well, my attitude toward this language in the class was somehow blocked. When I was called to the table, I did not open my mouth. I simply could not respond to the demand of that Italian professor, even though she was so pretty and even though she was not aggressive toward me in any way. I went back to my seat without saying anything. I did not write any homework, and I could not write anything whilst in the class. I simply could not!

Once a week, I had to see my doctor to check the lungs by X-rays and get a calcium shot. They gave me the injection of calcium in order to accelerate the calcification process in my lungs. Occasionally, they checked my blood sedimentation, which was always very good. Nevertheless, my general situation kept worsening to such an extent that my doctor sent me to the hospital. For me, this meant the end of that class in gymnasium, and so I lost the third year of my education without my own guilt.

1.18 TB

When my doctor dictated his diagnosis to the nurse, he used the Latin words, *phthisis* or *infiltratio infraclavicularis*, so I could not understand. In “Realka,” which was preparing us for technical study at the university, we were not taught Latin. From his attitude, I just realized it was something serious. Then he sent me to the internal clinics, which was a part of the old General Hospital in Ljubljana. This was a big E-shaped building, which I entered at the main central entrance. When a doctor checked my papers, he was annoyed. He gave me the papers back, holding them just with two fingers at the corner as if he had just pulled them out of a cesspool and said, “What are you doing here? This is TBC, and you should enter at the other side of the building, at the left end!” Well, then I heard the word TBC (tuberculosis or TB in English) for the first time to be directly connected with my status. Before the war, this was considered a social illness, and the mortality was very high. From then, I remember a pretty young black-haired lady in the apartment next to ours, who had tuberculosis. Once she started coughing blood, for which she was urgently transported to the hospital. I did not see her anymore because she died there. And now I got the same seal.

Needless to say, how very much sad I was when I entered the department for lung diseases at the side of the building. After checking my papers, I was told to come next week to stay there. I cried of disappointment when I arrived home, and my sister Adela tried to console me. Next week, I came to the hospital as ordered. The head of the department was Dr. Debevc, who was very much afraid to contract the disease for which there was no specific medication at that time. When I started speaking, he sharply ordered me to hold the handkerchief before my mouth all the time. He checked me with the stethoscope and with X-ray apparatus, and I had to give some blood to check its sedimentation. Later, I found that his assistant Dr. Wiesinger indeed contracted TB, and he had to undergo an operation where several of his ribs

were partly cut off so that the circumference of his thorax was smaller in order to squeeze the cavern in the lungs at that side. (To squeeze the cavern helped to heal the wound. However, any such operation had permanently reduced the lung capacity, which consequently reduced the strength to do some heavy work). The outside effect of this surgery could be seen by anyone because Dr. Wiesinger was bent to one side. All this might probably be the reason that the head of the department was so much afraid of this infamous illness.

After the initial checkup, I was sent to the pavilion at the back of the building. Then I had no idea that I will join a strange "brotherhood" for the next eleven years. The building was made of wood and one side up, under the ceiling had the upper windows open all time, even in winter. This was to stay exposed to fresh air the year around. At that time, the air in Ljubljana was much better than now, as it is polluted by excessive traffic and industry. The pavilion was divided in two halves for ten patients each. From the mild toward the serious side the therapy was: tuberculin shots (this was a serum which just made swollen upper arms and thighs, but it did not help much), pneumothorax (to introduce air between both pleurae in order to squeeze the cavern), pneumolyse (to separate both pleurae if stuck together, by surgery), thoracoplastics (to remove the section of ribs as mentioned before), plus several more sophisticated surgeries. Occasionally, we got the *transpulmin* shots in order to over-stimulate the mucous membrane in the lungs. (This caused us a chronic catarrh, and I had to cough (or spit) out mucus from my trachea always as soon as I came from a warmer to a cooler place or if I am in a smoked room. This is very nasty when I am in a company or if I am driving the car.)

At the visits, Dr. Debevc had a stiff system. He first looked up to the table where the date of arrival was written with chalk. Except for very serious cases, nobody was allowed to stay for more than one month. A week after we were released, we generally came back again. Next, he checked the name of the patient, which was also written on that table, and then looked down at his face and asked how he was. Third, he reviewed the temperature sheet, which was hung at the bottom end of the bed, and said, *Mirno zdravljenje* (peaceful treatment), wrote down the next stronger tuberculin shot, and moved to the next patient. At the patients whose status was more serious, he also checked some other things. That "peaceful treatment" appeared very nasty to me. Once, when Dr. Peter Kruh was doing the visit, he asked me, "Peter, what should we prescribe today?" I could not resist answering, "Doctor, just one peaceful treatment!" He just smiled. He was indeed good like *kruh* (*kruh* means bread in Slovenian).

About half of all patients had similar status like mine, but the rest of them were more serious cases. Most of us were the released prisoners from the concentration camps or jails, and soon it was clear that some of them came

home just to die here. A guy who was released from the jail of *Capodistria* (now Slovenian Koper) was just skin and bones. Once someone appeared to visit him, but the unfortunate guy was in the park, and the visitor admitted he had never met him before. "That one who is the most skinny, this is him!" We were told, and he found him without difficulty. Heartbreaking stories from other concentration camps were told. In Renicci in the Abruzzi Mountains, people were in tents over the winter. It was so difficult to keep personal hygiene that there were some cases when people were literally eaten by lice. When one such guy died, they found lice eggs under the crusts of his skin. Many times their neighbors did not report of the death for several days in order to get some extra food.



Playing music in 1950 . . .

On the island of Rab in the northern Adriatic also, women and children were interned. (Their adult and teenage male relatives were often killed in the Italian offensives, and their houses were burnt). About fifteen thousand people lived there in A-tents. The sun was hot during the day, and drinking water was scarce. Children and babies were dying like flies. Once there was a terrible thunderstorm, and almost the whole camp was flooded. The camp commander Cuiulli did not allow the flooded people to move to the higher places. Many prisoners died, especially small children and babies, because their mothers could not save all of them. Of those who survived, the flood splashed away all their meager property (some spare food from parcels and clothes). The mortality rate on Rab was the highest of all Italian concentration camps; some two thousand prisoners, mostly children, died there.



... and in 1976

Our daily routine in that ward was a succession of hours in bed and hours up, several times through the day. It was an exact copy of the routine that Dr. Behrens introduced in his hospital, Berghof, in Davos, Switzerland, already before WWI. The famous German writer Thomas Mann described this in every detail in his novel, *Der Zauberberg* (*Magic Mountain*). However, our food was not as fine as that one in Berghof. For breakfast, we had an ersatz coffee with milk, a peace of corn bread, and cheese. For lunch, it was mostly beef soup, cooked meat, “fakir’s potato,” and withered salad, and for dinner, some vegetable risotto, spaghetti, or the like. Potato was not cooked well and often partially black (half-rotten), so we said one had to have the will of an Indian fakir to eat it. To eat everything we got, plus something, which our relatives brought us, seemed to be the only efficient therapy. In addition, we should not overstrain ourselves and strictly obey the schedule. This made us to live like some sort of a clock.

In the next month, when I returned to the ward, I found Jože Ovsec in the bed next to mine. His father died of cancer and mother of tuberculosis; his two pretty sisters, the black-haired Anda, the blonde Jelka, his elder brother Janez had TB too. Anda was in the hospital, in the female department, and when she was nineteen, she died there. In general, we never saw a patient dying because those who were terminal were moved to another room, where only the closest relatives were allowed to come.



With my sister Adela (left), aunt Mici and her daughter Valeria (both of Trieste); just behind my neck is the room of the building in Sanatorium Golnik, where I had spent 6 months in 1953-54, being ultimately cured of TB.



My complete family

Each of us fought his private and quiet struggle for survival. The TB bacteria were grinding slowly, from inside. Since lungs have no nerves, we did not feel any pain. At the beginning, the lungs were affected in a diffuse way, which earlier or later progressed to complete disintegration of the tissue, and one or more holes (caverns) were formed. The only outside sign that something was wrong was the loss of strength and will to work, loss of weight and appetite, the rise of the body temperature just slightly over 37°C in the afternoons, and perspiration during the night. However, when the decay in the lungs affected a larger blood vessel, the situation changed fast and drastically. I remember one young farmer's boy, who was in the same barracks in Gonars, from where some prisoners escaped. Suddenly he started vomiting blood. Everything happened so suddenly that he had no chance to use the spittoon; his blanket and bed sheets were soon stained all over with blood. He could not stop coughing out his foamy blood, and it seemed that the damage of the blood vessel in his lungs was progressing with each cough. Since the blood was of light color, it was a sign that an artery was being affected. A doctor came soon and ordered the poor fellow to be transported to another room. He died of internal bleeding on the next day. Who of us will be the next?

However, not all deaths were as spectacular as described. Some patients were just gradually decreasing in weight and strength until they were skin and bones only. Then they extinguished like an oil lamp running out of oil. Those who could not quit smoking were gone fast. On the other side, for some of us, the course of the illness was entirely different. After being treated for some years, it seemed we were cured. However, the bacteria had remained hidden somewhere inside us, just watching for the proper circumstances to resume their devastating work. Flu, the worsening of living conditions, prolonged starving with hard work, or even a simple cold could provoke another start. Since this happened time and again, we did gradually lose the faith in our health. We went to check our lungs after each cold or flu, but the doctors mostly did not discover anything. Some doctors thought we were hypochondriacs. But later a month or two, when we considered everything was OK, the TB stroke again! Such struggle, which we kept fighting for months or years changed us to think of ourselves too much: I must eat all, even if the potato is half rotten, I must be careful not to catch cold, I must not overstrain myself, I must avoid smoked rooms, I must do this, I must not do that, I, I, I . . . Such attitude over a longer period turned almost anyone to become egocentric, which was hard to get rid of, even after we were cured for good. During the war and some years after, very few of us were so fortunate to be ultimately cured. We did everything we could not to think of TB—we were telling jokes, reading books, discussing the war, and so on. In summer, my mother brought me the accordion, and I played some hits and tangos. Since I was playing outside, on

a small fenced courtyard before the pavilion, the doctors did not object, for they considered such sort of entertainment as a part of the therapy.



With my children Miroslav & Zorana



Cveta's graduation for MD

Besides visits from relatives and friends from outside, the patients from other departments came occasionally. Some guys from the psychiatry came too, and one of them played my accordion much better than I did. He was a real virtuoso, but his main instrument was piano, he told me. In this respect, I envied him. Many of the psychiatric patients were the casualties of war. One fellow, who has been arrested by the Croatian Ustashe, told that his worst experience was to be put before the firing squad several times for faked executions. Among them was a good painter and draftsman, and he had drawn my portrait, which I still have.

Our pavilion was about 60 m away from the old military barracks, where the Italians had the jail. Since it was curfew, the nights were always very quiet. However, one night, when I could not sleep, I heard loud screams from there, with interruptions lasting hours. Only a guy who was horribly tortured could scream so much. I heard the screaming several nights in succession, but I did not discuss this with anyone, even not with Jože Ovsec, who became my friend. Those who would have the compassion would suffer needlessly if they would be told; if a traitor were among us, I could have difficulties. In short, the atmosphere in that pavilion was morbid and depressing in spite of all our efforts to turn it to the merry side. That merry side was just like a fresh chocolate glaze over a rotten tart. Here too, Dante Alighieri could write, "Lasciate ogni speranza voi, chi entrate!" (Abandon any hope you, who enter).



The 1000 m high north face of Triglav (2864 m), the highest peak of Slovenia (formerly of Yugoslavia). In the front is the monument to all our mountaineers, who have lost their lives in the national struggle, in 1941-1945.



My first ascent of Triglav was on my 42nd Birthday in September 1966. Here I am on the peak, in front of the Aljaž's tower.

But there was a dove—a nice, clean white bird with a dark collar. He always appeared alone, and probably he had lost his mate. I heard that “widowed” turtledoves and pigeons never “marry” again. We became close friends. When he appeared at the fence, it was just enough for me to come some meters close, stretching my arm with the index finger horizontally and calling him. He flew on to seat on the finger. Occasionally, I gave him some food, usually some crunches of corn bread and the skin of cheese, cut into small pieces, which he liked very much. However, he came when I had no food. He simply needed company and affection, like me. Sometimes he sung his “coo, coorrrooo” song and I felt how the vibrations of his little lungs and throat were transferred via his legs to my finger. Besides, he also knew another “melody” something like “googoogoo,” as if he was smiling. (Since the bird was singing, I supposed it had to be a “he.”)

He was also friendly to other patients and nurses, but it seemed to me, we had a special relationship. I spent a lot of my free time with him. In his company, I stopped thinking of that strange world around me, in which I was pushed in. Once I was curious what his body temperature was, so I inserted my thermometer under his wing. He had a full trust in me; he firmly rested on my palm for all ten minutes, and I found he had 38°C. (If any one of us had such high temperature, it

was a sign for alarm, but for birds, this was normal). I still remember his little eyes looking so trustfully at me. He was not offended for the temperature measurement, for he came again next time. We simply needed each other. When I was sent home for a week, he was there again when I came back. This dove, to which I did not give any name, was the only bright being in that morbid atmosphere.



The parents with the grandchildren



Cveta in her first years as the medical doctor



Zorana and Miroslav in 1955

A bright moment came on July 25, 1943, when we learned that Mussolini was forced to resign. However, the Marshall Pietro Badoglio, who succeeded him, was hesitating too much to offer the capitulation to Allied forces. So the Germans had time to take over and form the so-called “Gustav Line” southern of Rome, across the “boot” of Italy.

My friend Jože Ovsec was an excellent painter though he was only nineteen years old. When we were released from the hospital, we often went together hiking along Ljubljana River, all the way down to Fužine and then over the bridge and back along the right bank. Then that side was pure nature, no houses, which were also scarce on the left bank. Since I painted too, I took with me my watercolors to make pictures of that romantic scenery. While I was painting, he did several sketches of my face, which—to my great regret—I could not find any more. At home, Jože was prolific; he made many oil paintings, mostly the self-portraits. It was as if he had felt an internal urge to preserve his picture for the posterity, for he died in October 1945, just two months short of his twenty-second birthday. Later, there were several exhibitions of his works. One of his auto-portraits was reproduced on the cover page of *JAMA (The Journal of American Medical Association)* magazine, Slovenian edition. His withered cheeks and sad eyes revealed that TB was on its final assault.

1.19 The Ultimate Polarization; Germans Arrived

Already in the spring 1942, the Italians had formed the *Milizia volontaria anticomunista* (MVAC = voluntary anticommunist militia), which they called themselves Vaška Straža (VS), giving them arms. Their members were mostly farmer's boys, wearing weird dark-brown uniforms with a beret cap. The whole organization had a strong Christian religious background—to fight the communists and to defend their homes. The VS troops were stationed only in villages from where they rarely attacked the partisans alone, but much more often, the partisans attacked them. On the surface as I could see the matter then, the partisans in OF fought against the Italians and against VS. After September 1943, when the Germans pushed the Italians out of Slovenia, VS became Domobranci (*Home Guard*), and their number increased to twelve thousand. Sometimes Domobranci joined the Germans in the common widespread offensive. In such extensive combing of the countryside, the civil population suffered the most. Whole families were killed or burnt alive together with their houses.

On the other hand, the partisans also kept killing some families, or their members, whom they suspected to be too cooperative with the occupiers, though they did not participate in any armed struggle. Sometimes the victims of the partisan massacre were found badly mutilated. (Those ones who were tortured in the jails of the occupiers and shot were not known yet). The Italians and the Germans were glad for such extensive death toll among us Slovenes, fighting each other. The less Slovenes remained, the less work would remain for the times after the war to exterminate or assimilate us, which was their ultimate objective.

However, in essence and under the surface, all this was just an outside sign of an ideological struggle, which developed into a civil war or—as the partisans

called it—a revolution. Within two years of the occupation, this became more or less clear to all intelligent people in Slovenia and surely to all the leaders on both sides. Already from the very beginning, the partisan movement was under the control of the communists, who were then just a very small group. Their intent was to take advantage of the irregular circumstances and to establish a system equal to that in USSR, in order to get the absolute power. The party theoretician, Edvard Kardelj (a Slovene, later to become next to Marshall Tito), told at the very beginning: they would not organize an armed struggle, if there would be no chance for the revolution. To make their struggle compatible with the revolution of 1917 in Russia, the leaders even introduced some names from those times: Domobranci, who were on the German side, were named “White Guard”; those who wanted to fight against the occupiers but not under the leadership of the communists were named “Blue Guard”; the rich farmers and those who refused to give them food were “kulaks,” and those who did not want communism became “reaction” or “reactionaries.” Even the word *partisan* was imported from the Spanish Civil War. Besides, a new expression was coined, which was purely Slovenian; those who did not want to join either side were named OR (Oprezna Rit = *cautious ass*), and I too became a member of this widespread group.

In this ideological struggle, two things were essential: the enemy occupation of Yugoslavia and the German assault on the Soviet Union. Delete both, and there would be no killing of Slovenes by Slovenes and no revolution. One of the numerous proofs for this statement was the May 1 parade in 1941 in the coal-mining district near the River Sava. There were small towns Trbovlje, Hrastnik, and Zagorje with many communists among the population. In this parade—just about three weeks after the German occupation and *three days* after the Anti-imperialist Front were established—the members of the NSDAP (*Nazional-Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeits-Partei*) and the communists marched together. The first were carrying their flags with swastika and the second their red flags with hammer and sickle. At that time, Hitler and Stalin were still allies and the communists would not do anything against Hitler’s troops. Such unusual collaboration existed until June 22, 1941, when the German troops attacked the Soviet Union. Then almost overnight, the Germans arrested the communist leaders and many other communists, who did not succeed to escape in time. The just described act revealed the true nature of the communists. For them, only the class struggle was (and still is) important and not the struggle for survival of their own nation. Now, as Hitler gave them the reason and Stalin the order, they conveniently unified both. But the national struggle was just a camouflage to attract as many as possible fighters for their revolution.

Let us see how the whole matter developed. At first, we were not told anything of the planned communist revolution. E.g., already on September 6,

1941, the OF suggested the classes in gymnasiums to stand up in the middle of the Italian hour, in honor of the King Peter's II birthday. Our Italian teacher was ragged for this, which was an entirely needless risk from our side, for the communists would never allow the king to come back and rule in Yugoslavia. For this useless demonstration in some gymnasiums, the whole classes were excluded from further schooling by being sent to the Italian concentration camps. Young boys and girls were suggested to spread the tickets with OF sign along the streets. (My later wife Cveta was caught doing this, and she was arrested). All similar acts caused reprisals from the occupiers, increasing our anger against them, which consequently sent more people to the forests. Since the partisans were confiscating food in the country, the farmers, who had to feed their own families, were against them. Many village priests joined, but those from the Slovenian territory, which the Italians occupied already after WWI, did not. They were the pillars of the passive resistance against the fascism, and they remained so. On the other hand, in the partisan troops, the politcomisaries kept indoctrinating the troops for communism, thus increasing the number of the communists in the OF.

Initially several political groups joined OF in their sincere belief to participate in the armed struggle against the occupiers and to establish a democratic system after the war. They were the Christ Democrats, Liberals, Sokols, and many others who did not belong to any political party. Initially all these groups had no idea what the leaders of the OF had kept behind their sleeve. Eventually, those Liberals, who were in the forests, were either fully absorbed into communist party or they were forced to keep a low profile. Those partisans who could not accept communism and their blind worshipping of Stalin gradually "disappeared." Usually a suspect was sent somewhere, accompanied by one or two seasoned communists, who were ordered to shot him. When the guys returned alone, it was easy to explain that the enemy attacked them and their companion was killed in the combat. Who would do laboratory examinations of bullets and rifle barrels in those times? Some other partisans who were either against communism or who simply could not bear the harsh life in the forests kept their mouths shut and deserted at the first convenient opportunity. They went home, or some of them joined Vaške Straže.

Osvobodilna Fronta kept informing us by their underground newspaper *Slovenski Poročevalec* (*Slovenian Reporter*), the possession of which was punished severely. On the other side, we had the occupational newspapers in Slovenian language: *Jutro*, *Slovenec*, and so on. Besides, some books were also published: *Črne Bukve* (*Black Book*) and *V Znamenju Osvobodilne Fronte* (*In the Sign of Liberation Front*) describing the killing and massacres committed by the communists. In January 1943, the German troops suffered a fatal defeat

at Stalingrad, which was given much publicity in *Slovenski Poročevalci*. This was the first massive defeat of the Germans, and from then on, their marching direction turned toward Berlin. We learned more of the Stalingrad defeat by BBC and Voice of America broadcasting. On the other side, in April 1943, the German troops discovered the mass graves in Katyn Forest, near Smolensk, where 4,253 Polish officers were shot and buried by the Soviets in March 1940. This was reported extensively in the newspapers and exhibition panels, where some authentic photos of the bodies in Polish uniforms were also shown. The OF spread the information that it were the Germans who killed those Polish officers; now the Nazis were trying to shift the blame on the Soviets for this. Frankly, I believed that the Soviets had killed them. At that time, I could not imagine that much more extensive killing by the same pattern would take place in Slovenia *after the war*.

A very important document of the Liberation Front was the so-called Dolomitska Izjava (Dolomiti Declaration) of March 1, 1943. Besides the well-known Dolomiti in the Italian Alps, a chain of hills in Slovenia was named Polhovgrajski Dolomiti, where the Christ Democrats, Sokols, and communists signed the declaration. With this act, the OF became a unified organization under the leadership of the Communist Party of Slovenia. After the Stalingrad siege, the communists felt sure enough to let drop their mask. The stage for their acquisition of the power after the war had thus been set.

All these changes and polarization happened whilst I was in the concentration camp and progressed to its extreme whilst I was in the TB ward. Since I had too much to do with my own struggle for survival, I did not pay much attention to the outside world. However, when I was on my regular "one-week-leaves," I became exposed to all sort of information. Already in December 7, 1941 (thus, before I was sent to the concentration camp), the USA was pulled into war by the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. In 1942, the Allied forces started squeezing the German/Italian troops in North Africa. This gave us much hope that the war should end sooner. After they progressed along the Italian "boot," Italy signed the armistice with the Allied forces. This happened on September 3, 1943. Prisoners from Italian concentration camps escaped, heading toward home. Those who were in larger groups were soon seized by the Germans and sent to the concentration camps in Germany. But most of them, including my later brother-in-law, Ivo, many of my friends and classmates returned home in no much better shape than I was, after being released.

At the beginning of September, my TB status was stabilized so much that I was released from the hospital to resume the schooling. Due the imprisonment and illness, I had to inscribe again in the sixth class, lagging my former classmates for one year. In addition, the doctors forbade me any

gymnastics. Now our school was a half-finished brick building in the middle of the town. We had central heating and glass windows, but the walls were rough bricks and the pavement simple fir boards, full of dust from the walls. Since the Italians were almost finished, we got a Slovenian professor for Italian language, which I still kept boycotting though he told us that we could not advance to the higher class without a passing grade in Italian. The anti-TB dispensary sent me regular invitations for checkups—right into the class. It happened that the school caretaker brought such invitation, just when our professor of mathematics and descriptive geometry, Sajovic, was teaching. He took the ticket and read, “Peter Starič, greetings from the other world for you!” My classmates, who knew of my status, were embarrassed for such apparent cruelty, but I was not angry. I remembered how I was squatting next to this same professor in the latrine of Gonars when we were combating our constipation and discussing all sort of trivial matter. (Later, the epidemic of dysentery solved our problem in a drastic manner). However, I did not lose any respect toward him, so less did I try to get any advantage of this unusual past of ours. He was a professor for me and this is it! When I met him years after the war, he told me that the lack of food had completely cured his stomach ulcer in the camp, but his eyes turned so bad that the doctors barely saved his sight by a sophisticated surgery after he was released.

When the Italians capitulated, the partisans seized great quantities of arms, including the artillery. They did not hinder the retreat of the Italian troops; the most important for them was to get the artillery and the instructors how to use it. With this, they attacked the troops of Vaška Straža, who had retreated in a medieval castle Turjak, some 25 km SE of Ljubljana. After they destroyed the beautiful castle by artillery fire, the partisans captured all the members of VS, killed the wounded, and sent the leaders further to Kočevje (a town some 60 km SE of Ljubljana). About the same time, the Blue Guard troops were defeated at Grčarice, and their leaders were sent to Kočevje as well. (The Blue Guard was expecting the Allied invasion on Istria, so they had moved south, close to the Adriatic, without crossing the Croatian Border). From October 9-11, there was a process where of twenty-one leaders of VS and Blue Guard, sixteen were sentenced to death. However, soon after that, they hastily killed all the other leaders and captured men (in Jelendol) for the approaching German offensive.

On September 9, 1943, the partisan troops occupied the town Novo mesto in the southeast Slovenia. In the following three days, they, the Italians and the members of Vaška Straža, were wandering through the town apparently ignoring each other. Already on September 12, the German Stuka planes had bombed the town. On October 21, the German Waffen-SS troops suddenly arrived there from a 25-km-distant town Kostanjevica ob Krki. They seized

the remaining Italian troops and the men, who were forcefully drafted by OF whilst most of the partisans succeeded to withdraw. The SS troops seized all the captured OF draftees, who were in Italian uniforms wearing the caps with red stars, and hung them on butcher's hooks on the fence of the gymnasium.

The partisans drafted our late Olympic game champion, Leon Štukelj, who was then the judge in Novo mesto. The Americans could remember him—a ninety-seven-year-old man, but still fit, parading in front of the Slovenian participants at the 1996 Olympic game in Atlanta. Štukelj, who was a member of Sokol, won a golden medal in athletics in 1924 Paris Olympic games (just in the year I was born) and a silver one in 1936 (Berlin). The partisans gave him the uniform and arms, for he supported the basic idea of the Liberation Front. However, soon his openly expressed anticommunist views were considered so “blaspheme” that he was disarmed and sent to a penal battalion to dig antitank trenches near Kostanjevica. When the Waffen-SS approached, the armed partisan guards withdrew, leaving the penal battalion to the mercy of SS. (This was also one of their methods to get rid of “unwanted” fighters.) At first, the Germans intended to shoot all of them. However, Štukelj, who knew perfect German, told the SS officer that they were actually a penal battalion, the people forcibly drafted and considered unreliable. He also told that he participated in the Berlin Olympic Games, where he won the silver medal. The officer, who was probably a sportsman too, remembered this event of Štukelj and let him go, together with the rest of the group. After the war, Štukelj had great difficulties; he was arrested for two months but acquitted for lack of evidence. He and his family did not get any food stamps (we say food cards), his property was confiscated, he could not get any job several years after, and he was never again employed as a judge, even as he eventually got the job—which was way under the level of his education.

The German occupation of Ljubljana was not as spectacular and cruel as that one in Novo mesto. In a single day and without any shooting, some two hundred German troops disarmed all Italians in the town, even as the last were over ten times in number. The Germans did not do any harm to us, Slovenes. It was a strange satisfaction for us to see how the numerous Italian soldiers and officers were driven to that same railway station, from where we were being transported to Gonars, now they being sent to the German concentration camps. However, now it was slightly different; many dames and girls arrived to the station to bring food and to say farewell to their Italian lovers. But the Germans sent them cleaning the dirty barracks and all the dirt left by the Italians. It seemed that the Italians were tired of their long-lasting war, which began already in October 1935 with their assault in Ethiopia. They were apparently glad that the whole matter was finally over. We were somehow thankful to the Germans, who seized the Italians and sent these women to clean that Italian sh*t. The

Germans also relaxed some Italian restrictions: we were allowed to listen to full medium-wave broadcasting and ride bicycles again.

An immediate consequence of the Italian capitulation was the speedy departure of the *alto commissario* Emilio Grazioli. The Germans replaced him by the ex-Yugoslav general Leon Rupnik, who was then the mayor of Ljubljana. Almost at the same time, the Germans established the Domobranci troops. They got new, light blue green uniforms, and the Germans armed them also with artillery. The former Vaška Straža became the core of this new organization. General Rupnik wanted to be the head of Domobranci troops, but the German General Erwin Rösener kept the command. Rupnik just pulled the strings from behind as much as he was allowed to.

With the establishment of Domobranci, the situation in Ljubljana and around in the country had changed drastically. Already before, the Germans drafted the boys in their occupational zone in north Slovenia. At first, they sent them to *Arbeitsdienst* (working service), where they got the first military drill. After some months of training there, they were willy-nilly drafted into German Army and sent to the eastern front to shed their blood for the Reich. In the former *Provincia di Lubiana*, their policy was different; all the able-bodied boys and men, who were not employed, had to either join the *Organisation Todt* to work on streets, bridges, and so on or they were drafted to Domobranci troops. The exception was only very sick people. "Fortunately," I had tuberculosis, so they had left me to enjoy this war in peace. Since Ljubljana was surrounded by barbed wire, many boys who did not join the *Organisation Todt* in time were drafted to Domobranci troops, even as they were against the war where Slovenes were killing Slovenes. On top of all this, on April 22, 1944, the Domobranci were forced to swear under swastika flag to fight together with SS troops under the "Leader of Great Germany" (*Fuehrer der Grossdeutschland*, which means nobody else than Hitler) against the communists.

Domobranci arranged several mass meetings against the communism and OF. We got personal invitations by mail, which we had to bring to the meeting, or else . . . In the schools, some university students had lectures against communism as a regular subject of the education program, but without examinations, and no notes were required to write or were given. They were just describing the crimes of the communists in USSR, their concentration camps, the mass starving there, the Katyn massacre, the GPU/KGB/NKVD secret police and the like. The OF and their communist leaders were almost not mentioned. Their presentation of communism was convincing for me but not so much that I would do any harm to those whom I knew to be either active OF members or sympathizers. Already then it appeared to me that the struggle between Domobranci and the communist-led partisans was our national tragedy.

On the Sylvester evening of 1943, some friends, classmates, and acquaintances that were released from jails and concentration camps had a meeting in a pub in Moste, the suburb of Ljubljana. There I met my future wife Cveta for the first time. She was jailed in Ljubljana for two months, and fortunately, she was released just before the Germans occupied the town. Since Cveta knew Italian very well, she gave me the instructions. So I finally got a passing grade in this subject, which I hated so much. She taught me so well that the professor asked how it was possible that I suddenly knew Italian so well. Then I told him for the first time that I had personal reasons to have such a resistance to this language. On the other hand, I had no aversion against German language. We started learning German already two years before the occupation; thus, it was not connected with the arrival of the enemy. A hunchback Slovenian professor, with a German name, Pacheiner, who was a very good teacher, taught us during the occupation. In addition, my mother, who knew German perfectly, helped me learning. Besides, most of my radio books, which I bought already before the occupation, were in German language. And most of all, I did not taste a German concentration camp.

The Gestapo replaced the Italian secret police, and the arrested suspects were sent to German concentration camps unless they were shot as hostages. The names of those unfortunate people were published in newspapers and displayed on posters in two languages, the German part always starting with *Bekanntmachung*. A secret new organization was established, named “rna Roka” (*Black Hand*). They kept killing the activists, sympathizers, and supporters of OF and communists in their homes. Since this happened in the night, it was clear that rna Roka acted under the auspices of the Germans. The money lira was retained; however, its value became weaker and weaker. Small skirmishes and occasional big battles between the Domobranci/Germans, and partisans continued. The partisans had frequently derailed trains, destroyed bridges, or attacked German transports. The Germans drafted Cveta, and she had to dig antitank trenches near the airport, some 5 km east from Ljubljana. Slowly the last year of the war was approaching.

1.20 Allied Air Raids

As soon as the Allied forces arranged their airports in southern Italy (Foggia and Bari), they began sending swarms of planes from there to bomb the Reich. Already in the winter 1943/1944, we saw the first bombers flying over Ljubljana. The reports were that they bombed Wiener Neustadt, Vienna, Linz, Graz, Klagenfurt, and also Maribor. The last is a Slovenian town, which was from the very beginning in the German occupational zone, an important industrial center and railway crossing. The number of planes increased from month to month, and sometimes many hundreds of four motor bombers flew over Ljubljana. They were flying so high that we could see only their condensation strips on the sky. But with binoculars, it was possible to see the shiny *Flying Fortresses* (B-17) and the *Liberators* (B-24). In the last months of the war, they were accompanied by the double-fuselage, two-engine fighter planes, *Lightning* (P-38). With binoculars, we saw them flying above the bombers “like a doggy around the master.”

Usually, the alarm was sounded between 10:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m., and some fifteen minutes later, we could already hear the thundering of the first arriving planes. In our gymnasium, we had an air-raid shelter in the cellar. However, instead of going there, I left the building to visit the pastry shop of my uncle Pepi, which was just some five minutes walking away, in the very center of Ljubljana. There I always got lunch, for Pepi was an excellent cook, and he had a good supply of food too. During the alarm, we were not allowed to wander around. When it was over, it was already too late to resume lessons, and students went home. This was going on almost day after day. Some hours later, when the planes started returning, a new alarm was sounded, but we were home already. Then we went to the cellar where we kept the coal or wood for heating; there the ceiling was additionally supported by strong wooden beams to form a makeshift air-raid shelter. Since those swarms of planes were flying to bomb the Reich and not Ljubljana, we gradually ignored the alarms and remained in the apartments or outside in the courtyard to observe the bombers.

Occasionally, some returning planes were flying very low because the enemy fire had damaged them. Once I noticed a *Flying Fortress* passing the town just some hundred meters high. Then I saw this big plane so close for the first time. A trigger-happy German soldier on the courtyard of the military barracks (from where the Italians sent us to the concentration camp) began shooting with his machine gun at this convenient and large target. The B-17 made a turn and dropped several bombs on the barracks. One of them hit the makeshift air-raid shelter on the courtyard there, penetrated through the ceiling, and exploded inside. Dr. Krisper, the friend of my brother Jože, was among the doctors who were urgently called to the place. He told that the Germans had to use picks and shovels to remove a compressed mass of fresh, blood-soaked uniforms, viscera, boots, and crushed bones from the shelter. One of the bombs also hit the apartment house, some 100 m away killing some civilians. Otherwise, I do not remember of any German flak shooting on these bombers; it seemed to me that no flak defenses were placed around Ljubljana.

Sometimes the damaged planes could not make it back to Foggia. The pilots did their best to reach the territory, which was under control of the partisans, where the crew bailed out. The rescued men were led by circuitous ways to the partisan bases in the forests near Kočevje or Črnomelj. Some of the crews, being badly hurt, were given medical treatment, if necessary surgery in the well-hidden partisan hospitals. Two-engine Dakota planes from Bari occasionally landed on a makeshift partisan airport near Črnomelj to transfer the rescued men back to the bases in Italy. Sometimes the bailed-out crew was rescued just before the noses of the Germans. The Allied troops were thankful for this precious help. On their on flights, the Dakotas always brought some arms, equipment, food, or medical supplies to the partisans. In addition, some larger planes dropped the equipment by parachutes. Several rescued American pilots still remember thankfully how they were rescued, treated in the partisan hospitals, and transported safely back to their bases.

However, not all German adversaries who parachuted on to the partisan territory were so fortunate. The Italians had drafted many Slovenian boys from the territory, which was occupied by Italy after WWI. After the German/Italian defeat in North Africa, many captured Slovenes wanted to join the Allied troops to fight against the Italians. The English trained some of them as radio operators or for sabotage. When the training was completed, they were parachuted, each group with a radio station, to land on the partisan territory. At first, those courageous boys and patriots were welcome by the partisans. But when the Allied forces pushed the troops of the Field Marshal Albert Kesselring higher along the Italian "boot," the Yugoslav communist leaders were afraid that the British/American forces might soon invade Dalmatia and Istria. The second is a peninsula in the North Adriatic Sea, and by conquering

it, they might push further and wider to cut off the supplies of the German troops in Italy and prevent their retreat. (At that time, we did not know that the Germans were also supplied by railway with sealed wagons via Switzerland.) The arrival of the Allied troops on Slovenian/Yugoslav territory would mean that a democratic government would probably be established here after the war. This was against the wishes of the communists, for they could not tolerate any control of someone who took democracy seriously. In other words, this would mean “Bye, bye the revolution!”

Even though the partisans were almost entirely supplied by the Americans and English—except of those arms and supply, which they confiscated from the enemy—a strong anti-western campaign was being spread through OF. Today, after so many years, it has become clear that they were against the direct military help of the Anglo-American troops, even if this would liberate Yugoslavia sooner and thus shorten the suffering of the occupied people. The revolution was the only thing that counted! Soon those parachuted fellows were treated with suspicion—as English spies! They got provocative questions, which they understood too well. They were expected to admit that the Soviet troops under the leadership of the genial Stalin were bearing the heaviest burden of the war! Those English, who trained and sent them with their radio stations to the partisans, were imperialists, reactionaries, capitalists, suppressors of the working class, and so on, and the Americans were just the same! The unfortunate radio operators that joined the partisans in their sincere belief that they were helping to liberate their Slovenian brothers from the fascist tyranny were embarrassed. How could they be against the English and Americans who—like the Soviets—were shedding their blood and sacrificing their lives to push the Germans and Italians out of North Africa? Soon the parachutists had to give away their radio equipment and arms. Almost all of them “disappeared” in the manner already described.

In Bari, a fighter group of some sixty Yugoslav pilots was established. They started attacking some smaller targets on Yugoslavian territory and also in Slovenia. Later, this group moved to the Island Vis, where Marshall Tito was hidden, and still later to a closer town, Zadar, on the Adriatic coast. Usually, they arrived in pairs in either Spitfires (MK-Ve) or Thunderbolts (P-47). In their first attack, they dropped a bomb on the main switch at the western exit of the marshalling yards of Ljubljana railway station. To prevent the bombing of the town, from then on during any alarm, the locomotives and some wagons were moved about 4 km east, between Ljubljana and Zalog, just about 1 km away from our home. In that area, the buildings were scarce, and on one side of the railway tracks was the airport. (There Cveta and others, who were drafted to forced labor, had to dig antitank trenches for the Germans.) Then the fighters arrived and strafed the locomotives with their guns. They did not shoot the people, except in one case, where some 800

m away some too-curious observers were standing just in their shooting line. Some deaths were reported. Once an empty cartridge from a plane had fallen right on the head of the curious father of my acquaintance, who had stretched too far out of the window to see what was happening. He was dead on the spot.

Occasionally, the fighters dropped bombs. Some 300 m from our house was a school where Domobranci had their staff or something. Once a fighter dropped a bomb, which hit the tram wires so that it dropped flat, not exploding. The bomb was obviously intended for the school, missing by some 50 m. The father of my later brother-in-law, Ivo, was just riding home on his special bicycle when the bomb was dropped some 30 m away, behind him. Even as he was handicapped from WWI (he had one leg shorter), he told that never in his life was he riding the bicycle as fast. On account of this bomb, the population within a circle of 200 m radius had to leave their homes immediately. From the distance at which I saw the bomb, which dropped on the (straight) Zaloška Street I judged, it had a mass of some 500 Lbs. Over a radius of 300 m, we were advised to open all the windows wide to protect the glass. The pyro-technicians moved the bomb to a small field just about 70 m away. In the evening, just as Cveta and I were returning from a movie, a red flare was fired, and soon after that, they exploded the bomb. Even as we were quite far away, the blast widely opened all the half-opened windows. Then we got an approximate idea what was going on in Germany, where the towns were mass-bombed almost daily.

A young boy, who was much fond of guns, rifles, grenades, and all sorts of small arms, had shown me a bomb fuse, which he unscrewed from an unexploded bomb, dropped near the airport. He had used a wrench to remove it. I was afraid it might be a time fuse and intended leaving the place. To prove that it was not dangerous, he started banging the fuse against the cement foundation of a house. Needless to say, I ran away as fast as I could. In the afternoon, the fuse exploded and almost cut the unfortunate boy into two pieces.

We were listening to BBC broadcasts, but the Slovenian and Serbo-Croatian transmissions were too heavily jammed. So I preferred listening to those in German language. I still remember one transmission, when at first I heard the thunder of bombers. The speaker said there were hundreds of bombers flying to raid the Reich. He explained how the English had learned the art of bombing from the Germans, mentioning Warsaw, Rotterdam, Coventry, Bristol, London, Belgrade, and so on. The Germans gave them a lesson on what caused the greatest damage, and now, it was the Germans' turn to feel what the bombing was like. He said that the bombing of Lübeck, Hamburg, Köln (Cologne), Mannheim, Stuttgart, and Berlin were just the beginning. The raids would increase in frequency and severity. At the end, he reminded the Germans that they themselves wanted a total war. Then he reproduced the Josef Goebbels's speech: "Deutsche, wohlts ihr einen totalen Krieg?" (Germans,

do you want a total war?), to which the people in the hall were screaming, “Ja, ja, ja!”; “Well,” the BBC speaker continued, “now you have your total war!”

People who came for short visits from their work in the Reich told horrible stories of the bombing. So many people were killed in single raids that the Germans had to use mechanical excavators to dig long trenches in the cemeteries to bury all those unfortunate victims. My friend, who worked on the Klagenfurt railway station, told me that his boss, the stationmaster always wore the armband with swastika, which meant he was the member of NSDAP. Whenever my friend expressed some doubts about the German “new order,” his boss always gave him some “fatherly” explanations that the Germans would surely win. But once, after the station was bombed severely, the boss entered his devastated office, where the undamaged picture of Hitler still hung on the wall. Enraged, he removed it and slammed it on the floor.

In the neighboring military hospital, there was an *Obersturmbanführer* (Lt. colonel), who brought me his radio for repair. It was just some months before the German capitulation. During a large discussion, he showed us some photos of his rich and beautifully furnished apartment. Since the bombs had destroyed his house, he told he was keeping these pictures for the times after the war, when the English and Americans would have to pay for the damage. We did not say anything.

On January 19, 1944, a German plane suddenly fell on our National and University Library. A two-engine bomber *Dornier (D-17)*, nicknamed *Flying Pencil*, for its slim fuselage, penetrated the roof of the main reading hall of the library, causing devastation inside. The aircraft had apparently a sudden defect in steering and—fortunately—it was not carrying any bombs. (The pilot was probably aiming to land in the River Ljubljana, which was just about 100 m away from the library.) The beautiful big hall as wide as the whole



building and several stories high, with two stories of bookshelves along each wall were severely destroyed. Many valuable old books were burnt or damaged beyond repair. The crash had killed the pilot, who was the only one in the plane. Fortunately, at the time of the accident, only five people were in the building, and none of them was hurt because they were in other smaller rooms and not in the big, unheated reading hall. The library—a masterpiece of our architect Jože Plečnik—was soon repaired. After the war, I often studied in that hall, where I could get the necessary literature. I still keep visiting the library to read the documents, which I need for writing this book.

In the afternoon of the March 9, 1945, a swarm of low-flying two-engine Wellingtons (IC) arrived. Then also, Ljubljana got its share of bombs. Later information was that they intended to hit the German staff headquarters, which was in a modern villa opposite to Technical High School, at two main streets crossing. Since they were flying only about 800 m high and their miss was some 500 m on a parallel street,¹⁷ they did not aim to the proper target. Instead, they had spread their bombs along Marmontova ulica in the quiet suburb of Mirje. (Marmont was the Marshall in the Napoleon's Army, which arrived in Ljubljana in 1809. Then he was the governor of the so-called Illyrian Province until 1811, when the French left without saying farewell.) Nice villas were destroyed or damaged, and the bombs hit two houses dead center. About thirty people were killed, and several more wounded. The street was full of bomb craters or pits (we call them *jama*). I wonder if this was the reason that after the war, the street was renamed to *Jamova ulica* in the honor of our impressionist painter, Matija Jama.

In the last week of the war, I remember a swarm of some eighty *Lightnings* passing Ljubljana toward north. They were flying provocatively low, so we could see these unusual, double-fuselage fighters for the first time from so close. However, no trigger-happy German soldier would dare shooting up, since just a couple of those fighters could smash him into pieces. This was the clear sign that the Germans would leave soon.

¹⁷ The German area headquarters was located in a villa, which was destroyed after 1991. The wider place at these (Aškerčeva and Gradišče) streets crossing was purchased by the French embassy, which was located in the next building. On the place of the former villa, the embassy has now its parking lot.

1.21 Last Year of German Occupation

The steadily increased air raids gave us the hope that the war might end soon. We considered the bombing of that quiet suburb of Ljubljana as a grave mistake. But let us see what happened in the meantime on the ground. The most important event was the Allied invasion on the West Coast of France on June 6, 1944. This was followed by another Allied invasion of August 15 to Marseille south France. Now the Germans were squeezed by the Allied from the west (Normandy), south (Marseille and Italy), and by the Russians on a wide eastern front all the way from Baltic Sea, down to Black Sea. On top of this, the Allied bombers kept pounding the Reich from the sky. In the mid 1944, we could not imagine that the war would have to last another ten months before the German war machinery crushed. When the Soviet troops pushed toward Yugoslavia in October, Belgrade, the capital of Yugoslavia was also liberated. Next, the partisan troops, together with the Russians started pushing the Germans back across Panonian Plains. In this case, the leadership of the Yugoslav Liberation Army had nothing against them, for the Soviets did not hinder but support their communist revolution.

After Belgrade was liberated, we began listening to the radio transmissions from there. It was like we would hear the Moscow broadcasting, except for some things that were specific for Yugoslavia. The king Peter II, for whom we demonstrated during the Italian hour, was not welcome anymore. Instead, Marshall Tito was given the preference and all the glory possible. By hearing Belgrade radio, I got a strange feeling that great changes would take place here after the war. We would get a system, which would be a copy of that one in the Soviet Union. After all that I heard in the classes of anticommunist propaganda, I was expecting the liberation of our country with mixed feelings.

The Germans established a secret police called "Slovenska Policija" in Ljubljana. Only the Slovenes composed it, but it acted like Gestapo. (Besides,

the criminal and the traffic police were also staffed with Slovenes). They kept arresting people mainly in the night and led them to the cellar of the main police station in Ljubljana, where they tortured them to extract the confession. The next station for those poor victims was the hill Sveti Urh (St. Ulrich). This was a place some 5 km east of Ljubljana, with a church and presbytery, where the prisoners were subject to their last torture before being shot—providing they did not die in the process. After the war, a big monument was erected there, and the church was transformed into a museum, where the photos of all victims were displayed. When I visited the museum for the first time, I was surprised to see so many photos of my friends, classmates, and acquaintances.

Once, in the winter 1944/45, just after the curfew, two armed plainclothesmen of “Slovenian Police” knocked on our door. One of them was the son of a building contractor. He was a radio amateur. Before the war, I once wired the power supply for his transmitter. They came to arrest my sister Mimica. This was very strange to us because it was well known that she was against communism. My sister Draga began objecting, but she was told to shut up; otherwise, they would arrest her as well. In that night, they arrested my brother Rudi also, who dwelled in the same street. The arrested people were led to a class in the school of Moste (which I was visiting in my young years), where they were guarded by the police agents. Suddenly a group of drunken Cherkeses¹⁸ in German uniforms came in, who have overtaken the command, forming an unusual crowd: the arrested, some “Slovenian policemen,” and the newly arrived Cherkeses. On the desk were stacked the seized identity booklets, each with the paper of the arrest warrant folded in. Since nobody paid attention, Rudi started browsing through; he found his own documents and quickly put them in his pocket. He continued to find those of Mimica, but then a Cherkese had taken all. Finally, the drunken Cherkeses drew the entire crowd out of the school and left.

Then the agents were driving the arrested people from house to house like cattle, adding new arrests. So they arrived to arrest Tone, the friend of Rudi from their early childhood. When grown, he was well known to be a great lover of women and music. Those Italians, who knew him, awarded him the title *Il piu grande putaniere di Lubiana*. He was playing accordion in pubs and cafeterias, singing there, as well as in church chorus (to gain indulgences?); at home he also played piano. When the agents knocked on the window, just about midnight, Tone came from his bed; looking out of the window, he asked what is going on. Rudi, who was close, told him, “Just dress quickly and join us!”

¹⁸ Cherkeses were the German troops from Russia. Since they were anticommunists, the Germans named them *Hirwis* (from *Hilfswillige* = those willing to offer help).

Tone, supposing Rudi was among the police agents, responded bluntly, “You whore! Are you also among them?”

As much as the situation was tragic for the arrested, the whole crowd laughed.

In this dark and foggy winter night, the agents led their ever-growing “cattle” back again via Vodmatska ulica. Since it was black out and dense fog, Rudi managed to hide into a porch. When the crowd was away, he went home. For that night, he was sure they would not look for him again because he had stolen his arrest warrant and his personal document. It was different for my sister Mimica. They led her to the cellar of the main police station, and there she had to see and hear something. Besides being cursed as a *partisan whore*, she had to hear horrible screaming from some rooms where the people were being tortured. One girl was thrown in their cell with her back and bottom smashed like a hamburger. She told they had beaten her with the steel sticks for cleaning rifle barrels. After the war, I read an article by Rado Bordon,¹⁹ who was also among the arrested in that cellar. He wrote that the torturers pushed a leg of a prisoner through the door of the burning oven. Occasionally, some plainclothesmen came to the cell and screamed at the prisoners. In the morning, we managed to inform an attorney, a friend of Mimica, of her arrest. Since he kept a high position in the anticommunist movement, he had bailed her out immediately. However, she had to get a new identification booklet because the documents that drunken Cherkese had confiscated had disappeared.



¹⁹ I still have his excellent translation of the French book by Gabriel Chevallier, *Clochemerle*.

Brother Rudi did not risk sleeping in his apartment any further night. The Radio Orchestra had rehearsals in the small hall of the Philharmonic building in the center of the town. The hall was in the upper floor, and there he got the shelter, joining some other musicians, who were also on the black list. Their wives brought them food, underwear, and bed sheets regularly. When it was time to go to sleep, they unfolded their sleeping kit, redressed themselves in pajamas to sleep on the floor of the hall.

Some two days after Rudi joined that group, two plainclothesmen arrived to arrest him. However, the German soldiers guarded both entrances round the clock. They did not allow the agents in. Moreover, one of the guards came to warn Rudi and the others not to leave the hall under any circumstances. Thus, Rudi played, lived, and slept there for a couple of weeks. The director of Radio Ljubljana, a German officer Oswald Buchholz, accidentally entered the hall just when some guys were already in their improvised beds. He asked why they were sleeping there as any of them had his special permission to be out after the curfew. Even as it was not easy for the “candidates for arrest” to tell the truth, they did. Buchholz, who was also an excellent conductor, was very happy to have HIS symphony orchestra, and naturally, he was against losing any single musician. It was known that he was a kind and soft man, but then he swore something like, *Kreuzhimmeltausenddonnerwetter* (or maybe something shorter) and left very angry.

Next day, he returned to tell the suspects that they might go home safely. Nobody was allowed to arrest them! Since he was a higher German officer and his assurances were convincing, the guys went home, reluctantly. Indeed, nobody was arrested, but they had to pay nevertheless for their extra status. Rudi got an invitation to the main police station. To avoid possible inconveniencies, he first showed it to Buchholz, asking him what to do. He suggested my brother to go because they were forbidden to do him any harm. So Rudi went there, and he was accused of being the member of the “red aid.” He denied, but they showed him a list with the exact dates and sums of money, which he had contributed. Then he had to pay them all the money he had in the wallet. From then on, they did not bother him anymore. The same happened to the other “guests of the hotel Small Philharmonic Hall.”

I remember Buchholz conducting the Radio Orchestra in the big Hotel Union hall. They played “Moldau” (originally Vltava) by Bedřich Smetana and some other compositions, which I do not remember. He was indeed an excellent conductor. The story of my brother is a proof how some Germans, who were considered the “enemies,” were saving lives of us Slovenes, preventing to be tortured and killed by our own people.

Since my father did not care, my brother Jože found a dentist who replaced my smashed frontal teeth and overhauled the rest. The brother also paid the

dentist's hefty bill. In the autumn of 1944, my father departed to the former German occupational zone, where he got the job as a master room-painter in the General Hospital Golnik. Before the war, there was a sanatorium for lung diseases. (Then it was almost exclusive for TB patients, and after the war, this function was restored there.) As usual, when being away, our father forgot he had a family, which he was obliged to take care of. Instead, my brother Jože, my mother, and sister Mimica contributed the most to support the family. My sister An ka and her boyfriend, Ivo, also got a job in the Golnik Hospital. Once in the winter 1944/45, the partisans stopped the bus in which Ivo and Ančka were traveling from Kranj to Golnik. Both joined the partisans. Ivo was in the troops, whilst An ka was sent to Bari, where she completed the course for surgery nurses. She was later sent to help the partisan doctors in the liberated territory of Slovenia.

Cveta and I became friends. We were visiting symphony concertos, operas, and movies, and we walked together in the nature—as much as it was possible within the barbed wire perimeter. The visit of those musical performances broadened my knowledge in this field. We saw the operas, for example, “The Queen of Spades” by Tchaikovsky, “Tannhäuser” by Wagner, the operetta “Paganini” by Franz Lehar, and so on. I also remember seeing the Shakespeare’s play “King Lear” in our drama theater. On the concertos, I was impressed by the Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony, Edward Grieg’s Piano Concerto, some Brahms’s Symphonies, and Tchaikovsky’s Violin Concerto. In the last composition, I recognized that I knew it from my early childhood when my brother Jože played the middle part on his violin. Since he played the accordion too, he had also brought some scores for his instrument, which he played first and I learned later. Sometimes, we were playing together—he the violin and I accompanying him with the accordion. It was a strange combination, where we played some Chopin’s “Waltzes,” compositions by Fritz Kreisler, and so on. Cveta began visiting an evening drafting course, which was organized by a sculptor France Gorše.

The OF ordered a general cultural silence, which was impossible to keep because too many artists, musicians, and writers earned their bread with such activity. The well-known painter Miha Maleš published an *Anthology of Slovenian Painters*, a purely artistic and nonpolitical publication. Just for this, he became a no-person after the war, no matter how famous he had been before. However, after the war, the criteria of who was guilty of breaking the cultural silence and who was not guilty was purely arbitrary; those who were for the “reds” were usually pardoned of everything.

I kept unblocking radio receivers, earning some money by repairing radios and building shortwave radio receivers. It happened that my former tutor in radio, Drago Zrimšek, who ran a radio shop in Ljubljana, had visited our home. With him was an agent of the criminal police. At that time, I had an unblocked

radio, on which I did not put back the leaden seals yet. Zrimšek checked the radio and found it worked on shortwave band. The criminal agent made big eyes and wrote an invitation for me to appear at the criminal police next day. When I returned from school, my mother was afraid very much for this invitation and so was I. Since I did not have any possibility to escape, I decided to go to the main police station. If there would be anything political, they would not send me the invitation, but they would simply find and arrest me, I thought.

Next day, I went to that same building where my sister was arrested on that horrible night. I was directed to an office on the upper floor. The clerk there offered me a seat and asked if I knew a certain boy M. H. I told he was a radio amateur, almost a friend of mine. (His father was a skillful cabinetmaker, and he was making splendid radio cabinets for me.) The clerk put some radio parts on the desk and asked if I could recognize them. Yes, I told. I gave these parts to M. H., some year ago, when he began to play with radio. He required I should take these parts, which I refused, for they were not my anymore. But the clerk was adamant, and I had to take them. This was the end of the interview. I left that building, where some people were still being tortured in the cellar, with wobbly legs.

Later, I learned the full story. That boy M. H. was employed at Zrimšek where he started stealing soon. At first, he stole just some radio parts and later the complete repaired radio receivers. Instead of delivering them back to the customer(s), he drove his tricycle with the receiver(s) to a friend and they sold them, since radios were a much-sought item during the war. Zrimšek, who was the friend of our family, was visiting the friends of M. H. to find possible stolen radios. Fortunately, he prevented the criminal agent to report the unblocked radio any further. Now I understood why occasionally M. H. was offering me some radio parts at bargain prices. However, a sixth sense was telling me there was something wrong in this offer, and I never bought anything from him. For a while, I did not see M. H., and I presumed he had spent some time in the criminal jail.

Domobranci organized a good brass band orchestra. Many, who would otherwise be sent to fight the partisans, joined. They were convinced that nothing could happen to them after the war if they just played there. The same was valid for tailors, painters, mechanics, blacksmiths, bakers, and some other "neutral" professions. But they were badly mistaken!

The news from the fronts was encouraging. The western allies were at the Rhine, pushing farther into the Reich, whilst the Russian troops had forced the Germans back to retreat all the way to Warsaw. From BBC, we learned that the Soviets called the people in the Polish capital to rise and help pushing the Germans back to where they came. When the Polish underground fighters started attacking the Germans, the Russians stopped their advance until the

Germans suppressed any resistance in the town. The western allies, who wanted to help the Polish resistance, were not allowed to drop the supply from the air and then land on the Soviet territory. It was too transparent for me; the Soviets had intentionally sacrificed the Polish resistance. After the German troops finished with the Polish, at first, the Soviets continued their advance. Since the news of the events from Warsaw came to us only in fragments, we could not ask the communist activists of the OF to tell us any particulars. We have learned the whole truth after the war.

Eventually, the Allied armies, advancing from west and south, cut the Germany into several sectors. They met the Soviet Army on the historical day April 25 at Thorgau on the Elbe River. On May 1, radio told that Hitler had fallen for the fatherland. Later, we learned that he and his bride, Eva Braun, had committed suicide. Since now the Fuehrer was eliminated, we expected the German capitulation should follow soon. Strangely, even as the Reich had shrunk so much being cut into sectors, we heard the German news (in German) transmitted from somewhere to Radio Ljubljana, regularly, day after day, almost up to the last day of the occupation.

On May 1, the Yugoslav troops have occupied Trieste. This gave us the hope that the Italians would never come back to the territory of Julian March, where—after WWI—the countryside was inhabited mostly by Slovenes. But the Yugoslavs remained in Trieste for only twelve days when the English troops under General Alexander forced them to withdraw. After the war, the reason for this withdrawal became known. On the first day, the members of OZNA began arresting people in Trieste: fascists, war criminals, collaborators, policemen, and people who were against communism. In addition, some members of the Italian socialist party had “disappeared” in this pogrom, even as they were antifascists. Their capital sin was that they did not like communists. Some years ago, the joint Italian and Slovenian group of historians found that OZNA had arrested on that territory slightly over six hundred people who were then shot without any trial and dumped into Carst caves, which the local population named *foibe*. This was just the prelude of a much more extensive killing by the same pattern, which happened in Slovenia after the war. However, those arrests and killings might not be the essential reason for the English to push the Yugoslavs out of Trieste. Since the Yugoslav People’s Army was displaying such a blind obedience to Moscow, the Allied simply could not tolerate the communists in this important Adriatic port. The cold war had already begun.

“Črna Roka” (Black Hand) and the Slovenian Police kept killing people suspected to be either supporters or activists of the OF. This happened to the very last day of the occupation. On May 3, a group of thirty-nine people organized the “first meeting of the Slovenian parliament” in a gymnastic hall in

Ljubljana. Among the participants were also some prewar politicians, who had kept themselves away from the mutual national slaughter. They represented the prewar political parties, exclusive the communists. By quoting the Atlantic Chart and some other allied declarations how the democratic order should be established after the war, they declared the foundation of the National State of Slovenia as a part of Yugoslavia, ruled by King Peter II. Their intent was to wait together with the armed Domobranci troops for Allied troops to fight with them against the communists and the Soviet troops. From today's standpoint, those fellows appeared just as a group of crazy idealists. They were way too weak and unimportant for the Allied to achieve anything. After the war, all the participants of that meeting were arrested. One of them, Ivan Tonja, was the leader of our group Sokol, where I was doing gymnastics exercises before the war. Then he had black hair, but when I met him again some six years after the war, his hair was entirely grey. (As usual, in those times, any one of us was too afraid to say a single word concerning his past arrest.)

Besides their advance to Trieste, the Yugoslav Army, together with the Soviet troops, advanced from the north Yugoslavia to the north Slovenia to squeeze the German troops from south and north. The Russians looted and raped the Slovenian girls like they were used to do in Germany. The OF leader, Edvard Kardelj, reported this to Stalin during his visit in Moscow, but the red Czar did not want to listen. (In Milovan Djilas's book, *Conversations with Stalin*, published by Hartcourt, Brace & World, Inc., New York, 1962, the reader can find many interesting particulars of this visit.) So the Slovenes in Prekmurje got their first-hand experience about what the practical communism was like.

About a week before the liberation, the Germans imposed a curfew from 7:00 p.m. to 7:00 a.m. They wanted no interference during their withdrawal from Ljubljana. Domobranci had the task to guard their retreat. On the streets of Ljubljana, we could see a great mess of all sorts of carts with horses as the population from south Slovenia joined the Domobranci at their withdrawal. Among them were whole families, children, women, and old people with their belongings, all heading toward the north. From our house, we also saw how some heavily wounded Domobranci were evacuated from the military hospital directly to the train, which stopped there. However, there were not enough places for all of them, and some serious cases remained in the hospital, together with their nurses.

From the Castle Hill in the middle of Ljubljana, Domobranci were shooting with guns toward some 7 km distant place, Orlje, from where the partisans were advancing toward the capital. In the night of May 9, a strange silence spread in the town. The Germans as well as the Domobranci had left Ljubljana. We were anticipating liberation from the occupiers and freedom of totalitarianism. Unfortunately, in the first month, we realized that we had gained liberation only from the occupiers.

PART 2

End of War;
Communists Introduced
“People’s Democracy”

2.1 Partisans Arrive in Ljubljana

It was all quiet in the morning of May 9, 1945. Around 9:00 a.m., the Radio Ljubljana station started transmitting in Slovenian. First, we heard again *coo*, *coo*, which was the station sign before the occupation. Then we heard a woman's voice. "Radio Free Ljubljana speaking!" (Vida Tom was at the microphone.) Finally, the occupiers were gone! Soon after that, I went to the center of the town. In a street, close to the center, I saw broken glass of a window, where a poster had been fixed, displaying a member of the Home Guard, pointing at the observer, "YOU TOO ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE FATE OF SLOVENIAN NATION! WHO DOES NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE ANTICOMMUNIST STRUGGLE BETRAYS HIS NATION!" It was almost a copy of the well-known US poster, where Uncle Sam was pointing at the observer: "I WANT YOU FOR US ARMY!" The poster was torn away and laid trampled over on the street. This was the first sign that the future of the captured Home Guard might be gloomy.

When I arrived at the Main Street, Dunajska Cesta (the street to Vienna), I saw the first partisan troops marching. They wore English uniforms and were well equipped; many of them carried machine guns. People of all ages gathered on both sides of the street and kept greeting them. To have a better view, I went to the nearby "skyscraper," at first to the terrace on the twelfth floor and then further up all the way to the roof. (The elevator did not work, so I had to use the steps.) I saw the troops coming: trucks and even some armored cars as far as I could see toward the southwest. Since they were so many, the Germans would surely never return again. On the horizon was a big mountain, Krim. In the forests there and beyond, the partisans had found the shelter during the occupation. Now I could go there again, to the freed country, outside of the barbed wire fence! By seeing all this, a long-expected relaxation slowly came to my mind. No more arrests! No more concentration camps! No more starving! No more jamming of allied radio stations! No more hated occupiers!

No more watching what we were talking in public! No more barbed wire fence around Ljubljana! No more black out! We would get our schools back again! All crimes of the communist-led OF, of which I read during the war, were suddenly forgotten. The freedom was all that counted!

In the afternoon, Cveta and I went to Fužine, a place at the eastern perimeter, inside of the barbed wire. There, where the River Ljubljanica flowed, were nice meadows. I gave her the ride on the bar of my bicycle. It was a clear, sunny spring day, and we both were so happy that it was impossible to describe! For the first time we realized how very depressing was the occupation for us. During these years, the steady fear of being arrested, maybe tortured, sent to concentration camp or shot, slowly ground into our minds. It had become part of us, and now we have to get used to the fact that all this was just a nasty past. We had to be used to *freedom*!

When it was dark, numerous fireworks of different beautiful colors were shot. Apparently, the Germans had left an ample supply of them, for this went off evening after evening. In our broadcasting, we heard that Germany had capitulated. It was a little odd for me to hear so much glory on the account of the Soviet Union and the Red Army. It appeared to me like they had defeated the Germans single handedly. We learned more of the achievements of the Allied troops from their shortwave broadcasting, which was not jammed anymore. Horrible news was told of the German concentration camps: crematories, gas chambers, mass graves, people starved to skeletons, piles of dead, and so on. Pictures of these crimes also appeared in the newspapers. Some days before the liberation, the Slovenian police led twenty-nine prisoners, members of OF, among them two women, from Ljubljana prison to the Castle Turjak and massacred them in the most brutal way. Pictures of their mutilated bodies and the extensive reports of the massacre were published in the newspapers.

More and more people were calling me to restore their radios to the original, unblocked conditions, which I did with delight. My sister Ana and her former boyfriend, Ivo, who in the meantime had become her husband, arrived home from partisans. Ivo was wounded during the struggle and had to spend several months in a secret partisan hospital, where they operated his damaged liver and leg. He had never fully recovered from these wounds.

In the first week, the new authorities called us to the medical examination as a part of the drafting procedure. A woman doctor, to whom I told I had tuberculosis, which I proved with my X-ray pictures accompanied by some other documents, was not impressed. "Our boys suffered much more whilst in the forests, and they deserve to be replaced as soon as possible. They were sometimes much more sick than you, and they nevertheless kept fighting." Then my bodyweight was some 60 kg only, but this too was of secondary importance for her.

When my new brother-in-law, Ivo, visited us for the second time, another partisan, a family friend from before the war was with him. The friend invited me to visit their radio works, which were just some 200 m away. Of course, I went there to be delighted seeing modern American, English, German, and Italian military radio stations as well as different commercial radio receivers. I repaired a radio receiver just for fun. Unlike in the prewar Yugoslav Army, when the obligatory language was Serbian only, here the communication was in Slovenian. Then the commander asked me if I would join them. Since I could be drafted irrespectively of my TB status, I agreed. However, I told him that I was still not cured yet, but he assured me that they would not drive me too hard. Within a couple of days, I got brand-new English uniform, which was long enough but too wide because I was so skinny. A tailor in our street had shrunk it to fit. I also got brand-new boots and woolen socks.

The workshop was in a house, which was the property of some collaborators, who had escaped. In fact, several people whom I knew had also left. My friend Veko, a university student, who was against Domobranci, but his father was for, as well as his younger brother Cic, who became soldier, had left together with their mother and sister. When I appeared at the door of their apartment to get a professional book, which I lent to Veko before the liberation, an officer opened to tell me he is the new renter. He helped me find my book. Those German fellows, Mergenthaler and Narbeshuber, in the neighborhood, who had hung swastika flags on the first day of the occupation, were gone too.

My work in the radio shop was very interesting. Unfortunately, I did not know any English, which prevented me from understanding the instruction manuals. However, with the aid of my French, Italian, and German, supported by the circuit schematics, I could at least get some foggy idea of the circuitry. To understand the particulars, I would need to know English, but there were no books available to learn this language. Some stations had Russian inscriptions on the panels, and their instruction manuals were in Russian. They were made in USA as an aid to Soviets, and some of them were shipped to partisans as well. Since I did not know any Russian, the understanding of these manuals was still more difficult. Later, some red-hot communists told me that these "Russian" stations were better than the American ones. They were convinced that the first ones were built in Russia, and therefore, they *had to* be better! There was no way to make changing their mind, even if one would remove the cabinet and show them the inscription MADE IN USA. In the months to come, it became opportune to avoid convincing anyone of the American origin of those "Russian" stations.

On the other side, it was much easier to repair German and Italian radio equipment, for I had no difficulties understanding the manuals. Besides, they did not have so many entirely new circuits. The chassis of German stations

were made of die-cast magnesium-aluminum alloy called *Elektron* and ground precisely to the required dimensions. Even as *Elektron* was lighter than pure aluminum, these stations were heavy in comparison with equivalent American equipment. Poor soldiers! They had to carry these things. But the German stations were extremely robust and thus could withstand very rough handling. The electron tubes in German equipment were entirely new to me; they fit entirely inside their special sockets, for which they were very resistant against shock and vibrations.

An exception was the German receiver, nicknamed *Lampenfresser*. Its enclosure and chassis were made of sheet metal, and it was stacked with commercial tubes. It could be connected to any line voltage from 110 V to 220 V, either AC or DC. In addition, appropriate batteries could also power it. On its panel was a rotary switch, which had to be turned from the extreme left position, clockwise, step by step until the red glow-lamp lit. Then the receiver was set to the correct line voltage. Any further turning of the switch caused all the filaments of the tubes to burn through in a moment. Since the switch was very hard to turn, it was possible to make two steps instead of a single one. Therefore, the name *Lampenfresser*, which I learned later from German prisoners, was very appropriate. (This name means “lamps-gorger”). For its infamous properties, I stood away of *Lampenfresser*, so this is just a “second-hand information.”

The Italian equipment was of customary built, and the electron tubes were also of the American types, produced by FIVRE in Pavia. Once I repaired an Italian radio station in an armored car. Since we had to check the range, the driver moved the car to the periphery of Ljubljana. The car had double controls, in the front and in the back. It was strange to see the back steering wheel turning, gear-level shifting, and pedals moving as if an invisible driver would operate the vehicle at the back seat. Some people said that these Italian cars could drive much faster backward than forward, but I could not confirm that.

As soon as we were just about 1 km from the workshop, the car engine died. So I radioed to the shop asking to send a car to pull us. A tank arrived and attached our vehicle by a steel cord. Just before it pulled, I moved from the open turret down inside to close the side door. The sudden pull threw me back to the machine gun, which was painful for my ribs. When our engine started running again, we continued on our own power. I was sitting up inside of the open turret, looking around. Then I saw some phone cables stretched across the road and our extended vertical antenna, with a star on its top, might grab them. So I bent in again to winch the antenna down. Then suddenly I did not know what happened. After a while, when the black out perished, I found myself on the seat with the turret door closed, feeling a sharp pain on my skull. The car had apparently hit a hole in the road, and the sudden stroke had

closed the 5-mm-thick steel door just over my head. Fortunately, it hit me just to the steel strap of the headphones, which ran across my skull, so there was no bleeding. My next message was, "The door closed over my head!"

"Yes, we heard that" was the reply.

The repairing and testing of radio stations might also be dangerous and painful.

Since more helping hands were needed in the workshop, I suggested drafting my school and concentration campmate, Ivo. To distinguish him from my brother-in-law, let us call him Ivan, which is just another form of the same name. Being a radio amateur, Ivan joined with delight. In the second week of my military service, Ivan and I were ordered to remove the radio equipment from an armored train on the main railway station in Ljubljana. When we arrived there with our tools, a seasoned partisan, as I judged by his worn-out uniform and boots, showed us two remote wagons of the armored train, where we had to take the radio and intercom units out. Both wagons were some 70 m away and they were just the front part of a very long composition, parked on the farthest track from the station building, which was also some 70 m away. As soon as the partisan gave us directions, he moved away swiftly and disappeared behind a big utility building.

We approached the armored wagons. The turrets were away, lying on the ground. Special oversized shells destroyed their guns, and the gun barrels near the breach were neatly split into stretched bands, resembling the sleeves of a medieval jacket. The blast of the explosion had probably dislodged the turret, which dropped all the way down to the ground. The Germans did their job *mit deutscher Tüchtigkeit* (with German thoroughness). At first, we tried to open the doors, but all four doors on each wagon were locked from inside. Contrary to that partisan, who disappeared so quickly, neither Ivan nor I had any idea of possible booby traps. The only way to come in was to climb to the flat roof and descend through the opening of the turret, which we did. Ivan went to one wagon and I to the other.

On the floor, just under the opening, were shells of some 50-mm caliber, stacked vertically in two layers forming a block of approximately 1.5 m square and 80 cm height with their fuse sides up. So I descended, very gently, to stand on top of this stack. A strange feeling to walk on the fuses of such a big stack of shells! I walked very softly indeed. The positive side of the matter was that I would not know if it would explode and also my parents would be spared the troubles and cost of the funeral. Now I had to jump down to the wagon floor. Even as I did not know anything of D'Alembert's force yet, I was slightly afraid if the push might set the stack off. As you see, nothing happened, and I was ready to start working. When I had removed the radio station and the intercom, I opened the door from inside and went out the normal way. I was

glad I did not have to climb that stack of shells to walk over once again, this time towing a heavy radio station. Strangely, nobody was seen out, when Ivan, who had to go through the same unusual procedure, and I descended the wagons.

Years later, another colleague, who was then employed at the railway station, told me that this, several hundred-meters-long composition, had the wagons filled with sea mines, airplane bombs, all sorts of ammunition, and explosives. Such a train should not stay at the main railway station inside of a large town like Ljubljana, but it should just move through slowly, on the direct track, with all other traffic at full stop. This was an unpardonable neglect from the new military authorities, and fateful consequences followed soon. (See chapter 2.03) The partisans were used only to guerilla warfare; they had no experience what to do in such entirely different circumstances.

Indeed the partisans were not accustomed to the town life. Whenever I was a passenger in a (military) car, I was always very much afraid. The driver cut all curves, and only the fact that the traffic was extremely scarce prevented a frontal collision. On that side of Kongresni trg (Congress Square) bordering to the park Zvezda (Star), there was a beautiful stone booth with meteorological instruments; it was a work of our famous architect Jože Plečnik. A car hit its wide round roof, and the big stone plate fell down, destroying the booth completely. The barometer had never dropped so much any time before. This was the only "casualty" of the new traffic order known to me.

On May 26, 1945, it was announced that Marshall Tito, who arrived in Ljubljana a day before, would have a speech on Kongresni trg. We were encouraged to go there. Frankly, I was eager to see him because so much had been told of him that already he was a legendary figure. Kongresni trg as well as the adjacent park Zvezda all the way down to Wolfova ulica (Wolf Street) was crowded. I got a good place on the steps at the entrance of the Philharmonic building, which was only some 60 m away from the university. The public address system worked well, so I could understand every word. Tito, accompanied by the big brass Ranković, Kardelj, Kidrič, Kocbek, and so on, appeared on the balcony of the university building and began speaking. He was a very good orator. His speech in Serbo-Croatian language (his mother was Slovene) was very patriotic and equidistant to the western allies as well as to Soviet Union. (Later, I learned that the Soviets and Stalin especially were not pleased.) He also told these fateful words concerning the collaborators:

"The arm of justice, the arm of revenge of our people had already reached the vast majority of traitors, and only a minor part of them succeeded to run away to get the shelter at their protectors abroad. This minority will never see again our magnificent mountains and our blossoming fields. If this would happen nevertheless, it will last very short time."

At that time, the full meaning of his words did not come to my senses yet. Tito's speech was "baptized" by a heavy shower, but people had umbrellas (and I just moved slightly inside of the porch of the Philharmonic building, where I was sitting on the staircase). However, Tito refused to be protected by an umbrella and continued speaking, ignoring the pouring rain.

The text of the novelist Tone Seliškar, which was published the next day in—now regular—newspaper *Slovenski Poročevalec* (*Slovenian Reporter*), was even more specific than Tito's speech. His was the language of a total, final solution, *Endlösung*!:

"We will not only cut away the rotten tree, we will also pull out its roots and burn them, and we will dig up the ground where such tree grew, seven fathoms deep, to prevent the smallest germ of such tree to remain."

Already in the next week, I had to see the introduction of these measures in practice.

2.2 Dissolution of Slovenian Army

An immediate consequence of Marshall Tito and Ranković's visit was the dissolution of Slovenian Army. The Christ-Socialist Edvard Kocbek, who joined the OF and who also participated in the important meeting of AVNOJ in Jajce (Bosnia) on November 29, 1943, had mentioned in his memoirs that Marshall Tito promised to keep the Slovenian Army after the war (AVNOJ = *Antifašistično Veče Narodnog Oslobodjenja Jugoslavije* = Antifascist Council of National Liberation of Yugoslavia). But no written document specifying this was signed, and the Slovenian participants, Edvard Kardelj, Boris Kidrič, Josip Vidmar, and the others, were too much "internationally oriented" to care for such matter, which seemed of secondary importance at the time being. The fact was, however, that Tito did not keep his word after the war.

In the prewar Yugoslavia, the army was Serbian, and all the other language groups were suppressed. Many partisans joined the resistance expecting that in the new order, their language would be kept in the army as well, which the communist leadership kept declaring. A good case of a multilingual military service was the Swiss Army, where the soldiers spoke and were commanded either in German, French, Italian, or Romanch, depending on the area, where they dwelled. By his decree, Tito had created a Serbian Army again, which led to fateful consequences ten years after his death.

In the last week of May, our workshop had to be moved to Celje, a town some 50 km northeast from Ljubljana. On the ride there, I was the passenger in a battered German car, enjoying the scenery. For the first time after four years, except for my "vacations" in Gonars and Treviso, I was out of Ljubljana. The day was nice, and the late spring landscape was beautiful. In Celje, we were at first stationed at a pub. On the courtyard, there were some workshops staffed with Serbs and Croats. Since Serbs and Croats did not understand

Slovenian, the communication language was Serbo-Croatian. Among them was also a Russian, a certain comrade Orehov, an interesting fellow. He was probably an emigrant since 1917. Russians, even the emigrants, were kept in high esteem by our new authorities, and consequently his behavior was slightly patronizing. He beat us all in receiving Morse messages, for he could simply write them straight down by a typewriter. As a nonsmoker, I gave him my cigarettes, and thus I gained his sympathies. He helped me translating the Russian instruction manuals.

An elderly couple from a house nearby asked Ivan, Stane (who was in the group already from the partisan times), and me if we had the lodging. Since we had none yet, they invited us to sleep in one of their rooms. They told that they have their son in the partisans; therefore, they were glad to give us the shelter. Of course we accepted with delight! They preferred us rather than the Serbs or the Croats.

Some days after our arrival, it was in the early June, I had to witness an unusual event, which profoundly affected my attitude toward the new order. I was on my way to the center of Celje when I saw a big group on the street coming. The first half of them was the members of the Home Guard, some three hundred of them, followed by about so many women with children, babies, and old people in civilian dress. The Home Guard was mostly barefoot, some were carrying the knapsacks, and their uniforms were in a very poor state. In the front, I recognized a fellow Richard B., with whom we sometimes played music together. Next to him was a very young boy of some sixteen years, bent forward, and it was apparent he was marching with his last strength.²⁰ Soldiers with whips, riding horses, accompanied the whole group on both sides. The Home Guard was ordered to sing some of their songs. Occasionally, they had to shout "We are the traitors of Slovenian nation!" and similar humiliating slogans. The soldiers on horses, who were cursing in Serbian, kept beating the poor crowd down, sparing only the civilians of the second half. They ordered them to lie down and kiss the Slovenian ground. In addition, the civilians in the group had to obey, including the children. I saw those mothers, with children, some of them carrying a baby or pushing a cart with the baby in, bending forward, lying down, and kissing the dusty ground of the dirt road. On top of this, the partisan, who was accompanying me, started cursing these unfortunate people with the most obscene words.

The crowd was ordered to rise again and run. Since an old and tiny man—he could be my grandfather—could not run, two members of the Home Guard grabbed him under the arms to run together, his feet dragging.

²⁰ Thirty years later, I had the chance to meet him again. Then he was an esteemed surgeon, who had successfully operated my colon.

Quickly a soldier on horse approached and started beating with a whip both Home Guards over the head, causing them severe bleeding. Years later, I read in a book that on that same day, this whole group—women, children, and babies—were without any food or water for two successive days. The civilians were marching to be in some sort of trance, for they had to see such cruelties already for two days. I still remember vividly a mother with a girl of some four years, holding her hand and carrying a baby in her lap—all three a holy figure of maternity. Are all these three traitors like the rest of the group?

People in Celje were hardened to see the cruelties during the past four years of German occupation. However, the Germans were the enemies. What they saw the Yugoslavs were doing to their own people now was just too much for them. When I looked at the observers on the pedestrian way, most of them were shocked and some, also men, cried. (As I have learned later from many books, the people in the center of the town, near the railway station, behaved similarly to my comrade, who kept cursing those unfortunate people.) It was difficult for me to suppress my tears, but a soldier should not cry, and I also did not know what my companion might report of me if I would give in to my feelings.

After those unfortunate people had left in the same direction from where they arrived, I started talking with a pretty dark-haired girl, who was observing this horrible event from the window. Since my companion had also left, we could air our souls. I told her I was shocked to the depth of my heart. I was ashamed as I could do nothing to help at least that young mother with the girl and a baby.²¹

To return to the events and time in Celje, the reports of the crimes and massacres done by some members of the OF, which I had read during the occupation, came back to my mind. It was all true! Something had broken inside me. No, this was not which I expected when I was looking down from the “skyscraper” in Ljubljana! This was no freedom, but terror! I did not want to have anything in common with people who were responsible for such crimes! I was ashamed to wear the same uniform as those sadists on horses. However, I could not simply leave and go home, for I was a soldier. But from then on, I did my job in the shop more or less automatically. The joy to help building the new society was gone.

Although I normally sleep like a log, the cruelties I saw kept me awake for the major part of several nights. Instinctively, I did not discuss the event with anyone, not even with my colleagues, Ivan and Stane. During the night,

²¹ After the independence of Slovenia in 1991, heartbreaking stories were being published of that same group I had seen in Celje, as well as of some numerous other mass crimes, committed by the communists after the war.

I occasionally heard a remote barking of machine guns. When I mentioned this to the leader of our workshop, he explained that these were the cleansing actions because many collaborators still hid here and there while retreating across the Alps, and they had to be “liquidated.” Since we three slept in a private apartment, we kept our arms ready in case we would be attacked by the retreating collaborators. So Ivan and I put our guns under the pillow, and Stane kept the hand grenade on his nightstand ready. However, our leader did not tell us the truth. Years after the war, I learned that the sounds of those machine guns were from the shooting of the prisoners, who were stationed near the village Teharje, close to Celje. There was a place where the Germans were training Slovenian boys drafted to *Arbeitsdienst*. Their drill was a prelude to the military service. There, many of those civilians, whom I saw on the street on that fateful day, were executed. But what happened there indeed remained a secret to me for nearly forty years after.

Our makeshift workshop soon moved into the military barracks inside of the town, but we kept spending the nights in that private apartment. Once, just when I was out on the military courtyard, I saw approaching nobody else than my friend Marjan! He was wearing the uniform of a major. He told me that after the sentence, the Italians had separated him from his father. Marjan was sent to confinement to Calabria, southern Italy. When the Allied forces arrived there in 1943, he was transported across the Adriatic to join the partisans in Dalmatia. Later, he joined the Slovenian partisans to work in the secret radio works at Stare Žage in southern Slovenia. His father, who was the major of Domobranci, and his brother, the soldier of Domobranci, had run away. As a major of OZNA (the secret police), Marjan dwelled in Ljubljana, with his mother, sister, and the youngest brother, of whom he was taking care, instead of their father. What a strange fate! Marjan told me that OZNA was looking for radio technicians and that I would be welcome in their shop in Ljubljana—if I wanted to. I told him I would try to arrange the transfer, but right then, I could do nothing.

The head of our department was a Croatian major, an electrical engineer and a very kind man. Because I knew German well, he had sent me to Maribor with the task to make the complete list of some twenty wagons of radio material there. I should get food and lodging at the staff there. So I went to Maribor. As an industrial town and important railway crossing with two stations, the town suffered severe successive bombings by the Allied air forces. Many houses were either completely destroyed or uninhabitable, and even those which were less damaged had mostly cardboard or plywood instead of window glass. I got a spacious room and bed in a big old apartment house, some 500 m from the northern railway station, which was partly destroyed but still operational.

The next day, I went to the magazine to where the material from the railway station should be transported. The transportation workers were German prisoners, common soldiers, *Wehrmacht*, not the SS troops. Most of SS troops were executed in the first days. Some members of SS had changed their dress, but the telltale letter (s) of their blood group, tattooed under their armpit, proved fateful for them. No common soldier had such tattooing. The Serbian soldiers were driving those prisoners like hell! I did not like that, but I could not do anything to help them. An elderly soldier, about as old as my father, once approached me and told how starved they were. For the Serbs, the revenge was more important than the useful work the prisoners were doing. Once I managed to smuggle in a big loaf of white bread and gave it to that old soldier. Later, he told me how grateful the whole group was when the loaf was split evenly among them. Remembering my starving in the Italian concentration camp, I understood the full weight of his words.

In the courtyard, there was also a mechanical shop, and their former boss had just returned from the partisans. In addition, an older civilian German mechanic, who did not know a single word Slovenian, was employed in that shop. Among the material, which arrived there, was a complete broadcasting station, including the iron bars for the antenna tower. There were also some big flat boxes, the content of which I did not know. So I had to open one to find an antenna array in—unknown to me at that time. I simply wrote down, “dipole antennae in the box.” Once the boss of that mechanical shop pointed to a big, brand-new parallel vice and asked me if they could take it. They had only a couple of very shabby vices in the shop. I said I did not enter it yet and looked the other way. Within half an hour, the German mechanic had installed the vice on their bench. The Serbian soldiers did not see anything.

In two weeks, I completed the list of the material, and I was ready to return to Celje the next day. As soon as the staff commander learned that I completed my job, he denied me to sleep in that room. In the late afternoon, we soldiers were sitting on the courtyard of that house, eating our goulash. Those cooks from Serbia made it very hot so that after the dinner, I had the feeling to become a blowtorch. Suddenly, we heard a loud thunder. Since the day was cloudless, this was not a thunderstorm, but something else. Then again, “Wroooooom!” and soon after that, a big ring of smoke was seen rising from some 600 m away. This thunder was much louder, and we had the feeling that the earth was shaking. After a while, we heard “plinck, planck, plonck!” on the roofs. Like on command, the soldiers grabbed their canteens and ran to the wide passage, running through the house from the street to the courtyard. I could not understand their haste and kept eating my hot stuff. However, when the hail of splinters became denser, I realized that those seasoned soldiers were not cowards and joined them. They were sitting on the narrow pedestrian way

on each side of the passage. When I arrived, they were looking on me with admiration, not knowing that I was just ignorant of the danger. I closed the big doors, latched them, and sat on the staircase, inward. The explosions outside continued with increased frequency and magnitude, shaking the doors. Once there was a really violent blow, the doors to the courtyard and to the street opened like they were of cardboard and the thick iron latch had dislodged and bent. The soldiers on both sides collapsed like dominoes, spilling the rest of their goulash. Since nobody was hurt, we just laughed.

Because I could not sleep anymore in that house, I was waiting several hours until the explosions became less severe to start looking for the address given by the commander, where I should sleep my last night in Maribor. When I was walking outside, it was dark already, and the streets were deserted; it was already the curfew, but I was told the password. Occasionally, there were still explosions. Once, a violent blow had moved me a couple of meters like a chess figure. Fortunately, there were no more splinters. When I finally found the address, the old lady who opened to me, almost fell unconscious. She started trembling and told that the Bulgarian soldiers²² were there already and she was very much afraid. She was so much upset that I gave up and went to an empty bus where I spent the night.

Early next morning, I went to the nearby railway station, but I was told that the explosion at the junction, some 800 m away, across the River Drava, had damaged the track, so I would have to walk to the western station, which was almost 3 km away. When I was carrying my heavy case over the River Drava Bridge in the early morning, I found a splinter of some 25 cm length, weighing over one kilogram, stuck in the pavement. I pulled it out from the pavement to show it in Celje. The bridge was almost 2 km distant from the explosion! When the train was on its move toward Celje, we passed the local hospital there. The explosion had blown away almost all tiles from the roof of its buildings, and all window glass was gone. I imagined how the patients, who could not walk for months, were running to the air raid shelter to save their lives!

The major in Celje was pleased with my job. Next day, he had sent Stane, who knew German better, with another task, to Maribor. Three soldiers departed on a motorcycle with a sidecar body, Stane sitting back. Some hours later, we got the report that a fatal accident happened on their journey. Stane and another soldier were reported dead. God with you, Stane! After being drafted to *Arbeitsdienst* and then to *Wehrmacht*, to be sent to the French Front, being captured by British, sent to England and back to Yugoslavia to

²² The Bulgarian soldiers were there, retreating together with the German troops. When passing Maribor, they were looting among the civil population there.

join the partisans, after avoiding all those nasty leaden gadflies and shrapnels on both fronts, you certainly deserved a better fate now after the end of war. Rest in peace!

Since it was time again to check my lungs, I had to go to the hospital for examination. The results were such that the major had sent me to Sixteenth Division in Ljubljana on my asking. Soon after that, I took the train to Ljubljana.

2.3 Return to Ljubljana; End of My Military Service

When our train was approaching the Ljubljana station, I could not recognize once well-known environment. Big, several stories-high, modern customs houses, built just before war were not there anymore. All the warehouses along the tracks were gone as well. A large area, where that train with armored cars was parked, was cleared of anything, and the nearby utility building was also not there anymore. Not even the railway tracks or the wooden sleepers had remained there! Cardboard or plywood mostly covered the windows on the station building. When I arrived home, I got the full explanation of what happened.

On their retreat from Greece, the Germans withdrew their ammunitions and arms to the NW Yugoslavia. Part of this enormous supply was the train on the Ljubljana station, from where Ivan and I had to remove the radio equipment. On the evening of June 8, there were the fireworks to celebrate the Congress of the Antifascist Women's League (AFŽ), which should be the next day. The sporadic fireworks in the first days after the liberation had already faded away. The AFŽ celebration began with big and organized fireworks, starting at 6:00 p.m. People were delighted to see so many rockets of pretty colors. But after a while, the fireworks had suddenly increased for several orders of magnitude and became single colored. At first, the observers thought that someone began shooting bunches of rockets by a gun, but soon after that, the blast of huge explosion reached them. Instead of colorful flares, parts of wagons or even whole wagons were thrown several hundred meters high in the sky. This went on time and again with increased severity.

I got the first more accurate report from my closed relatives. Our home was just about 1 km away from that fateful train. When the explosions started, my five-year-old nephew, Rudko, was on the street before the house. His mother,

my sister Draga, had run down to protect him. She had arrived just in time to parry a shower of tiles, which might hurt Rudko, and a tile had hit her leg, causing a bad wound. Then the whole family had retreated to the makeshift air-raid shelter in the cellar, which was not changed yet after the war. The grandmother remained in her bed, refusing to go down. (She was used to raise only either to go to toilet or when she had a bad argument with my mother, her daughter-in-law.) When the blasts became more severe, my mother was afraid for her. One younger man volunteered to help her down but without success. Any time he went up, the blast threw him back down in the cellar. When at his last attempt the doors fell together with him, he quit. They had to stay in the cellar for several hours until the blasts became weaker. However, the explosions continued into the next day afternoon.

My grandmother had told me that she was very much afraid to be alone, but she prayed for help to the large picture of Santa Maria she had on the wall just next to her bed. Suddenly, a violent blast dislodged the picture which fell down on her. Being covered by the picture of St. Maria, she was sure nothing would happen to her and, indeed, she survived unscathed.

The remotest part of that train composition was the wagons loaded with sea mines. If they too would explode, the devastation of Ljubljana might reach the scale of that one in Halifax Harbour, Nova Scotia, in 1917.²³ Fortunately, some courageous railway workers had succeeded to pull the wagons with sea mines by the locomotive to a safe distance out of the town, toward Zalog. This was later written in the newspaper, but the essential help of some German prisoners, who crawled under the train composition, to disengage the wagons with sea mines from the rest of the composition, was not mentioned. (They were probably sent home to Germany *Summa cum laude*.) Nevertheless, the damage on the railway station had surpassed that of the worst bombing raid. Since all explosions happened about 1.5 m above the ground, there were no characteristic bomb craters.

My friend Jože Gasperič, who had seen this unusual firework from the 6-km-distant town, Polje, told that in the days to follow, he had to walk to the school in Ljubljana, for the train did not ride. A week later, when the first railway track was being restored, he had arrived to Ljubljana by train. On both sides of the track, he saw continuous piles of distorted iron bars, burnt parts of wagons, and ruins of buildings. Then the German prisoners had already cleared the station of the remained, unexploded ammunition, mines,

²³ There, on December 6, 1917, a French cargo ship loaded with the explosive material and a Norwegian steamer collided. This caused an explosion the power of which was assessed to 2.9 kt (kilotons of equivalent amount of TNT). The atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima had 12.5 kt.

and bombs. The ground was littered by wracks of wagons several hundred meters around the station. One kilometer away at the Castle Hill, there was a part of the wagon wheel, and on Ambrožev Trg, a square 1 km away, there laid a part of a wagon. A tank car full of oil was thrown to the roof of Dr Krisper's house, some 400 m away. Since he had dwelt in the uppermost floor, all his property including a big library and a small chemical laboratory was perished in the conflagration. Fortunately, he was then on the courtyard, with both his boys. They were washing his car, wearing swimming trousers. This car and their swimming trousers were all they could manage to save from the disaster!

All window glass, especially of the larger window ones, was shattered within a radius of about 1 km, and many roofs were stripped of tiles. In some cases, the blast took away the whole roof construction. Since this material was very hard to get, the house owners had to resort to all sorts of makeshift repair. The rumors were spread that four people died because of explosion. The only casualty known to me was the boy who, together with his brother, did not share the food with other prisoners, when we were returning from Treviso. Janez, what a harsh fate! Rest in pace!

There were just three very scarce reports in the newspapers. No deaths or other casualties were mentioned, just the material damage, the promise that the culprits would be punished, and the courage of the railway workers. Otherwise, the news of the accident was suppressed on all levels. Besides my own description of the event (including the explosion in Maribor), which I had published in 2001 in *Nova Revija*, nobody else has published anything on this so far. (This was written on February 13, 2011.) Considering such extensive damage, the place, and time when it happened, the number of casualties was probably higher than just four dead. At that time, General Joža Borštnar was the supreme commander of Ljubljana. However, he was never called to responsibility (at least nothing is known of this), and the owners of damaged houses never got a full compensation from the state. In the early July, when I had arrived to Ljubljana station, most of the debris and ruins had already been cleared, and some new railway tracks were being laid.

On that fateful evening, not only the colorful rockets were shot on mass, but also some soldiers were shooting their rifles or guns in the air for pure joy. What if one of those scattered bullets descended through the turret opening of that armored wagon (from where Ivan and I had removed the radio stations) hit the fuse on one cartridge of the stacking shells? This might initiate the "chain reaction." To me, this seemed the most probable cause because at the time when the explosion happened, that train was still there, where I had left it after completing my job two weeks before the "celebration." Unfortunately, no eyewitness remained alive to tell what actually had triggered the explosion. Only one fact is certain: no women's association around the globe was ever

celebrated by such magnificent fireworks! For the lack of any elaborate public report, this event was never registered in Guinness Book of World Records.

The next day after my arrival, instead of going to the Command of Sixteenth Division, I went to the address given to me by Marjan. This was the radio works of OZNA, the infamous secret police. The commander, Niko Šilih, received me. I mentioned that Marjan had invited me. Going to him, I saw there some other familiar faces of my friends, radio amateurs. The procedure went on swiftly. Šilih retained my documents and told me that they would inform the Command of Sixteenth Division, so I should not worry. In the next twenty minutes, I got my new working gown, tools, place to work, and the parts of a simple two-tube shortwave transmitter, which I had to complete. The circuit schematic was ready too. After almost two weeks of repairing the equipment, I got the creative work again. We had assembled transmitters and receivers and also repaired the radio stations. In the shop, I saw one 5 kW jamming transmitter, which was originally introduced by the Italians. This was my first and only opportunity to see that beast from so close. Since the jamming of the western (only) shortwave broadcasting was being reintroduced soon after the liberation, this transmitter was there to be cannibalized. Its parts were needed for maintaining the other jamming transmitters still in operation.

The work was not dull indeed, and in the first weeks, the food was excellent. Our cooks were the German prisoners. A German engineer, a specialist for teleprinters, worked in the next shop, and we were talking occasionally. There were also several common soldiers, German prisoners. Among them were Otto and Hans, the second was a young boy. Both of them were pretending they are radio technicians, but they were not. However, they were very helpful and learning fast. The working time was ten hours a day, six days a week, and we were driven like hell!

Once, General Ivan Maček-Matija, the head of OZNA in Slovenia, was announced to come for inspection. The masters were all trembling, for he was considered the Slovenian Beria. When he had entered our workshop, he was talking with us technicians, going from place to place and asking what we were doing. I explained I was assembling a radio transmitter. Due to shortage of parts, I just had to put a couple of parts in and the device would be completed. Not saying anything, he went to see the next fellow. Soon after he had left, the ragged boss came to me.

“Peter, why did you tell Maček that some parts are missing? He had raised hell here!”

“It is normal that parts are not readily available so close after the war. I did not want to blame anyone for this.”

“Maček does not accept this as normal!”

The boss ordered me to make a list of the missing parts at once. In the morning, next day, somebody brought all the missing parts to me, and I had to sign a receipt for the general. Occasionally, they had arrested someone. For example, my friend Darine, a very honest boy, was charged that he had stolen some parts. He had to spend three months in jail, and another friend Lado, two months. Eventually, both were released because it was found that the charges against them were groundless. Almost the same could happen to me, but I was fortunate that the missing part (a coil of an SCR station, wound with silver wire) was found after two hours of hectic search.

Even as the shortwave broadcasting from London was being jammed again, on August 7, 1945, the news spread that the Americans had dropped the atomic bomb to Hiroshima. A single bomb had destroyed the town (as big as Ljubljana is today), and some hundred thousand people were killed. The news had shocked our leadership. So far, they believed that Soviet Union has the world's strongest army. And Yugoslavia was their ally. The German engineer was disgusted. He could not understand why we believed that the dropping of such horrible bomb was necessary to end the war. Our press did not mention this event until August 9, reporting first and much more extensively that the Soviets had declared war with the Japanese on August 8 and then the atomic bomb on Hiroshima.

At that time, my late friend Dr. Zdenka Adamič was the head of the Yugoslav Press Agency TANJUG, the Ljubljana branch, because she knew so many foreign languages. Some years before her death, she told me that she had to send all reports from abroad first to General Maček and then he decided what should be published and when. She had sent him the report of the first atomic bomb, received in the evening of August 6. Maček had delayed the release until August 9 when already the second atomic bomb had destroyed Nagasaki. On that day, we were called to a meeting in the biggest hall of the shop. The political commissar was at great pain to diminish the strategic value of the new weapon. He told us that the Soviets work on the bomb design as well and they too would have it soon. Finally, he emphasized that the Americans had to produce heavy water, "an important ingredient of the atomic bomb" by electrolysis, droplet by droplet, whilst the Soviets had discovered a full lake of heavy water in the NW part of USSR! Fortunate Russians!²⁴ Similar wishful thinking was often spread among us, ignorant people. Even as then I had no

²⁴ Heavy water is not used in an atomic bomb. It may be used (instead of very pure graphite, which is cheaper) as an efficient moderator of neutrons in the nuclear reactor, where plutonium could be produced—of every 4000 uranium atoms of (beta transmuted) uranium 238, one single atom of plutonium 239. A ball of about 5 kg of plutonium was used as the fission core in the bomb, which has

knowledge of atomic bombs and reactors, I did not believe the nonsense of that lake of heavy water, but it was safer to keep my mouth shut.

With the Soviet Union entering the war against Japan, the news of the Pacific theater began appearing in the press, which was not done before. Even the Italians and Germans did not have such a watertight censorship concerning the war on the Far East. We had to get used to an entirely new concept of the “freedom of press.”

We had a great shortage of soldering irons. Instead of reliable and coveted German “ZEWA” types, we had used mostly those produced by a local tradesman, Pirnat. They were a poor copy of “ZEWA” and had two technological faults. Pirnat could improve them only if he would thoroughly change the design. However, this would take too much time and effort. So he kept repairing his products. Due to shortage of resistive wire, he had soon run into a dead-end street. Once I was ordered to see Pirnat and get the repaired soldering irons, even at gunpoint if necessary. The philosophy of General Maček was obviously projected down the echelons. I had found Pirnat on the courtyard of Townhouse and tried to fulfill the order to the best of my knowledge. Since I had never before pointed my gun to a person, I did not repeat it and left it locked, and I did not put my finger to the trigger to prevent any accident. In addition, I was smiling to show that I was not serious. Some of Pirnat’s colleagues, who were present, were smiling too when they saw him retreating in fear. However, Pirnat did not notice all these particulars; he just saw the gun pointing at him. Since at that time the human life was not worth much, especially if a member of OZNA was threatening, Pirnat was trembling. I got the soldering irons. However, my bad conscience was not calmed until some twenty years later when I accidentally met Pirnat again and beg him pardon. He was not angry, but I am still very much ashamed of what I did.

Sometimes in the middle of August, I was called to the port to receive a visitor. It was Stane! But his face was changed considerably; across the forehead, he had a deep and long scar, and his nose was very much different. Since he was reported to be dead, his appearance was like he had risen out of the grave:

“What did they do with your nose?”

“Well, the surgeons did not have any photo to compare how I was looking before the accident. So they did their job by heart.”

Stane asked if he could get a job in the workshop. So I introduced him to Šilih, and the procedure was as swift as it was in my case. He had joined our group.

destroyed Nagasaki. Of course, these details were not known at that time; they were first published toward the end of the former century.

After the visit of General Maček, our mess was transferred to a restaurant at the end of the street. The German cooks were gone; the food we got there was very bad and insufficient. Hard work and bad food soon affected my health so much that I had to visit the doctor again. His ordination was in the Slavija Palace, the headquarters of OZNA in the center of Ljubljana. Dr. Milavec was very friendly, and he did a thorough check. It appeared to me like he was afraid of something. In the cellar of that building, there were the cells where the prisoners were being interrogated, and who knows what all he knew? After my tests were completed, he signed a recommendation that I work only eight instead of ten hours a day. Unfortunately, this too did not help; I became more and more tired, and my weight kept decreasing. After two more weeks, I had to quit any work to be sent to the Sanatorium Golnik in north Slovenia. As I have mentioned already, my father got employment there during the war. Since there were too many grave cases of TB so soon after the war, in general, only the patients who had the lungs like Swiss cheese were being admitted. However, the presence of my father as the hospital master painter helped that they had accepted me for the treatment.

2.4 Sanatorium Golnik; Return to Civilian Life

In the sanatorium, I first got a bed in a room for three patients. After a thorough check of my status by X-rays, blood test, and so on, the primary Dr. Tomaž Furlan had sent me up to the so-called “pigeon house.” This was a six-storey-high building, and I got the room on its terrace with five other patients. On the flat roof was an observation post built by the Germans during the war. From there, I had a beautiful view of the mountains. The closest one, immediately behind the sanatorium is Kriška gora (1591 m), then toward the east Tolsti vrh (1715 m) and farther, the magnificent Storžič (2132 m) dominating the scene. Toward the south, the view was open all the way down to a double mountain Šmarna Gora (669 m) and Grmada (676 m). Behind these two mountains was Ljubljana. In the west, some 65 km away, I saw Julian Alps with the highest peak Triglav (2864 m). So far, I have never been on any of those mountains except on Šmarna Gora and Grmada. As weak as I was, I would not be able to ascend any of them, but they kept attracting me with a magic power. All of them became my favored mountaineering goals some fifteen years later.

The food in sanatorium was excellent, much better than I ever had at home. Due to lack of any specific medication for TB, the food together with fresh air and rest were the most efficient means which helped cure the disease. For more serious cases, the pneumothorax was applied, and if this did not help, the surgery. Besides, I saw many desperate cases, where nothing of this helped. However, the atmosphere in our ward was cheerful because all of us were in a relatively good status when compared with the other patients lower down in the buildings.

In our free time, when we were not ordered to rest, I went for short walks in the surrounding. So I was gradually introduced to civilian life. The food for

civilians was still rationalized, but in the surroundings were farmers, and the shortage was not as bad as in Ljubljana. What was much apparent to me was some sort of forced ideological indoctrination: Stalin and Tito were gods, and the communism was the only recognized state religion; for the slightest criticism or for jokes against the system or for those pointed against Stalin, people could disappear overnight. The soldiers kept wearing English or American uniforms, and they had the arms and equipment from there; the UNRRA parcels were sold to the population, but to express any praise for the western powers could prove fatal. The numerous party members (about six percent of the population) were obliged to report any criticism. One of my acquaintances told me that his friend, a party member, heard on the party meeting the following: another member reported he had heard that my acquaintance was a vegetarian. But he also added that this was probably not dangerous for the state. Since most of the members of the party, except some known public figures, never disclosed their membership, this organization appeared to me like some sort of Ku Klux Klan. Their favored way to learn the public opinion was to involve the target person into a "friendly" discussion, giving the impression that they too were not entirely satisfied with the system. The information they gained was duly reported further up and gathered at some appropriated place. When the evidence piled up, there was an action: either a reprimand or warning from the higher authorities, or jail, or even simply the disappearance, usually overnight.

After one month in sanatorium, my status improved so much that I was almost "kicked out" because there was a great shortage of beds for more serious cases. I went back home to Ljubljana to become suddenly exposed to a shortage of food and an even increased ideological indoctrination. In OZNA radio shops, I was told that I was not obliged to return. Excellent! So I went to continue my study in "Realka." I kept wearing the soldier's uniform, since this was the best dress I had. This was not unusual; we just had to remove the red star from the cap, which meant we were civilians. We had some special classes, where the study program of one whole year was very much compressed. At the end, I had to pass an examination of some essential subjects: mathematics, physics, Slovenian language, and so on; then I were ready to start at the university. I still remember how my professor Pacheiner, who had taught me German in Realka, asked me the questions about the French writer Emile Zola. I could answer very well because just before the war, I saw a French movie of the life of this famous novelist.

In the meantime, our family gradually disbanded. My mother joined my father in Golnik, my sister Draga went to Škofja Loka (some 20 km from Ljubljana), and later my sister Mimica joined my parents too. Sister Ančka was already with her husband, Ivo, and both moved to Golnik as well. I remained alone with my brother Jože, who was absent most of the time because, as a

civil engineer, he helped reconstructing many destroyed bridges all around Slovenia. So I was left alone with almost no means to support myself, except with the money I gained by repairing or building radio receivers. Since it was difficult to get *all* radio parts to complete a receiver, my incomes were meager and so was my living standard. I remember eating lunches in a mess, where we were served mostly beef lungs, liver, udder, tripe, and such disgusting stuff. I wondered who was eating the meat.

Occasionally, I visited my parents in Golnik, where our family got food from the sanatorium—the same that the patients were eating. Since I realized that my knowledge in mathematics had too many gaps, I spent my summer vacations in 1946 at my parents, studying mathematics thoroughly. Being well nourished, I ascended Kriška Gora for the first time. When I came to the ridge of that mountain, I became spellbound by the mountains for the rest of my life.

The authorities kept tightening the screw concerning the ideological indoctrination. In addition, people had to do “voluntary” work in rebuilding the country. But this work became all too often just a self-sufficient activity. Primitive party apparatchiks began driving people to work, even when there was no need, just to rob them of free time and to keep them under control. Let me quote just one crazy case. About one hour uphill walk from Golnik, there is a village, Gozd, which was burnt down by the Germans. The bricks for the reconstruction arrived to the nearest railway station, Križe, some 5 km away from Gozd, down in the valley. The simplest way to transport the bricks would be by carts with horses over the forest road from Križe up to Gozd. The farmers from Gozd were able and willing to do the transportation. Instead the school pupils from all the surroundings, down to Kranj, were mobilized. First, they had to hastily unload the bricks from the wagons, which caused many bricks to break. Then the bricks were reloaded to trucks, and again many bricks were broken. The trucks drove to Golnik, and since the work had to be done fast, many bricks were broken again at unloading. Then the poor pupils were ordered to carry four bricks each, over a steep trail to Gozd, 379 m higher up. Boys and girls were poorly nourished, and therefore, most of them could not carry such an awkward load under their armpits going up one hour. After a while, many of them had abandoned their nasty load and came back—after hiding themselves for hours in the forest. Later, the villagers of Gozd had a hard time to retrieve all the abandoned bricks. The described circuitous way was more than twice as long as the direct road from Križe to Gozd.

Since I had criticized this nonsense, I was called to OZNA in Kranj. My girlfriend, Cveta, who was afraid what might happen to me, accompanied me walking 5 km from Golnik to Križe and then farther down to Kranj by the railway. At OZNA, they had “convinced” me that the present situation was

all right. I was also sharply reprimanded for questioning why the picture of Stalin was hanging in any classroom or in any office, next to the picture of Marshall Tito. Since the western powers contributed equally to the victory over Germany and Italy, I had wondered why the pictures of Truman, Churchill, and de Gaulle were not displayed as well.

Occasionally, the new authorities were using some people who had compromised themselves during the occupation for the nastiest jobs. Kanal ob Soči was under the Italian occupation from 1918 (and from 1943 by Germans) until the end of the WWII. There was a woman who was so fond of Mussolini and fascism that she was considered a national renegade. Once, in the early thirties, she had visited her relatives in Padua. When she learned that Mussolini would have a speech at *Piazza nera* in Rome, where a parade of fascists should take place as well, she went to Rome, leaving her nursing baby at the relatives. During several days of her absence, she had stopped nursing, which had such consequences that one of her breast had to be cut off by surgery. After the war, she became the main impeller for peasants in Kanal to do “voluntary” work. Once, when she was at a meeting, again forcing people to do such work, one old peasant woman, who knew about that surgery, had enough. “Well, you have sacrificed one tit for Mussolini; will you give the other one for Tito?”

On numerous meetings, people were checked of their conduct during the occupation. There were cases when some people did not get the food cards, or they did not get the permission to vote. The elections were a farce. Since the opposition was allowed only in the constitution, but not in practice, we had no oppositional candidates. (Those who trusted the constitution and tried to form an opposition were arrested.) People were voting by throwing a rubber ball into a wooden “white box.” For those who did not like the new order, a similar box painted black was provided. Any voter was instructed to put his closed fist with the ball at first in the “white box” and then again in the “black box” and finally to show his/her open hand. In the place where my brother and I had voted, a man was sitting behind the “black box,” looking anyone sharply in the eyes like a lynx. (I wondered how exhausted he had to be in the evening when the elections were over.) We threw the ball into the first box, opened the palm, and went out, ignoring the black box. Formally, our voting should not be valid, but nobody paid any attention to such details. When we were out, we heard the public address system, transmitting the radio message: “The voters are leaving the election places with smiling faces!” Indeed we burst into laughter when we heard that. Decades later, I read that in the northeast Slovenia (Prekmurje), where the Russian troops arrived first, the majority of people had dropped their rubber balls into the “black box.” There General Maček ordered the election committees to reshuffle the balls to fill the “white boxes.” Some people who voted in the “black box” told that a very loud “dump” was heard when the ball

dropped in. Needless to say, the lynx-eyed man sitting behind duly noted this. Already during the elections, there was an extensive propaganda, denouncing those who had dropped their ball into “black box.”

In 1947, my brother married and moved to Pula (now in Croatia), an ancient town with a big Roman arena, at the Adriatic coast. So I was dwelling alone in our apartment of two rooms and kitchen. That neighbor, who was greeting the Italian funerals during the occupation, became a functionary, and he needed my apartment for his granddaughter. At the meetings where I had to participate, he was much against me—until I mentioned those greetings of the Italian funerals. But he had continued his activity “behind the stage.”

2.5 Studies at the University

On June 14, 1991, I was standing in front of the examination committee consisting of five professors to defend my PhD Thesis. The hall was filled with my relatives, friends, and many colleagues. The Chairman and Dean, Prof. Baldomir Zajc, PhD, at first quoted my general data, “Peter Starič inscribed on the University of Ljubljana, faculty of electrical engineering on March 5, 1946, and . . .” He made an unexpected pause as if something had stuck in his throat. “He had graduated on June 23, 1961.” Obviously, the dean was surprised at such an unusual gap between both dates. In the years after the war, the normal study lasted five years (nine semesters for the lectures and one for the diploma work). Due to shortage of books, laboratory equipment, food, lodging, and so on, only about 20 percent of the students at the faculty of electrical engineering completed their obligations in five years. But ten additional years was indeed an unusual excess. For me, these years were filled with study, combined with work as a student assistant, almost two years of accumulated time, spent in different recovery homes, plus six more months in the hospital for TB, writing technical articles, reports and reviews, marriage, two children, and four years of regular employment. Part of the delay was also due to subjective reasons. For some subjects that I had considered to be of special importance, for example, mathematics, physics, electrical engineering, electronic tubes, electromagnetic oscillations, and the like, I had purposely spent more time doing many exercises, and I was using several (mostly German, English, or Czech) books to deepen my knowledge. Last but not least, the part of the delay was also because I wanted to be too thorough there, where it was not necessary. Frankly, this was not valid for *all* subjects, for—like most other students—I also hated some of them.

An important advantage introduced by the new authorities was that the study at the university was free. Even as it was difficult for the students from the country to get the lodging in Ljubljana, in the beginning, almost all lecturing halls were overcrowded. (One of my late colleagues, who was very successful

and who, years later, became the dean of the faculty for electrical engineering, had dwelled in such a small room that only the bed and the nightstand could fit in. He had done all the drawings in kneeling position with the drawing board placed on the bed.) I remember when our Professor Josip Plemelj, who taught us mathematics, counted us on the first day, we were 266. Some of us were sitting on the staircases, and the air high at the back had soon become so thick that we had to open the windows even in the winter. In the weeks to follow, the crowd had decreased, depending on the quality and importance of the lectures.

Professor Plemelj was world known for his pioneer work in differential and integral equations, theory of potential (harmonic functions), and theory of analytical functions. (In one American textbook, I found the equations quoted as “Plemelj’s integrals.”) He was the first rector of the Ljubljana University, which was established after WWI in 1919. His lectures lasted four semesters, and after each year, we had the examination. When Plemelj taught us in 1947, he was already seventy-three years old. Neither before nor after had I heard such excellent lectures as were his. However, the problems were the suitable books, which were nonexistent in Slovenian language. He suggested us the German mathematics textbooks written by Kiepert, besides the book by Dölp & Netto, with thousand solved problems in calculus. Fortunately, my brother Jože had both. He had lent them to me, and he kept encouraging me in many other ways. This was very important to me because all the other members of my family were more or less indifferent concerning my study.

Another Professor, who had very interesting lectures in physics, was Anton Peterlin. He was also an excellent experimenter. His lectures had aroused my interest, and I have gained much in exactness and mathematical thoroughness. I was so very much impressed by the lectures of Plemelj and Peterlin that I had, spent excessive time in studying mathematics and physics.

While the lectures of both professors were on an almost equally high level, their examinations were entirely different. It seemed to me that Plemelj had indeed loved the students, and we had kept him in high esteem. Besides his excellent lectures, he did everything he could to help the student at the examination. For example, even if someone had all the results in the written examination incorrect, he nevertheless accepted the student to the oral examination—providing the concept of his calculations was right. To the oral examinations, we were called about six at a time, and there was indeed no writing. However, the professor did not ask us any derivations, but just some questions, which any serious student was able to answer. At first, he asked the best in the group so that the others could get an idea what he was expecting to be told. Even though he had spent much time with the last student, he/she usually did not get a passing grade. For such unsuccessful students, it was very difficult to

arrange for the second try. Plemelj kept avoiding them even on the street. It seemed to me that he felt to be somehow offended: "I have done everything to help you, but you did not care to study hard enough to give enough in return!"

Professor Peterlin had placed his very dense filter at any of his examinations. Before the war, he was known that practically no one had passed the first time. There were cases of the students who attempted to do the examination ten or even more times. The rumors were that the record was twenty-one times when ultimately the student passed and twenty-three times, when the student has given up for good. I was lucky that the attitude of Peterlin had improved after the war. Then we were eighty at the written examination, and only seven of us had passed the oral examination.

When I inscribed in the summer semester 1946, the professor of mathematics for that year was such that I could hardly write down everything, which was written on the table. No possibility to understand anything! This was the main reason that I interrupted my study at the end of the semester to refresh my knowledge of mathematics during the summer vacations. In the autumn, I inscribed again in the first semester, and then—fortunately—my professor was Plemelj! (Since the lectures of mathematics lasted four semesters for the whole curriculum, both professors were exchanged every second year.)

The third professor who made a great impression on me was Venč Kozelj. He had the lectures on basic electrical engineering (third and fourth semester) and electromagnetics (fifth and sixth semester). He was an excellent lecturer and free-hand draftsman. I was always sorry when the table with his drawings had to be erased. His presentation of the subject was perfect. One of his assistants had written the book from his lectures of basic electrical engineering, whilst Kozelj was just overhauling the text. I still keep this book, which—unfortunately—was published in poor technique and with free-hand drawings (they could be Kozelj's as well). In addition, the paper of the book is of low quality. This was at the time when some collected works of our politicians Kardelj, Tito, and Marx, Engels, or Lenin were published in books of excellent quality. If Kozelj's book would be in English, it would certainly be a worldwide bestseller in electrical engineering.

Professor Kozelj was also known for his humor and numerous jokes; many of them were "spicy." He certainly knew several thousand of them. When in 1952 I started writing for *Elektrotehniški vestnik* (electro-technical review), I met him more often, and then I could tell him some of the jokes I knew. It was very difficult to tell him something, which he did not already know, but I succeeded because my sources were different. The main editor of *Elektrotehniški vestnik* was Professor Roman Poniž, a kind person who helped me much in my career, mostly without my knowledge. He was lecturing the encyclopedia of power electrical engineering, a subject of minor importance. Professor

Koželj was also very fair at the examinations. He often mentioned that he is not interested in what the student did not know but in what the student had retained of his lectures.

By writing for the review, I had learned what was going on behind the stage. Poniž told me much how the professors were the primary targets for ideological indoctrination. At first, Prof. Mirko Košir started lecturing the basic Marxism and Leninism for them. But soon, he was arrested and sentenced in a political process. Years later, I had read that he was sent to the concentration camp Goli Otok (Nude Island) on the Adriatic. There the new arrivals had to pass the double row of the prisoners, which were ordered to beat them with sticks, poles, iron bars, chains, and so on. Košir was beaten so severely that he had lost his vision. He had “disappeared” within a couple of days. Even today, it is not known where he was buried, and the only thing reminding me of him is his signature in my index booklet.

The next professor of this infamous subject was Cene Logar. After some lectures, he too was arrested, sentenced, and sent to Goli Otok, but I do not know of his further fate. The third professor was Janko Branc, who had also taught mathematics for the students of chemistry. When Poniž saw him arriving, he warned him, “Let me say you just one thing. So far, anyone who had such lectures here was arrested. Now, it is up to you!” After some lectures, Branc quit. Maybe this had saved his life!

The ministry of education had sent one of red-hot “comrades” to have a serious talk with all professors of the faculty for electrical engineering. The main subject was why only some 20 percent of the students graduate within the prescribed five years. The dean, Professor Koželj told her that some of the students found that they did not choose the right profession and they soon dropped off. Before he could explain any further, she cut him short, “You had to direct them!”

Koželj explained that some students did not have the means or possibility to keep their stay in Ljubljana and after a while they quit.

“We will help them!”

Koželj claimed that the students did not have books, the laboratory equipment was scarce, and the students’ food was poor, and so on.

“We will correct all this within months! Any more excuses?”

The professors were silent.

“Well, from now on, we expect a 100 percent yield!”

This was too much for Koželj.

“Will you allow us at least that someone might be overrun by a tramcar?”

The “comrades” blushed and remained speechless. This was the end of her discussion.

Our curriculum was too much oriented toward the power electrical engineering. The branch I had inscribed was not (yet) called electronics but

“weak current.” We had the lectures of technical drafting, mechanics, machine elements, as well as strength of material to the extent that was necessary for machine engineers. For example, at the examination of strength of material, I had got the same problems and questions as the students of machine and civil engineering. On the other hand, I did not hear anything of differential, DC, operational amplifiers and way too little of feedback amplifiers. Since transistors were invented in 1948, they were introduced in the program almost some ten years later. Instead, Professor Dušan Lasič gave us the lectures of electronic tubes. Another subject he was also lecturing was transmitters. Since we had no suitable Slovenian textbook of electronics tubes, he had written one—by hand on a transparent paper. As an excellent draftsman, he had also drawn all the pictures in ink. The students made the blueprints of his work for which he had refused any author’s fee. During the war, Lasič was the leader of the secret partisan radio works. In the seventies, we became close friends, and though he was an excellent mountaineer and climber, surpassing me for several orders of magnitude, we made several ascents together.

The professor for technical drafting and machine elements was Romeo Strojnik. He had changed his family name from Fakin, which means *vagabond* in Slovenian, to Strojnik, which means *machinist*. (His brother, an esteemed professor on the faculty for civil engineering, had retained the original name.) We had to do our drawings in ink on a transparent paper. This had caused us great difficulties. Firstly, the good drafting tools were difficult to get. Secondly, the ink, which was available, was of very poor quality and so was the paper. Strojnik’s assistant, Čižman, was meticulous and refused any drawing, which was not of very high standards. Even as I was cursing this subject, I was later able to draw all pictures for my articles, as well as for my PhD thesis.

Some of coveted, brand-new German drafting tools (Reichert) were distributed free of charge among the students. In our class, a couple of them were given only to the “reliable ones” (read as “party members,” so Gustl got one set), neglecting that they might be either rich or those who already had their drafting tools. Fortunately, my brother gave me his tools, which—after many years when he had used them—were still useful.

The students were subject to ideological indoctrination no less than the professors. Those unfortunate Professors Košir and Logar taught us the basic Marxism and Leninism as well. Since I had to work to earn for my life, I have never been on any of their lectures, which was duly noted by the students-communists. Here the long duration of my study proved to be an advantage. I had procrastinated doing this examination for so long time that eventually this subject had been dropped from the curriculum, for which I was indeed not sorry.

One subject, which was dragged through six semesters, was the pre-military education. We were assigned to the maintenance of airplanes. In the first year,

we had the general education only. The only practical exercises were to crawl on the ground with the attached riffle and shooting with live ammunition (one hour each). In the second and third year, we heard much of airplane instruments and their maintenance, and once we had visited the military airport near Ljubljana, where we could inspect a Russian “Yak” fighter airplane thoroughly. We were surprised to see her shabby radio station—wooden knobs, imprecise craftsmanship, electronic tubes with wooden sockets, and so on. We had Serbian and Croatian instructors, and the lectures were in Serbian language. However, in the last semester, a Slovenian colonel taught us, and he too had spoken Serbian (with his marked Slovenian accent) to us Slovenes.

We also had to learn a foreign language, which was taught for two semesters. I was eager to learn English, but we were instructed that we should leave that row in the index (booklet of lectures) blank. Later, the order came that we had to inscribe the Russian language. Our professor was Preobražensky, an emigrant from Russian revolution. Since I hated all, which was Russian, I had boycotted his lectures (for which I am very sorry today). Nevertheless, his lectures were well visited because he was a good teacher. He was probably aware that we *had to* inscribe Russian, and therefore, he was not nasty at the examinations; *any* student had passed. Since Slovenian is related to Russian and we had willy-nilly heard many lectures of Russian on radio, both these facts helped us to pass.

After the resolution of Cominform, when Stalin had broken his relations with Tito, the number of listeners of Russian language class dropped drastically. Finally, only a bunch of students kept visiting them, their numbers still decreasing. Only those who really had the interest in Russian remained; among them one girl, who had told me an interesting story: Once she came too late, and through the door, she heard Preobražensky speaking already. Since she supposed that very few students were in the class, at first, she was reluctant to enter. But after a while, she nevertheless decided to go in. When she opened the door, she saw Preobražensky, with his “obligatory” chrysanthemum attached to his lapel, speaking to an empty class! Soon after this event, he had lost his job.

Before the liberation and during the war, we kept addressing the professors as “gospod professor.” This is an equivalent to *Herr Professor* in Germany, *monsieur le professeur* in France, *signor professore* in Italy, and so on, as it was the custom in Continental Europe. My elder friend and campmate, Niko, had taught the mathematics in the classical high school in Ljubljana. He told me that in the beginning of the school year 1946-47, the school-keeper had brought a circular with an order that from then on the professors had to be addressed as *tovariš profesor* (comrade professor). The addressing as *gospod* (sir or mister) was forbidden as it was already forbidden in all public life. After the keeper had left, the professor explained his position, “I do not mind if you call

me either sir or comrade. But frankly speaking, I could not be a good comrade to you. If you would not know enough, I will give you a non-passing grade!”

Students at the university had to write the “characteristics” of their colleagues, describing their political point of view and their study. I was ordered to write the characteristic of a female student, who was in the party. Fortunately, she was not evil, and she was also a good student, so I had prized her high in the sky. In return, I got my characteristic, which was also not bad. The problem, however, was the unknown party members among us students, who had reported any “deviation” from the official line. My colleague Igor was a good and diligent student. However, the party members had considered him an unreliable suspect. He was arrested and sent without any trial to forced labor to Strnišče, near Maribor. The conditions there were so bad that after eight months, he had returned home very emaciated and with lung tuberculosis. In one book I read of that camp, one prisoner had a high fever, and the prisoners asked the commander what to do with him. He ordered to “cool him down” by immersing him into cold water, which caused the death of that unfortunate fellow.

Besides forced labor, there was also the so-called “voluntary labor.” During the summer vacations, the students had to participate in the construction work in the country. This was not only in Slovenia but also in Bosnia, where in one year, the railway Brčko-Banovići was built and in another year the railway Šamac-Sarajevo. Some students were traveling there in the wagons for transporting animals. The sanitary conditions at work were so bad that many of them had contracted dysentery and returned home in a desperate condition. Those “voluntary slave workers” were subject to ideological indoctrination by their “polit-commissaries.” The speed of work was much more important than its quality. Prof. Leon Kavčnik, who had taught us the mechanical technology I (high furnaces, and so on), had reported that the trails were laid on dikes too hastily. Since the dikes needed some time to settle, the work was done in vain. The trails had to be removed and laid again after the dikes were reinforced. However, the speed of work and the propaganda how many meters of railway were laid each day was of primary importance. Kavčnik was arrested for some other reasons, but one of the charges was also his “critics of the voluntary work.”

One hothead “inventor” got the idea that the trains returning empty wagons could be very long yet pulled by a single locomotive. So long trains were composed that a second locomotive was needed to push them at the start. Professor Feliks Lobe, who taught us the mechanical technology II (machines and tools), went to protest at the direction of railway that by doing so, they would ruin all locomotives. He was told that he is a saboteur, who wants to hinder the speedy development of our new society. Such people should be arrested! The first problem arose when that long train pulled by a single locomotive had to stop at the red signal. Since the attempts to move it

again failed, the pushing locomotive had to be sent to help. By continuing this nonsense, many locomotives indeed were damaged to such extent that they had to be scraped. Soon they had stopped running such long trains. Later, diesel or electrical locomotives were used instead.

In Ljubljana, we had several Serbian students, and though they were in Slovenia many years, some of them never learned Slovenian. Like the former Italian and German occupiers, they were expecting us to talk Serbian with them. They had also spoken Serbian with the professors when they were on the examination. Once an overbearing Serbian student, who had difficulties understanding the lecture, had interrupted Prof. Anton Kuhelj, who taught us statics, asking him why the lectures were not in Serbian, so he too would be able to understand them. To our surprise, Kuhelj promptly continued the lecture speaking Serbian for some five minutes. Then red-faced, he explained, "So I have spoken Serbian to prove that I have spent the effort to learn your language. Since you decided to study at a Slovenian university, where the lectures are in Slovenian, you *must* learn our language to understand them!"

Professor Plemelj was especially sensitive to such Serbian chauvinists. If a Serb knew well, he treated him like any other student. However, if it was apparent that he speculated, Plemelj was very angry. "Ah so! Those there down did not like you, so you came here to display your ignorance!"

Since any public display of dissatisfaction had hard consequences, the students begun expressing their protests in secret. (The word spelled as *sekret* means restroom in our language.) For example, in the toilet room of the technical faculty, someone had drawn a man and a woman engaged in sexual intercourse. This picture was there almost a full year—until someone wrote SSSR (USSR) on the man and FLRJ (the acronym for Federative Public Republic of Yugoslavia) on the woman. Then within a few days, the whole room was repainted. The same happened with the inscription "Freedom exists only in toilet," which was written in the restroom of the university library.

Towards the middle fifties, the worst pressure had relaxed, and many prisoners were released. Due to the blockade of eastern-block countries, Yugoslavia needed western aid to which apparently some strings were being attached. In addition, food and studying conditions improved, and foreign books became available. Before the war, the professional literature was mostly in German. After the war, the first foreign books available were from Czechoslovakia. They are excellent, and I still keep some of them. Since the Czech language is related to Slovenian, it was easy to learn it; the formulae and the circuit diagrams help bridging the linguistic gaps. However, the most progress in electronics was done in USA, and I had scratched together some money to buy the most essential books, for example, *Electronics Designer's Handbook* by Landey, Davis, and Albrecht; *Electronic Tubes* by Carl Spangenberg; *Vacuum*

Tube Amplifiers by Valley and Wallman; and so on. Many Serbian and Croatian books were published. Even as I hated reading the Cyrillic script, I had bought two big softbound volumes of mathematics, written by the Serbian Professor Kašanin. One of these books was printed on seven different sorts of paper. (I met Professor Kašanin later in Sanatorium Golnik, and we became friends.)

Toward the sixties and later, studies became more similar to that in USA. The curriculum of electronics was modernized, transistors were added to the program, and the length of study had been reduced to four years. In addition, the two-year study was introduced to produce “engineers of the first degree,” an equivalent to German *Betriebsingenieur*. This was abandoned after some years. Those who had studied four years acquired the title “Diploma Engineer.” Further two years of study were needed to get the master’s degree, which was the necessary condition for the postgraduate PhD study.

2.6 Terror Sets On

Already in the first days after the liberation, the widespread terror was introduced. At first, it was not apparent, except that some people had disappeared overnight. Since I was soon drafted for almost four months, I did not see much, except that horrible event in Celje, where Domobranci and their families were returned. Those who saw or knew something more were afraid to tell of their experiences to anyone, not even to their closest relatives. The secret police OZNA had the spies everywhere. Therefore, many events, which I will describe here, became largely known only in the late eighties and most of them first after the communist system was abandoned in 1991. My main sources are the Slovenian books published mostly after 1991 and the narratives of my friends or of those rare ones, which had the fortune to return alive from the communist concentration camps. Under the threat to be executed, they were afraid to tell their experiences until the former system was abolished. Surprisingly many of my friends and colleagues have told me their hair-raising stories recently, when I started collecting information for this writing. The daily reports of mock-up trials, confiscation, and so on were published in the daily newspapers, to which now I could get access in the National and University Library in Ljubljana.

The terror was either public or secret. The public terror consisted of many political trials, confiscation of property, destruction of wealthy people and factory owners, expropriation of big merchants and farmers, and finally small merchants and shop owners. Way more horrible and spread was the secret terror. First, the returned Domobranci and their families were murdered, then political opponents (either murdered or jailed), then known dissidents, and finally many of those who just had said something which the authorities did not like. When looking back, I wonder how it is possible that I am still alive. My brother Rudi, who had founded a police (renamed to Militia, after the war) brass band orchestra after the war, and my brother-in-law, Ivo, with whom I

was in the Italian concentration camp, might have prevented my arrest. Both were communists, and both had kept very important positions. (Ivo, with his middle school education as a salesman, was the aide of the minister of health). Maybe the fact that I had built that radio receiver for Aleš Baebler and General Ivan Maček during the war had helped somehow as well? But most likely I was too small a fish, and they did not care.

In *The Black Book of Communism* (ISBN 067407087), the authors, Stéphane Courtois and all, have written a lot of the crimes of the communists, resulting in approximately hundred million of deaths. However, in this thick book, practically nothing is said of the crimes, which the communists had committed in Yugoslavia and Slovenia in particular. Several Slovenian books quote about twenty thousand Slovenes of both sexes and all ages murdered here *after* the war. Adding the number of the members of the other Yugoslav nationalities, who were killed here, increases this figure to at least one hundred thousand to nearly two hundred thousand. The exact number of all victims will never be known because much killing was done sporadically, and in Slovenia, almost all compromising archives were being destroyed after 1991. Their duplicates still exist in Belgrade, representing a valuable means for blackmailing the Slovenian communists, who are in our government. So far, about six hundred mass graves (as known in 2011) were discovered in different locations all over Slovenia. This includes the Carst caves and abysses (called *foibe*) to where the executed people were dumped—some of them alive or half alive. Here I intend to describe only some of the most characteristic and well-documented crimes. Since the reader is already acquainted with that transport of Domobranci and their families, which I have seen in Celje, let me continue from there.

As mentioned already, those unfortunate people were driven to Teharje, about one-and-a-half-hour walking distance from the place, where I saw them marching on the street at about 10:00 a.m. However, their torturers had extended their march so much that they had arrived to the destination—a former camp of the German *Arbeitsdienst*—in the late afternoon. It was a hot day, and people were thirsty. Especially the children were crying for water. But the local people who attempted to give them water or milk to the babies were harshly driven away. And all the way, the prisoners had to frequently lie down and kiss the dusty road, sing the Home Guard's songs, or shout, "We are the traitors of Slovenian nation!" and run. Totally exhausted, they finally arrived to the camp: men traitors, old people traitors, women traitors, boys traitors, girls traitors, children traitors, and babies traitors. Already on the way, several peoples were beaten to death. In addition, many old people and babies died on the march, and the stronger prisoners had to carry them to the camp. In the days that followed, their torturers took care to continue their agony in many different ways.

The communists were looking for the officers of Domobranci. They had forced the prisoners to indicate them. Since there was no response, all of them were subject to all sorts of torture. The favored one was to force them run in circle without food or water until people dropped down of exhaustion. Or they simply had to stand day and night to force them indicating the officers. Those who were recognized to be the officers were led to the “bunker,” where they were hung head down, beaten severely, skin belts thorn off from their bodies, teeth and jaws smashed, and so on. When the camp was to be destroyed in September 1945, the ground in the bunker was soaked with blood.

In the first days, they did not get any food or water. Many people died of this; some of them became insane, and there were also cases of suicide where the unfortunate men had cut their blood vessels by glass splinters. They were also not allowed to go to the toilet so they had to relieve themselves where they were—either outside or in the barracks.

Many other prisoners had to pull big and heavy logs uphill and downhill again and again. For some strange reason that fellow Richard B, whom I saw in the front of the arriving Home Guard, was given the command and he did not betray his captors. The food for all of them was way insufficient and awful, and the water was scarce.

Some girls were raped and shot afterward. Other prisoners had to dig the graves for them, and they too were shot after finishing their job.

Babies and very small children, who could not yet walk, were forcefully thorn from their mothers, thrown on a big cart with a flat platform. From far, their mothers had to see them slowly die of heat, lack of water, and hunger. The mothers were crying and begging the soldiers for mercy, but they were smiling. “All Domobranci must be destroyed, including the children!”

Already on the first night, the captors began executing people. (This had to be the shooting, which I have heard whilst I was in Celje). This had continued in the following nights. The executors were the members of OZNA and KNOJ (*Korpus Narodne Odbrane Jugoslavije* = Corps of National Defense of Yugoslavia), and they were mostly very young people. Most of those, who were shot, were buried in the antitank trenches, dug by the local population during the German occupation. The dead people in the camp were soon replaced by new arrivals from different parts of Slovenia. However, most mass shootings had taken place in Kočevski Rog, in the forests, south of Slovenia. The authorities were hurrying to remove as many of their political and other possible opponents as soon as possible, before the elections, which were scheduled in the fall.

Today, the communists quote the following reason for their crimes: in the years after the war, the strain between the western powers and the Soviet-block countries, to which Yugoslavia was the part, was very high. They were afraid

that the armed conflict between USSR and their satellite countries on one side and the western powers on the other side was imminent. (Then Stalin, believing he had the strongest army in Europe, did not know yet of the enormous power of the American atomic bomb; the first one was tested on July 16, 1945. Although the British spy of German origin, Klaus Fuchs, had currently informed the Russians of the development in Los Alamos, Stalin became seriously afraid of the atomic bomb only after August 6 when the Americans had dropped it on Hiroshima.) Therefore, people who were against communism could cause them troubles, and they had to be “liquidated” (to use their expression) including all their relatives. The true reason, however, was the communists wanted to get rid of all their opponents before the elections.

From May to September 1945, the camp Teharje had the “turnover” of some six thousand prisoners, and very few of them were released. Besides, the camps and the jails were all over Slovenia. One of the most infamous was in Šentvid, the NW suburb of Ljubljana. Before the war, the clergy had run a big boarding school there, named Zavodi Sv. Stanislava. During the occupation, Šentvid was in the German zone, and after the war, these buildings became the collecting center for the returned Domobranci. My colleague, Andrej Braune, was drafted to Domobranci in January 1945. Since Ljubljana was surrounded by barbed wire fence, he could not avoid being drafted, except if he would join the German (working) Organisation Todt, which he did not. He was employed in the Domobranci administration, because he was very young. This was why he did not see any reason to run to Austria with the others. In the first week after the war, he had read in the newspaper that all the members of Domobranci had to register at the new authorities (an amnesty was being promised). So he went to register. Some days later, he was arrested and driven to Šentvid.

There the conditions were similar as in Teharje: hunger, lack of water and food (some prisoners did not get any water or food for five successive days), beating and all sorts of torture, impossible living conditions, and fast turnover. One theology student was hung by his genitals; some boys had to undress, and sacks were put over their heads. Then they were beaten until all of them died. In parallel to this, all sorts of tight screening of the prisoners took place. The investigators were especially after the Domobranci officers who were among the most tortured ones. Those who did not die already during the interrogation were executed within some days, and the camp authorities had to dispose of their bodies. During the war, it was not difficult for the partisans to bury individual bodies in the hills and forests all around the country. Now they had to bury several hundred bodies, and they resorted to the same technique. About 1 km westward from the camp in Šentvid is hills and forests. They had ordered the German prisoners to bury the bodies of the killed there. However, the new

authorities did not consider that a source of drinking water was very near to the burying site. In the days to follow, the local drinking water became mixed with blood, and it also had an awful odor. The sanitary authorities investigated the reason for the contamination, but they were not allowed to publish the results of their finding. Then the German prisoners were sent again to dig out the half-rotten and horribly stinking bodies and carry them with their own hands to the trucks to be transported to the place near Toško Čelo, some 2 km farther. There they buried them more thoroughly. After they had finished the job, General Maček prevented them to be released, and all of them were shot.

The accident with the contaminated water had soon convinced the leaders of OZNA that they had to find a more remote and secret place to bury the numerous bodies. During the war, the partisans were concentrated in the forest of Kočevski Rog in the southern part of Slovenia. There the inhabited places were scarce, and in addition, there are many Carst caves and abysses—a convenient place to dump the bodies. Most of the Domobranci from Teharje, Šentvid, and from several other places (at least some ten thousand) were transported to these remote places. At first, the captors bound the wrists of the victims with wire. Before they were thrown into the trucks, they connected two or more of them together by binding their arms with wire. Already the long transport to the place of the execution was a horrible ordeal for them. When they arrived at the place of the execution, they were unbound to take off all their clothes, and most of them were not allowed to keep their underwear. Then they were bound together again two by two, and they had to march to the edge of the abyss, being beaten severely by the sticks, with attached knives. When they had arrived at the rim, they had to open their mouths, and their golden teeth were smashed away. Finally, they were shot to drop down in the cave. Mostly their torturers intentionally did not shoot them to death in order to prolong their agony in the cave. After the cave was full enough, the executors attached the explosive to the rim and set it on to bury the bodies.

The conditions in the cave were infernal. There were streams of blood; half-dead people, unable to move for broken limbs, were crying for help or water. In such hopeless situation, some individuals (E. G. France Dejak, France Kozina, and Milan Zajec) who were fortunate enough not to be fatally shot, managed to escape this hell. Usually the bottom of Carst caves are much wider than their entrances, so they were able to crawl far enough to avoid being hurt by the hand grenades, which the executors had thrown down occasionally. They had made the barricade of the dead bodies and of the rocks to hide behind. Since water was dripping from the walls, they could lick the walls to quench their thirst. The explosion on the rim had tilted a tree to fall down in the cave. It was used as a makeshift ladder for the prisoners to escape after two days when the night had set. After trawling through the forest for a couple of

days, each by himself, they succeeded to find some people, who helped them with clothes and food. When they eventually arrived home, they kept hiding themselves for several months or even years. Their stories became generally known first after the communist system was abandoned.

Some prisoners from Teharje were thrown into abandoned mines or air-raid shelters, and then the entrance was blocked by explosions. Those people captured in (including women and children), who were not shot on their way through the horizontal part of the tunnel of the mines, had died for lack of food and water, or they suffocated. Two such places were the mine of Santa Barbara at Laško and the air-raid shelter at Slovenska Bistrica. One fifteen-year-old girl had managed to escape, but she had asked for help a communist in the vicinity. He had stuck out her eyes with a pick and carried her back to be thrown in the pit. Some years ago, his neighbors had found him dead; he had hung himself.

Vladimir Zinger, who was imprisoned in Teharje as a nineteen-year-old student, told how they were transported by six trucks, twenty prisoners on each, bound by wire around their wrists and two by two around their arms. The truck unloaded them near a natural pit some 10 m long and 6 m deep, already half of it filled with the bodies. There they had to undress, and being bound again, the partisans shot them in the neck by pistol, one by one. (This was the exact copy of the Katyn massacre, except that here the victims had to undress in order to prevent their possible future identification.) He was not fatally hurt because the bullet missed his spine and came out under his eye. For some hours, he had lost his conscience. When he was awake again, he heard how a group of some fifty women of all ages had arrived to be shot as well. They too had to undress, and their executors had made crude and obscene remarks before shooting them. Zinger managed to escape with another prisoner, who helped him undo their bondage. The executors started shooting, and both men parted, never to see each other again. From the landscape, he concluded that the place of execution was near Hrastnik. In the days to follow, Zinger fell twice in the partisan's blockade, but he eventually managed to escape to get temporary shelter at his grandmother's. Dr. Škrlič gave him the medication for his wound. On October 1, 1945, he had succeeded crossing the border. He had arrived to Trieste, where he told of his horrible experience.

In the camp Strnišče, one partisan called "Puklasti Miha" (Mike the Hunchback) had ordered the prisoners to undress and lay down tightly one next to the other. Then he had run over them by his heavy motorcycle. He had also participated in raping, enjoying to hurt the girls with his enormous penis. Eventually, he had become so impossible for his excessive and publicly expressed sadism that he was called to the central office of OZNA in Ljubljana, never to be heard of him again.

Besides Home Guard and the members of their families, wealthy people were also the first to come under the ax, as mentioned already. When it was the turn for the smaller shop owners, my good uncle Pepi was arrested, and his pastry shop confiscated. When he was released, he told that he was prevented to sleep for almost two weeks. He, his wife, and his young son were thrown out from their modern three-room apartment and sent to an old three-room apartment, resembling to a den. After he had painted the rooms and arranged them to be inhabitable, he was moved again into a big modern flat where every room was assigned to a single family. He got a room of some 20 m²; the toilet was common for all the families. The house owner had dwelled in the bathroom of some 7 m². Then my uncle, a hard working man, began drinking. His wife got breast cancer and died. Some years later, he married a kind woman, and she somehow managed to put him on his feet again. But he remained a broken man for the rest of his life.

The new oligarchy had confiscated the villas of wealthy people, their furniture, and artistic paintings. The pictures were collected in a big old building called “Cukrarna.” There, the big brass came to pick their choice. Edvard Kardelj, Ivan Maček-Matija, and other leaders were the first to take their booty. Next came lower echelons and then still lower, and so on. Those families, which the Germans had sent to exile or concentration camps, could not get their houses or apartments back after their return. The big brass already settled in. Wealthy people were *a priori* considered the enemies of the people, no matter if they barely came alive from the infamous German concentration camps. Instead, new wealthy class was established. The same horse, just a different rider!

These new riders had special stores, where all sorts of good food and other items were available for them at bargain prices. At the same time, the “working class” was eating rationalized corn bread and animal viscera, drinking unsweetened black coffee made of wheat, and so on. I had a friend Božo W., who was in the concentration camp Gonars and later in the German concentration camp. He became the manager of such a special store. However, Božo was a practical communist. He had invited “common people” from the street and started selling them those long-forgotten goodies, known only from times before the war, for those bargain prices. Soon he was arrested and sent to a mental hospital. There, he told me, he was kept in a solitary room. After seven months, Professor K. had entered his solitary cell to talk with him. Božo attacked him at once and scratched his face. As a consequence, Professor K. had ordered him electric shocks. Years later, he was released, but he remained an embittered person for the rest of his life.

One of the primary communist’s targets was the clergy. Many reverends and priests were arrested and some of them murdered, the church property confiscated, many churches destroyed, especially those in the remote Kočevski Rog, which

General Maček had considered his own “hunting grounds kingdom.” At these times, the archbishop was Dr. Anton Vouk. A story circulated how General Maček (the name *maček* means *cat* in English) had ordered Vouk (this name means *wolf* in English) to his office. Maček was walking up and down, telling Vouk, who had to stand in attention, what all they would do with him if he would not comply. But Vouk did not show to be much impressed. Then Maček,²⁵ tall and slim, a concentrated evil, stopped in front of Vouk, who was also tall, but strong built, telling him nose to nose, “You are afraid of me, aren’t you?”

Vouk replied, “How could a wolf be afraid of a cat?”

Maybe this answer was the reason for the attack in Novo Mesto, where someone had splashed gasoline on Vouk and then set it on fire, just when the train had arrived at the destination. This happened on January 20, 1952. Though Vouk had hastily taken away his burning coat quenching the fire on his neck and face by his shawl, he got severe burns. When after almost one hour a doctor arrived, the crowd of some fifty instigated people tried to prevent him giving first aid. But the doctor was resolute; he did his job. The police that arrived on the scene was lukewarm, and they did not show much will to drive away the crowd, which prevented the ambulance car to transport the bishop to the emergency station. Then Vouk decided to return to the train. He had got the badly needed and thorough medical aid several hours later—80 km away in Ljubljana.

In the year 1936, when I was visiting the musical school in Ljubljana, we had some singing rehearsals in a hall of the Musical Academy, where just a year before, a new beautiful big organ with fourteen registers and two manuals had been installed. Under the new command, this innocent organ too fell as a victim of ideological indoctrination. Since this was considered a “religious instrument,” the order was that it had to be removed from the hall. Professor Pavel Rančigaj, an excellent organist, who had taught this instrument at the academy, was crying his heart out to prevent such nonsense but in vain. The most he could achieve was that the organ was taken apart professionally and stored in the attic of “Realka” across the street. (He was also a regular professor in this school, where he had taught us singing before the war.) Some years later, when the ideological euphoria had relaxed, he managed to rebuild this organ. However, instead in the big Hubad Hall at the Musical Academy, the organ was restored in the attic of “Realka” to be used for teaching and occasionally for the concertos there.

Christmas, Easter, and some other religious holidays were forbidden; even to bake the traditional Slovenian Christmas or Easter cakes called *potica* was forbidden. All names of different towns and villages starting with “St.” were changed.

²⁵ Several years after the war, Maček has increased in weight too.

Due to ideological indoctrination in schools and universities, many teachers, professors, and students were expelled or arrested. Until 1948, all that was Russian was the best. In the center of Ljubljana, the Cinema Moscow (with the original sign Moskva) was opened. We saw mostly black-and-white Russian movies, packed with propaganda and ideology, and just occasionally a western movie was shown. When the color film *The Dance on Water* (with Esther Williams, Harry James, and Xavier Cougat) was shown, people went crazy. The Hotel Union hall, where the film was shown, was packed at every performance. There was a fellow who had told that he saw the film twenty-four times. After some weeks, some instigated students, who were on the balcony, began protesting, and one of them had opened the umbrella intercepting the light rays from the projector. This meant the end of the running and all further performances of this movie. It was said that “people refused seeing such decadent western movies.”

My brother Rudi, the conductor of the police brass band orchestra, was severely limited in the selection of the compositions. All western composers like J. P. Souza, E. Elgar, R. Wagner, J. Strauss, E. E. Bagley, and so on, were forbidden. He had to submit the program to his bosses before any concerto, and no such composers were allowed. Since the higher echelons did not know much about music, my brother had nevertheless performed the western composers. However, instead of writing, for example, John Philip Souza or Johann Strauss, he simply wrote the name of a member of the orchestra as the composer. Of course, he did not tease the listeners with “Stars and Stripes” or “Radetzky March,” but he had selected some less-known compositions. Gradually, all the members of the orchestra became “the composers of those famous marches.”



With my bearded friend, Erik Margan, the colleague
and coauthor of the book “Wideband Amplifiers”

To the public libraries were distributed extensive lists of books and authors that had to be removed. Besides the political works, especially those of Hitler, Mussolini, Trotzky, and so on, purely literary works were to be thrown out, for example, the books by Andre Gide, *Retour de l'URSS*, Ada Negri, *Il libro di Maria*, *Il dono*, and the books by Knut Hamsun, Steinberg, and so on. Truckloads of these books finished in paper mills.

Soon after liberation, the public trials of those who were accused to be war criminals, collaborators, or traitors had taken place. Besides people who were indeed guilty of these crimes, always some political opponents or wealthy were also added to spread the anger of the people to all the accused. The most important trials were transmitted by radio. Around the court building, many loudspeakers were installed, so we could hear the proceedings also by the public address system. As a rule, the confiscation of property of the accused followed promptly after they were arrested. From August 21 to 30, 1946, there was a trial of the most responsible war criminals and collaborators. They were SS-General Erwin Rösener, the German military governor of the former Italian *Provincia di Lubiana*, General Leon Rupnik, the founder and leader of Domobranci, and Dr. Lovro Hacin, the head of the Slovenian branch of the secret police during the occupation. Here too some political opponents were attached: Dr. Miha Krek, Bishop Dr. Gregorij Rožman, and Milko Vizjak, who were accused of collaboration. Krek had spent his war years in London, frequently speaking on BBC radio, whilst the last two had succeeded to run at the end of war, so they did not appear at the court. The first three were sentenced to death. Doubtless, the first three would get the same sentence at the Nuremberg Tribunal.

Besides this trial, we had many more in the following years. It is difficult to select even the most significant ones from a pile of material. The authors, who were lucky to survive the harsh torture during the investigation process and who were not subject to capital punishment, wrote many books. Here we will describe only the most characteristic trials.

Since, according to Yugoslav constitution, the opposition was not illegal, fifteen intellectuals attempted to form an opposition. They could not be charged for any collaboration, and some of them had even joined the partisans during the war. With today's knowledge, their attempt appears naïve, for the communists had no intention to share the power with any other party, no matter what stood in the constitution. The proofs are many similar trials in all so-called "people democracies." (In 1965, I have visited Czechoslovakia. They told me that the difference between a common democracy and a people democracy is similar to that one between a common chair and an electric chair.)

The main culprit was Dr. Črtomir Nagode, a civil engineer. He was the leader of the "Society of Friends of USSR," which was established already before the war. He had led another group "Stara Pravda" (Old Justice, named

after the medieval farmers' uprising). Another accused was a university professor of law, Dr. Boris Furlan. Among them was also my professor Leon Kavčnik, whom I have mentioned already. There were also three women: Angela Vode, professional teacher and prewar communist; Pavla Hočevlar, teacher; and Elizabeta Hribar, sculptor. The attorney general Viktor Avbelj had recited the accusations in the best style of Andrey Vyshinsky. The judge Matej Dolničar was employed in the German working office in Maribor during the war. Later, as a drafted soldier of Wehrmacht, he became involved with the struggle against the partisans, but eventually, he had joined them. His "nasty past" was an assurance for the new authorities that his sentences would be as they had ordered to be. Nagode, Furlan, and Ljubo Sirc were sentenced to death. After appealing, the sentences of Furlan and Sirc were commuted to twenty years of imprisonment with forced labor. His father Franjo Sirc got ten years, and his uncle Metod Pirc, whom I have met some twenty years later, got fifteen years of imprisonment with forced labor. The other accused got different long-term sentences from sixteen years of imprisonment with forced labor, down to one year forced labor without imprisonment (Elizabeta Hribar).

Since they could not be sentenced for the attempt to form an opposition party, they were accused of sabotaging the new order or of spying for the Western powers because some of them had connections with either English or American diplomats. During the numerous sleepless nights and days all the accused had "confessed" any nonsense, which their interrogators had put together. Ljubo Sirc, who was released after seven years and who had later run to Great Britain, where he became an esteemed professor in Glasgow, had written a book, *Med Hitlerjem in Titom* (*Between Hitler and Tito*), describing this process at length. I read this book soon after it was published (in 1992) and wondered how mild Sirc was in describing all that was done to him. About fourteen years after his book was published, I got the explanation, why his book was so mild. In fact, Sirc described his time during the process much sharper, as anyone would expect, since it was published two years after the totalitarian system in Slovenia was abandoned. But the book was being censored and published, without the author's consent. Now as I am writing this insert, I saw the original text, which he submitted to the editor. He was not beaten during the interrogation, but he was practically not allowed to sleep for about one month. With such procedure, the accused were broken physically and psychically to such an extent that they had confessed all charges during the investigation and also later when they were standing before the court. (An exception was Professor Kavčnik, who had defended himself like a lion according to his name Leon, so he had got sixteen years of imprisonment with forced labor though for relatively minor charges). Some years ago, Professor Sirc published an article, where he appealed to president of Slovenia at that

time, Milan Kučan (a former president of the Communist Central Committee in Slovenia), to tell where Nagode was buried. His close friend, Mitja Ribičič, who was interrogating Nagode and arranging the whole trial, surely could know the location of Nagode's burial. Someone from the former secret police had told Sirc that Nagode was first shot in his legs and then gradually higher up so that he had died slowly and in agony. If his grave was located, he could be exhumed and the forensic check could prove (or disprove) that the communists were not only murderers but sadists as well. Kučan did not answer.

We will skip the trials against the "kulaks" and numerous others. After the main political opponents and wealthy people were eliminated, it was the turn for their own comrades. When in 1946 a boiler exploded in the glass works of Hrastnik, someone had "confessed" that already during the war he signed a document in Graz (now Austria) agreeing to work for Gestapo. (In his memoirs, Nikita S. Khrushchev, the former president of USSR, remembers how L. P. Beria bragged at Stalin's dinner. "If I get him (someone) just for one single night, he will confess he is the king of England!") Most of those communists, who were imprisoned in the German concentration camp Dachau, were imprisoned and tortured until they had confessed any charge. These, so-called "Dachau trials," had lasted more than one year. Thirty-four accused were sentenced either to death or to different terms of imprisonment with forced labor, but three of them died already during the investigation. One of them was Branko Oswald. In USA, the grave of Lee H. Oswald, who had (as declared by the Warren committee) killed the US president John F. Kennedy, is known, and his family got the death certificate. But the relatives of Slovenian Oswald did not know where his grave is, nor did they get the death certificate where the cause of his death would be written. Professor Mirko Košir (who had taught Marxism and Leninism, as already told) got twenty years of imprisonment with forced labor. After he came to Goli Otok he died within a few days. Some fifteen years ago, engineer Boris Fakin (alias Igor Torkar), who was also among the accused, wrote a book, *Umiranje na obroke* (*Dying on Installments*), describing how his former comrades had interrogated him in three shifts through many days and nights without interruption. Like Košir, he too was sentenced and sent to that horrible camp Goli Otok on the Adriatic island, where the conditions were worse than in any German concentration camps. The true reason for these genuine "Stalin's trials" were that some communists, who were professionals, could not agree with the stupid new state economy, with overstrained "five years' plan" and with similar nonsense, which the hardliners were pushing forward. The common line of the Soviet block was that any communist, who loved his country more than USSR, where the strict Stalin's line was the official religion, had to be eliminated. In seventies, I remember reading an article in the daily newspaper *Delo* that the charges against the accused at Dachau trials

and the Nagode trial were “withdrawn.” No compensation, no apology, and no punishment for those who were guilty of these senseless and cruel trials!

A new opportunity to punish those among their own ranks occurred after the resolution of the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform) in March 1948. Stalin, who wanted to have a totally obedient Yugoslavia, was badly disappointed with Tito, who did not show a similar obedience as all the other leaders of the eastern-block countries. Tito, claiming that Yugoslavia was liberated by our own troops, wanted to be number one here, and his “cult of personality” had already been fully established. At the first sign of the clash, the Soviet specialists were withdrawn. Then instead of taking the stick in his own hand, Stalin had “unleashed his dogs” on the other eastern-block countries. Hungary and Czechoslovakia were the leading ones in this campaign. Trade agreements were broken, the delivered goods sabotaged, and so on. For example, tractors from Czechoslovakia had iron filings in their ball bearings. I remember the radio tubes from Hungary; the hollow part inside the metallic rings of their bases was filled with wax. (These were the early all-glass tubes where a metallic part with the key, surrounding the socket pins, was fixed around the tube base. These tubes were made under the license of Philips.) When the operating tubes became hot, the wax melted and penetrated down into the socket, interrupting the contacts.

In Slovenia, almost one thousand people were arrested during the purge of Soviet sympathizers. However, many more were arrested in the other Yugoslav Republics. To the big old court building in Ljubljana, they had to add an additional storey to handle the increased “business.” The problem with the accused was that almost a day before, they had to worship Stalin, and suddenly they had to reverse and say he is not right. It was like to switch a car with the full speed forward into reverse. For the “ruined gearboxes,” a free service was provided in the camp Goli Otok.

After the first accusations of Cominform, the Yugoslav authorities became more pope than the pope himself. The pressure on farmers was increased; people who criticized USSR and Stalin were sent to jails in increased numbers. The secret police OZNA became overzealous, almost furious. We had to be very careful what we said in public. People kept saying that OZNA might arrest someone just for a fart in public, if they deemed the pitch was not appropriate. Since Stalin remained adamant, the pressure here had gradually released. After six months, Stalin’s pictures, which were hung in every classroom and office next to Tito’s, and all his statues, had disappeared overnight. The articles of Stalin’s purges, Gulags, and so on, appeared in the press. However, the jokes and cartoons mocking Stalin were not punished anymore, and were even published in the newspapers. There were cases when people jailed for criticizing Stalin and those who were praising him had met in the same cell. The sign on cinema

MOSKVA was changed to KOMUNA (in order to reuse as many letters as possible). However, those unfortunate communists, who were sent to Goli Otok, remained there, and many of them never returned.

In early fifties, when I was walking near the court building, I had noticed a man in prisoner's overall, Drago Zrimšek, my tutor of radio, standing inside, near the window of an office. I greeted him, and we had a short talk; however, he remained hidden inside, not bowing out. He asked me if I knew a boy S. C. I told him that he is my colleague-student, who was arrested recently. Then he said that I had to be very careful because he is a traitor. Zrimšek, who owned a radio shop, where they had constructed those jamming radio transmitters for the Italians, was arrested for this, and all his property was confiscated. But his employee Stane Pavlin, who was the chief operative in his business, became the boss of the OZNA radio works, where I had worked in 1945 for two months. What a strange fate!



With my bearded friend, Erik Margan, the colleague
and coauthor of the book "Wideband Amplifiers"

Due to the watertight blockade of the Soviet-block countries, the economy of Yugoslavia began rolling downhill. At the beginning of the clash with Cominform, Tito stood firm, resisting sides, east and west. But after about half a year, he had realized that he could not keep such independent status forever. Then it also became clear to USA and other western countries that they had an excellent opportunity to establish a communist state, independent of the Soviet block. This could become an attractive example to other eastern-block countries and an itching case for Stalin. Gradually, the strain between western countries and Tito relaxed, and Yugoslavia got the economic aid, mostly from USA. However, Tito had to pay the price; he had to stop supporting the Greek

communist guerilla. The situation on the Greek-Yugoslav border was similar to that one on the Vietnam-Cambodian border some thirty years later. Without the Yugoslav support, the Greek partisans had soon ceased their operations. At the same time, Stalin too had realized that this was a hopeless case and stopped supporting them.

Unfortunately, USA, from where the most economical aid had arrived, did not push the matter any further. They could request Tito to establish a democratic government as he had promised in his talks with Winston S. Churchill in 1944. By doing so, Yugoslavia would cease being a communist state. (It is hard for me to imagine how this could be established after several years of communist terror.) Instead, USA kept sending us money and economic aid, which, in the long term, spoiled us Yugoslavs. Even today, most of us could not realize that our relatively good living standard of the past was not entirely the fruit of a sound economy and hard labor but mostly due to foreign aid and credits. Now as we have to pay our debts with interests and live from what we produce, the living standard in Slovenia is not as good as we were used to. Too much jobless, poor social security, inefficient Medicare, and so on are troubling us.

The western countries had pressed Tito to relax his widespread suppression. In 1953, the Soviet president, Nikita S. Khrushchev, arrived to Belgrade to apologize for all the evil the Soviet-block countries and USSR did to us during the Cominform campaign. Then gradually those Soviet sympathizers who were sent to Goli Otok as well as many others and those who were sentenced for political reasons returned from camps and jails. Many of them were broken persons. Their former comrades did not want to know them. As a rule, they could not get any adequate employment or any employment at all. Several had run to the West, but a great majority remained here, and their life was a nightmare—no jobs, no earnings. They were dependent of their relatives and friends.

Just around mid-fifties, the worst terror had relaxed. But this did not mean that there was no further jailing for political reasons. In parallel with the normal official gazette, where different laws and regulations were published, a secret version was printed. In there such laws and regulations were printed, which clashed with the UN human rights list declaration, signed by the Yugoslav delegation. The communists wanted to keep all strings in their hands. No other opinion was allowed, and such situation, with some ups and downs, lasted until the Slovenian independence in 1990-91, when the communist system had finally collapsed—not only in Yugoslavia but in USSR as well.

2.7 Struggles for Life

The postwar authorities had introduced also several very positive regulations. The study, Medicare and Kindergarten, did not cost us anything, and anyone had a warranted employment. Those who did not have any means of supporting themselves could apply for a scholarship, which was given almost in all cases. (The main obstacles for not obtaining it were on political grounds.) However, the scholarship was meager, and it was not paid with the beginning of the winter semester but with two to three months of delay; it was also not paid during the vacations.

Within two years after the liberation, my parents had left me alone in a two-room plus kitchen apartment in Ljubljana. My three sisters gradually moved away. The youngest one, Ančka, married Ivo already in the partisans during the war. The second older sister, Draga, moved to Škofja Loka, where she was employed as a hairdresser, and the eldest one, Mimica, moved to Golnik to live with my parents. She was employed in the sanatorium as a seamstress. My brother Jože, who, as a civil engineer, was reconstructing the destroyed bridges all around the country, came home seldom. He stopped supporting me because he was much interested in a girl, whom he soon married. At his wedding, brother Rudi played violin on the choir, accompanied by the organ, played by the famous Slovenian composer and musician Bojan Adami. After the wedding, he soon moved to Pula, Croatia. So I was left without any financial support and still ailing of tuberculosis. The scholarship that was given to me was way insufficient to support an independent life. It was not even enough to buy food, which was still rationalized and very poor. Occasionally, we got UNRRA parcels with excellent food, but we had to pay some money for them.

In order to get the extra money to pay for electricity, apartment, fuel, and so on, I occasionally repaired a radio. Since this was way insufficient, I began looking for a more regular job. After a short employment as a student-assistant in the department of physics at the university, I finally settled

in the department of physics at the medical faculty in Ljubljana. There I designed different electronics measuring instruments (oscilloscopes, ultrasonic generators, sound-level meter, acoustic spectrum analyzer, and the like). Once, when an audiometer was broken, Prof. Janko Pompe, the head of the otology department brought it to the institute, and I repaired it. The internist Prof. Dr. Heferle invited me to repair the electrocardiograph, and the head of the patho-physiology Dept. Prof. A. O. Župančič asked me to construct an electronic stimulator, so I suddenly got more jobs than I could finish. However, all these jobs were poorly paid, and though I built the stimulator on a purely private basis (to get the full money worth for it), the taxes were deducted, and the payment was meager. So I kept starving. On the other hand, by doing all this work, I had gained much experience and also some professional reputation. In 1950, I wrote my first technical article, which was published in a Serbian radio amateur magazine (translated into Serbian); two years later, I became the regular contributor to the Slovenian monthly review, *Elektrotehniški vestnik*, where I got a fatherly support from Prof. Dr. Roman Poniž.

Since the circumstances were such that I could be thrown out of my apartment, my girlfriend, Cveta, and I decided to marry. Actually, we intended to marry after we completed our studies, but by doing so, we would lose the apartment, and to get another one was extremely difficult. (It still is.) Though Cveta's parents were living in Ljubljana, she moved to my apartment, where she continued to study medicine. The marriage was without the previous knowledge (and blessing) of our parents and without any "pomp and circumstances." It was in the morning on January 3, 1948, when we took a regular tramcar from our suburb Moste to the center of town. I was desperately looking in front of the town hall to spot my best man, who failed to arrive in time. Then my former classmate Božo Hočevár passed by; I explained to him my problem, asking if he would be my best man, and he agreed. But after we entered the hall, the first best man appeared. Then both drew the straws, and the first one won.

Cveta's mother cried when Cveta told of her marriage, whilst my parents were indifferent. Since at that time it was still usual to make a church wedding, in the next week, we married in the church as well. Though our marriage was in that same church in the center of Ljubljana, as it was at my brother's wedding, there was no violin, no organ music and no relatives. However, my good uncle Pepi made a nice big cake for our wedding dinner, where our parents were present as well.

When looking back, this marriage was indeed a crazy thing since we both were without any regular incomes. A week after that, it was during the break of a symphony concerto (then the tickets were very inexpensive), we met my elder friend, the meteorology professor, Dr. Oskar Reya. When we told him of our marriage, he openly asked us, "Excuse me, but where will you get the money for life?" A well-justified question to which we could not give a satisfying answer! But strangely,

today in 2011, sixty-three years later, after all the storms that accompany any marriage, we are still together. Conclusion: a luxurious marriage, with big limousines, flowers, white gowns and black dresses, organ music, maids, big banquets, honeymoon, and so on, seems to have no warranty that a marriage holds as well.

In the late spring of the year of our marriage, my health status had deteriorated again and so much so that I was sent to a “recovery home.” This was intended for the university students, who had TB, but their cases were not severe enough for a sanatorium. The recovery home was in Tupaliče, a village under the mountain Storžič (2,134 m), where the air was much better than in Ljubljana, and food was very good. With many interruptions, I spent almost a year there in the period from 1948 to 1951. The shortest stay was one month, but usually I was there more months. To stay there did not cost me anything.

When I arrived in Tupaliče in June 1948, it became known that the Russians had unleashed the so-called “Resolution of Informbureau,” accusing Yugoslavia the deviation from the socialist line. The real reason was Stalin’s belief that Tito had grown too big for his boots, and thus he became “unmanageable.” Since there were many communists among the sick students in Tupaliče, they were totally disoriented for the lack of any information from Ljubljana. As soon as I appeared in the recovery home, I found myself in the crossfire of all sorts of questions. Since I was never fond of Russians, I told them bluntly that I believed it was better for Yugoslavia to become independent rather than to obey the orders from abroad. The communist students accepted my opinion as a matter of fact, and in the first week, I did not have any problems for this.

However, after one week, the student’s leader—apparently a party secretary—arrived to Tupaliče just to explain the confusing situation. In a meeting in the dinning room, under the pictures of Stalin and Tito, he told us if we did anything wrong, the Russians would certainly pardon us. I was indignant of such servitude, but I kept my opinion to myself because it would be too dangerous arguing. After he had left for Ljubljana, I soon learned who the communists among them were; they stopped talking to me! However, a few weeks later, when the situation became clear and the pro-Russian enthusiasts were arrested en masse, they began talking to me again. Needless to say that then it was I who did my best to avoid talking to them. Stalin’s picture in the dining room remained there for the next six months until it was removed overnight. The same happened in Ljubljana and elsewhere in Yugoslavia.

In Tupaliče, I continued to study from my books and notes. During my stay there, I even managed to do some examinations, for which—of course—I had to go to Ljubljana. The good food, rest, and some walks in the nature had improved my health. After some months, I returned to Ljubljana to continue studying, working, and starving. In some winter months, the air in Ljubljana was so bad that the fog was worse than in the worst times of London smog. Our smog was very dense and

dark; when one cleared his nose, the handkerchief was black! The coal burnt in Ljubljana contained too much sulfur, causing the air to be stinky and full of soot. The situation had improved after the central thermal power plant was erected in the suburb, Moste. After the independence of Slovenia (in 1991) when the high-quality Indonesian coal was replacing the Slovenian coal, the air had become much better.

After Cveta and I got married, the neighbors, who coveted our apartment, expected a child was underway. Since nothing happened in the expected time, they resumed their pressure to throw us out. "You have no children, so you are not entitled to have such an apartment" was their argument. They did not offer us any substitute, and we could get no help to defend ourselves. Then Cveta and I committed another crazy thing; we decided to have a child. Our son, Miroslav, or shortly Miro (Slovenian equivalent for English *Fred*), was born on June 9, 1949. Since his birth weight was 4.35 kg, Cveta had a very hard and long-lasting labor. The arrival of our child had substantially delayed her study of medicine. The neighbors did not stop pushing us out of our apartment. Now they offered us as a substitute a single room of 16 m², without toilet and without a place to store fuel (wood and coal). In addition, this room was humid one meter high. We refused to move there. The neighbors' pressure was so violent that whenever we returned from the visit of my parents in Golnik, we were looking at the beginning of our street, expecting to see our furniture on the street.



Both my children 57 years after,
at the celebration of Zorana's 61st Birthday

Even when we got the second child, daughter Zorana (English equivalent is *Aurora*), two years later, they still wanted to throw us out, it did not matter that I kept paying the rent regularly. Then my brother-in-law Ivo, who was then the aide of the minister for health of Slovenia, had prevented any further molesting of us.

2.8 Professional Work

At the department of physics of the medical faculty in Ljubljana, I had the material and possibilities to design interesting electronics-measuring instruments. At first, there was an elderly Prof. Julij Nardin, a very good teacher, who loved the students as equally as his profession. His assistant was Aleš Strojnik, an electronics engineer. He was the son of the professor who taught us technical drafting and machine elements at the Technical Faculty. Strojnik was very smart and had realized interesting original ideas. Therefore, he had no reason to be an eccentric, who believed that his way up was over the heads and shoulders of anyone who came in his way. But he was just like that.

In the department, he had developed a DC amplifier for electro-cardio-scope. I designed and built the oscilloscope part and everything else. Since I was eager to get a cathode ray tube, to make my own oscilloscope, I agreed to get such a tube (a German military surplus material) for the payment. However, when I completed the job, Strojnik had broken his word because he was afraid that I would gain too much knowledge by building my own instrument. Then I complained to Professor Nardin, who said the agreement should be honored, so I got the tube. Since Strojnik intended to publish an article of the electro-cardio-scope, he insisted that I signed a statement that *all* subassemblies of this instrument were designed under his leadership (they were not!) and that the mechanical construction built by me had to be modified after the first tentative design (which was true). In order to get the cathode ray tube, I signed. Strojnik indeed published the article in *Elektrotehniški vestnik* under (only) his name. Though the complete circuit schematics were included, Strojnik did not write down the values of the circuit elements in order to avoid anyone else to copy the instrument. At that time I set my principles of writing technical articles: It makes no sense to publish an article for the sole purpose to advertise how smart the author is. It is my belief the author *must* include all data and the necessary know-how in order to make the article as useful as possible for the reader.

Both Nardin and Strojnik were not the members of the Communist Party, and this was considered a great deficiency at the medical faculty. In the first semester after the war, only those students were admitted to inscribe to medicine, which could prove their active cooperation with the Liberation Front during the war. Cveta could prove it, for she was arrested during the war. Only the lack of suitable professors and the fact that Nardin was expected to retire soon were the reasons that he became the lecturer. When he was retired, Strojnik, who was almost as good a lecturer as Nardin, should replace him. Since Strojnik was still young and eccentric, and in addition, he occasionally expressed his criticism of the “new order,” he was not considered a proper choice. Professor Župančič found another man, L. J., who was (very probably) the member of the Communist Party. During the German occupation of Czechoslovakia, L. J. had graduated there as a *Betriebsingenieur*. Since Germans needed engineers badly, the course for a *Betriebsingenieur* lasted only four semesters and not nine, which were obligatory to acquire a *Diplomingenieur* degree. (Strojnik, who had graduated just after the war in Ljubljana, studied nine semesters, since this was the rule here as well.)

The new authorities had nullified all academic degrees acquired during the occupation. Therefore, L. J. had the problem with the approval of his war diploma (which had a big German eagle and swastika imprinted on the head). The dean of the faculty for electrical engineering, Professor Poníž (my tutor), refused the approval. My later friend Professor Lasič, who acquired a PhD degree in Padua, Italy, during the war, had voluntarily renounced his degree. However, the pressure from the medical faculty was too strong, and in addition, the niece of Professor Poníž studied medicine there. So the professors eventually gave up, and L. J. has become the head of the department of physics at the medical faculty.

If Strojnik was a poor choice for the head (because of his unusual character for the students and for political grounds for the authorities) L. J. was certainly the worst one. He could bluff the professors at the medical faculty, but he could not bluff those who knew something of physics and electronics. His lectures were disastrous and so was his book of physical exercises. Whenever I asked him for some professional advice, he almost always avoided the direct answer. Occasionally, he gave me a book, telling me the answer to my question is in there. In three months, I had built an oscilloscope and got a meager payment of 2,200 Din monthly. (The oscilloscope I designed, with the parts of the institute, was worth some 250,000 din.) Since this was way insufficient to support a normal life, I asked for a higher monthly salary fee of 3,300 Din but without success. Within a few weeks, the secretary of the faculty told me that the only person who was against the rise was the head—L. J.

I decided to “catch the bull for the horns” to discuss the matter with L. J. himself. At my first attempt, when I was to enter his office, where he kept a big blackboard on the wall, he was not there. To my surprise, on the blackboard, there were still my draft circuit schematics of a sound-level meter, which I had drawn some two months ago. When I asked the cleaning woman why she did not erase the board, she told me that L. J. has explicitly forbidden erasing it. (Apparently, he wanted to impress the visitors). Later, when I met him, I told him that I had learned that he was the only one opposing the increase of my salary. He blushed and said it was not true, but in the next month, my salary was increased according to my asking.

He hindered me in some other ways also. For example, when I had completed my obligatory working time for the month in the first two weeks, I was taking the second half to study for an examination. Fortunately, I had a good English book for this, which I had taken from the institute library. After some days of my absence, L. J. sent a guy, requesting that I come to the institute. I answered that I was studying for the examination and would come the next month because I had already fulfilled my obligations for this month. Next day, the fellow came again and told me that L. J. required the book back because he needs it. I came back together with the book, and the planned examination went down the drain.

The department got some money to initiate a scientific project, and L. J. suggested me to design an acoustic spectrum analyzer. It should be used to analyze the vowels of people on Susak, an island in the northern Adriatic. There the incest was widespread, and their vowels sounded strange. (Some thirty years later, I was there on vacations. When I visited the village cemetery, about 2/3 of family names on the gravestones were “Pičinić,” whilst the rest was “Tarabokija” and “Matošić.”) The spectrum analyzer was electromechanical with a rotary switch and with twenty-five filters 1/3 of octave each. Since I did not know yet how to design filters, having no material to build nor instruments to test them, the filters were ordered at the *Institut za elektrozveze* in Ljubljana. They were built into three metal boxes. The rotary switch was designed at our shop, and I had successfully completed the instrument.

Since I was in a desperate need for money to support my family, I was looking for any appropriate job. Our pioneer of radio, my professor Mario Osana, asked me if I would build an oscilloscope for him. He gave me all the material, and I started working on this instrument to assemble it in my home. Professor Župančič also wanted an oscilloscope for physiological measurements, which I started building. In addition, I started overhauling an electrocardiograph for the internal clinics. This affected my study to a great extent. By doing so much work, without proper food, the consequences were soon to appear.

2.9 Moved to another Apartment and Again to Sanatorium

In order to rebuild the country, the students had to do a lot of voluntary work. There were some big working campaigns in Yugoslavia, and one of them was to build a railroad Brčko—Banovići in Bosnia as already mentioned. Though I was not yet ultimately cured of TB, the party secretary of our semester Gvido said I had to join this “voluntary” action—no excuses on health grounds! As an introduction, I had to undergo the mass vaccination against typhoid fever, which was obligatory for all the participants of this work action. The vaccination had taken place in the main hospital, to where Cveta has accompanied me. After I got the shot, we went home. However, whilst still on the hospital area, just when we were walking behind the Anatomical Institute, I suddenly collapsed. When I came back to conscience, I was laying on the ground, my mouth still dirty of sand, Cveta shaking me. “Peter! Peter!” Soon I was able to stand up again, so we went back to the place of vaccination, Cveta supporting me. There they suggested me to rest for a while, and I was offered a glass of water. After one hour, we went home; this time, I arrived safely.

A couple of days later, I became red all over my body. It was like a scarlet fever but without any increased temperature. Cveta simply did not know what to do with me. When she was in the town, she accidentally met Dr. Antonović, a doctor of Sanatorium Golnik, where she had been for the summer practice. She told him of my case, and he came to see me. After he learned that I was vaccinated, he told this was a reaction to the vaccine. A few days later, the symptoms had ceased, but I still felt weak.

The matter with our apartment was going on without interruption. This time someone had bought it, and as a replacement I was offered to rent another, slightly smaller two-room plus kitchen apartment in the NE suburb Šiška, where I agreed to move. Since Cveta was just in the middle of her study for the examination of pathology, I had asked the new owner for a month of delay. I strictly required that, in the meantime, Cveta should not learn anything of the proposed moving. In the meantime, I had prepared all I could in the other apartment (painting, curtain rails, lights, and so on). When she came home, happy for successfully passing the examination, I had already packed the boxes with our books. Our son, Miro, was at my parents in Golnik, and our daughter, Zorana, with Cveta's parents in Ljubljana. So we started further packing right away. The work involved with moving and carrying the heavy furniture had exhausted me very much. In one month, I felt so weak that I went to check my lungs again. Dr. Karlin spotted a cavern on the left side of my lungs (that part was OK in the past), and I was quickly sent to Sanatorium Golnik.

In the first week of my arrival there, they first performed a thorough check on me. Then I was assigned a room for two patients only, and I started getting the streptomycin shots. All this was an unexpected bonus, and I did not know the reason for this strange pampering. My roommate, his family name was Podgoršek, arrived there with a cavern as large as a grapefruit. After some months of treatment, his status was stabilized—his cavern had shrunk to the size of an mandarin. He was waiting for the surgery.

Besides conservative treatment (pneumothorax and medication) for more serious cases, a surgery was the only alternative. The head of sanatorium, Dr. Tomaž Furlan, and his staff performed most of the operations. For more demanding and delicate cases, Prof. Božidar Lavrič, from the medical faculty in Ljubljana, came to Golnik, and he was operating from the morning until evening, almost without interruption. Only his surgery nurse could stand this toil, whilst the doctors, who assisted, worked in shifts. Almost all operations involved the cutting of ribs in order to get access to the lungs and/or to decrease the thorax circumference. Though the surgery was successful in most cases, the post operational complications were the reasons of many deaths. Due to broken ribs, breathing was painful, and thus the patients were doing only short breaths; they also got additional oxygen, which was very dry. Shallow breathing caused poor ventilation of lungs and caused the bacteria in the remote places of the lungs to grow excessively. The resulting pneumonia was fatal for many patients. I remember how a patient from Trieste (then in Zone A, now Italy), who was also a medical doctor had entrusted me how afraid he was of the surgery, which he had to undergo the next week. Due to many streptomycin shots, his hearing was already impaired so much that he, in his forties, needed the hearing aid. I told him that his professional colleagues would surely be very

careful. To this, he replied that the mortality rate after this surgery was over 30 percent. And indeed, he was among those unfortunate 30 percent! I remember him for giving me the first banana, which I had eaten in my life—he had to show me how to peel it.

The high mortality rate of patients who underwent the surgery was the reason that many of them were procrastinating to undergo the operation as much as possible. In a room for six patients in the upper story, four of them were scheduled for surgery. Dr. Furlan was resolute—either the operation or go home! Three of them gave in, and one was sent home. When Dr. Furlan came for the next visit, he saw a big inscription on the door:

AVE FURLAN OPERATOR
MORITURI TE SALUTANT

He has understood the humor. Fortunately, there were no casualties among those three.

After I was sent to sanatorium, the authorities at the medical faculty had realized that I was badly exploited in the worst sense of the nineteenth century capitalism. In addition, all the previous efforts of the doctors and all the expenses for my rehabilitation were wiped off by that nonsense vaccination. So Cveta kept receiving my monthly fee of 3,300 Din, though I stopped working at the department of physics. My strange “accident” did not pass unnoticed at the faculty of electrical engineering either.

In the otology department in Ljubljana, they had purchased a new German audiometer, and they had built a soundproof room for it as an attachment to the main building. This happened already before I was sent to sanatorium. Once a month, I had checked the calibration of the audiometer. In the winter, when I was already in the sanatorium, the snow from the roof of the main building had dropped down to the roof of the attachment. The roof was leaking, and the whole soundproof room was flooded. Professor Pompe was very much afraid of what happened with the precious instrument. Since there was no one else to know how to check and calibrate it, I was the only choice. So when Prof. Dr. Lavrič came to Golnik to do the surgery, he conveyed the urgent message from Professor Pompe that I was badly needed to check and calibrate the audiometer. Fortunately, I was already in a much better shape than at the time of my arrival, so Dr. Furlan agreed to let me go for a couple of days. It was also a desirable change for me to spend two days at my home in Ljubljana to break the monotony. I was given a ride in the car in which Professor Lavrič had arrived.

After I had calibrated the audiometer, I checked my hearing and noted how the streptomycin had impaired it. The monthly testing of audiometer had become almost a routine: Professor Lavrič was up, Starič down to Ljubljana to

calibrate the audiometer, and then Starič was back to Golnik and Prof. Lavrič back again to Ljubljana. Occasionally, I was in the car together with Prof. Lavrič, and we had interesting discussions.

Professor Lavrič had operated my roommate Podgoršek. I had promised Podgoršek to write regularly to his family until he returned from the shock room. Prof. Lavrič had removed him two of the three lobes from his right lungs. In the first days after the operation, his status was very much improved. So my letters were optimistic. Then in one evening, I met Professor Lavrič and asked him when Podgoršek would be back in the room. He told me that his state had worsened, for he got pneumonia. Indeed, after my next visit to him, I had to change the tone of my letter to his family. A few days later, I had written that they had to hurry to Golnik if they wanted to see him whilst he was still alive. Since no one arrived to see my unfortunate friend, on my next visit to Ljubljana, which was only a couple of days later, I went to see his wife to tell her visit was urgent. I wanted to hide the sad facts from their nine-year-old son and I was talking in German. After I explained the situation, the boy started crying bitterly—he understood German! My explanations were convincing enough that his wife went to Golnik to accompany her husband in the ambulance car to the internal clinic in Ljubljana. However, they did not want a terminal case and sent him to the surgery department across the park. Since there were difficulties as well, Podgoršek said, “Please, just carry me to the mortuary!” Indeed he was moved there the next day when he died.



Jacqueline, with her daughters
Madeleine (center) and Emilie
in Trenta, in the year 2010



Receiving the PhD Diploma in 1992

Occasionally, Cveta came to Golnik with my children, and I was eager to see them. I was not a “positive” patient, so there was no danger they could get TB from me. But by touching anything in the sanatorium, which a positive patient had touched before, I could be an indirect cause of their infection. Before I left the room, I washed my hands thoroughly, opened the doors with my elbow (our doors had hook levers and not doorknobs), and was meticulous not to touch anything whilst in the sanatorium building. Apparently my precautions were successful, for both my children never had tuberculosis. Once, when I was on the terrace of our room, Cveta came down in the park with both children to say farewell before departing to Ljubljana. Then I realized how cruelly this illness was separating us.

In the winter 1953/1954, the Montenegrin politician Milovan Djilas, one of the four chiefs of the Yugoslav Government, started criticizing the way the government was ruling the country. He has denounced “the new class” of people who were “more equal” than all the rest. Actually, he had told the facts which most of us had in our mind, not daring to tell. In our department, we had a major from Montenegro. I asked him of his opinion, but he had none. Some days later, my ray of hope was extinguished; Djilas was expelled from the Communist Central Committee and arrested. Then the major had the opinion.

In the same winter, Anthony Eden, the British foreign minister visited Belgrade to settle the border with Italy. The situation was on the verge of an armed conflict. But eventually Italy got Trieste with a small band of shore, and Yugoslavia got almost the whole Julian March. The greatest part of the town Gorica was assigned to Italy. The whole border was laid so that about hundred thousand Slovenes remained in Italy. This was how we had to pay the blind coquetting with the USSR in the years after the war. Also the Italians felt cheated. Trieste had lost its hinterland, and many Italians in the Istrian coastal towns did not like to stay in Yugoslavia. Consequently, a massive exodus of the Italians followed. I still remember a cartoon in a German magazine. Marshall Tito disguised as a woman, dancing with Anthony Eden, whilst across the border, the Italian president Alcide de Gasperi was sadly observing this strange pair. The title was *Valse Triest*. (After a well-known composition of Jan Sibelius *Valse Triste* = sad waltz.) It was sad for us too because we had expected Trieste to be assigned to Yugoslavia.



My brother Rudi, the Colonel and the director
of the Militia brass band music, with my father



With my German mountaineering friend,
Hans Wunderer in 1972

When I was once repairing a radio for a doctor, he asked me how my study was progressing. I told him I continued studying but I had problems, for—contrary to Ljubljana—here was no one to explain me anything, which I did not understand. At the time, I was studying transmission lines and had problems with mathematics; I had forgotten some differential equations. The doctor arranged a meeting with a Belgrade Professor Kašanin, who was also a patient. He had a single room in the building called “pigeon house.” When I visited him for the first time, he was looking so strangely at me that I became embarrassed. Then he asked, “Do you know why I am looking at you so strangely?”

“No.”

“You are the first student who came to ask me for anything.”

“Well, I have no reason to be afraid of you. I have already successfully passed both my mathematical exams at Professor Plemelj.”

We became good friends, though he was known as a nightmare to the students in Belgrade and Sarajevo, where he had taught at the universities. He had answered all my mathematical questions, and as a consequence I had refreshed my mathematical knowledge to a great extent. Since I knew the environment of Golnik very well, we often went together to walk. He had told me many interesting stories and anecdotes. Once when he was on a meeting with the university teachers, in Belgrade, he had complained to the minister of education Svetozar Vukmanović—Tempo, “It is entirely wrong to put very young engineers, just after they graduated, on the leading positions (because they are communists). Inexperienced as they are, they may commit grave mistakes for which they are jailed.”

Vukmanović objected. As a proof, he quoted several young engineers, who were on the job a couple of months already, working well. Then Prof. Milan Vidmar of Ljubljana cut in, “And when you will arrest them?”

All in the hall laughed, and Vukmanović had lost his argument.

In the sanatorium, I had met some colleagues whom I knew already from Tupaliče; some of them were cured, but some others had died. Actually, most of them needed years to be cured. The worst case was Darinka, a student of medicine. She was a divorced woman and had a son. In ten years, she has spent eight years in Sanatorium Golnik, but the doctors could not help her. After I was cured in March 1954, I kept visiting my parents in Golnik. I always brought her some foreign magazines. After I did not see her for three months in succession (I was kept busy with my diploma work), I visited her again, carrying a bunch of magazines. But she was not in the room anymore; her roommate told me that she died.



After my return from USA, with our cocker-spaniel Baba, at the upper cable car station Vogel (1540 m)



With my British mountaineering friend E. Dudley Stevens (center), and his wife Heather; the black being I am holding for the collar is the beach Baba.

My strong will and self-discipline, buttressed by the appropriate medication, good food, rest and good air, eventually helped me to get rid of TB for good. I put the strong will and the self-discipline on the first place because the patients, who lacked them, were usually bound to die, no matter what the doctors did. After six months in sanatorium (this was in the years 1953-1954), I was sent home—ultimately cured! Eleven years had passed since I arrived home with tuberculosis, which I contracted in the concentration camp! However, I had to pay a price for this. When I was calibrating the audiometer in Ljubljana, month after month, I could note a progressive loss of my hearing—due to streptomycin. Fortunately, only the very high frequencies were affected, so I could do without a hearing aid for the next forty-eight years. When compared with the loss of life of so many other patients, this was a low price to pay. Another loss, of which I became aware much later, was that the six-month separation from my family (plus more time during my recovery in Tupaliče) robbed me of my closer contact with my children. Due to my absence, all the burden of the family was on Cveta's shoulders, which had substantially affected her studies.

2.10 Graduation and Working as Engineer

After being released from Sanatorium Golnik, where they had cured my TB for good, I resumed working at the Physical Institute of Medical Faculty. Since 3300 Din was way insufficient for a family of four, I was doing some additional work as well. So I had designed twenty special amplifiers for the network model of a power electrical institute in Ljubljana, later to be renamed to Institute Milan Vidmar. And since this too was not enough, in 1955, I got a substantial scholarship of the Ljubljana General Hospital, where I had maintained and calibrated electro-cardiographs (ECG) and audiometers. The scholarship enabled me to do the examinations like on a conveyor belt. Besides, I kept writing reports, book reviews, and (occasionally) articles for the review “Elektrotehniški vestnik.” I had to complete a special big oscilloscope for the Institute of Patho-physiology. In Ljubljana hospital, they had “forgotten” my obligation to complete the overhauling of that ECG. Since Prof. Mario Osana retired during my stay in the sanatorium, also at the faculty of electrical engineering, they had “forgotten” the oscilloscope I had half done. Now it seemed to me that they were aware they would push me back into TB, if they would insist I had to complete both these projects. Ultimately, the six-month therapy in the sanatorium was caused by that crazy, forced vaccination, for which I was as guilty as for the earthquake, which had devastated Ljubljana in 1895. Now, after so many years, I have the impression that Professor Poniz at Faculty for Electrical Engineering and Professor Pompe at Ljubljana hospital became aware of my professional potential and my real value for both institutions. They realized that the completing my studies was of primary importance.

Such situation lasted slightly over one year. Then at the Institute for Electronic Communications at Iskra branch in Ljubljana, they needed someone who was expert in oscilloscopes. With mutual agreement, they had paid back

all my scholarship at the Ljubljana hospital to employ me in the Laboratory for Electronics Instruments. If an ECG or audiometer in the hospital would need repair or calibration, they promised to send me there, when needed. The job offered was much more promising and interesting; I had all necessary material and instruments to do more advanced R&D job. I had accepted this offer in March 1956. Since I had to continue my study too, I was obliged to work only six hours a day instead of eight hours (including Saturdays), the remaining two hours, I should use for my study. Consequently, I got only 75 percent of usual salary.

All went well until the winter 1954, and even I managed to pass the three examinations. Then the whole electronics laboratory was moved to Horjul, 20 km away from Ljubljana, where a new factory for electronics instruments was established. Since we were transported there by the company bus, I had to be ready at 5:20 a.m. at the bus stop to return home at 2:40 p.m. in order to work in Horjul from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. However, on Saturdays (which was a working day), I was free to study, receiving “only” 16.6 percent lower salary. It became impossible for me to make any single examination in three years of this toil. In addition, on the journey to Horjul and back, several fellows in the bus were smoking, which was detrimental for my lungs. I was often sick having bronchitis.



For the shortage of foreign currency in 1983-84 the gas rationalization has been introduced in Yugoslavia.



My granddaughter Jacqueline, at 9 years, on the peak of Stenar (2501 m). The mountain in the back is Triglav.

Since I kept writing for *Elektrotehniški vestnik*, the editor, Professor Poniž, warned me to speed up completing my remaining nine examinations because a new regulation at the university was in preparation. Those who procrastinated

too much would have had all their exams already done annulled. In this way, I would lose all twenty-seven examinations, which I had already passed successfully, so I had to resume my study as soon as possible. I went to the director of Iskra Horjul, Vladimir Klavs, BSEE, explaining the situation. He promised me to get me one year of paid leave, but I had to first complete the design of one oscilloscope and the redesign of one electrocardiograph. For this, I needed almost one year to do, but then I got my leave, as promised.

After being free, I started with easier examinations in order to come back into studying routine, which I had interrupted for three years. Advancing well, I was eventually ready to make the exam in electromagnetics, which was the most demanding examination of the whole curriculum. The date for the examination was set just before the summer vacations. However, at the agreed date, Professor Koželj was sick. I was told the examination was delayed for one week. When I came again the next week, Professor Koželj arrived, but because of the sudden violent bleeding out of his nose, he had to see a doctor immediately. The next term was scheduled for after the summer vacations. What now? I could not imagine interrupting the study of such important subject and start again two months later. So I decided to do exercises and dragged the study through the summer vacations. In the first term in September, I passed the examination and continued with the rest. However, for that dragging over the summer I had problems, when my leave was approaching its end. I needed just fourteen days over one year to be fully prepared for the last examination, which was of transmitters. For this, I already had the agreed date with Prof. Dušan Lasič.

In order to settle the matter beforehand, I visited the director of the newly established Iskra R&D Department in Ljubljana, to where my employment was shifted during my leave. Since it was not my fault for the complications, I supposed those fourteen additional days over one year should not represent any problem. Contrary to my expectation, this was not the case. The Director A. W. required that I began working exactly after one year as it was agreed. In the dispute that followed, it became clear to me that A. W. was to prevent me from graduating. I knew him already from those OZNA radio works, where I worked a couple of months in 1945. So I told him bluntly, "Would you prefer to have a graduated engineer working in the lab or a drop-out? Bine (this was his nickname), even if you fire me I would not stop my studies just for fourteen days, which I need to complete all my examinations!"

Since it was absurd to fire one, who was absent for fourteen days to become an engineer, I appeared in the newly assigned lab, on the next day after I completed the last examination. Then it was time to think of the subject, for my diploma work. This should be made on the company time, so it had to be useful for the series production. Already when I had started my leave,

the director of Iskra who worked in Horjul V. Klaus, had suggested that it would be fine to design a simple oscilloscope with a large screen, for schools. Also Prof. Slavoj Jenko, who would be my mentor, agreed with this project. Since cathode ray tubes (CRTs) with large screen were expensive, the main problem was to achieve the reasonable balance between the price and the performance of the whole instrument. For a designer, this meant to achieve the proper balance between the price of the large screen CRT and the price of the electronic circuitry, which had to drive that CRT. After I did the preliminary calculations, I had to—again get the consent of A. W. He directed me to the commercial department to discuss the matter with them. Unfortunately, the manager there was “my friend,” G. B., who did not like me from the students’ years for my “weird” political orientation. So he had turned down my project on the grounds that I had used too many electronic tubes. Since Professor Jenko, who was one of the establishers of Iskra, had great influence, he had overruled these entire obstacles. Eventually, I got the project as proposed.

During my one-year leave, the R&D department of Horjul was moved to Ljubljana, where almost all the dispersed Iskra.²⁶ R&D departments were joined in order to save the cost. This was a good idea, but its realization was poor. We had occupied a big E-shaped three-storey building of an old tobacco factory, which was built already during the reign of the Austrian emperor Franz Josef. Though the consumption of tobacco was much increased since those times, the company had ceased producing handmade cigars, snuff and chewing tobacco, concentrating solely on the production of cigarettes. The modern machines had very much increased the production rate, requiring less space, and the company had had enough room in the remaining buildings. The brick walls of all these buildings were about 1 m thick; the hot air heating was poor, the ducts leaking smoke and carbon monoxide, which caused headache. Sometimes the smoke was so dense that we could not see the ceiling and had to go out until the room was aired. At the beginning, there was still the tobacco fermentation in the central attachment of the building. There the rooms were so low that I could touch the ceiling, without rising myself to the toes. When they were clearing these rooms, carrying out the half-fermented tobacco, there was an awful stench; I could not imagine that the half-fermented tobacco stinks so horribly! However, I do not remember any smoker, who would drop his habit because of this. In the main part of the building, the wooden walls divided the big halls to make smaller rooms the building was painted afresh inside and outside the lavatories were modernized, and so on. But all this facelift did not

²⁶ Iskra was the greatest Yugoslav company, where all sorts of electronics apparatuses were produced, including cinema projectors. At its peak the company had about thirty thousand employees in different locations all over Slovenia.

help much—it was still an old building, which somehow suppressed new ideas. Even after the fermentation casemates got a fresh white paint, this still did not remove the stench entirely. Many years were needed until it was ultimately gone. Fortunately, there were only the library and the stockroom in these rooms.

In that building, I started working on “school oscilloscope” for my diploma work. Since I already had the experience from several past designs, this was almost purely a routine job. Usually all drawings were prepared on transparent paper, and they were drawn in ink. This was a formidable job, but we had many inexpensive drafting persons. When the prototype was built, the design engineer had to write the complete parts list, circuit description, and test and calibration procedures. After the environmental shock and vibration tests of the prototype, the complete documentation was made in triplicate, and the works in Horjul (or elsewhere) began the production.

Since it was impossible to do all this in just three months, in which, as a rule, the diploma work had to be completed, I just made the whole instrument on a rack frame and completed the basic documentation in a hardbound book. Exactly three months after I got the project, I had to hand the documentation to my professor, who waited for it in his office. Some weeks after that, I had to come to the department of electronics to defend my work. This building was a part of the Faculty of Electrical and Electronics Engineering of the University of Ljubljana. My instrument was just in the experimental form, on a frame, an ugly mess of wires, electron tubes, and associated parts. I was afraid that something might be damaged on the transport to the class, where five other candidates had to defend their diploma work that day. Fortunately, all worked as expected. The professors were pleased; four of us had got an “A” grade. Right after the verdict of the examination committee has been declared, Professor Jenko invited me to his office where he offered me the post of an assistant. However, I had accepted his kind offer only as a part-time employment. I preferred working at Iskra where I could do more design with many more measuring instruments than in the university lab.

My next job was to transform that ugly mess into an enclosure, making a commercial instrument, for which I needed about six months. Then the instrument was successfully produced for eleven years; ninety-four of them were bought by the firm RIM of Munich, Germany. For them, we had to prepare a different front panel on which the inscriptions were in German.

In a similar way, I designed several simple and inexpensive oscilloscopes to be used mostly in school laboratories. The purchase of parts from abroad required ever more documents and permissions, which were issued in Belgrade. Sometimes, up to three months passed before all documents were ready. The next steps were the acquisition of foreign currency, getting the end-use certificate (from the Federal Chamber of Commerce in Belgrade), purchase, shipment, duty procedure, and so

on, so the total delay to get all parts was usually about six months. Then I had noted how much the central administration in Belgrade was hindering our industry. Let me quote just one case. For one instrument I needed high-voltage electrolytic capacitors, which were not on sale in Yugoslavia. After some two months, we got refusal from Belgrade. They informed us that the enterprise Elektronska Industrija (EI) in Niš (Serbia) was producing such capacitors, and a catalogue was attached. Excellent! We would save our scarce dollars for something else, and the parts would come sooner! So we ordered the capacitors from EI Niš! After about one month, we got a letter from there saying that, indeed, they had such capacitors in their catalogue. However, since the demand was insufficient, they had dropped the production of such high-voltage capacitors. So we had to start the whole purchasing procedure once again. Sometimes, the delay in purchasing the parts exceeded any reasonable proportion. I remember one case when we got the ordered parts one-and-a-half year after we demanded them. In the meantime, I found another solution, and when the parts arrived, I almost forgot the original reason why we had ordered them.

Another problem was the mechanical shop. Though we were an R&D department for the whole enterprise Iskra, our mechanical shop was doing mostly series production for outside customers. Whenever there was a gap, they worked for R&D. So for a chassis, which could be completed within a single day, we had to wait one month or more to get it. We did the best to organize the work so that we did something else during the waiting time because it was forbidden to write the “idling time” on the account of the project. Nevertheless, such arrangements plus the excessive purchasing time and all sorts of redundant administration had increased the cost and time of the design drastically.



Working at Tektronix, Inc, Beaverton, Oregon

At the Faculty for Electrical Engineering, I led the seminars of electronics measurements. There I could do some teaching work, which was interesting but poorly paid. It happened that my Professor Jenko had a serious car accident. Driving his Volkswagen “bug,” he collided with a truck, and all four members of his family had landed at the emergency department of the Ljubljana hospital. His youngest son, Žarko, who was then four years old, was thrown through the windshield to land some six meters in front of the car. When I had visited the professor, all his family was in the same room. He told me that altogether eleven ribs were broken in his family in addition to some other serious injuries. Žarko—who was to become my boss in 1980—was unconscious for one full week. Then I should hold the examinations, instead of the professor. Fortunately, only those students who should graduate in that same year were allowed for the examination. Since I was designing oscilloscopes, I purposely did not ask them anything of oscilloscopes because I could not be fair to them. Nevertheless, some students were ill-prepared, and I simply returned them the examination form, suggesting that they come again when the professor recovers.

Another work I was doing was the testing of hearing aids. Already whilst I was a student, I arranged a test laboratory in the otology clinics in Ljubljana. The clinics invested much money in the test equipment, which we had purchased from the renowned Danish firm Brüel & Kjær. As much as this job was interesting, with time, it had become a purely routine, and it was poorly paid as well.

My third job was writing for the magazine *Elektrotehniški Vestnik*, where as a student, I had contributed much. Gradually, I had realized that doing my regular job from 6:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m., plus the jobs at the faculty, at the clinics, and writing articles and reports were just too much for me. Since the laboratory at the clinic was heated, I went there outside regular working hours to write some articles or to study. There in the cellar, it was quiet as it was necessary to do faultless measurements. However, when someone slammed the door of the elevator—fortunately, this happened very seldom—I had to repeat the whole measurement because the slam was recorded on the paper as well. Even the upholstered door of the laboratory did not prevent the interference. Soon a party member had decided that the laboratory had to be moved to the otology department on the second floor. I had resisted the moving, explaining why the working conditions there would be inappropriate but in vain. When I arrived to the cellar laboratory next time, the lock cylinder on the door was changed and all the expensive instruments were moved up to the second floor. Since the instruments were mechanically and electrically interconnected, I had no idea of how they were put apart and if the people, who had moved the whole equipment, were gently enough with the very sensitive microphones.

Then I asked for a paper to write my immediate resignation. When Professor Jenko fully recovered, I quit the job at the faculty as well. The money I got from both jobs was an inadequate payment for my regular obligation and spent time. However, I remained the regular contributor to *Elektrotehniški Vestnik*, though I did not write as much as I had written years before.

Already in 1959, I bought a brand-new typewriter, *Rheinmetal*, a product of Eastern Germany. When I bought it, I reflected that if I had started writing with two fingers, I would probably do so for the rest of my life. To prevent this, I bought the book of how to learn ten fingers' blind typing and completed the whole self-taught course in six months by exercising one hour every day. I kept using the mechanical typewriter until 1986, when I got my first personal computer and printer. My knowledge of ten fingers blind typing proved very useful after this change. Now, in my late eighties, I can write very much faster on the computer, and I could not imagine writing by hand. Because of advancing essential tremor of my hands, since 1990, handwriting, as well as piano playing became gradually very difficult for me. (For this, I had to quit piano playing already some ten years ago.) I sincerely recommend anyone to learn such typing as soon as one starts using the keyboard. Since this speeds the writing drastically, it much improves the efficiency of work in any profession, where typing is required.

Once a plainclothesman entered our laboratory at Iskra, telling that he is a "military person." He asked me several questions concerning the deflection circuits of cathode ray tubes. I had drawn corresponding circuit schematics. After about one hour, he collected my sketches, thanked, and left. Several months later, I was invited to the navy base in Pula at the tip of Istrian Peninsula. There I was led to an admiral's office, and he asked me the same questions to which I had drawn the same circuits. Every time I had drawn a circuit, the Admiral opened a thin hardbound book, comparing my drawing with the content there and then closed it again before discussing the next question. After the third question, the admiral said, "The content of this book is supposed to be a military secret. Since you are drawing exactly the same circuits it does not make much sense to insist on security any further."

We resumed the discussion with the book open. Then I learned that a guy had taken a diploma work to design the electrostatic deflection circuits for large screen cathode ray tubes, which should be used for aiming of the naval guns target practice. Unfortunately, the student was not skilled enough to properly design the circuits and calculate the value of the components. So when he had built the equipment, it did not work as it should have. Since the Yugoslav Navy had paid a hefty sum for this work, the admiral was entrusted the task to investigate the whole matter. The "military person," who visited me in Ljubljana, was just his advance party (or, maybe, that student himself).

I am sorry the Yugoslav Army and Navy did not have many such competent, respectful, and kind officers as this admiral. We had parted as good friends.

The big enterprise Iskra had arranged many buildings in different tourist resorts, where the employees could spend their vacations. These were some old buildings, which were overhauled and rearranged by the voluntary work of employees. So they had arranged a big building in Poreč at the Adriatic Coast of Istria in Croatia. We spent many vacations there, where both of my children learned to swim. Another rearranged building was in Trenta Valley, in the heart of Julian Alps. I came there firstly in 1961, and from then on, I spent part of my vacations there every year. At the slopes of Krvavec (about 1,500 m high), there was a small mountaineering cabin, which also belonged to Iskra. It was used mostly in winter where the skiers of Iskra spent their vacations. It was during the summer when I got the key of the cabin and my whole family moved in to spend some days there. However, in the late afternoon, “my friend” G. B. (who had kept his key permanently) arrived there with his family, and we had to move out. Fortunately, it was still early enough so that we could catch the cable car to transport us down to the valley. Otherwise, we would have to spend the night under the roof of the cable car station or go some thirty minutes up to a larger mountaineering cabin where we could probably get shelter. Then we had understood that the members of the Communist Party, especially if they were the agents of the secret police, were more equal than the rest of us others.

2.11 Introducing Personal Cars in Yugoslavia

Beginning of the sixties, the production of personal cars was introduced in Yugoslavia. Earlier, the main transporting means of an average Yugoslav citizen were just bicycles, trolleys, buses and railway. The enterprise *Crvena Zastava* (Red Banner) in Kragujevac, Serbia, started producing the cars by the license of the Italian company *Fiat*. Firstly, they were almost exclusively the type Fiat 750 (in Yugoslavia named Zastava 750). This was an improved version of Fiat 600 with the engine of 750 cm³ combustion volume. This was a compact car—the Americans would say a “mini car”—with the space for two adults and two children, the engine was at the back, and the trunk in the front was very small. When I was in the States (in 1967–1970), I noticed there were no Fiat cars—except for a single Fiat 1300, which was driven by Dr. Artur Seibt at Tektronix, Inc., where I had worked. The Italian-built cars with high-revolution-rate engines were known to be unreliable; the reliability was still decreasing in the cars produced in Kragujevac. Some of the parts were produced by the Yugoslav subcontractors. The electric parts—starter, dynamo, regulator, distributor, and such—were produced by Iskra, and they were unreliable as well. The reflectors and other lights were produced by *Saturnus* in Ljubljana, and they were better. Within a year, the owners had experienced numerous faults; For example, the body metal rusting, the pistons, and the carter leaking, the joints became wobbly, the thermostat broken, the ball bearings leaking or worn out, the radiator and brake fluid container leaking, the tires (“made in Europe”) elliptic, the windows and doors leaking rain in, and so on. These cars were conceived for the warmer Italian climate, and they were unsuitable for our harsh and cold winters and bad roads. Under

the engine, there was a large flap, opening outside down by a thermostat when the engine reached the operating temperature. When driving backward on a snow-covered surface, the flap caught the snow and forcibly opened all the way, ruining the thermostat. In order to start the engine when the temperatures were under 10°C and if the car was parked outside, we put a towel under the motor cover to prevent the temperature of still warm engine to drop too much overnight. Otherwise, it would be difficult starting it in the morning.

To sum up, let me quote a German tourist, whom I met in 2000 in Trenta Valley, cursing over his Italian-built Fiat trailer, where the radiator leaked. He told me that the name “Fiat” is the German acronym for *Fehler in aller Teilen*²⁷ (*faults in all parts*), which I could confirm from my vast experience with such cars (mostly Serbian—but also one Italian-built). On the other hand, the Yugoslav car drivers were given frequent chances to learn how to diagnose the faults and how to do emergency repairs. Frankly, our poor roads, many of them still unpaved, contributed much to the frequent defects.

The *Crvena Zastava* enterprise was originally a big factory for arms, which were exported to Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Congo, Ethiopia, Libya, and so on, where Marshall Tito was traveling to be celebrated as the leader of unaligned countries. Since these arm-deals were not paid regularly, the company began mixing the business with the car production. *Crvena Zastava* had become one of the most state-pampered enterprises in Yugoslavia. The prices for the cars were high; the import of other cars was hindered by excessive duty, taxes and special permissions; and the production was sloppy. However, anyone who had bought a brand-new car had no warranty to get a roadworthy product yet. With the temporary license plates, printed on plastics, he had to drive—at his own risk—straight away to some kilometers-distant authorized shop for technical examination. If the check was OK, then he was allowed to register the car, where he had to pay the hefty taxes for the State plus the obligatory insurance. There he got the permanent metallic license plates. Honestly, those lucky ones, who had imported a new car, had to do the technical examination first—no foreign attestations were acknowledged. (Now, in the independent Slovenia, a new car does not need technical examination for the first three years.)

In some cases, the brand-new Zastava car did not pass the check. What if someone would drive such a car from the dealer to the technical examination, trying to stop at the pedestrians' crossing and the brakes would fail? How would the matter be resolved legally in case of an accident? The next step after the technical examination was usually to let insulate the bottom of the car against rusting. The technical examination was obligatory every year, before the registration renewal. The way how sloppy these cars were—this was understandable.

²⁷ Americans have their own words for this acronym: *Fix it again, Tommy*.

Another problem was the spare parts. Fortunately Ljubljana is close to Italy, where we could purchase the exact replacements to smuggle them here. Since the most of our service shops were sloppy and lacking spare parts, we had often driven to Italy to have our cars serviced there. Sometimes, the repair of the car in the authorized repair shop here could not be completed until we brought the spares from Italy.

Once I saw a car crash; the body was distorted, and water was running out of the hollow thresholds—several liters of water. Then I remembered that every time when I stopped my car, I heard the water splashing in the thresholds. My friends suggested removing two rubber plugs on the bottom of the thresholds, which I did. Then several liters of water ran out of my car as well.

Later, in 1970, I bought a bigger Zastava 1300, but its reliability was no better. It happened that once the neighbors came to me reporting that my car, which I parked in front of our apartment building, had caught fire, so they had smashed the small triangle window, opened the car and the hood, removed the contact from the battery, and extinguished the fire. The insulation of the cables to the starter was worn out, and there was a short circuit to the body, causing the fire. I had to spend a whole afternoon to replace all the damaged cables. The Soviet-produced cars Lada-Samara, which were imported in the late seventies, had caught fire very often. There, the tube feeding the gas to the carburetor got loose, and the gas began splashing over the hot motor. Unfortunately, this happened during the ride. Since most drivers did not have a fire extinguisher or helping neighbors as I had, many such cars had burnt down completely.

However, the higher State officials and party leaders did not drive those unreliable Zastava 750, which were seen almost everywhere in Yugoslavia. First, they were using American Buicks and then the German Mercedeses, BMWs, Audis, Volkswagens, French Renaults, Peugeots or Citroëns, or Swedish Saabs. To avoid paying high duty, on one day of each year (or on two days if everything could not be settled in one day)—the date was kept confidential to common citizens—the import was duty-free. The rumors were spread that if a common citizen had imported his car on the same day, he was also freed of duty. But I could not recall any “common citizen” claiming to import his car without paying the duty.

In the eighties, some citizens with thin purses had bought the cars imported from USSR. These were Lada-Samara, which we mentioned already, and Zhiguly (ЖИГЎЛЎ). They were robust and heavy; the body metal was thick, and their toolboxes were abundantly stuffed with all sorts of tools. The Soviet car owners were apparently do-it-yourselfers. Some people said the sheet metal of this car was so thick that—in case of war—Russians would just need to attach a machine gun turret on the roof to convert it into an armored car. In the late seventies, in Kragujevac, they started producing Zastava 101. This was

a car with 1,100 cm³ engine, and they were roomier than the previous Zastava 750. However, their reliability was no better than that one of the previous types. Then in Sarajevo, Bosnia, the German firm Volkswagen arranged the production of their famous “bugs.” In order to distinguish them from the German-built cars, those produced by PRETIS (acronym from *Preduzeće Tito Sarajevo* = Enterprise Tito Sarajevo) had attached a big “J” (from *Jugoslawien*) on the back motor cover. Apparently, the Germans did not want risking their reputation. In Slovenia, the French firm Renault had built a factory in Novo Mesto. At first, they were producing the model R4, and their reliability was almost typically “Yugoslav.” Later, it was improved, the production of R4 was abandoned years ago, and today they produce some other Renault cars; for example, the compacts Twingo, Xsara, Clio, or also larger cars, which are as reliable as those produced in France.

Since the Czechs abandoned communism in 1990, their company Škoda started producing excellent cars—as it did before WWII. Their reliability and performance are amazing. On the street, there could also be seen cars imported from Japan; those from USA were seen very seldom, mostly the Ford cars, produced in Europe. The big American street cruisers simply did not fit our conditions and demand; they were too big, needed too much gas, and their prices were too high. In addition, their classical design at that time (engine in the front and the back wheels driving, plus the automatic gear) performed badly in winter.

After the purchase of our first Zastava 750, our family was travelling a lot, and we had the opportunity to visit some beautiful places in Slovenia as well as along the Dalmatian coast. After that mass tourism had become a reality for us.

2.12 Mountaineering

Slovenia has the easternmost part of Alps, which stretch from the west in France/Italy, over Switzerland, Italy, Germany, and Austria. The Slovenian mountaineering club, established already in 1893, counts 74,097 members. (This was the status at the end of 2000; the membership had exceeded one hundred thousand when we were still in Yugoslavia). Considering the total Slovenian population, slightly under two million, this is a relatively large percentage. However, some four times more nonmembers keep visiting mountains more or less frequently. We have many mountaineering cabins, where it is possible to get shelter, bed, water, and food at a reasonable price. In 2000, there were over 1,500,000 visitors. The most frequented climbing routes are marked, equipped with steel pegs and steel ropes to make possible passing the exposed parts for less experienced mountaineers. The needed prerequisites are good physical condition, lack of vertigo, adequate equipment (boots, pack, dress, and so on) and, of course, love for mountains.

Before the war, I had never ascended high mountains, for example, Julian Alps, Karavanke, or Kamniške Planine. The highest one, which I had ascended at those times, were Šmarna Gora (669 m) and Grmada (676 m), the twin mountains some 10 km away from Ljubljana. Only one hour was needed to reach the top of Šmarna Gora from its base. On the peak, there is an old church and a pub, where one might get a good lunch. A high and thick wall surrounds the church. It was built in the middle age when Turks were invading our country. The people in the villages under the mountain had run up there to defend themselves in the hope to be protected by God. For the same reason, the churches surrounded by a wall are on numerous other lower mountains and hills all over Slovenia.

Usually people who ascend Šmarna Gora visit Grmada that is separated from the first mountain just by a slightly lower pass. Grmada had on its southern slope a “climbing kindergarten,” named Turnc. There a part of the ascent route transverses a vertical cliff, partly in the horizontal and partly in the vertical direction. The horizontal crossing is equipped with steel pegs and rope, whilst the vertical part has a steel ladder made of U-shaped bars, which are fixed in the cliff. Whoever passes Turnc is qualified for all the marked ascents in the Slovenian mountains (though no document is issued for this).

During the war, I could not go out of Ljubljana because a barbed wire fence surrounded the town. In the years after that, I was unable to ascend mountains, for I had TB. My first higher summit was Storžič (2,134 m), in the vicinity of Sanatorium Golnik. Though I ascended it in 1947 when I was still not ultimately cured of TB, I had no health consequences after ascending it. Obviously the rich food I got at my parents’ home in Golnik had helped. I had ascended the peak with my future wife, Cveta, who, as a medical student, was practicing in the laboratory of the sanatorium. For both of us, this was the first real mountaineering experience. The view from the top was magnificent; we could see all the way across the border to the Austrian mountains. A couple of soldiers had erected a tent just some 20 m under the peak. At that time, our borders were watched closely. (Poor fellows, when there was a thunderstorm!) They let us use their big telescope to see the surrounding mountains better.

The challenge to ascend higher peaks became irresistible for me. As soon as I was entirely cured of TB, which was in 1954, I gradually started visiting the mountains again. It was like wanting to make up for something, of which I was robbed during my adolescence and in the years immediately after. While the most boys, who were living in more normal conditions, were either serving their military duty or fought in war, or participating in different physical contests and activities after the war, I was starving, being detained in the town or in the concentration camp, or curing my illness, always taking care not to overstrain myself. But gradually mountaineering became my regular free-time occupation. Living in the hypocritical communist world, which was created here after the war, I instinctively found some sort of escape in this activity. The mountain is fair; only the able-bodied can ascend it. Here no membership in Communist Party could help avoiding the mandatory effort, as it was all too often the case down in the valley. In the mountains, cheating is not possible! It seemed to me that many other mountaineers were at least partly influenced by this factor.



Since Storžič is the highest mountain in the Karavanke chain of Alps, I soon turned to Julian Alps, which are divided from the first by the valley of River Sava. The highest peak in Julian Alps, which was then also the highest peak of Yugoslavia, is Triglav (2864 m). “Four brave men” were the first who ascended it in 1782. In 1895, the priest Jakob Aljaž had bought the ground on the very peak from the Austrian State to build a round steel tower there. Inside the tower, it is just enough room for three mountaineers to seat. There they may get a safe shelter in case of thunderstorm. (Since the lightning on the peak is frequent and violent, in such case, they would probably need some spare underpants). In fact, the only thing I was afraid on my tours was to be caught in a thunderstorm. Therefore, it is advisable to consider the weather forecast before the ascent. After a clear summer morning, the thunderstorm could unexpectedly cook up in the afternoon, so the trip must begin early enough to arrive from the valley to the cabin, or back from the peak, in the early afternoon. Though I was doing some eight to ten ascents a year through about thirty years, I was caught by life-threatening thunderstorms only three times.

My first ascent in Julian Alps was Prisojnik (2547 m), which may be ascended from Vršič Pass (1612 m), to where it is possible to come by car. The road is closed for motor vehicles from the first substantial snow in the autumn until the middle of the spring, usually until May 1. At Vršič, I had met a Scottish couple: Eric and Harriet. Since I was the student of English in the three-year class at Iskra Company, led by the excellent teacher Dr. Schaup, I already learned much. So conversation was no problem. At first, I proposed

ascending the easier mountain Mala Mojstrovka (2332 m) on the right side of the pass. But Eric and Harriet had ascended it the day before, and they suggested Prisojnik on the left side. So there we went.

The well-marked trail goes first through some pine bushes and then over a long scree slope and then left up to the Window, which penetrates the mountain in the north-south direction. Another route through the Window is steep, and its opening is spacious enough that a church could be placed inside. Our route was not through the Window; we had arrived at its upper exit by the south slope. Looking down through it, we could see towards the road from Kranjska Gora to Vršič Pass. The trail continued above the Window, toward the peak over the western ridge, from where we had a beautiful view to the mountains and valleys all around. This last route is relatively easy, except for two nasty places, where the safe holds are very widely spaced, however I am tall and have passed that part easier than my British friends. On that ridge are no iron pegs or steel rope, for lightning would soon dislodge every metal object protruding out.

The ascent from Vršič to the peak lasted slightly over four hours. On the summit, we inscribed our names, addresses, and the descending route into the book. There is also a hand stamp and inkpad with a flask of ink, and we had printed the stamp of the peak in our booklets. Such books and stamps were on almost every peak here, and they were kept in steel cases to be protected from rain, lighting, and snow. Soon the cloud prevented us to see around, and the temperature had dropped so that we had to put our pullovers and anoraks on. After having a snack, we were ready to leave. Because of those two nasty passes on the crest route, we decided to descend by another route, straight down over the south slope, which seemed easier. Since it was early June, there was still much snow. No one of us had an ice ax, but Eric found two sharp stones, which he was using as the anchors when going down backward. Harriet and I did not use this slow technique, for the snow was relatively soft in the afternoon, and we could press sure steps in. Suddenly, Harriet had lost the balance and started sliding down toward me. When she slid near, I grabbed for her jacket at the shoulder to stop her. But both of us started sliding down toward the abyss. I urged Harriet to brake with her hands and feet, like I was doing. So she did, and—fortunately, just less than about ten meters from the abyss—we succeeded to stop. She was shocked so much that she could not stand up until Eric, whom we had left way up in the fog, had arrived to the scene. From that place, we needed more than two hours to come back to the cabin at Vršič Pass. Then I had realized that in such danger I am no panic, and my brain works like a Swiss watch. The real danger of the situation we had experienced came to my mind first when we were back at Vršič, consuming our late lunch. Though my stomach was empty, I had no appetite; I had the feeling I would throw up.

The fate was merciful with me, allowing me to ascend Prisojnik some twenty-five more times in the years to come, as well as many other peaks in Julian Alps.

The road, built by the Austrians during WWI, crosses Vršič Pass and continues down to Trenta Valley (≈ 600 m). Between WWI and WWII, that part was under Italy, and the border pass to Yugoslavia was right at Vršič. In summer 1961, I had arrived there for the first time, and Trenta had embraced me like a loving mother does her long-missing son. In addition, from my side, it was love on the first sight. And it still lasts now, fifty years later! Trenta is a long, slightly descending valley, in the heart of Slovenian part of Julian Alps. Higher in the northern, beginning part of the valley there is the source of the River Soča, which makes a long U-turn, continuing further SW down toward Italy to its outflow into Adriatic Sea. The Italians and Austrians call this river *Isonzo*, and this is the name known to those Americans who are interested in this part of the world (and who have never visited the area). Since the material of the Julian Alps is (white) limestone, the white riverbed is probably the main reason that the clear Soča has such a beautiful turquoise color. Near the source there is a small cabin with a simple restaurant, and from there, the very source could be reached in fifteen minutes, partly by a climbing route. The water there is abundant, clean, and very cold—perfect for gastritis, if one drinks too much!

On the lower, southern part of this U, there is a small village, Na Logu. There our enterprise Iskra had rearranged one half of an Italian military building into a vacation home. It had five spacious rooms: three upstairs and two downstairs, each room with four beds. These were once the soldiers' bedroom quarters. We had our meals at Hotel Orel (Hotel Eagle) across the main street. Across the former military courtyard, there was another military building of almost equal shape, just lower and with smaller rooms, where once the officers were accommodated. After the war, these rooms were being used for the hotel guests. Some fifteen years ago the Iskra building was totally rebuilt and there is now the Triglav Tourist Center and the Alpine Museum.

Besides the magnificent, high, and steep mountains surrounding Trenta Valley, a cabin, named Pogačnikov Dom (at 2051 m), had attracted my attention. The cabin could be reached from the village via a mule trail (Ital. *mulatiera*), built by the Italian soldiers. The trail with numerous zigzags has an easy and steady slope, and my best time from the valley up to the cabin was four hours and twenty minutes, carrying a 10-kg pack on my shoulder (excluding the breaks of fifteen minutes each hour). At the level of about 1500 m, the forest ceases, and at 1900 m, there is an abundant source of water. There the Italians had built a long, concrete carter with several pipes (no faucets) to make some sort of a fountain. The mountaineers, chamois, ibexes, sheep,

birds, and mules transporting the supply to the cabin, quench their thirst there. Only people, mules, and sheep occasionally drink together. The wild animals, however, access that source by an unwritten hierarchy: ibexes first and then chamois, and then hawks, crows, jackdaws, and so on. Close to the source is the lowest of the three glacier lakes in the area, from where the fountain probably got water.

The manager of the cabin was Pavel Poljanec, whom I knew already from the times during the war. He was playing either double bass or violin in the Radio Orchestra in Ljubljana. Since he was a mountaineer as well, after his retirement he became the manager of this cabin. His wife and another woman took care of the kitchen. He told me he is a good friend of my brother Rudi, whom he knew from playing together in the orchestra. After the long ascent, I consumed my lunch with great appetite and even a glass of wine was not missing. The cabin had place for 155 people; the rooms in the first storey were equipped with bunk beds, mattresses, bed sheets, pillows, and covers, whilst up in the attics, there was a common dormitory with mattresses, pillows, and covers only. Sometimes the number of the visitors exceeds the capacity. If they arrived too late to reach the valley before nightfall, or in case of bad weather, they stacked the tables in the living room to place additional mattresses on the floor, forming a makeshift dormitory. After my first visit there, I visited the cabin many more times. The following description is more a summary of all visits there than the description of the first one.

At the evening, ibexes come to lick the salt, which Poljanec had spread on the rock, some 50 m away from the cabin. Here the leader licks first, not allowing any one of his herd close until he had enough. The chamois that come to lick the salt on the rock at the other side of the cabin were more sociable—among themselves but not toward people. As soon as someone approaches their herd to some 50 m, no matter how slowly and friendly, the leader chamois whistles and all herd retreats immediately: “mothers and children” first, then all the others, and the leader being the last. Ibexes, which were imported here in the middle sixties from Gran Paradiso, Italy, allow the slow, non-aggressive approach to some 10 m, before their leader sounds a warning whistle for retreat.

Around the cabin, there are several peaks: Planja (2453 m), Razor (2601 m; it had nothing in common with the English word *razor* because neither its peak nor its ridge are sharp), Križ (which means *Cross*; 2410 m) Stenar (2501 m), Gamsovec (2392 m), and Veliki Pihavec (*Great Blower*; 2419 m). Except the last one, I had often visited all the others, the most frequently Stenar. It is nice to see all these peaks in the evening sun, in front of the cabin at 2051 m, whilst Trenta Valley is already in dusk and only the lights from the windows of the houses reveal that people dwell there. Toward the sunset, the color of the peaks changes from yellow through pink, red, and purple. After the sunset

the color becomes light blue and finally gray. In parallel to these changes, the temperature drops substantially so that people return to the cozy and heated living room, where the dinner is ready. Some ten years after my first visit, the diesel motor generator was installed to supply the electricity for the lights. It is run only in the evenings. After the dinner, people wash in the rooms with running water, separate for men and women. This part was added to the original building in 1970, and the water from the upper lake is siphoned down to the reservoir near the cabin. The bedtime is from 9:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m., for many mountaineers began their tour very early in the morning. Poljanec switched the motor generator off after 10:00 p.m. and people, who get up in the night or in the early morning, must use their battery torches.

It is spectacular to see a thunderstorm from the cabin, especially during the night. During the day, we could see how the lightning strikes from the clouds under us, down into Trenta Valley. In the night, it was apparent that the lightning gave preference to the mountain Križ. Poljanec said this mountain probably contained something metallic, for example, iron ore or such metals. When the lightning strikes this peak, it spreads on its way down like a veil all over the mountain. This made a really magnificent view. Sometimes the wind gusts are so violent that the whole cabin creaks. But no reason for panic! The cabin was built with bricks, and it is strong; its roof is anchored well by steel wires, and it is fully protected by numerous lightning rods and leads. Of course, going out in such a storm was another matter, but nobody is that creasy to challenge the fate.

The ascent to Stenar is easy, and I had occasionally taken our dog Baba (a black cocker spaniel) on this trip. I had to only help her couple of times over some high steps. Once when I had led a group of German mountaineers to Stenar, I saw two ibexes fighting for leadership. They were just some 30 m across a small abyss. I would not dare to climb the very steep rock there because the shelves on that cliff were narrow and too far apart. But the ibexes are at home there. It was strange that by all these violent collisions, as the contestants were hitting each other with their long horns, neither one had ever lost balance. There was a third ibex, watching this match closely, like a referee. A hunter told me that the third one was the next challenger. If the leader wins, the challenger remain in the group, but he will certainly try again. If the challenger wins, the leader leaves the herd, becoming a solitary. Such hermits allowed people to come very close, sometimes taking the bread out of hand. My American friend, Randy told me that once he wanted to come down from Gamsovec as fast as possible to avoid the threatening thunderstorm. But a solitary ibex was standing on the trail, grazing the grass, not allowing anyone to pass. Since the trail was on a very steep slope, it was impossible making a detour. For a while, the ibex had ignored several threatening gestures,

occasionally snorting contemptuously, until *he* eventually “condescended” to give way—after eating all the scarce bunches of grass there.

Besides Poljanec, I had gained many friends in the mountains. One of them was Hans Wunderer, a German from Augsburg. I met him in a pub in Kranjska Gora, a starting point for many ascents. Since he was as old as my father, he wanted to engage a mountain guide to ascend Triglav because he did not want to risk going alone. He had found a member of the mountain-rescue service, Franc Mrak (mrak means *dusk*). Since Mrak did not know German, I was invited to take part as a translator. Another German, Dr. Sprinz, a friend of Wunderer joined us too. As a condition training, we had ascended Mojstrovka and Sleme (1815 m) the day before.



Celebrating our
60th Wedding Anniversary



SW of Ljubljana; the square building
in the center is the National University
Library, a masterpiece by our architect
Jože Plečnik.

Mrak had proposed a very long route, lasting several days. If the weather would be nice, as it was in the days before, the whole tour would be spectacular. The weather was nice in the morning, when we were off from Vršič. The first day route was from Vršič, down to the Valley Mlinarica, where we had lost some 500 m of elevation, and then up to the saddle between Razor and Planja (2349 m) and again down to Pogačnikov Dom (2051 m). It was fine all the way to Mlinarica, where we came to an abundant spring. The ascent over the southwest slope of Razor was spectacular. There is about 100 m long natural gallery, spacious (some 3 m wide and 3 m high), as straight as the tunnel builders would make it, with the slope of some twenty degrees, and one side open toward the abyss. From then up, the weather started deteriorating. When we arrived to the saddle, there was already some rain. From there, we needed about one hour and a half to reach Pogačnikov Dom, where we arrived at dusk in the pouring rain. Usually this part of the descent takes just about a half of this time. But Dr. Sprinz was handicapped; he had one leg shorter, so we

needed more time. Fortunately, there was no lightning—yet. However, we had much opportunity to admire lightning during the next two days, safely from the inside of the cabin.

In the cabin, we had dried our clothes on the warm and big stove. The warm dinner was also welcome. Next day, the weather was about the same, and Dr. Sprinz decided to descend into Trenta Valley. Mrak accompanied him down in the rain and came back—again in the rain. The third day, it was also raining, so we continued idling in the cabin. The fourth day, the weather improved slightly, but the weather forecast was not promising. We nevertheless decided to leave. Our route was over Gamsovec, ascending some 340 m and then down to Luknja Pass (1758 m; *luknja* means *hole*), descending some further 400 m toward Zadnjica Valley. (*Zadnjica* means *bottom*.) The fellows, who had given the names of these peaks, passes and valleys, had certainly some sense of humor. Already when we were climbing to Gamsovec, the rain started pouring again. I was climbing in my raincoat for the first time. On the way down to Luknja, the sun came out again but not for long. Luknja was also the border pass between Italy and Yugoslavia before WWII. Then the border also crossed the very peak Triglav. At about noon, we arrived to the cabin at Doli (2151 m). We were soaking wet, mostly from perspiration under our raincoats, the rest due to rain.

Some two hours later, Mrak urged us to continue to the cabin Triglavski Dom (2515 m), where we have arrived toward the evening. Wunderer and I were totally exhausted. The ascent to Triglav was scheduled for the next day. The next morning, when we looked out, Triglav was covered by snow. No chance with our summer equipment! Instead of ascending the peak, we descended to Kot Valley (*kot* means *corner*). Although we had made a short stop at the cabin Staničeva Koča (2332 m) to get the shelter from the rain, which started pouring again, we came down to the valley at the end of our strength. (Not valid for Mrak, of course!).

Since the first ascent to Triglav had failed, we three (Wunderer, Mrak, and I) ascended it the following year. We started from the Vrata Valley (1015 m, *vrata* means *door*). After spending the night in the cabin Aljažev Dom, we took the much-used climbing route “Čez Prag” (which means over the threshold). The trail goes first almost horizontally for some 20 minutes until it reaches the base of Triglav North Face, where we had to cross a small stream. The North Face is about 1000 m high with the slope from seventy to ninety degrees. Several famous free climbing routes led over the face to the peak, but the way *ez Prag*, which goes on the left side of the North Face, is easier, marked, and well equipped with steel pegs and wire. When we arrived to the flat part at some 2300 m, I had difficulties continuing because a week before I had just recovered from a flu. In the late afternoon, we arrived at the cabin

Triglavski Dom, where we had spent the night. It seemed that the copious perspiration had a favorable effect to my health, for the next day, when it was a clear and crisp morning, I felt well fit to ascend the peak.

The final route to the peak is very steep, and there the pegs are so densely placed that I did not know which one to grab. The reason for such abundance became clear to me when we met some mountaineers who were already descending. Without so many pegs, it would be difficult to meet and avoid each other on such exposed route. After the first steep part, there is an almost horizontal trail, going over the ridge called Mali Triglav (Little Triglav). Then there comes another steep part, and after one hour from the cabin, we had reached the summit. Here the hand stamp and the book are kept in an old iron stove, which is heavy enough to withstand the most violent wind and lightning. In addition, its flat surface makes the writing and stamping easier.



The presentation of my Slovenian book “Atomska bomba” (Atomic bomb) at the Jožef Stefan Institute, in 2008



The view from the Castle tower toward the north of Ljubljana

Every genuine Slovene should visit Triglav at least once in life. So I have fulfilled this rule. Of course, I went inside of the steel tower, which once had on its conical roof a small metallic banner with the number 1895 (the year when the tower was erected), which was replaced by a red star after the war. After the independence of Slovenia in 1991, someone had put the original banner back again. On the wall inside, there is a picture of the whole panorama with the names of the peaks. The view around was magnificent. It was a very nice celebration of my forty-second Birthday.

On the peak, I had met a friend of the same age, Tone Črnič, whom I knew already from before the war, for both of us were radio amateurs. After a while, another distinguished mountaineer, with a white beard, wearing a strange outfit, leading a group of some fifteen teenagers had arrived. We started talking, and he told me his name: E. Dudley Stevens. He was a professional

mountaineer. Since he had discovered Julian Alps some years earlier, he came regularly twice a year, with a group of teenage boys or girls, to spend three weeks ascending the peaks from Vrši Pass all the way down to Lake Bohinj. We became good friends, and next year, I had accompanied his group on the ascent over the North Face of Mojstrovka. It is strange how friendships established in mountains, last throughout one's life. In the ascents to come, I had gained many more friends.

From the peak of Triglav, we had descended to another cabin Planika (2401 m), where we had a snack, and then further to Dolič cabin, where we had the lunch, and we also spent the night there. Then the path went up over a plateau Hribarice and then further down to the Valley of Seven Triglav Lakes (≈ 2000 m). However, I was more interested to make the transverse across the North Face of Kanjavec (the peak Kanjavec is 2568 m high), but Wunderer was not willing to go there because that trail stretch was too exposed and poorly secured, as Mrak had told. So I decided to go there alone, and we agreed that the meeting point was the cabin Prehodavci (2210 m) on the other side of Kanjavec.

In the cabin at Dolič, I had met a couple that joined me in traversing the North Face of Kanjavec. The *trail path pathway* way goes slightly down from Dolič and then over a snowfield. This was under a steep cliff on the north side, where the snow is still hard in the early morning. Since I did not have an ice axe, I sled down. The long snowfield did not end at a precipice, but where the slope evens, are loose rocks as big as houses. After some 20 m, I managed to stop, braking on small and sharp stones, which were frozen in the snow. Fortunately, I did not break any limbs, but my bottom was like a hamburger and also my wrists and hip were badly scratched by those sharp stones. The completely thorn trousers, broken light meter, and so on, were of lesser importance.

After I had collected all the lost items, which were spread along my slip, we continued the path. The view down to Trenta Valley was spectacular. Then I soon realized why Mrak was not enthusiastic for this route. On one place, the way was literally dug into the vertical wall. The rock was so loose that no pegs or wire could be fixed. In addition, the cut in the wall was too low for me; I could pass only in a half squatting position, which was difficult with the big pack on my back. There were also several other exposed parts, where the rock was similarly unstable. The danger prevented me thinking of my pain. Finally, we arrived to the ridge, from where the Prehodavci cabin and the uppermost lake, with the rustling source, could be seen. The descent to the cabin was easy, and I could wash myself in the clean water of the lake. When I met Wunderer and Mrak, the last had reprimanded me for parting from the original group. In addition, the punishment was not missing. Since the first aid kit in the cabin did not have enough bandage and iodine tincture to disinfect my severely scratched hip and bottom, they had simply poured brandy over—it was like I

sat on a barbecue. In the afternoon, we continued our way along the Valley of Seven Lakes and descended over the steep Komarča down to Bohinj.

In this way, as described, I had gradually learned how to do proper mountaineering. In some years, I had become a relatively experienced mountaineer. However, my knowledge and my physical condition had never reached the status, which would allow me free climbing or doing tours lasting ten or more hours in a stretch. In general, especially when going uphill, I kept making regular fifteen minutes breaks after each hour.

A few years later, the stretch across the North Face of Kanjavec was closed. (Some ten years ago, it was improved and opened again, but then I did not climb so high anymore). I had asked Stevens to bring me an ice axe from England because, in spite of so many mountaineers in Slovenia, it was not possible to buy such an item here. Neither was it possible to buy a normal, small-scale map of Julian Alps, Karavanke, and Kamniške Planine because the Yugoslav military allowed selling only crude maps, where only the ridges, peaks, and trails were drawn. We were buying better maps of *our* mountains in the neighboring, Austria.

The mountains left and right of the Soča River, from Bovec downstream to the Friuli Plane were the theater of twelve bloody offensives in the years 1915-1917 during WWI, when almost four hundred thousand soldiers were killed on both sides. The ways to the peaks Rombon, Krn, Matajur, Kobariški Stol, Veliki Šmohor, and so on are still littered with relics of these struggles between the Austrians and the Germans, and their adversaries, Italians. The most decisive battle had started in a rainy night at 2:00 a.m. on October 24, 1917, when the Germans and Austrians had attacked the Italians in the valley close to Bovec. Their breakthrough had started with a massive gas attack, which killed all the Italians in the gorge between Bovec and River Soča. Almost one thousand of Italians in the gorge were killed by 884 simultaneously, electrically triggered mines filled with phosgene. At the same time, the shelling from the Austrian positions in the surrounding mountains from Bovec, all the way downstream Soča to Tolmin, had surprised the Italians to such an extent that the whole front had collapsed. The event is known as "the breakthrough at Caporetto" (Caporetto is the Italian name for the Slovenian town Kobarid).

Besides the soldiers of other nationalities, many thousand Slovenes, who were drafted by the Austrian Army, were killed in those eleven offensives. It is interesting that our poet and priest Simon Gregorčič (1844-1906) had predicted this bloody struggle in his poem *To the River Soča* (first published in 1882).

Therefore, the mountaineering in Julian Alps meant more than just a sport for me. The nature, the history, and the people there had impressed me so much that the Soča Valley and the surrounding mountains became anchored deeply in my heart.

2.13 Traveling Abroad

If I delete the visit of Kanal ob Soči and Trieste, where I went with my mother when I was four years old, and my imprisonment in Gonars and Treviso during the war, my first visit abroad took place in 1959. Then the Othological clinic with the approval of Iskra, where I was working, arranged my one-week visit of Atlas Werke in Bremen, Germany. At the clinic was an Atlas audiometer of which I was taking care, and they wanted me to learn more of audiometry. (Audiometer is the instrument for measurement of hearing loss.)

So I had boarded the train in Ljubljana, and we started moving toward the Austrian border. When I was looking for a seat in the wagon, I remember seeing a Turk who had occupied one whole compartment. He had a nursing baby, the dirty and stinky diapers were hanging from the luggage racks, and he was smoking “like a Turk” as we used to say. Poor baby! Due to “specific atmosphere” in that compartment, everybody was repulsed as soon as the door was opened. Very few Yugoslav passengers remained in the train when it crossed the border. The border check of Yugoslav authorities was thorough. Then the Austrian Custom officer arrived. It appeared he was in civilian dress: a grey hat and a cape. Only the official brooch under the neck, which tied the cape together, was a sign that he is a State official. Therefore, it was no wonder that I read the following true story in our newspaper.

The Austrian Custom officer entered the wagon department asking, “Schliowowitz, Brinjewitz, Zigaretten?” (plum brandy, gin, cigarettes?). These were the most smuggled items, which the passengers had to declare.

Somebody, who was apparently crossing the border for the first time, thought the man is collecting orders. So he ordered, “Bring me two sandwiches and a cognac!” The amused Custom officer answered in a distorted Slovenian: “You are asking too much from Austrian Customs!”

Nothing similar happened in our compartment, where I remained alone, and the procedure was “short and painless.” At the following stops, the Austrian

passengers came in. They were interested of the life in Yugoslavia and asked me several questions; I answered as frankly as I could. I was not afraid a Yugoslav spy was among them, for they had spoken such a heavy Austrian dialect that sometimes I had difficulties to understand them. I still remember I did not understand the word *Regen* (rain) in the way they were pronouncing it, and asked what that was. They had told me that was *kisa*, which is the Serbian word for rain. Then it came to my mind that they considered all Yugoslavs were Serbs. This was hard to understand considering that their Slovenian minority of some fifty thousand souls lived in Austria just north of the border to Yugoslavia. (This was the census of 1959. Now, forty years later, their number is substantially lower for the strong assimilation pressure.) There was another passport and custom check at the Austrian-German border. One Austrian passenger was afraid that the custom was checking *mit deutscher Tüchtigkeit* (with German thoroughness). But all went through smoothly.

In Munich, I had to change the train, and then I was off to Bremen. I was impressed by the food service in the train. Since the journey lasted overnight, a German boy and girl suggested shifting the seats forward so we made makeshift beds for all three of us. In Bremen, I was booked in the *Hotel christlicher Hospiz* (Christ's Refuge). I wonder if the official at Atlas Werke had selected this hotel assuming I am a communist in order to let me feel I was in the Limbo. Next day, a taxi picked me up, and I was introduced to the commercial director, Herr Schubert. When I asked if his first name is Franz, he told me that Franz is his son. He was no relative to the famous composer, who had applied to be the teacher of music in Ljubljana, being refused for his age of seventeen years only. What an opportunity lost for my hometown!

Herr Schubert told me that Dr. Grandjot would have a special training course only for me, and after a short talk, he had introduced me to him. My first lesson, which had started after a short informal talk, lasted three full hours, without interruption. Though I understood him well; my head was saturated when he stopped. The most important item, which I had learned from him, was how to calibrate the audiometer on the average method by taking twenty young people and making the average of their hearing over the tested frequency range. (Then the excessively amplified music, introduced by the Beatles was not known yet. Today the young individuals with damaged hearing are very rare.) At last, audiometers were built so that it was easy to calibrate them by this method and no artificial ear or any other expensive equipment was mandatory. Thank you, Dr. Grandjot! We had further courses through the next four days, each morning. Besides, I was introduced to the leaders of other departments, where they were designing hemoglobin-meters, electrocardiographs (ECG), and sonar.

I was surprised to see that Herr Götsch, the head of the ECG department, was designing the input amplifiers with very low rejection factor.²⁸ He did not know the book by Valley and Wallman, *Vacuum Tube Amplifiers* (Radiation Laboratory Series, Vol. 18, published over ten years ago). This book was my “bible” for six years already and much better amplifiers were described therein. When I was back at home again, I had sent him my published article describing an ECG amplifier with a high rejection factor. After testing my design, he had sent me an enthusiastic report. I had realized that (then) the Germans were too much trapped in their own professional literature, not looking for the state-of-the-art across the ocean. The poor knowledge of English language was probably another obstacle.

In the sonar department, I had my first chance to see a Tektronix oscilloscope. The department leader was surprised that I was much more interested for the oscilloscope than for the sonar, which appeared trivial to me. On the other hand the explanation of how sonar works, which was given to me, was on a level, which would be appropriate for someone from a tribe in the jungle of Central Africa.

Dr. Grandjot told me that Bremen was 80 percent destroyed by the Allied bombing. The traces of that enormous destruction were still evident; many houses had only the ground level restored. However, the company Kaffee Hag had restored a complete medieval street in the harbor. On the other hand, it was obvious that the Germans were well supported by the Marshall Plan, which Yugoslavia had rejected, because the condition to get it was political liberties. In the shops, I saw numerous items, which were not available in Yugoslavia, but I could not buy anything because I had very little foreign currency. Herr Schubert had bought for me an electrical shaver, which had served me for the next ten years.

On the weekend, Dr. Grandjot had taken me to a trip with his family. Our end station was Vegesack at the outflow of the River Weser into North Sea. There I saw the transoceanic ships sailing to and from the harbor of Bremen. On the trip, Dr. Grandjot explained me his position toward the Jewish prosecution in the Nazi Germany. He told me that he had seen the SS troops driving a long line of the Jews on the street. The prisoners, apparently from a concentration camp, were going to work. The SS guards were handling them cruelly, and the doctor was depressed seeing this. However, he said, if I would

²⁸ ECG amplifiers must amplify the useful electrical signal of the heart (at about 1 mV range) and suppress the noise emanating from the electrical power installation in the room, which is some hundred to thousand times higher. Amplifiers with such properties are said to have a high rejection factor.

express my protest to the guards, they would join me to the group. So he had kept his mouth shut, like all the other observers.

Another of my trips abroad was in 1962 to Nærum, Denmark, to the company Brüel & Kjær, the world leader in acoustic measuring instruments. They had arranged a one-week class of acoustical measurements. Besides five Yugoslavs (two Slovenes and three Serbs), there were the engineers from Germany, Norway, England, Poland, Czechoslovakia, USSR, Switzerland, Hungary, and one Frenchman from Alsace, who also knew English and German very well. All of us had class in English language. However, five French engineers, who did not know any other language, had a separate class in French. We had an accommodation in Klampenborg Hotel at the shore (near Copenhagen) from where we were transported to the company by taxis.

While all the other nations were mixing together during free time, the Russians kept themselves separate, especially avoiding us Yugoslavs. Once when I was sitting in the taxi, where one place was still free, a Russian engineer attempted to enter, but when seeing me, he changed the idea and waited for the next car. In fact, only three Russians were engineers, the fourth one, Comrade Kontratenko, said, he was only a translator. We learned that another Russian engineer was invited, but "he became sick," so Kontratenko was sent instead. He was in fact the leader, and his command of the other three was obvious. He had to be a KGB agent, we concluded. While the other three behaved like puppets on the string, Kontratenko was a gregarious fellow. We were teasing him:

"Do you know that the American and Russian Embassy in Copenhagen are separated by a cemetery?"

"How horrible stories you Yugoslavs are telling!"

No matter what a nasty joke against USSR we were telling, he smiled apparently sincerely. However, the other three fellows turned their eyes, like a nun hearing a spicy joke. On the other hand, all three seemed to be very competent engineers, concluding from the questions they were asking the instructor.

As a treat, the company proposed us to see either the famous Danish ballet or to hear a symphony concerto. Most of the participants went to see the ballet, but I had decided for the concerto, where also the four Russians decided to go. The performance was in the Radio Hall, where Dr. Peer Brüel, one of the company's owners, had participated in the design. A German was conducting. (I have forgotten his name.) The first composition was *Divertimento* for Violoncello and Orchestra, by Bohuslav Martinů. A Danish soldier was not impressed, and he slept in. After a while, he started snoring. Not following the conductor's directions when he ordered *pianissimo*, the tired soldier continued "sawing" at his previous sound level. The comical situation ended, when a girl sitting just behind, pushed him by her knee in the back. The next composition

was *Concerto for orchestra* by Bela Bartok, and the third was the Symphony *Eroica* by Ludwig van Beethoven. The performance was outstanding.

In the company, they were producing a handheld sound-level meter for which they had the instructions in many languages. Dr. Jens Trampe-Broch asked me if I would check the instructions in “Yugoslav” language. I told him that there was no “Yugoslav” language because several different languages were spoken in my country. The text he had given me was in Serbian language, so I proposed my Serbian colleague Nikola Petrović to correct it. At the same time, I had offered to write the text in Slovenian language. Then I had to experience the Serbian chauvinism expressed by Petrović:

“But the official language in Yugoslavia is Serbian!”

I did not want starting an argument in the presence of a foreigner. But later, I told Petrović that according to the Yugoslav constitution, the Slovenian, Croatian, Serbian, and Macedonian languages have equal rights. These rights were trampled down in the so-called Yugoslav People’s Army, where only Serbian language was allowed.

The company Brüel & Kjær had given us enough pocket money so that I could buy some presents for my family. On the journey back home, I made a detour to visit Amsterdam in Holland. This was a very interesting old town and the numerous channels, old building, and a specific atmosphere made a great impression on me. I had visited the *Rijksmuseum*, where I saw many famous paintings, including the “Night guard” painted by Rembrandt. Since I wanted to learn more of this famous painter, I was suggested to visit the *Rembrandthuis*, the house, where he dwelled in 1639–1958. To get there I had to pass through the “district of red lights” to Jodenbreestraat 4. It was interesting to enter the house, where—except for the fluorescent lights—the interior was practically the same as it was at the times of Rembrandt. I sat on an old chair and “submerged” myself into those times.

On my way back, I had to pass that “amoral district” once again. Since it was late in the morning, there were no people, only my steps were echoing in the street. The drapes on the windows, where the girls were posing at evenings, were closed. Then suddenly, I heard a lady speaking in Dutch. I turned back to see a woman waving her hand in the inviting gestures. Since she was some sixty years old, I would not even touch her with high voltage pliers. So I just went my way. Later, it came to my mind that she was probably a *madame* inviting me to her girls. So I might have just missed the opportunity to enjoy sex at a reduced price (no customers so early in the day).

In summer 1963, I undertook the most significant trip abroad. It lasted one whole month, and I had combined the business trip with some private excursions. Of course, the last ones were to my own expense. At first, I spent two weeks working at Hewlett/Packard works in Böblingen, near Stuttgart,

Germany. Since I was designing oscilloscopes, I asked to work in the oscilloscope department, where Herr Tischer was the head. At the same time, there were two Italians, a *Dottore-Ingeniere* and a technician. Since the *Dottore-Ingeniere* was relatively young, I asked him how he could complete his PhD so fast. He told me that any graduated engineer in Italy could get automatically the title *Dottore*. Those who later made a PhD degree were called *Professori*. Though both Italians had only a marginal knowledge of oscilloscopes, Herr Tischer had an opinion that I, coming from Yugoslavia, could not know anything, which would be of some value for the department. He was very hesitant to allow me to correct a conceptual mistake in a dual channel plug-in amplifier. When I corrected it, he was surprised that I could do something like this. Honestly, a week later, he told me that he had discovered a couple of weeks old suggestion from Hewlett/Packard to make a similar modification. Later again, I had difficulties to convince him that a change in the sampling head of an oscilloscope would be necessary. (This was fresh knowledge, which I had gained from a friendly Czech engineer Mužík, who was the head of the sampling oscilloscopes department.) After I corrected the mistake, he was glad, but there was still no way for me to surpass the Italians.

On the weekend, we (both Italians and one's wife) hired a NSU Prinz car to make a trip across the countryside. We visited Herrenberg, Castle Zaffelstein, Bad Teinach, and Pforzheim, returning over the Autobahn toward Stuttgart and back to Böblingen. On the Autobahn, the spring returning the gas pedal broke, and we were passing all vehicles at maximum speed. But *Dottore-Ingeniere* was an excellent driver, and the technician, who was sitting next to him, helped pulling the gas pedal back when we should stop at the gas station. Since it was Sunday, no service shop was open. We fixed a cord to the gas pedal, and the technician pulled it, when necessary. So we happily returned the car to the Rent-a-Car office.

After two weeks, I continued from Böblingen to Amsterdam by train. In Holland, I rented a Volkswagen to make two trips through the countryside, visiting some medieval villages such as Purmerend, Monikendam, Edam, Hoorn, Schermerhorn, as well as Zandvoort, Oude Kerk, Hilversum, and the surrounding on the next day. The windmills of which I had visited one in Schermerhorn, climbing inside to the top of it, to look through the hole of the main shaft, were much interesting to me. Though it was August, the North Sea was very cold, and—being pampered by the warm Adriatic Sea—I would not dare to swim in it. My trip had continued by train to Rotterdam and then by a vessel to Harwich and again by train to London.

Next day, I took train to Weymouth continuing from there by a vessel, which was the extension of British Railways to the Island of Guernsey. We were over one thousand passengers, and the whole sailing lasted four hours. After

the first hour, the sea became rough, and many passengers became seasick. This caused the rooms to be littered all over, but the crew kept covering the puke by sawdust, and they had cleaned the dirt almost immediately. Fortunately, I am not sensitive to rough seas, but the acrid stench everywhere became annoying. So I decided to take some fresh air out on the board. There I had seen a really big crowd, sacrificing the contents of their stomachs in many different ways to the God Neptunius. If the Dutch painter Pieter Bruegel (1528-1569) would be present, he would have the chance to paint all this diversity. However, the crew kept cleaning and washing. About one hour before we arrived to St. Peter Port, the sea became calm again, and the crew managed to clean the ship completely by the time when we had arrived to the port.

On the pier, two men from Tektronix, Ltd. were waiting for me; the vice director, Arthur Ball, and the engineer, Derek Phillpot. Seeing all these pale passengers in dirty dresses descending from the ship, Mr. Ball asked me if the sea was rough. I told him it was, but I am not sensitive to this. I got the accommodation in a hotel with a beautiful view to St. Peter Port. The next morning, Derek came to me to meet Mr. Frank Doyle the manager of "Tektronix Guernsey." I was surprised to see there was no water in the harbor, and the boats were laid on the ground, some six meters lower than they were floating on the sea at the time of my arrival. Derek told me that the difference between the high and the low tide was 8 m to 10 m. Mr. Doyle was very kind, and on my asking, he had given me a coveted book of oscilloscopes, which was not available in Yugoslavia. Derek was my guide on the tour through Tektronix factory. I was impressed to see the production line, the overall order, and cleanness. Everything was much better organized than in Hewlett/Packard factory in Böblingen. It came to my mind how much we in Yugoslavia were behind. Derek showed me some interesting parts of the island, where I took beautiful photos. He showed me Perelle Bay and the charming Little Chapel, built of shells and of ceramic splinters by two priests. I was told that the company kept training courses for foreigners, and I asked to get an invitation. When sailing back, the sea was calm, and I almost read the interesting book of oscilloscopes through.

In London, I visited some interesting places and rested in Green Park, where the brass band was playing classical music. I still remember how well they played the very difficult fourth movement of the fourth symphony by Peter Tchaikovsky. The next day, I had to return to Harwich and then continue by a liner to Rotterdam. When I had to pay my bill in the dinning room of the ship, I was awkward with the English money. (Then one pound was worth twenty shillings and one shilling twelve pennies, besides there was a nonexistent unit "guinea.") As a sort of excuse, I mentioned that I read that soon the British would change their money: one pound would be one hundred pennies, whilst shillings and guineas would be abandoned.

Then a man of some eighty, sitting across the table, became furious. With an angry voice, he told me that this is an English tradition and it was none of my business! His baldhead became red like tomato, and the blood vessels of his temples became dangerously swollen. I told him that indeed this is none of my business and I that had just read of this. But it did not help; to stop the old man would be like stopping a train by underlying my foot on the track. He had just got the momentum and, if he would be struck by a heart attack, I would feel responsible. I wonder if he was still alive in 1971 when the British had indeed changed the money in the way predicted.

At the Dutch pass control in Rotterdam, I had difficulties because I had the visa just for a single entry. But the border officials were kind, and I got a transit visa on my way to Germany. In Ulm/Donau, I visited the company Telefunken A. G., from where we (at Iskra) were purchasing the cathode ray tubes. They showed me the production of TV picture tubes, and I also got some interesting technical literature. The most interesting building in town is the old cathedral in Gothic style with the world's highest bell tower (161 m). I could not go far enough to get the full tower in my camera sight. The old part of town was charming. On the way back home, I made a short break in Augsburg to visit my mountaineering friend Hans Wunderer. He gave me a sightseeing tour of the town. Then it was time to return home.

The whole trip starting at Hewlett/Packard, Böblingen, and ending in Augsburg had lasted one full month. It was the most significant single trip in my life, and it had a profound effect to my professional career. I had visited three important companies; all three were related to my field of interest. I had seen how the efficient production should be organized, and I also got much information, which was extremely useful for my design work. Unfortunately, the circumstances in Yugoslavia and particularly in Iskra, where I was working, were such that it was impossible to organize the production in the way I had seen abroad. The most important of all trips was that I got in touch with the company Tektronix, where I was to become an employee from 1967 until 1970.

In late autumn of 1963, I was off to participate on a three-week training course at Tektronix in Guernsey. This time, I went by jet plane *Caravelle* from Zagreb Airport in Croatia to London and from the Heathrow Airport by a four-engine plane to Guernsey. These were my first trips by airplane. In Guernsey, I was booked in a private hotel at St. Peter in the Wood, together with four English and one Dutch participant of the training course. We became like a family. In our free time, we hiked across the island, and during the weekends, we hired a car to increase the range. I still have beautiful transparencies, which I have taken during our trips. The island, with numerous bays, abandoned German gun posts, charming villages, and so on, was something I would never forget. The Germans had occupied the Channel Islands from June 30, 1940, until May

10, 1945, one day after they had signed the capitulation. But the people on the island were reluctant to discuss anything of the German occupation.

In three weeks on the island, I had improved my English, and I also got used to the English way of life. However, there were two exceptions. I still cannot understand why the bathing room, where one is naked and wet, had no heating, why the hot and cold water ran from different faucets, and why there was so little hot water that after filling the bath tub to one decimeter only, the hot water started running cold. So I had taken a warm bath only once in three weeks. Fortunately, I am used—since my eighth year—to wash myself to the waist every day with the cold water from the faucet and to wash my feet, and so on, with cold water as well. It refreshes me, and I really enjoy this. I enjoyed the English breakfast very much, but the lunches and dinners were not to my liking. (After I returned home, I asked Cveta to drop any potatoes from the menu for the next month because we were served potatoes as the side dish every day at lunch and dinner). Fortunately, I had discovered a very good and inexpensive restaurant in St. Peter Port, where I could occasionally replace the lunch, which we had in the company cafeteria (where potato, prepared in different ways, was served every day as well) by excellent Italian spaghetti or something else, all this representing a pleasant change of my diet.

The training courses led by Terry Ness, with whom we became good friends, were very instructive, and they improved my knowledge to a great extent. I was impressed by the informal way of the lectures. This was just the period when Tektronix was introducing transistors to replace the electronic tubes, so we discussed both sorts of instruments. We also got many instruction manuals and other literature, which formed such a big package that I was promised this to be sent by the company by a special mail to my home address. Even so, my luggage was too heavy because I had bought many items for my family and for me. I was curious how the official at the airport would calculate the excess luggage cost. By considering the odd English monetary system and the Imperial System of Units (1 lb = 16 oz), this should be quite a calculation. But the official had disappointed me. After checking the weight, he had taken a table from where he read the exact amount of surcharge.

In the years to follow, I participated on several training courses at Tektronix Guernsey. One of the lecturers was Ted Marguerit, a Frenchman from Switzerland, with whom I also became a friend. In my free time, I wandered across the Island and visited several interesting places. The house of Victor Hugo in St. Peter Port was very interesting to see. Here the French novelist dwelled from 1860 until 1870, when the French King Louis Napoleon III was deposed, and Hugo could return to his native land again. In his exile, he had written two famous novels *Les misérables* and *Les travailleurs de la mer*. It was interesting to see the (then 100 years old) photo laboratory, which was located

under the staircases, where his son was developing pictures. Hugo was also a good painter and carver, and in his luxury house, I could see some of his works. He had the writing desk in the attics, arranged so that he was writing whilst standing. Judging from my own problems, he had probably difficulties with his spine. The curator had shown me his bed, which was very hard, and instead of the pillow, Hugo had a specially tilled piece of wood to put it under his neck. The part of the attic where he was writing had a glass roof, and from there, it was a spectacular view down to St. Peter Port. The curator had also shown me a big oak, which Hugo had planted in the garden, saying when the oak would grow to its full size, there would be United Europe.

In one of my return flights from England, I had an intermediate stop in Zurich, where I had to change the plane. Before boarding, the search of the Swiss Police was thorough but polite. They had checked not only my luggage, but me as well, my legs all the way up to the groin. Two flights were announced to Yugoslavia, one for Belgrade and one for Ljubljana. When queuing for Ljubljana, I could hear a juicy quarrel between a Serb and a Slovene. It came out that the Serb, who was smoking, had made a hole with his cigarette in the nice, brand-new coat of the Slovene. The last was big and strong, almost twice the size of the Serb. However, the Serb had replaced this deficiency by cursing and insulting. (As it came out too many times after the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the Serbs are not willing to admit any guilt.) If they were both alone, the Slovene could make a *Pretzel* out of the Serb, but so . . . When we arrived to the stewardess, who was collecting boarding passes, she tried to explain to the Serb that his boarding pass was for another plane destined for Belgrade. However, the angry gesture and a loud curse of the enraged passenger made her jumping away. Shrugging her shoulders, she let him through. In addition, when we were in the plane, the Serb continued cursing and insulting, not only that passenger whom he had burnt the hole in the coat, but all Slovenes as well. The doors of the plane closed, the engines started running, and the pilot announced the flight to Ljubljana. When hearing this, the Serb panicked; he tried exiting the plane, but it was too late! Then he was simmering his grudge quietly all the way to Ljubljana, probably thinking who would collect his luggage in Belgrade. A hard punishment indeed!

In 1965, my friend and colleague Milan Kejzlar had invited me to visit him in Czechoslovakia. I had met him for the first time in the late fifties on the electronics show in Ljubljana. Since I had read Czech professional books and magazines, which were available here after the war, we could communicate well; I had spoken in Slovenian language and he in Czech. In this way, we keep corresponding until today.

To visit Milan, I had taken a train via Austria. After leaving Vienna, the smooth ride of the train had suddenly became very rough, when we were

approaching the Czechoslovakian border. The passengers who remained in the compartment were mostly Czech and Slovaks, with whom I was talking in my language. Strangely, the conversation in Slovenian and Czech went on without greater difficulties because both languages are related. The most interesting was the area near the border. There I saw a long and high double fence with barbed wire, and it reminded me of that one in Campo Concentramento Gonars. I told the passengers that I saw a very similar fence already during the war, when I was a prisoner in the Italian concentration camp. There too were towers with reflectors and machine guns just like here. It seemed to me that the passengers were at great pain to suppress their amusement when hearing such a sincere comparison. I had also taken one picture of this fence. But when I had the picture developed, I found it was blurred because of the violent swinging of the wagon. The rough ride was probably arranged intentionally. The border check was thorough and long lasting. I still remember how a lady custom officer was proudly carrying a bunch of confiscated synthetic raincoats.

In Bratislava, I spent the night in a hotel. It was unusual for me that the lady in the hotel reception had taken away my passport, telling me that I would get it back in the morning. At first, I thought that the numerous seals from Austria, Germany, Holland, Denmark, and England were probably the reason that my passport had to be checked more thoroughly. Next morning, I saw this was a routine procedure for every guest from the west. For the ride to Žilina and further to Nižna nad Oravou, I had taken the local train. In the dining wagon, I met a kind and hospitable attorney Dr. Žochňjak. When arriving to Nižna, it was easy to find the apartment of Milan, to whom I could not communicate the exact time of my arrival. Milan worked in a big factory of TV receivers in the town, and he had arranged my tour through the plant. In Czechoslovakia, they had decided to have only one and single factory for TV receivers to cover all the domestic needs as well as for export. I had seen the whole production process, which was very impressive, for we had nothing nearly as big and sophisticated in Yugoslavia. Since the production was on such a large scale, it way surpassed the production of oscilloscopes, which I had seen in Guernsey. I could only draw a similarity to the production of TV picture tubes, which I saw at Telefunken in Ulm, Germany.

At last, I was shown a prototype hi-fi stereo, and they were curious to hear my opinion. From several long-play records, I selected Max Bruch's violin concerto with the soloist Josef Suk and Karl Ančerl conducting Czech Philharmonic Orchestra. Together with another member of the team, I listened to the concerto from the beginning to the end. The quality of sound as well as the performance was excellent. A few years later, when working in USA, I bought exactly the same record, which I still have. I could never understand why some "educated listeners" consider this masterpiece "a poor Brahms."

Next day, Milan and his wife Milada took me for a ride to Starý Smokovec, a tourist resort under the Tatra Mountains, where they had reserved a beautiful hotel room for me. We passed the place Liptovský Mikuláš, where the rebel (*hajduk*) Juraj Janošík (the “Slovak Robin Hood”) was sentenced to death in 1713. The punishment was exemplary cruel; he was hung on a hook for his ribs to die slowly. As a memorial, there are still the gallows at the main road through Liptovský Mikuláš where a (flat and metallic) figure of Janošík hangs on the hook.

The hotel in Starý Smokovec, which had seen the times of Austrian/Hungarian Empire, was excellent and spotlessly clean. Concerning the average living standard in Czechoslovakia, the cost, which Milan had paid for me, had to be high, and to get the reservation during the high season was surely difficult. Unfortunately, I did not start thinking of all this until after my return. On the ride to Starý Smokovec, we passed Višné Hágy. My late roommate Podgoršek, with whom I had spent several months together in Sanatorium Golník, curing TB, had told me how it was during the war, when he was a patient in the TB sanatorium at Višné Hágy.

Starý Smokovec (1017 m, in today's Slovakia) was the starting point for several ascents, and Milan had proposed to climb Lomnický štít (2632 m). We first took a cable car to Hrebienok thus gaining some 300 m of elevation. Then we walked to the lake Skalnaté Pleso (1701 m; Pleso means *lake* in Czech). The trail was excellent. Since I was used to rough and narrow trails in Julian Alps, it appeared to me that too much work was done to make the trails so wide and easy. Another impression was that all these trails were too crowded. Besides Czechs and Slovaks, many mountaineers from the surrounding “socialist” countries were visiting the area: Hungarians, Romanians, eastern-Germans, Poles as well as some tourists from the west. The capacity of the mountain cabins, cable cars, or even of some trails could hardly match such a big crowd. On top of this, too many mountaineers were poorly equipped for the ascents of high mountains. In spite of such crowd, it was amazing how spotless clean were the trails and the rest areas. Well, in 1965, the western “throw-away society” did not penetrate to the east (yet). On the other hand, the visitors of the Czechoslovakian mountains were apparently much better educated than ours in Yugoslavia, who keep littering their ways left and right. The third factor was probably that people in Czechoslovakia *want* to keep their mountains clean, and they surely spend some effort to clean their trails regularly.

Though a cable car went from Skalnaté Pleso all the way up to the peak of Lomnický štít, we took another cable car just up to the saddle Lomnické Sedlo (2189 m) from where we continued climbing to the peak. Chains secured the most exposed places on this spectacular route, and the whole ascent was a real pleasure. We were all well equipped, with mountain boots, and so on, and I had

an ice axe. Then we suddenly saw something one could indeed not expect on such a steep and exposed route. A Polish mountaineer was descending—instead of the mountain boots he wore Japanese rubber sleepers, his toes protruding through the socks. Also the rest of his “mountaineering equipment” was way insufficient for such high altitude. If the weather had changed suddenly, he would have frozen. Very frankly, I had never seen a worst-equipped mountaineer in my entire mountaineering career!

On the top of Lomnický Štít, there is an astronomical observatory, a restaurant, and a cable car station. From the summit, we could see numerous peaks, valleys, lakes, and rivers, and Milan had told me their names. Unfortunately, the weather was slightly misty, so I could not take clear photos of all this beauty. Since it was already late afternoon, we had no time to descend by walking. Instead, we had taken a cable car from the peak all the way down near Tatranské Matliare (885 m) from where it was not far to the railway station Tatranská Lomnica, where we had boarded the train back to Starý Smokovec.

In the sunny days, that followed, we had visited Štrbské Pleso, Popradské Pleso, and Mengušovská Dolina. In the toilet room of the hotel at Popradské Pleso, somebody had written funny comments against the ruling system. (This reminded me that Slovenian students too could express their disagreement with the system only in toilets.) At another valley, Bielovodská Dolina, there was a lake of crystal clear water. Inside of the lake, several meters from the shore an impressive sign was fixed on the pole: PITNÁ VODA (*drinking water*). Unlike Julian Alps, Tatra Mountains were built mostly of granite, which was not porous like chalkstone of our mountains. So the water does not drain underground, and this is why there are so numerous beautiful lakes, waterfalls, and rivers. When a wet glass dries in Slovenia, the stains of minerals, mostly calcium, remain on the glass. I was so used to this that I could not understand why the dry glass in my room was always spotlessly clean, though I had left it wet after I drank water from it.

When it was time to take the farewell, Milan gave me the ride to the Žilina railway station from where I went to Bratislava and further to Vienna. I had spent the whole day sightseeing this beautiful capital of Austria, which is so very much connected with our history. The following year Milan, Milada and their two young daughters Lydia and Jítka came to Yugoslavia to spend two weeks at the Adriatic coast. I could reserve only a very simple bungalow for all four of them, but this disadvantage was somehow compensated by the fact that it was very close to the shore of the sea.

2.14 Decision to Work Abroad

In 1966, the working conditions at Iskra Central R&D building in Ljubljana kept deteriorating. (Some statements written in chapter 2.11 will be partly repeated here in order to show the general picture better.) For example, for every single item, resistor, nut, screw, and so on, we had to fill a separate document (how many pieces, the project and part number, and so on, plus our signature) in *six* issues to get it from the stockroom. After the documents were filled, we discovered in too many cases that the item(s) required was/were not available. Even the standard resistors and capacitors were not all on stock, neither were the company-standardized cabinets and knobs. We had to let them made separately, down in the shop. However, the mechanical shop had the priority of working for the outside customers, whilst the urgent needs for R&D had to wait sometimes a month or more. To get any material from abroad lasted about six months on average. Most of the competences were centered in Belgrade, to where our representatives had to travel daily (usually by plane, to be back the same day) to get the necessary permissions for import, in order to speed up the procedure.

The central purchasing department of Iskra was located in a modern skyscraper in the center of Ljubljana. The whole building was named Iskra Commerce, and they were also selling the products built in our branch works. Besides importing the parts and instruments to cover the needs for the research and production, they also were importing some other items, even airplanes and helicopters. So foreign currency, which a department had assured for the prompt payment of the ordered parts, badly needed for the design, was sometimes used to make up for such, larger imports, where hefty commissions were being paid. The purchase of originally ordered parts was pushed to sometime in the future, where they would again get a suitable sum of foreign currency. The situation became peculiar once, when a department did not meet the deadline for a military project, because the parts they had ordered and paid for in time, were

not purchased. Then a general from Belgrade came to Ljubljana to investigate the matter. (I do not know how this situation was resolved.)

All the waiting time due to lack of material and services had to be assigned to the project developed. So the cost for the design, which was paid by the branch-works where our “masterworks” were being produced, had risen sky-high. In addition, the originally supposed time to be spent for the design was usually doubled or tripled. In order to fill the waiting time, some departments were developing special single instruments for the outside customers. Instead of decreasing the cost and time for the design, this habit had caused more harm than good.

For all this, the working enthusiasm from years ago was almost gone. Once when we had a New Year’s celebration in our R&D building, most of us engineers got drunk intentionally—on grounds of our disappointment. I remember losing balance, when I was dancing with a girl, and I literary dropped down to the floor. To get drunk on such occasions was highly unusual for the engineers. I do not remember ever to see one drunk, maybe only a technician, who liked booze too much. But the drinking of wine did not help changing the circumstances.

Since at that time some of our engineers got the employment abroad, I started looking for the possibility to work abroad as well. My best connections were with Tektronix Guernsey, where I had asked the director Frank Doyle if he could find a place for me. However, on the Island Guernsey, there was only production and no design, which was located in Beaverton, Oregon, USA. I was already several times on the training courses at Tektronix Guernsey, so they were nearly familiar with my knowledge and education. In the months to follow, Frank moved to USA to work at Tektronix, Inc. as the foreign sales director. He suggested that I should rather go to USA to work there in the engineering department. On his recommendation, the company started the recruitment procedure. The matter came so far that in October 1966, I should meet the R&D director Bill Walker in Paris. Tektronix had paid all the expenses for our meeting in Paris, where I got the accommodation in a hotel near L’Arc de Triomphe. There was also the engineer of Tektronix Guernsey, Ted Marguerit, whom I already knew well.

Bill, who came to my room in the hotel, asked me some technical questions, to which I had apparently answered to his satisfaction. I also asked how to get the apartment in USA and the like, and Bill’s answers were satisfactory to me. At the end, he had offered me the yearly salary plus the profit share, which was ten to thirty percent. Although I had no idea about US salaries, the offered amount seemed insulting to me. I have told that, to my opinion, this was a salary of a US technician and not of an engineer. The answer was that the salary went up with performance. In case I would not be satisfied at Tektronix,

I could move to another US company. I replied that I was not prepared to join Tektronix, Inc., unless the salary is substantially higher.

My return from Paris was something to remember. On my wish, Ted had shown me the Museum Louvre, where I spent too much time so that I almost missed my plane. The taxi driver, who gave me the ride to the Orly Airport, was speeding as much as he could, so I was afraid, the police might stop us. This would mean, "Adieu the plane!" Fortunately, the police did not stop us, and the departure of the JAT (the acronym for Yugoslavian Air Transport) plane had a delay, as usual. So I was not too late. Our *Caravelle* plane had an intermediate stop in Frankfurt, Germany. As soon as we had touched the landing strip there, all the lights in the plane went out. The pilot announced that we should not panic because he was still in full control of the plane. We had to disembark, and the repair had taken long time. Finally, we were told that our airplane was ready, and we boarded it. But when the engines had started, the lights went out again. To continue our flight, we had to go out again and another JAT *Caravelle* took us and our luggage to the Zagreb Airport.

Due to excessive delays, we landed in Zagreb at about 11:00 p.m. and not at 6:00 p.m. as scheduled. The parking lot was closed already, and the attendant went home. In order to get my car, I had to find the fireman on duty to unlock the gate. During my absence, snow had fallen in Slovenia. The motorway from Zagreb to Ljubljana was salted but unevenly. On the road, there was some 5-cm-high (2 inch) "islands" of hard snow, separated by salty water, where the salt had melted the snow. After passing about one third of the way to Ljubljana, for which I needed a full hour, I was too tired to continue. I was near Hotel Oto ec, a beautiful tourist resort, where I got the room to spend the rest of the night. When I arrived back to work at Iskra, it was hard for me to explain the unannounced absence.

After waiting for more than a month to get the answer from Tektronix, I supposed they had dropped the matter. So I started looking to get employment at Brown Bowery Company (BBC) in Switzerland. My friend Camillo L. P. Kind,²⁹ who was the leader of the BBC Turbines Department in Baden, had

²⁹ I have met Camillo in 1964, when he was camping with his and two other Swiss families in the wilderness on the Adriatic Island Dugi otok (Long Island). There a policeman kept coming almost every day to check and molest them. Once Camillo sent her daughter to me (I was camping with my family at the nearest bay on the camping place of the company Iskra). The reason was that the policeman, who did not know any other language, except his Croatian, had required all three families to leave. Then Camillo had literally pawed the camping table with all sorts of documents and permits issued by the local and federal authorities, putting a stone on everyone to prevent the wind blowing them away. I asked the policemen to

arranged the meeting to where I was traveling by train. They offered me a position in the control engineering department, and the salary would be much more than I would have got at Tektronix! However, the problem was that I had no experience in control engineering. Therefore, I had agreed for a fourteen days term to say my ultimate word. Fortunately, a week after I returned from Baden, I got another offer from Tektronix. This time it was 25 percent more than the first time, which I had accepted, though I still considered it a too low a salary for an engineer. I quickly wrote a letter to my friend Camillo, explaining that I had accepted the offer from USA because I already had some experience in the design of oscilloscopes but none of the control engineering. With today's knowledge, I would accept the better-paid offer from Switzerland, but at that time, I was afraid to disappoint my Swiss friend. In the study program I went through, we had no subject of control engineering, and I could also not afford taking the risk to disrepute myself. In general, our study program was such that I had to make up for several subjects, which I had not learned at the university. On the other hand, we had the lectures and examinations on strength of materials, machine elements, descriptive geometry, and so on, which I almost never needed in my profession. But the nasty subject of technical drawing, where the professor was meticulous, proved very useful in my later work. When looking back, I got the most valuable knowledge from the professors Josip Plemelj (Mathematics, four semesters), Anton Peterlin (Physics, two semesters), and Venče Koželj (Basic Electrical Engineering and Electromagnetics, two semesters each). A very good and kind professor was Dušan Lasič, who taught us electronic tubes, a subject, which was practically obsolete at the time I arrived in USA. Dr Schaup of Iskra Company taught me English three successive years, two hours a week during the cold half of the year. All this knowledge was essential for my employment in USA.

When I had accepted the offer of Tektronix, Inc., I did not expect that nine months would be necessary to settle everything before my departure to the States. The first difficulties were at Iskra Company, where the purchase of the parts from abroad had become more sluggish. In addition, I was told that I should not leave the company unless I complete my project. When I reported of this to Tektronix, they promised me to send any material I needed to complete the project (which was an oscilloscope for TV servicing). Indeed they started sending me the necessary parts by airmail, special delivery. My work continued faster than ever before. Since the procrastination to purchase

leave the neutral Swiss families in peace, but he was adamant. Eventually, Camillo replied bluntly that he will not leave! Against so many documents and the firm will of the Swiss, the paranoid policeman was unable to do anything. They stayed, and the policeman left, never to be seen again.

the parts did not work, my envious adversaries at Iskra hit me with another bludgeon. The total cost of my project should not exceed thirty millions of Dinars, and I was watching closely how the cost went up. Toward the completion of the design, when I had spent about twenty-eight millions, the accounting department reported a sudden ten-million cost increase of my project! As a consequence, they had immediately decreased my salary. Since such an increase seemed impossible to me, I started tracking how the money was spent. It was difficult for me to dig through the numerous documents. Finally, I discovered that the sudden jump of the cost was caused by a lady administrator, who had charged me for any square centimeter of the printed circuit board, as for one square meter! Since a square meter has 10,000 square centimeters, the actual cost increase was (about) ten millions Dinars divided by ten thousand, which was just a humble one thousand Dinars. The mistake was corrected; however, I got neither an apology, nor the money unjustly deduced from my salary. To complain would not make any sense because I could not win against a communist. (I believe that the mistake, caused by the wife of the head company economist, was done intentionally.)

Finally, I had completed my design, the prototype was built, and it had successfully passed heat, cold, humidity, shock, and vibration tests. The production documentation was completed as well, and I had written the operating manual, the calibration procedure, and so on. When everything was completed, my "friends" at Iskra had arranged the last obstacle: I should also write which parts might fail most frequently. Since this information could be obtained only by statistical analysis of at least some hundred pieces, within some years and not on a single prototype, I had flatly refused doing such nonsense. I told them that I could indeed write some fiction, but this would be of no value, besides there would be nobody to prove I was wrong. Finally, they had given up. The last requirement was that I had to see the director, France Dobnikar, to make an agreement with him, before leaving Iskra. Since I was not told of what an agreement this should be, I suspected another trap. Then I suspected, and now I know that he was an agent of the Secret Police UDV. He might ask me to send the reports of the behavior of some Yugoslav citizens in USA or from inside of the company, where I would be employed. I refused seeing him and simply went home. Frankly, after all that, I was tired of Iskra indeed.

Another obstacle was the American embassy in Zagreb; the town is some 125 km distant from Ljubljana. Since I had written on the application form for the immigrant visa that I had tuberculosis, which was ultimately cured some fourteen years ago, they did not believe me. No recent X-ray picture and no doctors' report from Ljubljana were good for them. I had to do another X-ray picture of my lungs at a Croatian doctor in Zagreb, who was assigned to do such examinations for the embassy. But again, his report was still not sufficient.

Another doctor had to come from Vienna to give his ultimate blessing. All these troubles had required nine travels to Zagreb, and each time I had to take a working day off.

In addition, the people at Tektronix had checked me in some way. Dave Nelson, the American I had met at Tektronix Guernsey, came here from Zug, Switzerland. With him, his wife, and my daughter Zorana, we made a trip to Trenta Valley. Dave was a good mountaineer, and we both made a small ascent there. I met him again some days later in Belgrade at the international fair of industry. We both should participate there at the Tektronix stand. There was also the new director Arthur Ball and Jack Moffat, an engineer from Tektronix Guernsey. Belgrade had the reputation for reckless drivers and, consequently, the new Porsche car of Dave had suffered two collisions. Since Porsche is a very strong built car, it was “the winner” in both cases. However, Dave had to have some bodywork done, and both reflectors had to be replaced. There I experienced the nasty habit of the local taxi drivers; in order to overcharge the customer, they did not switch the taximeter on. Once when we were on the ride from the fair to the center of the town, Arthur reminded me that the driver did not switch the taximeter on. We protested and asked the driver how much he intended charging us for the ride to our hotel. He told an exaggerated amount, and we asked him to stop immediately, continuing that small rest of the way on feet—not paying anything. Needless to say that he was cursing abundantly, so we had to hear the Serbian names of human genitals again and again.

The Russians had a large stand at the fair. They came to our stand too, but they were very shy. After they had left, Arthur told me that he would like to get a catalogue of Russian oscilloscopes. So I visited the Russian stand, offering them a Tektronix catalogue in exchange for theirs. They were more than pleased! In addition to their catalogue, I also got a glass of vodka and a package of genuine Gillette razor blades—a sales promotion gift. In some way, I was sorry for them, who—probably for political reasons—were afraid to ask us for a catalogue and get it, like any other customer. Though I was using an electric shaver, I had nevertheless taken the “Gillettes” (which had to be certainly very precious in USSR) just to avoid offending them.

The Yugoslav enterprise Elektronska Industrija (EI) had displayed a copy of a Tektronix oscilloscope, which they were producing. From outside, it looked almost like a genuine Tektronix oscilloscope, type 515. Since EI lacked some parts, which were produced at Tektronix for their exclusive use, the inside of the instrument was slightly different. Still worse was its performance in comparison with the copied model because they did not do a thorough circuit analysis of the more sophisticated details. (I had the opportunity to examine this instrument already several months earlier. We called it “Serbonix.”) When Arthur and I came to the EI stand, asking for some details of this oscilloscope,

we were told that they had the Tektronix license (!). Arthur just replied he was hearing this for the first time.

To leave my country for good in order to settle in an unknown environment proved more difficult for me than I had expected. I went to different mountains knowing that I would not see them anymore. When I had ascended Šija (1880 m) at Lake Bohinj, I had met there an English ambassador and his wife, a movie actress. We were sitting on the summit looking down at the beautiful landscape. I had told of my intention to leave for the States for good, which he could not understand. Why leaving such a beautiful country? Though I had told him about all the troubles hindering my professional development and the political and economical situation in Yugoslavia, I could not convince him. Next we decided to ascend the neighboring mountain Vogel (1922 m), but he was already too tired when we arrived to the saddle. However, his wife decided to go with me. The ascent to Vogel was very easy, and soon we had reached the peak. Šija and Vogel were just two peaks in the long chain of mountains where the border between Yugoslavia and Italy was laid after WWI. The view down and around was superb; it let me think of what the actress' husband had said. Before descending, I caressed the grass on that peak.

With my wife, Cveta, I visited Bohinj and the waterfall Savica. There she had taken some photos of me to let me remember what I was leaving. We also went to the Valley Tamar, under the beautiful mountain Jalovec (2645 m), my beloved peak. From the valley, we ascended some 100 m up to the source of Nadiža. There the cold and crystal-clean water ran abundantly out of a wall, and we both drank it with gusto! Then we took the chair lift to Vitranc (1631 m). Again pictures were taken. Now as I was reviewing these pictures, they reveal how sad I was.

When everything, except the airline ticket, was settled for my departure to USA, I still could not decide whether to go or not. Finally, it came to my mind to ask an experienced and older man, whom I trusted. I went to the faculty of electrical engineering to hear the opinion of my Prof. Dušan Lasi. I told him everything: how difficult it was for me to leave my country and my beloved mountains, the impossible situation at work, no hope for an improvement in the future, and so on, including my doubt if it was moral to leave the country where I got the university education free of charge. However, I did not tell him of my feelings concerning all the injustice I had experienced at Iskra in the last year. Professor Lasič, who was a first-class mountaineer and climber, had listened patiently. Then he told me that I should first take care of my professional career, and everything else would come by itself. He told me I should go to USA since I already had such an excellent opportunity to go. So the dice was cast!

Finally, the day of my departure in early October 1967 was here. My wife, Cveta, son Miro and daughter Zorana accompanied me to the Ljubljana

airport. In addition, my sister Draga and her husband Jože (he had the same name as my brother) accompanied us with their own car, taking my luggage with them. (My small Fiat 750 would have no space for four persons plus four big pieces of luggage.) The farewell should be short and painless, but it was neither. The airplane from Belgrade had two hours of delay, for it was very foggy at the airport. I had to spend almost all this time waiting in the international zone. Then I could see my family only from far. About one hour after the fog disappeared, the plane had landed. More than half an hour was needed for our airplane to finally take off. Near the airport, there is a chain of mountains, and I said my farewell to Storžič, my first ascent over 2000 m.

In London, I had to switch airplanes to continue my flight to USA the next day. I still remember seeing myself in the mirror in the hotel room. "Peter, you will have to change your life drastically from now on," I said to myself. Next day, I was surprised seeing US officials to check our passes just before boarding the plane. Then the long twelve-hour flight to Seattle followed. The landscape of Greenland and Baffin Bay, seeing from 10,000 m, was spectacular. This was the longest day in my life so far. In Seattle, there was another thorough US pass control. When waiting for the plane for Portland, I phoned Tektronix, Inc. in Beaverton, telling them that I was on my way to Portland. On the flight to Portland, I could see the snow-capped peaks, which would become familiar to me in the years to follow: the dominating Mt. Rainier, Mt. Saint Helens, Mt. Adams, and "my future friend" Mt. Hood, all higher than our highest peak Triglav. After landing at Portland airport, I was greeted by three top Tektronix officials: the R&D director Bill Walker and the foreign sales director Frank Doyle, both of whom I already knew. There was also the boss of the Parts Evaluation Engineering where I would work, Jack Milay. I did not consider myself being such an important person to be greeted by Tektronix big brass right at the airport. After the greetings, my words were:

"Well, now here I am all yours! But I will not spit on all that is Yugoslav. I have left my country just for political and professional reasons!"

2.15 The American Interlude

Bill Walker, who was driving the car, offered me the front seat, whilst Frank Doyle and Jack Milay, were sitting in the back. The distance from the airport, which lay between the Columbia River and the largest Oregon town, Portland, to Beaverton, where the main works of Tektronix, Inc. were located, was about 32 km (20 miles). I could not miss noticing that Bill was occasionally watching my reactions during my first ride “in the New World.” Since I had already visited some big European towns like Vienna, Copenhagen, Paris, Zurich, and London (where they drive on the “wrong side of the road”), the environment appeared usual to me. When we approached Portland, our ride was via the highway. The only thing which impressed me was the multiple lanes converged on the double deck Marquam Bridge, across the Willamette River to diverge again. Further on, we drove on the circuitous (now old) Canyon Road, up to Sylvan and then over the Sunset Highway, turning left to Beaverton. Bill pointed out the Tektronix Sunset plant, a predecessor to much larger Tektronix Industrial Park, where we were heading.

When we arrived, I already knew the names of all buildings there, except the administrative building, which was completed recently. The source of my previous knowledge was the movies, which I saw in classes on the island of Guernsey as well as some literature I got there. Bill led me straight to the parts evaluation department, where I was supposed to work. Since it was already after 5:00 p.m., only Don Tucker was there, apparently working on a “home project,” which was allowed after the regular working time. He told Bill that I was bashful, and I replied that I was just tired because for me the time was after 2:00 a.m. I was shown also instrument evaluation department upstairs. After showing me his very nice house at the edge of a forest, Bill gave me a ride to a nearby motel where I spent the night.

However, just after two hours of sleep, I was awake and could not sleep anymore. Then I did not know anything of the time-lag symptoms. Later I was told that for every hour of time difference an average individual needs one day to get fully adjusted. The time difference between Central European Time and the Pacific Time Zone is nine hours. To kill time, I switched on the TV, which was then black and white, like ours in Yugoslavia. (Color TV was just introduced in USA but the price of such receivers were very high.) I was annoyed by too frequent and too many commercials, which had interrupted any interesting movie way too many times of which I was not used to. After a while, I switched the TV off and kept lying in bed half awake, awaiting the sunrise. The next day was Sunday, and I spent time investigating the nearby environment. To my surprise, I saw extremely few pedestrians and a couple of car drivers even stopped, asking me if they could help me and give me a ride.

On Monday, my boss Virg Tomlin came to give me the ride to Tektronix Industrial Park, which was just about 1 km from the motel. We entered the lab in Technical Center (Building fifty), which I had seen two days before. My colleagues Roger Ady, Allen Hollister, Don Tucker, Hazel Love, James Kassebaum, Bill Marquart, John Fessler, and the secretary Frances Butte were there. Of those, Roger Ady was exceptionally helpful to me. He kindly lent me a b/w TV set, his photo camera, and even a backpack until I bought my own. He also helped me in many other ways on my first steps into the "New World," giving me the feeling that I was welcome among them. There was a work bench waiting for me and the plastic plate with the name PETER STARIC (to which I had engraved a small v above C to make STARIČ) had been fixed there. In the days to follow, I got a key for the engineering building, which opened the four-side entrances and my visit card. (The main entrance, which was intended for the visitors, had a receptionist.) The working conditions were fantastic when compared with those in Yugoslavia. I was impressed by the comradeship of my colleagues, who helped me in every way, when needed.

In the first days, I needed to go several times to Portland in order to arrange for the necessary permanent immigration documents, social security, health insurance, and such. Since I did not have my own car yet, and because I could be lost in a town entirely unknown to me, I was always given a ride and all necessary help by a Tektronix clerk. After the first week, I moved to a furnished apartment. For this, I bought my household utensils with the money Tektronix paid me as the "hiring cost." Since it would be unusual to buy so many things by pure cash, always a Tektronix employee was with me to explain the situation.

Later, when I got my own checks, the employee at the counter usually asked me to show my driver's license. To identify myself, I had shown my Green (immigration) Card, on which was my photo. But this document was not known to them. Since the girl insisted on seeing my driver's license, I showed my three-page International Driver's License, issued in Yugoslavia, which was in Slovenian and French—but not in English language. Eventually, the girl at the counter called her boss, and the situation was resolved. After I bought my (second hand), six cylinder American Rambler car for just \$300 and got my US driver's license, I did not stick out from the average customers anymore.

When my time lag was over, I got a project, a very sophisticated oscilloscope for physiological research. I should discover why one transistor in its amplifier kept failing consistently. Lee Milles came by, asking, "Will you do this?"

"Yes."

"Well, good luck to you! Good luck!"

I got the impression that my task would be a difficult one. Since I had already designed similar amplifiers for electrocardiography, just by using electronic tubes and not transistors, I was not too scared. After about two weeks of futile work and study, I had found the reason for failure. In addition I had also discovered an important design fault, which required sending a modification kit around the globe to every customer, who had bought this instrument. So my position in the company became firmly established.

Though I successfully solved all other tasks I have been assigned to, I noticed that my knowledge was partly obsolete. The colleagues and some from the other departments came to me, asking me to explain the circuits of the older oscilloscopes, which were designed with electronic tubes. They were trained to design transistor circuits only. In order to upgrade my knowledge, I subscribed to several training courses in the company. The most important of them was the class on wideband amplifiers, which were extensively used in TV, measuring equipment and in communications. Our main lecturer was a company expert Carl Battjes, assisted occasionally by John Addis and Bob Ross, who was an expert in mathematical analysis of circuits. Unfortunately, these lectures were not complete; to start with the very basics and gradually going further toward more sophisticated circuits, buttressed by a thorough mathematical analysis, as I was used to from the lectures at the University in Ljubljana. Nevertheless, at Tektronix, I had learned so much that I had fulfilled this task almost fifty years later.³⁰

³⁰ Together with thirty years younger Erik Margan, we completed the book *Wideband Amplifiers*, which was published in 2006 by Springer/Kluwer and reprinted a year later.



The view down to the old part of Ljubljana. The long, white building, (just slightly up and left, off the center) was my high school, "Realka". The fancy palace in front of it is the University. Today most of the different Faculties are dispersed around the periphery of the town.

One thing surprised me very much. When visiting Frank Doyle in the international department, which occupied one third of the fourth floor, I saw the Director Howard Vollum had his working desk in that same big room. No anterooms with a watchdog in the form of a charming, but resolute secretary, as I was used to in Yugoslavia. His desk was at the wall, near the window and just a big oil painting on the wall, distinguished his place from all others there. So he was accessible to *any* of his employee at any time he was there. And he was at his desk most of the time. In the company, we were addressing each other by our first names, and on the very rare occasions, when I had the chance to speak with him, I had to address him by Howard. So I had realized the picture of that "dirty capitalism," which was being propagated in Yugoslavia, was indeed a fake.

About a month after my arrival, I was invited to the patent department on the fourth floor. Besides that Russian catalogue I got at the Belgrade fair, they showed me the complete original blueprints of the circuit schematic of the oscilloscope I had designed at Iskra, just before my departure to USA. I still wonder, who was that "generous" guy who supplied these blueprints.

In Building 50, we had an Auditorium, where occasionally some interesting films were shown. Once, an employee of National Bureau of Standards (NBS)

had a lecture on the benefits of the internationally used metric system (SI) there. Though this would be for me convincing the convinced, I nevertheless went there, just to see how my American colleagues would react. Frankly, I admired their skill and patience with which they kept calculating their equations, where the symbols were being replaced by numerical figures, appended by so many conversion factors, just because they were using the British System of Units (BSU). Since I could not accept this sort of “mathematical masochism,” I kept calculating in SI units, where such conversion factors were not needed. So my calculations were faster and not as error prone as those of my colleagues. This was in 1967 and the NBS lecturer said that USA will be fully metric within seven years. Fine for me! As for the British, he was skeptical for their conservative adherence to the BSU. They might not go as fast, the lecturer thought. Now, more than forty years after, USA is still non-metric. I wonder for how long will USA keep avoiding the metric system, which has been adopted by the rest of the world?

The discussion following the lecture was very interesting for me, though I did not participate in it. When all this was over, just before the lecturer left, I stepped up to him and asked him, how to unify the different meanings of millions, billions, trillions, and so on. For example, the European billion is equal to the American trillion, not to mention quadrillions, quintillions, and so on. The lecturer took the chalk and wrote, one billion = 10^9 . And this was the end of our discussion.

When I started writing the reports, my boss Virg directed me to Eddie Richmond, an elder fellow in the neighboring department, who edited my English. He was a very kind person, and I learned much from him. When I began visiting the concerts of the Portland Symphony Orchestra, I found that he too was a regular visitor. He had also written that (in Europe) coveted book *Typical Oscilloscope Circuitry*, which Frank Doyle had given me in Guernsey.

I had noticed different accents of those colleagues, who came from abroad. Soon I could distinguish between the French, Italian, German, Hungarian, Danish, and Scandinavian accents not being aware of my own, Slavic accent and of my way of pronunciation. My colleagues were polite and patient. If I was making the same mistake too often, they taught me in a friendly manner what was correct. However, there was one single exception, which I had to describe in detail. They are important for understanding some events, of which I will write later.

Toward the end of the first year, I had to explain some important aspects of my project at a group meeting. The company director, Howard Vollum, was present among several engineers from design engineering. Though my English was better than at the beginning, it still was not perfect. Then an engineer R. H. asked me a couple of times for the explanation. His questions were

derogatory because of my imperfect English. At first, I was embarrassed, since I have never been exposed to such scoffing. After his intention became clear to me, I told him, "Ich kann auch deutsch sprechen, wenn sie möchten." (The German, Art Seibt, was amused.)

"What?"

"Io puo parlare anche in italiano, se lei desidera. (Carlo Infanti was smiling.)

"Lahko govorim tudi po slovensko, če vam je prav," which, of course, nobody understood. R. H. did not open his mouth anymore. After the meeting, I told his boss, if R. H. repeats such scoffing at the next meeting, I will make a scandal. He did not. Much later, I learned that he had designed that (part of the) oscilloscope, which was my first project in the company. Apparently, he had felt hurt for my discovery of his design fault, which required the sending of the modification kit to all customers around the globe.

To further improve my English, I took two successive classes of conversational English with a charming lecturer Star van Valkenburg. The characteristics of all Tektronix Classes were that at the end, the students had to assess their lecturers. I had written that I would prefer discussing this question directly with the lecturer. So Star asked me, "What would you like to talk about, Peter?"

I was not to discuss the basic content of her lectures, which were excellent. Instead I told her, "In your lectures, it sticks out that you expect us to become good Americans in order to fit the 'compartment,' which is being prepared for any of us, who came here from abroad. Since the students of this class came here from different parts of the world, they *will* make USA richer by the culture of our homelands we brought here. We are proud of our culture, which existed many hundred years before the world even heard of USA. Why should all this diversity be abandoned, just to fit that uniform 'compartment'?"

Her answer surprised me indeed, "Peter, I did not think of this, and I apologize."

In the next class, she was strictly considering our discussion.

I was baffled by the immense possibilities offered to me with the arrival to the New World. Since I was sending a part of my salary back home to Yugoslavia, I had to be very careful how to spend money. At first, my interest in music prevailed; I had bought many long-play records and built my own hi-fi system. For just \$110, I bought a well-preserved upright piano and started learning to play. My previous knowledge of violin and accordion proved to be very useful, and I was advancing fast.

In August 1968, I was watching the riots at the National Democratic Convention in Chicago on my TV. I saw bloody heads, some scared and beaten journalists with bandaged heads telling their story, and so on. But I did not understand anything. Next Monday, when I arrived to work, Bob Frum of the next department asked me, "How do you like our practical democracy, Peter?"

By hearing this, that sadistic beating of the crowd in Celje (which I have described in chapter 2.02) came to my mind again. Unlike the demonstrators in Chicago, the prisoners in Celje were being beaten much more cruelly, without having any chance to run away from their tormentors. (Then the horrible details of mass killing were not yet known to me.) I just answered that I did not understand what was going on in Chicago.

Even as I brought my ice-ax with me, I had to buy also some other additional mountaineering equipment in order to carry on my previous free time activity. I had also obtained the membership of the mountaineering club "Mazamas," where many excursions were organized for the weekends. So I was getting to know the Oregon country, which was magnificent. In the beginning, the experienced senior mountaineer Dick Pooley had taken me to traverse the Eliot Glacier at the north side of Mt Hood (3424 m), up to the plateau at almost 3000 m level, and back down the easier way. At first, we spent the night at Cloud Cap Cabin some 2000 m high. Next day, we started ascending in the groups two-by-two. My "rope-mate" was an Australian fellow (sorry, I have forgotten his name), and I barely understood his English. However, understanding of each other is extremely important, when for example, one has to jump over the crevice and such. Fortunately, under Dick's experienced leadership, everything went fine. However, I soon discovered that my condition was no match for the rest of the group. In my ascents in Julian Alps, I was used to taking a rest of fifteen minutes every hour, whilst here we had no rests, except up at the plateau. There Dick instructed us how to rescue someone from the crevice, but I was too tired to participate. I had realized that my eleven-year-long TB status had taken its toll. This was why I was going alone on all my further attempts to ascend the peak of Mt Hood. For this, the Ranger at Timberline Lodge Hotel (at about 2000 m) allowed me to ascend only up to the Crater Rock and no further. In fact, I went just slightly further, going between fumaroles and Crater Rock up. Occasionally, the wind had brought an awful stench from the fumaroles.³¹ My way ended at a huge crevice, which mountaineers named Bergschrund.³² From there, I could observe the more fortunate rope-teams, making a long detour to avoid the Bergschrund and continuing toward the peak, which was only some 300 m higher. Being on the rope was mandatory there because any slide on that steep snowy slope, just above that crevice, might be fatal if going alone. So I could not claim being on the very top of Mt Hood. I was alone also on many other, less demanding tours and excursions, just wandering "by the book."

³¹ In chemical terms, I would describe this stench as $\text{H}_2\text{S} + \text{NH}_3$ in company.

³² The Americans use the German word *Bergschrund* for the first upper crevice of the glacier, which is usually the largest one.

On life in general, one thing impressed me. In USA, I was *a priori* considered an honest individual. For example, to cash my personal check in the bank, nobody asked for my identification. I gave them the check, and they gave me the money, saying “thank you.” How different was life in Yugoslavia, where almost everywhere I was basically treated as a crook and had to identify myself on every occasion. There, for example, for the payment of the English books, I was ordering from McGraw-Hill, the bank clerk, where I was making the transaction, had typed my order in thirteen copies! (When typing so many forms, separated by the carbon paper, all at one time, he had to have the strength of a pianist playing the beginning part of the Piano Concerto in B-flat minor by P. I. Tchaikovsky.) This American attitude has probably the roots in the pioneers’ times of Wild West, when everyone had to trust his neighbors in order to make life bearable. Of course, the bandits were an exception, and they were bad through and through. (I had created such opinion by seeing too many American Westerns.) For this, almost every adult American has (or is allowed to possess) a gun to protect himself. At Tektronix, the bosses were competent, and some of them were very young. Who was the best and had the manager’s skills had an open way to advance. In Yugoslavia, however, the bosses and managers were almost exclusively the members of the Communist Party. The other qualities were not so important. The reason so many bosses were incompetent and inefficient in Yugoslavia was because it was expected of them to be competent professionals, honest, and members of the Communist Party, the last being mandatory. The candidates possessing all three properties were extremely rare. (And even if such perfect individuals were found, usually all three properties did not last for a long time.)

On the other hand, I was surprised how little an average American knew of life in Europe in general and less so of Yugoslavia. Somebody had asked me, “Mr. Staric, do you *have* television in Yugoslavia?”

“Yes, we do. Since our television has been introduced many years after yours in USA, ours had a higher resolution. Right now (it was 1968), we started introducing color TV, which uses the PAL-system, which is better than yours NTSC.”³³

Another question:

“Do you *have* telephones in Yugoslavia?”

“Yes, we do.”

An old lady asked me once, “Mr. Staric, do you *have* electricity in Yugoslavia?”

³³ The PAL-system (*Phase Alternation Line*), which is used in Europe, has a better color stability than NTSC-system (*National Television System Committee*), which was introduced in USA earlier.

How I should answer that old lady, without offending her? I explained, "In the University of Ljubljana, there is also the faculty of electrical engineering, where I have graduated. To have such a faculty and no electricity in the country would not make much sense, would it?"

Once when I was ascending Neahkahnne Mountain at the Pacific Coast, together with a group of Mazamas, a young teacher asked me, "Peter, is Yugoslavia a communist country?"

"She has a communist government."

"Well, we suppose anybody coming from a communist country is a communist."

"Would you believe I am a virgin if coming from Virgin Islands?" (In fact I am a Virgo by considering that I was born on the September 2.) Then she went straight to the point, "Are you a communist, Peter?"

"Well, I came here just because the communist system was introduced in Yugoslavia, suppressing any freedom, which prevented my professional growth and initiative. I am not a communist, because this would be against all my ethical and moral principles in which I *have* been educated during my adolescence."

The apartment buildings, where I was dwelling, had also a swimming pool. I was surprised to find that men were not supposed to wear swimming cap, no matter how long their hair. For women, on the other hand, a swimming cap was obligatory, no matter how short their hair. When my Swiss colleague Ted Marguerit brought his *six* years old girl to the pool, dressed "topless," there was a scandal. All girls, no matter how young had to wear such swimming dress that their upper part is covered.

It surprised me seeing women on the street, or in the market, with curlers in their hair, which would almost be a scandal in Europe. Well, I got used to this, except that I put on my (men's) swimming cap whilst swimming.

I had also bought skis in order to carry on this sport on the slopes of Mt Hood. However, on my first attempt to ski from Timberline Lodge down, I had selected an unknown and too demanding route, injuring my back. This was probably due to lack of my daily exercise. In Ljubljana, there is a forest hill very close to my home, and I was used to do hiking there almost every day. In Beaverton, this was not possible, except on weekends. Besides, I had to prepare my dinners and do all other household. Though I kept doing my regular morning gymnastics, the consequences of my accident were seen very soon. I started working on Monday, but I had to soon quit, go home and stay in bed. Then the genuine comradeship of my colleagues came to expression. They had covered my needs in full helping me the whole week.

In this week, my situation had become so critical, that I had to go to Portland Hospital, where I spent another week. To my great surprise, my boss

had visited me, explaining that my employment was secure and I would get my regular salary also after the allowed sick leave, until I recover. The overpayment would be gradually deducted from my salary, after I was OK. On the third day, when I had already no pains, I could go back home and start working. Then the primary, Dr. Pearson, and my personal doctor Rankin came to my bed, telling me that the spinal test had to be performed as a part of the diagnostic procedure. Since my status had been so much improved, I objected, but they insisted. Finally, I gave up.

“Well, you are my doctors, and I *must* trust you. If you think this test is indeed mandatory, then do it. If this is not strictly necessary, then please, do not do it.”

“It is necessary.”

The spinal test was performed by a very young Dr. Dietrich. This caused me severe pain and loss of appetite for the next two weeks, when I had lost 7 kg of weight. Three days after this test, I asked the secretary Barbara, who came to see me, to transport me back home, where I had to stay the next two weeks mostly in bed. I was surprised when I saw in the meantime, my Tektronix colleagues had thoroughly cleaned my apartment; I was moved to see even a vase with flowers on the table. They kept taking care of me as they did before until I was back to work. I got the most substantial help from my Danish colleague Jørn Eriksen, who was an excellent cook and also a very good piano player. The total cost of the spinal test was some \$350, and this seemed to me the main reason why that test was “mandatory” in my case. Dr. Rankin was inaccessible by the phone until I was back to my feet again.

When I met Dr. Rankin weeks after, I told him, “Now I know of the main difference between the Yugoslav and USA medical care. In Yugoslavia, the first objective is to help the patient. How to cover the expenses comes after. In USA, money is first and the patient second.” (In 2011, as I am writing these lines, the medical care in the independent Slovenia is becoming similar to that one in USA—just our salaries are much lower than they are in the States.)

After one year working in the parts evaluation department, I was moved upstairs to the instrument evaluation, where the work was more demanding and also more interesting.

Though I expected my whole family would come to USA within the first year, this did not happen. My wife, Cveta, who was a MD, wanted to pass the extremely difficult examination ECFMG (*Educational Council for Foreign Medical Graduates*), before coming to USA. This was mandatory for all foreign medical doctors in order to get the working permit in USA. Even the British doctors coming from the United Kingdom were no exception. In this way, the American doctors prevented poor medics to work there and also limited the competition of the competent doctors coming from abroad. Besides her regular

work, Cveta cared for my son Miro and daughter Zorana, both teenagers. In order to balance the burden of both parents, it was suggested that I move my daughter to USA.

So I took one month of leave to visit my family in Ljubljana and to bring Zorana back with me. I had also taken my essential mountaineering equipment with me to visit my beloved Trenta and to ascend some peaks there, presuming for the last time. When I was to leave Pogačnikov Dom (2054 m), I was very sad to leave this beautiful environment for good. When I told of my feelings to my old friend Poljanec, he suggested taking a small stone with me to USA, which I did.

The second departure was not as sad as the first one, for Cveta wanted to join me soon, after passing the ECFMG exam. However, a couple of months after my departure, Miro have been drafted into the military service, which was to last one and a half year. This had introduced a hefty delay to our plans of moving the complete family to the USA. On the other hand, Cveta was relieved of taking care of both children, so she would have more time to study for the ECFMG exam.

Miro served his military term in Bosnia. After six months of basic training, he was sent to a military transmitter, which was located at the peak of Mt. Vlašić at 1969 m. Any direct contact with me would cause great difficulties for him. So I did not send him my letters directly from USA, also taking care not to mention anything, which could disclose my whereabouts. I kept sending him letters via Cveta, and his replies went the same circuitous way. In spite of all these precautions, Miro's superiors surely knew that his father was in USA. Probably the paranoid censors had a hard time searching in vain for the hidden messages in my (our?) letters.

When Zorana and I landed at Heathrow Airport, we had two days time until our flight to the USA. Since my daughter liked art very much, she suggested visiting Westminster Abbey, National Gallery, and Tate Gallery. Needless to say, I enjoyed the visits of these places as well. Her English, which she learned in school, was already very good.

In the last winter, before my visit to Yugoslavia, I had sold my old "Rambler" and bought a brand-new Renault "R-16" car (on installments). Since it had front wheel drive, it performed much better on snowy roads. Besides, it consumed only about 40 percent as much gas as the Rambler. It was better in many other ways too—except that its carburetor got a hefty crack, just before my departure to Ljubljana. So I arranged at the Renault dealer, where I had left my keys to pick up my car at the Portland airport in order to repair it during my absence. After landing, I phoned the dealer to learn where they had parked my car in the airport. To my surprise, I was told that the car was still there, where I had left it and not repaired. This was probably my fault because I did not tell the dealer at least an approximate location of where I had left my car.

The European models R-16 performed much better than those which were sold in the USA. I was surprised to find that the acceleration, which was sluggish in the USA models, was swift in that EU model, which I had the chance to test in Yugoslavia. In the USA, all R-16s were modified in order not to exceed the allowed ratio of emission vs. combustion volume of the American cars. This was detrimental for the cold start of the original R-16 and its carburetor had to be modified correspondingly. I will not write of further technical details and consequences of this modification, which was not the only one in the American model of that French car.

The arrival of my teenage daughter was of doubtful benefit for me. It was fine to have someone of my family to talk with in my native language and someone with whom to share household work. In the beginning, she went with me hiking on weekends, so I did not feel as terribly alone as before. Though I stopped sending part of my salary home to Yugoslavia, I had to be more careful of spending the money, when we were two in the household. I had also bought the necessary additional furniture for her, when we moved to a larger apartment. She continued her study in the high school, and I had to take care of her when she became sick, and so on. All this had hindered my necessary further study to a great extent. Consequently, my objective to learn how to design state-of-the-art electronic circuits was pushed toward the foggy future.

At Beaverton High School, Zorana was advised to visit the evening class of English language for foreign students. After the second visit to that class, the teacher said there was no need for her to continue, for Zorana's English was good enough. In order to decide in which class she should continue, she had been asked to show her school notes of the second high school year she had completed in Yugoslavia. The teachers were surprised of how many subjects she had been taught all six days a week. (Then Saturdays were normal working days in Yugoslavia.) So she was allowed to jump over the third year to continue in the fourth year. The curriculum in the Beaverton High School was not as demanding as that one in Ljubljana. On the other hand, my daughter was amazed to find immense possibilities to gain additional knowledge, which were suddenly offered to her. The teachers were competent and friendly, and they patiently answered any question the student asked. In addition, the school library was abundantly stocked. The school was spacious, modern, and clean, and the laboratories there were well equipped.

My elder colleague Lloyd Swedlund and his wife, Mary, invited us for Christmas evening. They had a color TV, which was still very expensive in that time. We were watching the live transmission of Vladimir Horowitz piano recital from Carnegie Hall, New York. He was playing several compositions by Chopin, Scriabin, Scarlatti, and Schumann. I liked Schumann's "Arabesque" so much that I had bought the score and learned to play it.

My French colleague Jacques Manscourt and his wife, Annie, dwelled in the neighborhood, and she had met Zorana. This resulted in a friendship, and we were introduced to a French group in Beaverton. So I met the family of Prof. Charles Varga, MD, whose wife, Jacqueline was French. They had a nice Steinway grand piano on which I was allowed to play. This soon became more important to me when I had to sell my piano.

I had found that the ups and downs of the American economy were in some relation to the four year election period, though they were not “in phase” as we would say in electronics. Over the winter 1969-1970, gradually no jobs were offered. The company began lying off redundant employees. My situation there became difficult for the reasons, which I would try to explain as simply as possible:

Already in 1967, when I began working at Tektronix, the company started developing entirely new, more sophisticated, high-performance and versatile oscilloscopes, which should surpass all competitors. The new instruments consisted of two basic “mainframes” and a series of plug-ins for them, which were needed for their operation. Unfortunately, the original date, when the new series should be put on the market could not be kept because of some unexpected faults, which were not discovered in time. The usual procedure was to build first the so-called A-phase form of any instrument or plug-in. These were given to the instrument evaluation department to discover anything which was wrong and possibly suggest how to correct the faults. When (and if) all faults were corrected, the new, B-phase series were produced, which had to behave according to the specifications. After this was thoroughly checked by the instrument evaluation, the full production was to be launched.

My task was to evaluate the plug-in, designed by that engineer R. H., of whom I have already written. At first, when we met in the new working relation, everything was looking fine, and I had ignored his scoffing at a staff meeting from over a year ago. He explained how the instrument worked, and I began evaluating it. However, as soon as I had found some faults in the operation or—God beware—a design mistake, he had taken this personally and not matter-of-factly as I did. I had to hear heavy words, like “You Yugoslavs do not know anything,” and the like. To avoid any further insults, I stopped giving any suggestions and only wrote the laconic reports of the instrument behavior, buttressed by the data of my numerous measurements.

The problem was that the plug-in amplifier R. H. had designed should be the most used in the new series. Four of five would-be customers had already ordered it, and three of them would cancel the whole order if this plug-in is not available. To accelerate the matter, the management assigned the design engineer Larry Biggs to assist R. H. and Jim Cavoretto to help me. Jim was a very kind fellow, and we cooperated well. The new situation had become easier

for me; I let Jim to communicate with R. H. and to give him any suggestions for the necessary changes. On the other hand, Larry had found some design faults and had correspondingly simplified the plug-in. The evaluation went on fine, except for a basic design fault, which could not be corrected without extensive mechanical and circuit layout changes, for which there was not enough time. Though Jim and I had all possibilities to prove this necessity by measuring the necessary electrical parameters and to do the thorough mathematical analysis, based on the measured data, neither of us had enough knowledge to do this. (Now forty years after, I know how to do this because I have done the necessary mathematical analysis of a similar circuit in the meantime.)

As even in the third A-phase (normally there is only one) that basic fault was not corrected, management decided to serve the soup before it was fully cooked, neglecting the B-phase entirely. So I had got the production release document—already signed by R. H. and his boss, as well as by my boss Leon Orchard—to sign. Since the plug-in was not yet ripe for the market, I refused to sign. Besides, if I would sign, I would become the convenient main scapegoat, when the customers would discover the fault. Only when the document was modified to include all my suggestions of the mandatory corrections, I had signed. On the very next day Jim Heinze, who just became my new boss, told me that I was moved from instrument evaluation to the production—to work on the graveyard shift.

I felt this as an unjust humiliation. To look for another employer would be futile in that time of general recession. Though my new boss James Baker accepted me and was very friendly, I decided to return back home to Yugoslavia because the anticipated arrival of my whole family in the USA had become impossible. My health was unreliable, for my spine could fail at any time. In addition, I could be laid off at any time. Since there were no free jobs, my wife, who had just passed her difficult ECFMG exam, could very probably not get the employment as a medical doctor. My son Miro, who would return from his military service in March 1971, which meant the next year, could—after his arrival to USA—soon be drafted and sent to Vietnam War. If he had refused, he would never get American citizenship, which—even I, coming to USA more than two years before—did not yet have.

Needless to say, how much my sudden decision had hurt my wife, Cveta, who had spent so much effort and time for that ECFMG examination. Since she was living all her time in Yugoslavia, she could have no idea of how unstable my situation had become. Instead of making plans to move the rest of my family to USA, I began planning my return to Yugoslavia. I told the company management of my decision to depart in August 1970, as soon as my daughter finishes her study at Beaverton High School.

In order to reduce the cost of living, we moved to Jenkins Road to be just five minutes walking distance from my working place. Before moving, I had sold my piano. Since I had to sell my furniture, the new apartment manager was very helpful. He promised to replace any furniture, which I would sell, piece by piece. Already after two weeks, my graveyard shift in the production had been changed to normal daytime work. I still remember when R. H. came by, when I was calibrating an instrument, which was my regular job in the production. He started lamenting because he had been degraded even more—his work had become the wiring of instruments. Since it was not my habit to “rub salt into someone’s wounds,” I expressed my sympathy and kept the discussion short.

Two weeks before departure, I sold my car. About a week before, my forwarding agent delivered four big wooden crates for sending our personal effects home by a freighter. On that day, Lee Miles, who in the meantime had become a department boss, phoned me; he had been told that I intended to go back to Yugoslavia. I explained the reasons for my departure. He asked if I would stay in the company if someone would “pave the road back for me.” What should I do now, when I had already sold all my furniture and my car, and purchased the airline tickets? I still wonder if this unusual gesture had been initiated by the top management to give me a better feeling at the farewell. My plans to leave were already well known in those circles in the company, where I was working. I thanked Lee and told him that his kind offer had come too late.

On the day before my departure, I still worked the first half of my shift, which had surprised my colleagues. After lunch, I went home, put on my formal dress, and went to Building 50 to say farewell to my former colleagues. My first boss Virg could not hide how sad he was for this. Since I wanted to iron out all wrinkles, I also went upstairs to meet someone of the Big Brass. It was Lang Hedrick with whom I shook hands. Besides I met there Frank Doyle, who took out his checkbook and wrote a check for \$300 as a loan, which I should return, whenever I could. This was indeed a kind gesture.

The next surprise was, when I returned to production, where my colleagues had arranged a farewell party. A big cake was prepared, photos being taken, and all of them signed a folder, wishing me well. I would never forget this; I still keep these photos and folder in my USA album.

In the morning, the next day, it was time to take off. Annie Manscourt came with her car to give Zorana and me the ride to the airport, taking also our four suit cases. I was leaving with mixed feelings, reflecting at what was awaiting me in Yugoslavia. When we were already in the plane, Mary Swedlund came in to say farewell. She had brought a fancy purse for my daughter. This reminded me of how many genuine friends I had left in the USA. With some of them I managed to renew the contact, which I still keep, mostly by e-mail. Soon after Mary left, the doors of the plane closed, the engines started, and we

were off to London. Through the window, I could see the Columbia River, Mt Hood, and farther away Mt Rainier, where Zorana and I had once visited the magnificent Paradise Park.

Such was the end of my “USA experiment,” which had failed. Even as this chapter of my book is much longer than any other, I have described only very few events and some of my feelings of how I accepted the “New World.” Much more, which I still keep in my memory, had to be omitted. I was surprised how many more details of those times came vividly to my mind now, forty years later, when I started digging in.

2.16 Back Home in Ljubljana Again

Though the future after my return looked gloomy for me at the time, Frank Doyle already had a plan for me. Since I was the only one in Yugoslavia, being “Tektronix trained,” his idea was to establish a Tektronix Service in Ljubljana with me as the leader. This would be a “dream job” for me; being in my native town and country, working in the profession I was trained for and which I liked. Since no independent foreign companies were allowed in Yugoslavia, the service had to be formed as a subsidiary of a Yugoslav firm. To Frank, the Slovenian trade enterprise “Elektrotehna,” with which Tektronix had a lot of business, seemed the most appropriate. Unfortunately, neither Frank nor I knew what the real business of that enterprise was. On the surface, everything seemed promising; however, the later events turned to both Frank’s and mine great disappointment. But let me first tell the immediate events after my return.

As soon as I was settled, I went to my beloved Julian Alps, which I had missed so much whilst being in America. At first, I ascended the cabin Pogačnikov Dom, where I had returned that little white stone, I had taken there before my return to USA. From that cabin, I visited some peaks around. My former technicians from Iskra times, Zdenko and Martin were the frequent companions at such ascents.

In addition, my English mountaineering friend E. Dudley Stevens—Steve, as he desired to be called—whom I had met at the peak of Triglav just on my forty-second birthday, had visited me. As already mentioned, then he had led a group of some fifteen English teenagers on a three weeks tour in Julian Alps. We had kept the contact by letters, during my stay in USA. Unfortunately, Steve became very sick in the meantime. He had to undergo a serious operation, after which he could not do any more strenuous ascents. Besides of being an experienced mountaineer, he was also a good landscape painter. He

had brought some oil paintings here to our first reunion. His wife Heather accompanied him, and both came by their car. When we arrived to Trenta Valley, which is about 650 m high, he was looking up to Pogačnikov Dom, some 1400 m higher, where the manager was Pavel Poljanec, his very good friend. He had painted a picture of that cabin and the environment to give to Poljanec, but the new circumstances prevented him to go up there.

Since I felt his longing, I wanted to help. At that time, transportation of food to that cabin was done by mules, and this was the care of the local, Viktor Kravanja—every day from mid-July to mid-September, up and down again, irrespective of weather. I proposed Steve to ride the mule to come up and see his good friend. Steve agreed, and I had arranged everything with Viktor. So Viktor and Steve, riding the mule and Heather, walking by, started the ascent already in the dark hours of the morning. In addition, the painting of Pogačnikov Dom was among the cargo. I followed them one hour later, going alone. In his book *Irresistible Challenge*, which had never been published in English, but only in Slovenian (*Neubranljivi izziv*, translated by Marjan Lipovšek), Steve had described this journey. He did not know if he or his mule was more tired at their arrival up.

After spending a couple of days there, all three of us descended together. Steve was confident he could manage walking down. When we descended to timberline, I proposed a slight detour to a hidden hunter's hut, where we afforded a substantial break. There, looking down to Trenta, Steve said, "Oh, what I would give to be able to wander here every day up and down just saying, Gremo! Gremo! (Go! Go!)"

When I told this to Viktor, he said that the matter was not just as simple.

Besides Steve and other friends from abroad, some complete strangers had announced their visits, claiming they were the members of the Mazamas club. Their common characteristics were to be experienced mountaineers, but all of them had taken my car transportation, my mountaineering guidance, and my free time I spent with them as granted. After they had left, I never heard of them anymore. For example, a young fellow (I have forgotten his name) arrived from Romania. When he opened his huge suitcase, the stench was such that we had to move it on the balcony. On the first day, we washed and dried all his laundry, and the next day afternoon, both of us went to Kranjska Gora, which was one of the starting points for the ascents in Julian Alps. I had selected an inexpensive hotel to spend the night before the ascent.

When I told how much each of us should pay for the accommodation, he began lamenting that we Yugoslavs are not as hospitable as he was used to, when in Romania and Hungary, where he had been before. I told him, he had a free ride in my car and free guidance in the mountains, for which I had taken several days of my free time to help him. If all this is not enough, then I would

leave and let him continue on his own expenses. Then he asked me to lend him some money, which I did. Next day, we ascended Prisojnik (2547 m) over the demanding “Window Route,” starting from Vršič Pass (1612 m), where I had left the car. In this, often precipitous route there was a narrow horizontal slot, which was impossible to pass with one’s pack on the back. We had to tie his huge pack to the rope to pull it through the slot. The whole ascent was spectacular, and the weather was fine, when we arrived to the peak as well as all the way down over the easier, southern way.

Though the money I lent the guy had been dutifully returned, I nevertheless decided writing to Mazamas Club in Portland to stop such sorts of visits, which also drained my budget too much. I explained if an unknown member of this club would come again, I would be glad to give my advice and description of the tours—and nothing more. After that, the visits of such strangers ceased altogether.

In the mid September 1970, I started arranging for my new employment. In the meantime, I was approached by a few people, offering me employment. Among them was also my tutor in radio from my teens, Drago Zrimšek. After six years of jail, he had been slowly promoted to become the leader of the R&D of Magnet Department at Iskra. I told him that I was looking forward to be employed at Elektrotehna, where I should establish a service department for Tektronix Inc. (Frankly, I was not interested in the development of magnets.) He mentioned that he knew Elektrotehna well and that I would be sorry ever to go there. How right he was!

Since Zorana’s former classmate was the son of the director of foreign trade of Elektrotehna, she helped to arrange the meeting. I got the job, but the salary was poor. Nevertheless, I hoped I would get more, once Tektronix Service would be established. To sign the contract to become Tektronix representative, my boss and I flew to Guernsey. On this flight and on the return, we were in the executive class; this was the first and the last time in my life. It was difficult to keep polite relations with my boss, who was younger and way less educated than me, trying to cover this deficiency by his blown-up superiority. In short, he was an *ignoramus* (an ignorant and an asshole in the same person). I was sure he was in the Communist Party as were all key employees in that foreign trade department. Many of them were either the former members of the secret police³⁴ (OZNA, later renamed to UDV) or were still the members.

³⁴ This statement requires an explanation. In 1966, Aleksandar Ranković, Secretary of the Central Committee of the League of Communists, State Vice President, the leader of the ubiquitous secret police UDV and Tito’s comrade in arms has been removed from all his functions. The Serb, Ranković attempted to reintroduce the supremacy of Serbs as it was in the prewar Yugoslavia, which was against the will

In St. Peter Port, in Guernsey, we met Frank Doyle, who in the meantime moved back from the States. He was again the director of Tektronix Guernsey. The contract had been signed, and Elektrotehna had become the representative of Tektronix. This included that service for Tektronix instruments had to be established for all Yugoslavia. When the customers were informed of this possibility, they started sending instruments for repair to Ljubljana. Since I had only a desk, a chair and a typing machine, but no tools, instruments and documentation, so less some competent technicians to do the job, there was no possibility to repair any instrument. The principal in Guernsey already sent the service documentation of all instruments on microfilms and promised sending spare parts worth \$15,000 to begin. Elektrotehna should only pay for the microfilm reader, which was already at the custom in Slovenia. (This seemed to me a test of how seriously Elektrotehna was to honor the contract.) The microfilm reader was not bought, the spare parts were not sent (yet), and the instruments to be repaired kept coming. I soon realized that I got the employment at this trade enterprise just to make easier for them to become the representative.

When I contacted Guernsey, asking how to act in this impossible situation, they suggested resending the instruments to Guernsey. They would repair them and deduct the cost from the commission paid to Elektrotehna. Since Tektronix branch office and service was also in Zug, Switzerland, I went once there, taking two defective instruments with me to repair one; they repaired the other one. At that opportunity, I was given some spare parts with the exact data of the instrument, where they had to replace the wrong ones. That instrument was imported by Elektrotehna on the basis of the end-user certificate, issued by the Yugoslav Chamber of Commerce. This was mandatory because there was a strict embargo for eastern-block countries and USSR on

of the other constitutional nations (Slovenes, Croats, Bosnians, Macedonians, the Hungarian, and Albanian minority). In pursuing this objective, Ranković went so far to install the eavesdropping device even in Marshall Tito's own bedroom. Tito (whose father was Croat) was ragged. The result was an extensive purge of the whole secret police. Many obedient apparatchiks became redundant. Since they knew of too many postwar crimes, most of them got some well-paid employment in the international trade enterprises. Almost all of them did not have any appropriate formal education for the new function, so they had kept their mouths shut. They knew too well that Tito has also some other, more convincing means to keep them quiet. The described reduction of the UDV apparatus did not relax the general suppression in any way. Over two decades, State terror had scared people enough, so this could continue even as the number of the secret police has been shrunk so drastically.

all Tektronix instruments, but Yugoslavia, being kicked out of Soviet Empire, was an exemption.

After coming back, I informed my superiors of this request. They become angry, telling me that this was not my business. It did not help to tell them that my business was to repair the instruments, which Tektronix had sold in Yugoslavia. So the matter remained pending. When a representative came from Guernsey, he asked me if I had repaired that instrument. I said I did not.

“Why not?”

“Because I had no access to that instrument.”

About a month later, I was called to the re-export department of which I knew already in the first month being there. It was located at the next story down. After coming there, I saw my colleague Maks L. from the student's times was the boss. He had graduated in economy. On two desks, there were only the calendars and nothing else. All documentation was probably locked in a couple of cabinets there. Maks had shown me a letter from Belgrade, where nobody else than the US ambassador general himself announced his visit to check of the whereabouts of five Tektronix instruments, which were imported by Elektrotehna. They were listed in the letter, together with all necessary commercial data. Among them, I saw the type 519, which was explicitly developed for the measurements of extremely high energy transients, which appeared at the explosion of an atomic bomb. (I knew that instrument well because one of my projects in USA was to improve the uniformity of the brightness at high speed displays of this unique oscilloscope. In general, this instrument was not appropriate for any common measurements because much better oscilloscopes with a bigger screen were available.)³⁵ When I told this to Maks, he panicked; he asked me I should not tell this to the Ambassador, who would certainly want to discuss the latter with me. I assured him, I would not tell that this instrument is used for the measurements at the explosions of atomic bombs.

Indeed, I was called to re-export department again, when the Ambassador arrived. He asked me of the purpose of any instrument listed, which I answered as honestly as I could. Pointing to 519 he asked, “And this one?”

“This is for nuclear research,” I answered. (Since Maks was present too, I almost heard how a big stone rolled off his heart.)

About a month after this visit, I quit my employment at Elektrotehna. I did not want to be involved in such turbid business and at the same time

³⁵ Already in 1980s, this oscilloscope became obsolete, because better instruments were put on the market. In his book *Oscilloscopes; Selecting and Restoring a Classic*, published in 1992, the author, Stan Griffiths, comments, “You probably don't want to own a 519 unless you are building an oscilloscope museum.”

being prevented to work in my profession, which I wanted to carry on. Two more months after, I read in the local daily newspaper, that the re-export is forbidden. Tektronix had recorded a hefty drop in their sales to Yugoslavia.³⁶

My new employment was at the Faculty for Electrical Engineering in Ljubljana. Professor F. K., who was the head of High Voltage Test and Measurement Department, managed to bring me in “through the side door.” He was a strange personality, boasting his study and work in USA, where—to my opinion—he did not learn enough. After half a year working for him, I was fed up of this “work” and tried to get the employment in the Department for Electrical Measurements, for which I was also much better qualified. However, almost all professors of the Faculty were against me. So I had to look to find a suitable job elsewhere.

³⁶ However, re-export was too profitable business to be dropped altogether. Much later, it became known to me that Elektrotehna has added a surcharge of 35 percent on all expenses for the re-exported goods. (This was probably the reason that the management of Elektrotehna was not impressed, when their commission has been reduced for the cost of the service being done abroad.) Though forbidden, the re-export has continued, but in a substantially smaller scale and in a tighter secrecy.

2.17 Working at Iskra Again; Tito and the Communists Stepped on the Brake

After a short six months' interim at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering, I got the employment at my first company Iskra in the production of electronics instruments, in Horjul. My colleague from the students' times, Radovan Vrabl, who became the director there, had offered me his helpful hand.

Since Horjul was about 20 km away from Ljubljana, this meant I had to start my car in the early hours in order to be there at 6:00 a.m. sharp, when the work started, ending at 2:00 p.m. During the cold period of the year, the driving on the local road there was mostly difficult for fog, ice, or snow, or a combination of such factors and because it was still dark in so early hours. Since the circumstances at Iskra R&D in Ljubljana were no better from those of four years ago, when I had left, Vrabl was planning to reestablish the design at Horjul. And I seemed to be the most appropriate employee to start with.

My first project was to redesign a pH-meter, which was still built with electronic tubes. (Such instruments, together with appropriate electrodes, were used in chemistry for the measurement of acidity or alkalinity of liquid compounds or solutions.) This was just in time when the American firm Intersil had launched an integrated circuit on the market, which could fully replace all those electronic tubes and associated circuits. Since this integrated amplifier had the size of a shirt button, the dimensions of the whole instrument could be shrunk drastically. Besides the line operated pH-meter, I also designed a pocket-sized version, powered by batteries. For some reasons, which were too technical to discuss here, all pH-meters were sluggish in response. To correct this deficiency, I had introduced my invention, which had improved the speed

of response very much. This is very important if a pH-meter is used as a sensor in control engineering, or at titrations. Iskra had patented this invention. For this, I got so much money that I could buy a brand-new Russian upright piano. (For a western-built piano, the sum was not big enough.)

In order to understand the subsequent events I had to explain the relevant political background of the early 1970s. Ever since the communists had seized power at the end of WWII, the main ideological theoretician Edvard Kardelj (next to Tito) began his experiments in the national economy. He did his best to imitate the Soviet model as an obedient pupil. At first, the rich farmers ("kulaks") were expropriated and their land distributed among the poor ones. Because of the general famine, all farmers were forced to give an excessive high part of their crop to the State. Since this proved to be inefficient, the cooperatives ("kolkhozes") were established. This too did not work, but Kardelj kept experimenting. He did so in every branch of national economy, causing an increasing inflation. People soon realized that saving money means loss, but getting loans from the banks (which was easy to get, due to general employment) means profit. Those loans were mostly used to buy personal cars Zastava 750, or to build houses. The galloping inflation had reduced the real value of a five years credit to one tenth when the last installment for the car had been paid and even down to 1/1000 for the thirty year long year mortgage credit, which was given to build a family house. (Our houses are solid built with bricks and concrete in order to last for a hundred years.)

Already in 1967, when the liberal President of Slovenian Government Stane Kavčič was elected, he tried introducing the market economy to prevent the collapse of State economy for the crazy experimenting of Kardelj. At the time of my return from USA (in 1970), the first effects of his regulations were already felt. I remember seeing Kavčič on our TV, proposing such unheard of possibilities as the workers to become the shareholders! In parallel, the students' riots at the Philosophical Faculty in Ljubljana erupted, being stimulated by the beginning success of the "Prague Spring." In addition, the (twenty-five) liberal delegates of Slovenian parliament proposed the leaders to be elected in the parliament and not set from the top by the Communists' Central Committee. This was too much for the communists, who were afraid to lose their full control. Toward the end of 1972, Tito, Kardelj, and Stane Dolanc (then the Secretary of Communists' Central Committee of Yugoslavia) had stepped on the brake.

At first, Kavčič was removed from his post and forcefully retired. A widespread purge down the ladder followed. For example, four liberal professors at the Faculty for Social Sciences were fired in order to make this faculty uniformly "red." Competent liberal politicians, experts in industry and economics, professors, teachers, and so on, were either degraded or fired. An

extensive purge was performed among the journalists too; my friend Viktor Blažič was sentenced for two years of jail, just for helping Edvard Kocbek (who dwelled in Trieste, Italy) to publish the article of the postwar massacres. This era was later named “leaden years.” Kardelj went even so far that he “prescribed” the non-communists should not have any initiative at all. This widespread tsunami splashed all the way to the remote Horjul. As a critical intellectual and an engineer, it was my turn to feel the ax.

Being up to my neck in work at that distant place, I could not follow all those events, and the cause and consequence in detail. Much what I have written in the previous paragraph has become known to me way later. I got my first feeling that something was wrong when I wanted to complete the design of the engine analyzer oscilloscope, which we were working on. It worked well, when testing four-cylinder engines as had almost all Yugoslav cars. However, when we measured a six-cylinder engine for a German customer, it did not work as it was supposed to. It would certainly behave worse at an eight-cylinder engine. I knew well what part of the analyzer should be corrected. To do so, we would need one six-cylinder distributor and one for the eight-cylinder engines to upgrade our ignition simulator. All my attempts to purchase these, relatively inexpensive parts from abroad via Iskra Commerce, which was in charge to import them, had failed. So we had to abandon the project, which was almost completed.

A weird problem appeared also with how to sell our pocket pH-meters, which were so much praised by the Danish firm Radiometer and by several German customers. Very few of those two hundred pieces, which were on stock in Horjul, were sold. My colleague Matic Gregorka, MS (now PhD), who had written the chemical part of the manual for this instrument, had shown it at a pharmaceutical conference in Zagreb, Croatia. They were amazed and asked where this instrument could be bought, because it was utterly unknown to them, though it was produced in Yugoslavia. So Matic went to Iskra Commerce in Ljubljana, proposing that he would sell all two hundred pieces, providing he gets 5000 Din commission on each instrument, the cost of which was 220,000 Din. Though the commission would be only 2.3 percent of the selling price, his proposal was turned down.

The Iskra management wanted to have a better control over me, coming from USA with all sorts of strange ideas, either professional or political ones. The bait was that I should continue working in that instrument design department at Iskra, Institut za Prenosno Tehniko, in short Iskra IPT in Ljubljana, which I had left seven years ago, going to USA. They said, with my knowledge, gained in the States, I could do much to improve that ailing department. Since I knew how poorly equipped that department was, I asked for 20 millions Dinars to buy the badly necessary measuring instruments in order to start successfully. This was paid by Horjul works, and the instruments

were bought indeed. Maybe at the beginning their intentions were sincere, for they would certainly not spend so much money, just to have me in Ljubljana under a tighter control.

I had accepted the offer, which meant waking up half an hour later in the morning to be at my working place at 6:00 a.m. sharp, and not so difficult, long driving in the winter. The new management also offered me an extra room just for myself, but I refused, telling them I wanted to be together with the others. However, a small room in which the former boss D. M. and two other young engineers worked was retained. My position was to be a consultant. At first, I continued working on the new line operated models of precision pH-meters. I also got a bigger project (an oscilloscope), which I had to split among four other engineers, taking the most difficult part for myself. Due to new instruments, our work became more efficient, and all seemed to be OK.

During this time, I had to undergo surgery of colon. My surgeon was Dr. Tine Velikonja, whom I had seen as a young boy in June 1945 in Celje, marching at the front of that group of the returned Domobranci, and their families. (See chapter 2.2) The operation was successful, and after two weeks, I was back at work again. Since I was not alone with Dr. Velikonja, I did not mention these events in Celje. However, one year later, when I saw him for the checkup, we were alone in his ambulance and I told him of my impressions in Celje. He explained me that the people at the periphery of Celje behaved quite differently than those in the town center, who were almost as cruel as their guards-tormentors. Since then he was a minor, he was eventually released, under the threat that he would be killed, if he mentions of the cruelties he had seen, to anyone. However, he had vented his grudge in some other ways. For example, a retired lady (who was very much for the “reds”) told me that she was walking with her friends in Tivoli Park. Then Dr. Velikonja came by and asked, “Hello! How is your ass?”

She had forgotten of her surgery, which was already a couple of years ago: “How do you dare?!”

“Well, I had operated you and I am curious, how successful it was.”

Several years ago, when I needed some firsthand information for my writing of that infamous Camp Teharje, we arranged a visit at his home. He had answered all my questions.

In 2010, less than one year before I continued writing these memories, he climbed over the exposed, northern, “Window Route” to the mountain Prisojnik, together with a thirty-five-year-old American friend. However, after completing the most demanding part through the window, his heart (he had had already eighty-one years!) had betrayed him. So he decided not to continue toward the peak, which was just about one hour up over the mountain ridge away. Instead, he went back by the easier southern trail down to Vrši

Pass. Being slow, he suggested his friend to leave him alone in order to call the Mountain Rescue Service in Tičarjeva Koča (Hut) at the Pass. But the doctor did not make it. On his lonely way back, he had lost balance and dropped across the cliff, where the rescuers had found him dead.

Dr. Tine Velikonja was probably the best Yugoslav surgeon for colon and lower abdomen. In his career, he had operated some communists, who were either the tormentors in the Camp Teharje, or were in some other ways guilty for his personal ordeal and for the murder of his father.

In 1972, my daughter Zorana married Dieter Bedke, a Tektronix salesman, and both of them dwelled in Vienna. Two years later, their daughter Jacqueline was born. All this gave me numerous opportunities to visit Vienna. Since our granddaughter was visiting us often, she became bilingual from her birth on. It was interesting for us, grandparents to observe, how easy children learn speaking and writing in German and Slovenian. I would write of some further details on these memories later. Now let us come back to the circumstances at Iskra.

Though we got the new measuring equipment in our department, the other arrangement in the whole branch works at Iskra IPT kept working in the same manner as they did seven years ago, when I had left to work in USA. Instead of workers shareholders, as promised by deposed Kavčič, the theoretician Kardelj had introduced the invention named “workers” self-management.”³⁷ The workers become the owners of the factories. Since this was just a camouflage for the communists’ management, people did not believe in the new regulations. Several jokes began circulating, and this one explains the matter better than a long paragraph:

A gipsy, hearing of workers to become the owners of the factories, did not want to stay behind. He had hit his horse with the whip.

“Pull, Frisky, the cart is yours!”

How sincere the workers’ self-management was indeed I could tell in my own case, which followed soon after this gimmick has been introduced. Due to the circumstances I mentioned already, the work of whole Iskra IPT

³⁷ Kardelj even made a tour in USA to explain the ‘workers’ self-management’ there, which was proudly announced by our communists. However, we did not hear or read of how successful his tour has been. But I got second-hand information of his debacle in Sweden, where my acquaintance from the TB times was present. There, on the press conference, the journalists asked Kardelj if the workers’ strike is allowed in Yugoslavia. He avoided the direct answer twice, explaining that a strike would be nonsense in a system of worker’s self-management. But the journalists adamantly asked him the third time. Felt to be cornered, Kardelj answered, ‘It is not allowed!’ and angrily left the conference.

became less and less efficient. A meeting was arranged, where all the designers of the Company were present. The Party Big Brass invited me too to join them on the podium, maybe expecting some miraculous proposals based on my knowledge from working in USA. The designers kept complaining how bad the circumstances are and eventually, I got my word. My proposal was to make a survey among the engineers to tell of everything which was hindering them to work efficiently. Then we should act accordingly to remove all obstacles. The leaders agreed, and I got the task to prepare the questionnaire. I did this within one week, asking some department leaders of their opinion and considering their comments. However, the survey had never been done. When I kept pushing the matter, I just got some foggy and avoiding answers, never to be told the true reason: The Big Brass was afraid to get the answers, which would clearly indicate that the incompetent “red” leadership, which had created that enormous bureaucracy, was the main culprit for the inefficiency of the whole Iskra IPT. This was my first clear sign that the workers’ self-management was indeed a farce. However, there was more to come.

Since I did not want to work in vain and insisted the survey had to be executed, my turn had come to be executed. The management did not attack me directly. They acted like a landlord, who does not take the stick to drive away an undesired individual, but he unleashed his dogs instead. Their offensive started with a young engineer Marjan Z., working on a part of the project for which I was responsible. He should complete the preprinted form of a special rotary switch, which we should order from a French firm as a custom-made item. He brought me his order form, but it was not signed. When I asked him to sign, he refused, which meant he did not want taking the responsibility for his work. Though the work was warranted for anyone in Yugoslavia, such a direct insubordination would be a justified reason for someone to be fired. The exceptions were the members of the Communist Party, as Marjan was,³⁸ and I was not. (In such cases, the dismissal had to be agreed beforehand by the Party Committee.) In parallel, almost all members of the group suddenly turned against me. This was not difficult to trigger because they felt uneasy by feeling the gap of knowledge between me and them. Though I did the best to help anyone as friendly as I could, their envy had erupted with a big flame. Soon I was called to a special committee, where they accused me of all sorts of nonsense. The smallest of my mistakes was blown up to unexpectedly high

³⁸ When in 2003 I bought the book, Dušan Lajovic, *Med svobodo in rde o zvezdo* (Between Liberty and the Red Star) ISBN 961-238-206-9, where about fifteen thousand members and informants of the former Slovenian Secret Police (UDV) are listed, I found Marjan’s name and his birth date among them. At the time of our clash, he was an active member of UDV.

proportions. Since I was entirely unprepared to receive such a hail on my head, I did not defend myself as if I would have, by knowing this beforehand. The result was that I was relieved of all my functions, and the inexperienced, young engineer Marjan became the leader of my project.

About a week before this clash, I began spending a minor part of my time to work in a small branch laboratory, located in the building of Slovenian Philharmonics at Kongresni trg (Congress Square) in Ljubljana. They were making big mixing panels for studios, mostly custom made. My task was to design electronic filters for them. Since, after my degradation, I had no job anymore at Iskra IPT, I spent more time there. Once coming back to my previous working place, I found my desk to be moved in the corner of the lab, to a remote dark place. When I checked the content of my drawers, I found that several of my special integrated circuits I brought from USA were stolen. When I expressed my protest, my former colleague from the students' years told me that I should be glad that it was not raining on me.

So my "work" at Iskra IPT had become a strange routine—appearing at work at 6:00 a.m. sharp, after some inactive hours behind my desk leaving for the acoustic lab at Philharmonics and returning before 2:00 p.m., when the work ended to leave the lab with the others. I remember when in the summer 1974, we had an earthquake in Slovenia. Though the epicenter was in the nearby Italy (the towns Tarcento, Gemona, and Venzona were severely damaged) it affected the not-so-much distant So a River Valley in Slovenia. Many old built houses in small towns in the nearby Slovenia, like Bovec, Kobarid, Tolmin, and villages in this area, especially Breginj, were either fully destroyed or so damaged that they had to be built anew. I remember being in the laboratory on the May 6, when the one of the strong after-shakes had hit the whole building. The racks in the lab began shaking almost to the verge of tilting, and everybody ran out as fast as possible. I did not mind to leave because my life had become hell. I did not mind if the whole old building collapses over me, for I had enough of this vegetating called life. But the one hundred-year-old tobacco factory building where I was now sitting alone had already successfully withstood the much stronger earthquake, which had devastated Ljubljana in 1895. So it was not affected in any way by these minor shakes.

The shaking recessed soon and after about a quarter of an hour, I decided to leave for the Philharmonic, because there was no reason sitting in the lab alone. To keep my internal balance, I was playing my piano in my free time at home up to three hours a day. I also found peace in hiking through the nearby forest hill, which I did often. The lady, who led the lab at the Philharmonic, was aware of my problems. When I saw a big Bösendorfer grand piano in the small Philharmonic hall, I asked if it would be possible to play it. She brought me the key of that piano, and I was delighted to play on such noble and

well-tuned instrument, which felt soft under fingers. Once I had the chance to play the Steinway grand in the great hall. After the excellent concert pianist Aci Bertoncely had ended his rehearsal, leaving the podium, I remained there alone. He went home, I supposed. Before leaving the hall myself, I decided to try how this piano sounds under my fingers. So I mounted the podium and played the first part of the Beethoven's "Moonlight Sonata." It sounded magnificent, but of course way less perfect as when Bertoncely had played this complete sonata just before. Then I stooped and descended the podium to leave. However, just when I opened the door to exit, Bertoncely came in again. When I closed the door behind me, I heard that he had begun playing that first part of "Moonlight Sonata" again. What a shame for me!

When I was playing at home our black cocker spaniel dog Baba always came to lie near my chair. It seemed she liked the music I was playing. On my hi-fi, I played many records I brought from USA. Once I was listening to the record of that recital Vladimir Horowitz had had at his Christmas 1969 concerto in Carnegie Hall. When he was playing Arabesque (by Schumann), which I too played often, Baba came in, looking first toward the piano and then toward me, seeing me sitting on the couch. This was probably something she could not understand.

Baba was also a good companion on many lonely mountaineering trips, those which a dog could manage, which she liked very much. Already at home, when I started preparing my backpack, she was jumping of joy. (When I was to undertake a more demanding ascent, I had to console her, before leaving her at home.) These trips, done mostly on my vacation time, helped me to think of other matters than of my impossible situation at Iskra. When we came high to Poga nikov Dom, Baba was also treated as a "dog mountaineer." The kitchen personnel had given her cooked carrots and some bones from the soup, which she liked very much. She had slept on the floor, next to my bunk bed.

I remember once we ascended Svinjak (1653 m) on the December 22. The way up was not difficult, except for the last 50 m slope to the peak, which was very steep and covered by snow. To belay her, I tied her to the rope. When I said "Go!" she went up and on the command "Stop!" she stopped, anchoring herself with all four of her "crampons." Then I continued, and after a few such stretches, we arrived to the top. There the wind had blown away all snow, so I could seat on the very sharp grass, whilst Baba afforded a nap. After a while she started barking. I thought, someone was coming and went to the edge, but I did not see anyone. Soon I discovered an eagle, circling some 80 m high above. Just in case the eagle would attack, I held my ice ax ready. But this was not necessary; after a few more circles the eagle flew away. The locals had told me that an eagle would attack only if the dog would be either alone or far enough from me.

Since my status at Iskra IPT became impossible for me to bear, I tried to find a job elsewhere. Unfortunately, almost everything, which was connected

with electronics, was Iskra. At the faculty of electrical engineering, I was already rejected, so there was no possibility. I remembered that the director of the main works of Iskra in 25-km-distant Kranj was my former classmate and colleague Aleksander Mihev. So I went there to see him. We had a long friendly talk and everything was arranged for me to work there. I was shown the laboratory, where I should work. The boss Teran, MS, had lamented that they had too much rejects in the production of microphones for telephone apparatuses. This should be my first project. Since my work some ten years ago was also testing of hearing aids, I suspected what was the problem. So I had taken some aluminum membranes with me to check them. At that time, the personal director of Iskra Kranj had even arranged a job for my wife to work as a medical doctor in Kranj hospital. Aleksander suggested me to make a formal application, which I did. Since after two months, I did not get any answer, I packed the membranes, where I discovered the fault by inspecting them by a binocular microscope at the Metallurgical Institute, telling them what was wrong and at the same time informing them to drop the matter of my employment. Then too I did not get any answer.

All other attempts to get the job elsewhere had about the same pattern. At first, they were enthusiastic. At the second meeting, they were not so anymore because—as I guessed—they had already got the directions from the Party Big Brass. In one case, I got second-hand information that the higher boss of someone, who was willing to employ me, told him, “You will probably not be allowed to employ him.” When I applied to published official invitation for tenders, I got in most cases the answer that they had selected another candidate. In one case, a week after I had received such answer, the public invitation had been published once again.

Gradually I became a nervous wreck. Once when I had got an exceptionally hard blow of this sort, I came home, sat down, and started crying. Then Baba came to me and cried with me.

In such turmoil, a former classmate at the university, who was employed at Iskra TV Pržan, Rudi Writzl had contacted me if I would be willing to work for him. In that works, which was in the suburb of Ljubljana, they produced hi-fi equipment, where Rudi was the boss, and TV receivers. It was well known that Iskra TV Pržan was considered to be a scrap yard for engineers, but they apparently wanted to squeeze some last droplets of juice from that pressed-out lemon, named Peter Starič. (Later I have estimated that the average length of employment of an engineer there was about 6 months. The exceptions were very poor engineers, who could not get the employment elsewhere, and those members of the Communist Party, who kept the leading positions.) To end my agony at Iskra IPT, I had accepted the job. When I had left the lab at IPT, I told them,

“I will get my satisfaction. I will just have to wait some time.”

At first, my work in Pržan was successful; I had designed several car sirens intended for the French market. In this connection, I had even twice visited our dealer in Paris, together with the Technical Director Jure Butina, BSEE, who has spoken French fluently. (I had to scratch together my French, which I had learned in gymnasium, which had mainly evaporated by not using it for so long.) Just when my work on sirens was completed, I got such a bad flu, that I had to stay at home for two weeks. After I returned, I found that all the models, including the production documentation and even my design notes, which I kept in my drawer, had disappeared. Since I was not fond of working on sirens, I did not comment this strange event not to provoke mobbing again. (It appeared that I became already “well trained.”) I also got another, more interesting job. I should prepare the complete instrumentation for testing phonograph hi-fi stereo-amplifiers in the production. Since the budget of the company was tight, I proposed purchasing the assembly kits from the Heath Company in USA. I assembled all instruments myself. In addition, I designed a “central instrument,” which enabled all particular measurement connections by simply pressing some buttons instead of disconnecting and changing the cables on the amplifier. I had written the step-by-step procedure for the complete test. I still remember a young and talented girl coming from Vojvodina (Serbia), who had learned the procedure so well that she was the fastest in this production test.

We got transformers for our TV receivers from Czechoslovakia. Unfortunately, the iron cores of these transformers seemed not to have equal properties in all batches. In order to discover what was wrong I carried out the measurements, which I proposed already whilst working at Tektronix, Inc. Since my proposal there was connected with the buying of expensive Brüel & Kjær equipment from Denmark, it was turned down by the company management. The parole “Buy American” had prevailed. Here at Iskra, we already had the complete Brüel & Kjær equipment for such measurements. I needed just to design an inexpensive magnetic field probe to record the polar plots of stray fields of those transformers. By doing this, I had discovered that some transformer cores were of poor quality though they bore the same part number as the good ones and also could not be distinguished in any other way from the first ones. When I completed this basic research task, I had published an article, in the Slovenian monthly magazine *Elektrotehniški vestnik*,³⁹ where I

³⁹ For those, who are more interested, the article “Measurements of Stray magnetic Fields of Transformers” was published in *Elektrotehniški vestnik*, 1982, No. 1, in Slovenian, with a short English abstract.

Much later, when I was at a symphony concerto in Ljubljana, the guy sitting next to me introduced himself and told that he had based his diploma work on the

had described the construction of the field probe and all measurements in the necessary details.

Encouraged by this success, the company had entrusted me the arrangement of the new acoustic laboratory. It should be placed in the new wooden building on the top of an existing concrete building. I had composed the complete list of the wooden furniture and office chairs, which were needed for the new laboratory. Money was provided, but the wooden furniture was not bought, because the money went “elsewhere.” Instead of this the mechanical shop at the company had made the mechanical frames on which the carpenter fixed the necessary wooden plates. In addition, the standard office chairs (with wheels and good spine support) were replaced by cheap production chairs, which were not to the modern ergonomic standards. Only in my little office, I got the required wooden furniture, but the chair was like all the others. Since I had a sensitive spine, I protested and got a chair I requested.

Those hi-fi amplifiers were not our original production, but we had got them as subassemblies from Czechoslovakia. We had just to complete them here adding our loudspeakers and the phonograph. Since they were built in the state-of-the art of some fifteen years ago, they still had discrete semiconductor components, which was way obsolete. With the modern integrated circuits, we could design much simpler, more efficient and service-friendly amplifier. In order to convince the management of this possibility, I designed such an amplifier, which was better in every respect and also much cheaper for us to produce. When I had shown the new amplifier (with all measured data and its complete circuit schematics) built in the same box as the former one, the management said *no!* We continued assembling that old stuff.

Soon I learned the background of this strange refusal. In the company, we had two huge machines to produce the plastic cabinets for TV receivers. Since we could not consume such hyper-production, we were selling surplus cabinets to Czechoslovakia. And since they had no money to pay, we got those amplifier subassemblies as the payment. Instead to push the matter further, I fixed the new circuit schematic on the wall of my little office and attached a broad tape diagonally across, with the inscription:

*Plus ça change, plus ça reste la même chose*⁴⁰

For me, this meant the management and all successive reforms of the system in Yugoslavia; for those few observers, who knew some French (including the Technical Director), this meant the amplifier.

magnetic field probe, described in that article. Since I expressed the desire to have a copy of his writing, he had kindly sent one issue to me.

⁴⁰ In English: The more it changes, the more it remains the same thing.

Since nothing had changed, I had written an article *Our Own Design or Screwdriver Industry*,⁴¹ for the company's monthly magazine. In my writing, I had emphasized the facts that we had enough competent engineers, who could do better design than such we got from abroad to be just assembled in our factory. When the Technical Director Butina had read the article, he called me and suggested to withdraw it, not specifying the reason. I obeyed. However, after a couple of weeks, the company party secretary called me to see the article. After reading it, he said he had found no objections and suggested my article to be published, which happened. The consequences were that the party secretary had to go to another, higher position at Iskra Commerce, and I became a *persona non grata*.

My subsequent projects were a succession of "unfinished symphonies." With a Hungarian firm, I should arrange to get the custom built tape recording subassembly for our amplifiers. They had provided the sample, but the cooperation was never realized. I was sent to Hungary to buy magnets for our speakers and arrange the deal. No deal followed. In my visits in Budapest, I had gained the friendship of Csaba Szathmary, BSEE, who worked in the design of oscilloscopes in the company EMG. Since I would like to analyze that unfinished project, for which I had left Tektronix, I helped him resolving the same difficulties in a similar instrument. I had given him the suggestions of how to measure the circuits. Then I did the relevant mathematical analysis, using the data of his measurements. Further, on the basis of the analysis, he rearranged the circuit so that the discovered faults were corrected. In his company, they had made the plots of my calculations by their computer. Of course, I did my theoretical calculation either in the time gaps at the company or mostly at home. In my visits to Budapest, I discovered the beauty of this unique town on the Danube River. I had also bought some records of the music by Zoltan Kodaly, Franz Liszt, and Imre Kálman, which could not be bought here.

The company TV system, which distributes the necessary signal to every workplace, was 90 percent obsolete. I got the task to overhaul it with new instruments. Only Tektronix vectorscope,⁴² which was almost never used, was OK. I contacted the Dutch firm Philips to supply everything else and arrange the complete installation. The pro forma invoice for all this was 84,000 US dollars. The vectorscope had to be recalibrated again, and I was sent to Tektronix subsidiary in Zug, Switzerland, bringing the instrument with me to calibrate it. Since I was "Tektronix trained," I had signed the label at the back panel, where the date of the new calibration has been written. However, when

⁴¹ The work where we just assemble the parts, to which the design, parts and subassemblies were done and produced abroad, we called "screwdriver industry."

⁴² This is an instrument to check the color ratios & their saturation in a TV signal.

the other instrumentation should be ordered from Philips, it was not done on the grounds that there was not enough money.

To my surprise, a big machine, for drilling printed circuit boards by preprogrammed schemes, a product of the American firm Thrudrill had arrived. At the "Workers' Council" we had never discussed the purchase of this monster, which cost us 240,000 US\$. After a while, another machine of the same type has arrived. At that time, the programs for drilling were already written on "floppy disks" and not on the unreliable punched paper tapes as it was the case in both machines. In short, they were obsolete and the price of them should not exceed some 100,000 US\$. Though each machine weighted at least one ton, the transport costs and the insurance should not exceed about 40,000 US\$. So where were the remaining 100,000 US\$ gone?

Since the machines failed many times, the service engineers from Germany, Belgium or even from USA had to come often to repair them. The long down times could be avoided, if our service department would get the necessary training. In this respect, the subsidiary in Germany invited me and two technicians for one week training with all costs paid. We got the necessary documents from our company, plus some money for traveling expenses. I let my car serviced in order to be OK for the journey. So everything was prepared. Then something, which was already expected, happened.

2.18 Marshall Tito Dies

In the first months of 1980, the health of Marshall Tito has deteriorated so much that he was hospitalized in the Clinical Center in Ljubljana. He apparently did not trust the Serbian doctors in Belgrade, for already before, whenever he was sick, he always came to Ljubljana. Since he was already approaching his eighty-eighth birthday (being born in 1892 in Kumrovec, Croatia), it became clear that his end was close. Like many smokers, who could not quit their unhealthy habit in time, he too had procrastinated for so long that the doctors had to first amputate his leg. But even this did not help, so the end of the Yugoslav leader had become the matter of weeks.

Tito's greed for luxury and his ambitions were almost limitless. He had about forty-seven residencies or hunter's cabins all over Yugoslavia, practically just for himself. All of them had to be ready for him to come at any time either in winter or in summer. The islands Brioni at the North Adriatic became his favored residence, where he had built a court of which the Roman emperors could not be ashamed of. He was the president of Yugoslavia for life, the supreme commander of the Yugoslav People's Army, and the head of the Communist Party (named "the league of communists"). When he became saturated with domestic glory, he—together with Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Indian President Djalal Nehru—established the so-called Unaligned Countries' movement in the mid-1960s. Since this movement had hindered the influence of Russia and red China around the world, he gained the sympathies of USA. Already before the "Unaligned Countries" were established, Tito began propagating anti-colonialism and the seizing of Suez Channel by the Egyptian President Nasser was one of the beginning dominoes to fall. Tito began visiting the new rulers of the African States, like Mobutu Sese Seko in Zaire (Congo), Idi Amin (Uganda), Jean Bedel Bokassa (Central African Republics) and so on, or they had visited Yugoslavia.

These mutual visits cost Yugoslavia dearly. The Marshall distributed credits lavishly, and the Yugoslav enterprises had to cover them. In too many cases our enterprises had to take the loans from the banks to pay for the limitless Tito's greed for glory. And now his last hour was to come soon.

He was in the Clinical Center several months already. During this time, I too had to visit my urologist about once a month. His ambulance was on the ground level of that same building block where Tito and his staff had occupied the full storey somewhere higher up. The check for other patients and visitors became strict. I remember coming there just a couple of weeks before his death, being checked almost like today at an airport. Since I had to wait for my turn to be examined by the doctor from one to three hours, I had an English book of US history in my briefcase, the content of which was thoroughly checked. When the checking procedure was over and I told to where I would go, I headed for the toilet. (The doctor, who checked my prostate gland, preferred that I had the empty colon and bladder.) Then the nervous guard screamed to me:

"To where are you going?!"

"I am going sh*t!"

Then he let me go. Though the particulars of Tito's health were not yet known, it became a "public secret" that he would not leave the hospital alive. Who would be so crazy to risk his own life in an attempt to assassinate Tito, instead to wait for a couple of weeks for the Mother Nature to do the job for him?

Due to pyramidal structure of the Yugoslav Government, Tito's authority was still so great that he successfully kept pressing down the lid over the pot in which the antagonisms of our nationalities were simmering. Mainly the Serbs and Montenegrins wanted to reestablish their hegemony over the other nations, like it was before the war. The communism, which was the obligatory religion in Yugoslavia, was their strong lever for aligning the other nations. We Slovenes as well as Croats, contributing the most to the economy of the common State, felt suppressed and exploited. The Albanian minority on Kosovo and the Hungarian one in Vojvodina (a District bordering to Hungary) were not pleased either. All this was overruled by the slogan "Brotherhood and Unity," where the brotherhood was trampled for the sake of unity; this was especially the case in the army, where only Serbian language had to be used all over the State. Now, when Tito would die soon, there was no equivalent leader to prevent the discord from erupting.

Two policemen came to our works to prepare us for the inevitable situation. They told of possible riots and of suspect individuals, how to handle them, and so on. We were instructed how to use guns and when. Finally on the May 5, 1980, it was announced that Tito had died. Though we were a factory for TV receivers, which could be placed in any room to watch the final farewell ceremony in Ljubljana, we were sent home to watch TV. (I remember how it

was in USA, when in the summer of 1969 the CNN TV had transmitted the moon landing. In order to prevent absenteeism, the leadership of Tektronix had placed many TV receivers in all laboratories, so we could watch the space module launching and its landing on the moon.) The funeral was in Belgrade, where the coffin of Tito was laid in a white marble crypt in the so-called "House of Flowers." Total 209 delegations of 127 states, among them many state presidents and other dignitaries came to Belgrade for this occasion. I wonder how many would have come if the knowledge of (then the top secret) 600 mass graves, in Slovenia alone, of the people who were murdered after the war for the sake of revolution, would be as known then as it is known today. As already mentioned, in those graves, abandoned mines, air raid shelters, tank trenches or Carst caves some hundred thousand to two hundred thousand bodies of mostly men, but also women and even some children were buried or dumped. Due to strictly pyramidal structure of the Yugoslav Government, Tito, being on the very top, was the most responsible for these crimes against humanity. Today, he would certainly be the candidate for the International Court Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in Hague.

We were told that we should make up for the hours, when we were sent home to watch Tito's farewell. Since I had to prepare my car, and so on, for the planned journey to Thrudrill representative in Germany, I had compensated my lost time in the days immediate after the ceremony. We were scheduled to depart on Monday. However, on Friday before the weekend we were told that *all* employees had to make up for the lost time *together*. Instead leaving at 2:00 p.m., we had to work until 4:00 p.m. When I attempted to go home at 2:00 p.m., I found the main gates of the works closed and the receptionist told me that nobody was allowed to leave. The fact that I had already compensated the lost time did not matter. Then I had made a grave mistake by saying, "I was in a similar 'institution' during the war and I have taken the first opportunity given to me, to leave."

When I came to work the next Saturday (which was then a working day), I was told that I should return all the documents and the money I got for the planned journey on Monday. The whole trip was cancelled with no explanation why. Even today I am not sure, if the trip was cancelled for my caustic remark or for the possibility that I could learn of the true catalogue price of the Thrudrill machine at the Principal in Germany. Many years later, I learned that our import enterprises, which were abundantly staffed by the former secret police employees, had wound up the prices of foreign goods enormously in order to cash hefty commissions and thus provide their financial base for the possible unsure future.

2.19 Twenty Months of Mobbing

Already before Tito's death, I expressed occasionally my opinion of senseless official and practical idolatry to Marshall. I still remember once, when he was still well, we should stop working and go to almost 1-km-distant Celovška cesta, where his motorcade should pass to waive flags and greet him along that street. Being already fifty-five years old, I had difficulties to stand for a long time, because of my feet problem. I refused to go, saying,

"If Marshall misses me, please let me know and I will come at once."

My remarks of this sort were probably accumulated somewhere. Besides I probably became dangerous for my frequent visits to Vienna to discover for how much our import enterprises were overcharging the original factory prices of machinery and instruments we were purchasing from abroad. In addition, that article of *Screwdriver Industry* could be the reason. For the start, they requested me to be ready in the middle of the night to repair the equipment. Since I refused, they had relieved me of all functions.

This was the beginning of a twenty-month-long mobbing: being at "work" at 6:00 a.m. sharp to seat in my little office (of about 6 m²) up to 2:00 p.m. without being given any task. I remember how the other personnel could not correct an important fault in TV receivers. It would be easy for me to fix the matter, but I had nothing to say. However, as an engineer, I still had to participate (better to say, seat only) on the staff meetings, just to "enjoy" the dense tobacco smoke, which was detrimental to my lungs. Once I had enough of this smoke and asked the colleague next to me, if I too might light one (he thought cigarette).

"Sure you may."

I had taken a thin stick of Indian incense and lit it. Soon the same fellow said, "Starič, what a stench you have lit?"

"This is Indian incense. It smells beautiful, doesn't it?" I had moved the stick toward his nose.

“No! Take it away!”

On the protest of other smokers close by, I had to extinguish my incense. So I learned that only one sort of stench was allowed.

The new statute of the company was written, and everybody got a copy to write his/her comments. I noticed one paragraph, where even bosses with two grades lower education were supposed to command engineers. (This was just a safeguard in case there would be no communists among the engineers). I had written my objections, quoting that the bosses without proper education could not decide on professional matters, which they did not understand. How a Sergeant could command a Colonel? This time, I was called before some sort of a Tribunal to get my head washed. The “chairman” was the personnel director (a former carpenter), with a draftsman and a drafts girl as “assessors,” both very young. The personnel director, pointing to my written objections said literally, “in all your comments to the statute, it drags on like a red tape: professionalism, professionalism, professionalism. This is not important at all!”

What to say to such nonsense? I remembered driving over the Golden Gate Bridge and explained, “Take, for example, the Golden Gate Bridge, at San Francisco. The most competent engineers designed it, and then the workers began building it by the blueprints of the engineers, who did all calculations first. How could they have built it without professionalism?”

I do not remember much of what the personnel director said to my reply. It was just an empty political drivel. When he had ended, I closed, “You have not convinced me and I have nothing more to say. Please let me leave” and had left the room. When the Director Ivo Stumberger had met me after, he was *fuchsteufelswild*.⁴³ He threatened to hit me. (One of his previous jobs was being the director of the Penitentiary in Škofja Loka, soon after the war.) To this I answered, “This would be a strange way to convince the engineers that you disagree with them.”

“I will destroy you!” He kept threatening. (Later, I learned that some employees of Iskra, who were subject to an equal treatment, had committed suicide.) In some way, he reminded me of the character Samuel Goldenberg and the party secretary to Schmuyle from Modest Mussorgsky’s suite *Pictures of the Exhibition*. So I learned this part of the composition; playing it became a strange satisfaction to me.

My unusual status began slowly grinding my nerves. The playing of my piano and the walking in nature during my free time could not cure all. I

⁴³ I have used this German superlative for the gradation: angry, ragged, *fuchsteufelswild*, because there is no equivalent English word for this. A direct and clumsy English translation would be *fox’s-devil’s-wild*, which lacks all “juice” of the original German word.

was frequently sick and the Serbian doctor at the company was sympathetic to my strange condition. He had given me sick leave, whenever I asked him. In the files, he had often written: "He said, he is sick," in order to safeguard his back. For my sensitive lungs, the sea atmosphere was useful. So I went several times to the Adriatic Island, to town Mali Lošinj, which was about 220 km distant from Ljubljana. During the cooler time of the year, the price of hotel accommodation there was relatively low. I had always taken with me the books to cover the gap in my knowledge of literature. There I had read *Brothers Karamazov* and *Crime and Punishment* by Fyodor M. Dostoyevsky, *Death in Venice* (and some other short novels) by Thomas Mann, four big volumes *Jean Christophe*, by Romain Rolland, and some other books. In my free time, I walked along the coast or chatted with guests, who were mostly Austrians or Germans.

During my vacation time in summer, I went to Trenta. This lonely valley, with turquoise River Soča and high mountains around, helped me to gain the necessary strength for my hopeless time in the factory. By ascending my old "friendly" peaks of Mojstrovka, Prisojnik, Razor, Križ, Stenar, Mangart, and so on, I had forgotten of my troubles in Ljubljana because the effort in climbing had fully occupied my mind. Usually my wife, Cveta, our



The River Ljubljanica; the long building on its right bank (also the design of Jože Plečnik) is the end part of the main market of Ljubljana, which is behind and more right.



My farewell of Trenta, in October 2011. The highest peak in the back is Jalovec (2645 m), which I have ascended 3 times. The monument was erected in 1953 in the honor of the mountaineer Julius Kugy, the pioneer of Julian Alps and a prolific writer. The statue was created by Jaka Savinšek, with whom I was together in the Italian concentration camp Gonars, during the war.

granddaughter, Jacqueline, and I went to Trenta together to spend there one or two weeks. It was interesting to see our granddaughter growing in her bilingual world. Jacqueline had, so to say, grown up in that valley, and I remember how she started walking there. Cveta, who did several ascents with me in the years before, was babysitting, so she did not join me on my ascents. In addition, all three of us visited some beautiful places in the Soča Valley, by our car Zastava 1300 (a poor copy of Fiat 1300), which had replaced our shabby Zastava 750.

To avoid mixing German and Slovenian words, I soon found that whenever Jacqueline saw something new, I had to tell its name in German and in Slovenian. It was comical when she saw, for example, a ladybug, I told her this is *pikapolonca*, as it is named in Slovenian. Then her father told me, laughing, when she saw a ladybug in Vienna, she said, "See, pikapolonca!" The German name is *Marienkäffer*, which I did not know before. When she was crying too much we told her, "You are screaming like a jay!" We bought her an Italian doll, which cried, when the pacifier was removed from her mouth. She said as well, "You are screaming like a jay," plugging the pacifier back in her mouth, to stop her crying . . .

We kept introducing her to nature and, whenever I could, I told her also the German name of something. When I led her in Trenta Alpine Museum for the first time, on the branch of a tree, there was a stuffed jay. I pointed to the bird, saying, "See, Jacqueline, there is a jay." She looked at the bird, and I felt how her imagination of the jay had somehow collapsed. She had to have an entirely different idea of what a jay (*šoja* in Slovenian) is. Otherwise, she was interested in abundant flowers, which grow in Trenta and along the Soča Valley. We had much joy with her.

When I was in USA, I had once a performance of slides at the home of Dr Charles Varga, where I had also shown pictures of Julian Alps and of the River Soča. After my return to Yugoslavia, Jacqueline Varga came here several times, and I led her to our mountains. Her visits became frequent in the time, when her husband Dr. Charles Varga spent his sabbatical year in Vienna. (When my granddaughter was born, she was her Godmother and this was why this child had got the name Jacqueline.) At first, I had selected the "simplest" mountain Mojstrovka (2253 m), which our dog Baba could easily ascend from Vršič Pass (1612 m). But gradually she became trained to more demanding peaks. Once when the day was very hot, I had selected the shadowy, northern, "Window Route" to Prisojnik, which she managed as well. By passing this difficult test, she became qualified for all marked routes in Julian Alps. In general, we had nice weather, but in two cases, we barely survived the thunderstorm. Let me describe them:

The first was the peak Kanin (2587 m). We started at nice weather from the upper cable car station at about 2200 m level. After the first, steep trail,

most of the way was easy going toward the west, on an almost horizontal way at the upper edge of a scree slope, in parallel to the right ridge Peči. The real ascent over the rock was just the last half hour of easy climbing, from a notch up to the peak. Kanin lies on the border between Italy and Yugoslavia (now Slovenia) and, like all Italian peaks this one has a big iron cross at its top. When I saw Jacqueline writing her name in the book at the top, I saw some tufts of her hair rising up. Since this was the sign of a strong electric field, there was no time to afford our usual rest on the top. We had to descend at once! And we had to do this as fast as possible, for the iron cross is a very efficient lightning rod. Indeed we managed to come down to the notch, before the rain started.

Just when we reached the “horizontal” trail on the scree slope, the thunderstorm began. Though the lightning was striking on the 100-200 m higher ridge at our left, we should not be confident, so we kept our ice axes hidden under our (wet) rain ponchos to prevent challenging the lightning. And we really went as fast as we could, though we were already tired from the long trip. After about one hour, when we arrived to the place from where the upper cable car station could be seen, we were out of the storm. Totally exhausted, we sat down on the rock to take our badly needed rest. We escaped the danger unhurt, except that Jacqueline, as exhausted as she was, dropped forward after rising up from the rock. She slightly injured her skull and tore her parka. After a short rest, we continued down to the cable car station, which was already running its last daily shift.

Another thunderstorm had caught us just about 300 m under the peak of Jalovec (2654 m). We started from a tinny Refugio “Pod Špičkom” (2064 m) in the early morning. A boy in his late teens asked if he may join us, because he was there for the first time. I agreed under the condition that we should go back if I had decided so because the weather was not reliable. At first, we had to climb over a part of the steep slope of Ozebnik (2480 m). Then a narrow almost flat saddle followed. Further the climbing became step up again, until we came to a long, narrow ridge, precipitous to left and right and with a moderate slope leading toward the very top of Jalovec. However, already when we were almost out of the Ozebnik slope, the thunderstorm developed. To go down, holding occasionally the steel rope might be fatal for lightning. Instead we speed up to the saddle, where we found a shallow pit opened toward the valley to stay there until thunderstorm stops. There was rain, wind, and lightning (fortunately, higher up), so we survived. After about one hour, the heavy storm ceased, but the weather was still bad. The young fellow proposed to continue to the peak, but I said we go down. So we did and soon after that, a retarded lightning hit the peak of Jalovec, just as a warning to stay off the summit. Fortunately, it was just a single one, but I was very much afraid, when we had to hold that steel rope while descending. When we arrived to our start, the weather became nice

and the sun was shining again. Bye, bye, Jalovec, we will come the next time! But it was no next time for me and for Jacqueline. She remained in USA, and I became too old to ascend it for the fifth time.

When I came back to “work” again I tried to get the employment elsewhere. But soon I discovered the Party anathema over my head was watertight. In those times, our red journalists accused the Germany of *Berufsverbot*,⁴⁴ which was applied there to the former violent extremist groups. Since my health status began deteriorating again, my immediate boss, a young engineer Žarko Jenko, who was the son of my former Prof. Slavoj Jenko, suggested me to start writing a book of wideband amplifiers, just to keep my mind busy. I had accepted his benevolent proposal. However, the task before me was enormous. At first, I had to repeat some mathematics; then I had to learn the theory of complex variable, which I was not taught at the university. Buttressed by this knowledge, I repeated the Laplace Transformation in depth, which was used for the basis of wideband amplifier transient analysis. Only then I was equipped to analyze the circuits I was taught at Tektronix, Inc. I had my pocket calculator HP41CV, with the magnetic card reader and printer. (My former son-in-law Dieter Bedke had brought this to me.) In addition, I had ample time from 6:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., provided “they” left me in peace. Since the book of such special subject would not find many buyers in Slovenia, I was writing it straight in English. I also calculated many diagrams, which I had drawn in ink on transparent paper of the size A3 (double letter format). In this way, I somehow managed to survive these “leaden months.”

During this time, Jacqueline Varga invited me to USA twice. I visited her in the spring 1981 and 1982, for one month each, taking unpaid leave at the company both times. Knowing my problem, she had paid all expenses for the journey, which I could not afford with my meager salary. On my first visit there, I went to Hewlett/Packard works in Corvallis, Oregon, where I bought some advanced programs for my computer. This helped me very much to do more complicated calculations for my book. She had also paid a complete laboratory measuring equipment in order to keep me working in my profession. Since the assembled laboratory equipment would be too expensive for her, and I would not be allowed to import it, I proposed buying relatively cheap assembly kits from Heath Co., Michigan. I could not emphasize how much her help was useful to me. Being in a free world for a full month, out of that hostile and unjust environment, being rid of everyday mobbing, was something I needed like a dried-off soil needs rain. There I had also the chances to play that nice

⁴⁴ In Germany, the members of the violent extremist groups are not allowed to be employed by the state for a period of maximum five years. This law was introduced in 1970s, and it is named *Berufsverbot*.

Steinway grand piano again. (Since I had completed the class of piano tuning and repair, I also ground the hammers of that piano and its sound had become brilliant.) Together with Jacqueline's German friend Inga Gloeckler, we also ascended Saddle Mountain, near the Pacific Coast. On the saddle, I met my former Dutch colleague Ahne Oosterhof and his friend, just descending from the peak. What a chance! In that month, I also saw the musical by Jerry Bocks and Sheldon Harnick, *Fiddler on the Roof* in the Portland Auditorium.

I did not ask for all measuring instruments to be sent to me at once. Instead I split them into smaller packages. First, they sent the oscilloscope and the calibrator kits to Ljubljana. When the goods arrived to Ljubljana Airport, I was informed by the carrier. So I visited first the airport's Custom Office presenting my documents. The matter was so unusual that I was directed straight to the office of the Custom General Director:

"Here I am to pay the duty and to pick up the package."

"Have you any officially allowed workshop?"

"No, I will use this for my own education, first by assembling the instrument and then by experimenting with it."

"Then you are not allowed to import such things."

"Why not?! I have read already many times how much the knowledge is important to raise the level of our industry. The package is the gift of my American friend, and I am prepared to pay the duty for this. The knowledge I will gain, I will use when working in our industry."

"Nevertheless, you are not allowed to import this." The director probably remembered how in one single day of the year (known just to the selected ones) the Big Brass was allowed to import their expensive cars without any duty.

"What do you suggest me to do?" I asked. He became sympathetic.

"It is hard to understand all our laws even for me. Resend the package to someone abroad," he suggested. (He did not tell directly to smuggle it back.)

So I had sent the package to my daughter in Vienna and smuggled it back. All other instruments were then sent directly to my daughter and in this pattern I had "imported" them. Gradually, I assembled all instruments, which I needed in my "laboratory" at home. It was hard for me to tell, if I gained more knowledge by assembling the instruments, or by using them after.

Since I did nothing, which could be a legal reason to lose my job at Iskra, they tried to force me leaving the company by myself. So they had given me an unusual task. I got a list of the obsolete material, which was still in our stock. I should collect all these parts, put stickers with the part number on them and bring the collection to the technical director. Needless to say, any literate individual could do this job. It was clear for me, what was their aim. Without any protest, I did what I was told to. When I brought the box with the obsolete parts to him, I said, "On my visit at my former company in USA,

they have offered me the job again. (Indeed, on the basis of my article my former colleague Bob Cogan had offered me the job at MultiComp, Inc., a Tektronix spin-off company. Since I was already fifty-seven years old, I had to regretfully refuse their kind offer.) Is it not strange in USA they found me useful to work as an engineer? Here at Iskra, I am good only to collect the obsolete parts in the stockroom.”

It would be tedious for the reader to read of just every event of this sort. So let me tell only one more characteristic incident. Once the Director Štemberger, the Technical Director Jure Butina and the guest, Mitja Tavčar (my colleague from the earlier times at Iskra, who was responsible for the instrument manuals), appeared in that acoustical laboratory, which I put together in my better days. Tavčar, seeing me in my little office was surprised.

“Peter! What you are doing here?”

Pointing to Butina I answered: “Ask my boss.”

Štemberger was *fuchsteufelswild* again, judging from his face. When they left, he probably explained to his Party comrade Tavčar, why I was just sitting there, doing nothing.

My widowed father-in-law married again. His second wife had two grown sons and one of them, I. E., had a very high political function. He was the secretary of nobody else than the Yugoslav minister of internal affairs, Stane Dolanc. Once I. E. visited us at home and I told him of my problem. I had also shown him my article *Our Own Design or Screwdriver Industry*.” After he read it, he told that even Dolanc would not find anything objectionable in my writing. Later, I learned that I. E. had called all Iskra Directors to the center at Iskra Commerce and asked what they had against Peter Starič. Since they could not say anything to hold on, he required to give me a job. I could not tell what all was going on in the party circles following this meeting, but the end result was that I eventually got a job at the research Institute Jožef Stefan in Ljubljana.

The circumstances at Iskra TV Pržan were such that I could not make a farewell party. But my immediate boss Žarko Jenko told me that the collective wanted to buy me a farewell gift. He asked what I would like. Since I did not have any operas in my long-play disc collections (CDs did not exist yet then), I told him that I would like one opera. To my great surprise, I got a gift package of *five* complete operas! I had accepted this as a sign that the employees had disagreed with the way the management had treated me. This was another proof that the “workers’ self-management” was a farce.

2.20 Working at Jožef Stefan Institute

A younger engineer at the acoustical laboratory, whose father Vinko Vrščaj worked at Jožef Stefan⁴⁵ Institute (our acronym IJS), told me that his father would soon be retired. They were looking for someone, who would replace him. So I submitted a formal application and got the job.

Today, this Institute is the largest Slovenian research institution. It was established in 1949, when the Yugoslav leadership coquetted with the possibility of making an atomic bomb. The promoter of this crazy idea was Prof. Pavle Savić, who in 1938 worked with Irene and Frederic Joliot-Curie in Paris. In the years after the war, he helped establishing the Nuclear Institute⁴⁶ in Vinča, near Belgrade, where the graphite reactor should be built to produce plutonium (Pu239) for the would-be atomic bomb.⁴⁷ Soon after that, the

⁴⁵ Josef Stefan (1835-1893) was a Slovenian physicist, working as a professor at Vienna University, where he became also the Rector. In 1879, he discovered the law of thermal radiation, which was in 1884 mathematically proven by Ludwig E. Boltzmann (1844-1906). This is now known as Stefan-Boltzmann's Law. More of the institute could be found at the address: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jo%C5%BEef_Stefan_Institute.

⁴⁶ After the death of the revolutionary politician Boris Kidrič, it was renamed to Institute Boris Kidrič.

⁴⁷ Only about 5 kg of that artificially made element plutonium 239 was needed for the atomic bomb, which has devastated Nagasaki. The atomic bombs in USA (and later in USSR, England, France, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and so on) were made with huge efforts and at an enormous cost. For example, in USA, about 160,000 people, many of them top scientists and even several Nobel laureates were working in the so-called Manhattan Project, where the atomic bombs were made.

Nuclear Institutes in Ljubljana and in Zagreb were established. Gradually, the ambitions to make an atomic bomb had evaporated and the Nuclear Institute in Ljubljana was renamed to Jožef Stefan Institute and that one in Zagreb to Rudjer Bošković Institute. Today IJS has connections with the world-top scientific institutions. So far prominent scientists, many of them Nobel laureates, like Werner Heisenberg, Rudolf Peierls, Pjotr Kapica (Peter Kapitsa), K. Alex Müller, Christian de Duve, Harold Kroto, Robert Hub. Pierre-Gilles de Gennes, Nobuhito Katunuma, and so on had visited IJS. Instead of graphite reactor to produce plutonium for the atomic bomb, a research reactor TRIGA was built in a detached unit at Podgorica, some 10 km away from Ljubljana.

My task was to maintain four big mass spectrometers. Let me explain their function as simple as possible. They consisted basically of a curved tube placed in the gap of an electromagnet. An extremely high vacuum had to be kept inside the tube to where the minute quantities of compound(s), consisting of elementary particles (atoms or molecules), are sucked in. Once inside, these particles are first charged to become ions. The charged particles are then accelerated by the high voltage and sent as a narrow beam along the curved tube in which the magnetic field at the curvature deflected them to arrive at the other side of the tube, to be caught into a small container. Depending of the strength of the magnetic field and of the value of the high voltage, only a certain mass from the mixture of the sucked-in particles is caught by the container. So by changing either the magnetic field strength, or the high voltage, different particles are caught by the container and transformed into current by an electrometer. The current, caused by the caught particles flowing into that container, when the magnetic field at the tube curvature is changed, is recorded on the paper and such plot is named the mass spectrum.

The electronic part of this device is big and very complicated. But I soon learned everything I had to know. The vacuum pumps were of two sorts. The first was the usual rotational pump. When the air pressure inside the tube became low enough, then the oil-diffusion pump took over to decrease the air pressure to the desired low level, named high vacuum. The diffusion pump had no rotational parts and it had to be cooled by liquid nitrogen. Though the

The money spent up to the end of WWII was about 2 billions of dollars (worth about 36.53 billions of dollars in 2011, by considering an average 4.5 percent of yearly inflation). In comparison with USA, the attempt to make an atomic bomb in the war-crippled Yugoslavia was an insane idea. When the military leadership realized how little the chances were, the word “nuclear” was dropped from the names of all three institutes. However, the institutes remained, devoting their research to more realistic projects.

daily working shift is only about eight hours, the pumps had to work around the clock to keep the constant high vacuum. That was it!

I had met Vinko for the first time already in the military radio shop to where I was drafted in May 1945. He had also driven our car to Celje, where our unit has been dissolved into Serbian Army, called Yugoslav National Army. During the war, he was in the Partisan Radio Works (Slovenske Partizanske Radio Delavnice, or SPARD), where my later professor Dušan Lasič was leading that secret unit at Stare Žage in SE Slovenia. Then the circumstances were such that many items which we could now simply buy in a shop, had to be made from scrap material. At the institute, Vinko was together with his brother Stane already since 1949. (Eventually, his brother had left for USA, where he stayed for good.) In those thirty-four years Vinko had accumulated enormous knowledge in all aspects of mass spectrometry of which the electronics is just a part. His solutions were extremely bright, and I was no match for him. Being an introverted man, he wanted to do all by himself, even as there were people and departments at the institute, who could do something of his work much better. In this respect, he became a self-made-man establishing a one-man-band in all these years. His notes, when he had written or drawn some, were such that only he could understand them.

Contrary to Vinko, my background was entirely different, though my previous knowledge of oscilloscopes and pH-meters design and of magnetic fields measurements were a solid basis for the start. I went through the regular university study, which he did not. Besides, my past work was in industry, where it was not enough that an apparatus just works. It had to be built for the market and it had to successfully pass all environmental tests, like shock and vibration, temperature variations, humidity, and the like. In addition, the full documentation had to be prepared for the production as well as another one for the user and for service. All instruments Vinko built were not up to these standards. When I had to attempt my first repair, I simply did not know how to handle the matter, because my way of design was so very much different from Vinko's.

Fortunately, we never came to any dispute. I soon found out that instead of repairing something it was better to build the new system according to contemporary standards. So I usually said, "Just tell me, what the apparatus has to do and I will make it." However, it was hard to break the ice. The staff, educated in chemistry, simply could not imagine that I was able to do something of my own design. They kept suggesting me to study the factory manuals of the old spectrometers they had. Since the technology I was supposed to copy was over twenty years old, I refused even to look at that documentation, which could lure me into a dead end street.

The personnel in the Department of Mass Spectrometry K2 accepted me friendly. I was glad to come there, where they needed my knowledge instead to grind my nerves as it was the case at Iskra. Though several doctors of science and some with master's degree were working there, the department head Vili Kramer, PhD, told me that we should address each other by the first name. This was like at Tektronix in USA. However, this was valid only among the personnel in the same departments. In "outside" communications, the appendage "comrade" was used. Higher standing professors were supposed to be addressed by comrade Professor or, for example, comrade Director. The last one was Milan Osredkar, now a PhD, who was in the concentration camp Gonars at the time when I was there. But then we did not know of each other, mainly, because he was in the separated section Beta and I was in Gamma. As already mentioned in chapter 1.6, he was among the main organizers of the secret radio station "Screamer," during the Italian occupation. When we once met in the institute dining room, he told me that he was also among those sixteen, who had dug the tunnel to escape the camp. However, after the first eight of them succeeded to escape, the guard sounded the alarm and he, who was just the next to run out, had to return together with the other seven. After the capitulation of Italy, when the camp was dissolved, he joined the partisans in Slovenia. For my article of the "Screamer" (which was published in IEEE Potentials,) he had given me the complete data, circuit diagrams, and some photos of the replica of this transmitter, which was built again after the war.

The working atmosphere at the institute was relaxing, though Hermina Leskovšek, PhD, BSCE, told me that she was assigned to supervise my work in the first two months. Frankly, I had never felt her "supervision" in any way. Apparently, they were satisfied with my work and behavior, for there were no objections to continue my employment at IJS. When I had ordered some parts to be made in the mechanical workshop, I had established good relations with them too, because all my drawings were to industrial standards, to which other employees' drawings were mostly not. I also got friendly relations with the ceramic department, where they had made some special resistors for me.

Though, at first I had the feeling the Party had lifted the anathema off my head, I gradually become aware that it was just very much relaxed, but not cancelled. For example, even as I spoke German and English, I could never discuss some important questions with a supplier abroad by phone, but just by letter.⁴⁸ In all six years and eight months I worked at IJS, I was also never sent

⁴⁸ Once I got the reply from an English firm addressed to:

abroad to participate at the international meetings of mass spectrometry, where the other employees of my position, were being sent. How much more new knowledge I might have gained abroad, instead to study that documentation of the obsolete spectrum analyzers, which were being used at the IJS! Even as the institute photographer had occasionally taken a photo of me, together with some other employees, I never got a picture of this. For my sixtieth anniversary, he had taken some pictures of me alone, but I did not get these either. (On my special request now in 2011 the retired IJS photographer had collected some of my pictures, but not a single one was taken during my employment at IJS.) In addition, later, when the work of K2 was described and published in several publications of IJS, one would in vain look for the name Peter Stari there. Such attitude was not changed even later, when Slovenia became independent and the communist totalitarian system was officially abandoned. For example, in 1997, when I had a lecture in the big lecture hall of IJS, for the occasion of one hundredth anniversary of Carl Braun's invention of the cathode ray tube, people of RTV came, with their cameras and reflectors, who had recorded part of my lecture. Though in the evening news this event was shown, my lecture, which was the main part, was not shown. Instead another PhD at IJS had explained the Anniversary . . .

On the other hand, I had to admit that my professional development at the institute had reached the highest level in my life. The whole environment there was such that it pulled me forward and up. I met excellent people and great experts in every field I wanted to increase my knowledge. However, though the institute was well equipped with very expensive measuring instruments, the measuring gear I was given for my work was way inadequate. So I had to bring my instruments from home to do all necessary measurements. By seeing this, my boss let me order some equal instruments from Heath Co., which I assembled and replaced my own ones. The exception was only the function generator, for which the dealer in Vienna said that the Heath generator was no longer available (which was not true). Instead, he sold us a shabby generator, which was not satisfactory for my work. So I kept bringing my own function generator from home.

Already in 1954 two homemade mass spectrometers were built at the institute, which were placed in the laboratory on the second floor. Any one had a 500 kg heavy magnet. Since they were built with electronic tubes, this

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When I had shown this to my colleagues, they told me that it was not for the first time that the letters from abroad were so mistakenly addressed.

part occupied three big closets for each spectrometer and the power dissipation of such set was about 5 kW. Needless to say, how hot was in the laboratory during summer. Besides, there was also a modern, smaller Hewlett/Packard spectrometer, with which I never had any problems with. (However, the chemists working with it had a strange problem because they had kept some permanent magnets in the drawer, close to the spectrometer programs, which were written on the magnetic tape cassettes. I told that them the magnetic field had partly erased the program on the tapes. So they had to order new cassettes.)

In the mid 1970s, a German firm had one spectrometer, which was destined for the scrap yard. It was arranged that this instrument was given to IJS, and Vinko had thoroughly overhauled it. In addition IJS bought another equal instrument, which we got at a reduced price, because that company had already discontinued its production. Since they were very big and heavy, they were both placed in the cellar where my first working place was.

About one meter behind my back was a big magnet and one meter farther a diffusion pump, cooled by liquid nitrogen, which had the boiling temperature of -139°C . For this the parts close to the pump were always coated by frost from the humidity taken out of the air. In addition, Bogdan, who worked with the spectrometer, was a heavy smoker. This combination was very bad for my lungs. Since I started working there in the cold month of January, I was trying to achieve the bearable “air-conditioning” by slightly opening the window above my desk. Soon I become sick, and the doctor had diagnosed bronchitis. After fourteen days of sick leave, I came back cured; however, two weeks later, I became sick again. Such ups and downs repeated several times in succession. Since I suspected the dry air might be the reason, I had taken a humidity meter and found the percentage of humidity at my working place to be ZERO! Not believing this unusual result, I calibrated the hygrometer, which needed only a slight readjustment. The repeated measurement was just the same: zero percent! When I appeared sick again at my doctor, he asked me of my working conditions. I told him of everything and he decided, “Tell your boss that I will keep you on the sick leave, until you are moved elsewhere, where the working conditions are normal.”

Soon a nice room in the second floor was found for me, where I kept working for the rest of my time at IJS. At first, I was there alone. On the far away desk, two modern Hewlett/Packard chromatographs were placed, which Hermina has used occasionally for her measurements.⁴⁹ I always admired her

⁴⁹ When it was discovered that some wines in Austria had added glycol, which caused a big international scandal, Hermina got the task to measure about 500 sorts of Austrian wines. All of them were to be displayed at the coming International Wine

knowledge, and her skill with which she—as a weak woman and just alone—had moved the heavy bomb of gas, she needed for her work there. In that room, I designed the complete electronics for those two home-made spectrometers built in 1954 to replace all modules, which were originally built with electronic tubes. I had retained only the magnet, the pumps and the vacuum-meter, which was designed by Vinko. Since he did not let me replace his unusual wiring by a modern printed circuit plate, I had only changed the front panel in order to fit the rack. Because I did not want to look in the documentation of those obsolete spectrometers in the cellar, and since I was never sent to any international meeting of spectrometry, my work was based entirely on my previous knowledge and on some basic books of mass spectrometry I read recently. By using integrated circuits, transistors and contemporary circuitry, I had shrunk the previous size of these two black monsters to 1/3rd and decreased the previous power consumption below 1/10th.

In my free time at home, I still kept working on my English book of wideband amplifiers for which I did numerous calculations and drawings. Once I attempted to make a table of Bessel poles up to tenth order. When arriving up to sixth order, my calculator HP41CV just kept milling and milling, without printing the end result. Even as I started the calculations in the evening, in the morning, when I was up, the calculator was still milling and no result was printed. When I consulted the fellows from the computer department at IJS, they told me that the computing had to be executed with twice as many decimal places, which my calculator could not do. They did the calculations on their PDP-11/34 computer, doubling the decimal places and printed the whole table for me. I had consulted them also later, whenever I encountered similar problems and they were always helpful. Since I had drawn my diagrams in ink on the transparent paper of double letter form, I made reduced Xerox copies at IJS, for which I found no objections. Once my former colleague of students' years, Dr. Janez Korenini, saw copying me and asked me of the particularities. Then he told me that I could use my work to make a PhD degree too, but I should not publish the book before.

In 1986, just after I had completed my first mass spectrometer, I began working on the electronic part of an oxygen meter of which the essential part was an invention of Arkadij (Dadi) Popovič. Then I got an offer from the

Fair in Ljubljana. For the examination of wine, the originally sealed flasks were sent to IJS. Only about 1 cubic centimeter was needed for the analysis; the rest was supposed to be “officially destroyed.” Now, a quarter of century later, I am taking the freedom to describe the “destruction” procedure. Since the measurements of so many sorts lasted about one month, we at K2 destroyed the rest currently, in a natural way and out of the regular working time.

Head of the Otology Dept. of the Medical Faculty in Ljubljana, Prof. Dr. Mirko Kambič, to go to Kuwait, to repair and calibrate audiometers at Al Sabah Hospital. The monthly salary to be paid was ten times of that one I had at IJS. Such a generous offer was hard to refuse. Though I preferred to stay at IJS, where the work was much more interesting, I had arranged for a two months of unpaid leave, which I had spent in Kuwait. My work there was successful. In general, I had to repair the instruments, which an Egyptian engineer had attempted repairing, but he was “too strong” to put it mildly. Since I was not used to be in a country, where I could not read the signs on the offices and streets, I bought a textbook by T. Francis and M. Frost, *Write to left*. I had written all exercises, learned the Arabic alphabet and also many words.⁵⁰ Though the Arabic numbers and their decadic system, with the great invention of zero (0), is used in all world, however their signs for the numbers are different from ours. Besides, they write the numbers from left to right and the text from right to left. With the money I earned in Kuwait I could buy myself a personal computer, which I had to smuggle in from Austria, like I did previously with the measuring instruments. Nevertheless, in our newspapers, I often read how much the knowledge was important for the State economy . . .

In working on my book, I met the colleague Erik Margan, who worked in the Solid State Physics Dept. He had just completed an oscilloscope, which had the display on liquid crystal screen instead on a cathode ray tube. This design was a cooperation of Iskra and IJS. Since the wideband amplifier is an essential part of any oscilloscope, we began some work together. He taught me how to use my personal computer, suggested some useful programs, and so on. I had lent him my Class Notes of Tektronix and in short, we began broadening each others knowledge, which was not against the general policy at IJS.

Already in mid-1970s, my daughter Zorana divorced. Eventually, she got the employment at OPEC Fund for International Development in Vienna. Since she had to care for her daughter Jacqueline, the child spent much time with us, grandparents in Ljubljana. When Jacqueline started visiting her school

⁵⁰ To my surprise, several of their expressions were equal to Serbian words, which I already knew, and their pronunciation is strictly phonetic like in Serbian. Contrary to the Latin alphabet the Arabic has no capitals. Also the written and printed fonts are almost equal. Even as the Arabic alphabet has 28 letters, they had no *o*, no *e*, no *p*, and no *č*. Instead they use a similar letter. So Toyota is written and pronounced as *tuyuta*, Coca-Cola as *kuka-kula* and my Arabian taxist told me, he will go *barking* the car. In short, to learn Arabic alphabet is much easier than to learn the Latin one, not to mention the Chinese writing . . .

in Vienna, she was here for almost all her school vacations. So my visits to Vienna to bring her here and back again became frequent. When in Vienna, I had taken the opportunity to visit the numerous museums there. At that time, the highway to Vienna was not finished yet and especially in Slovenia a great part of it was missing. So the driving to there lasted about six hours or even more in winter, but I went there irrespective of the weather. (Today, as the highway is completed also in Slovenia, the driving Ljubljana-Vienna lasts just about three and a half hour.)

In addition, the authorities in Ljubljana were making ever more administrative difficulties. The economical situation in Yugoslavia kept worsening after Tito's death and the inflation kept increasing. In the second half of 1980s, almost all middle class became "millionaires." The main reason for the galloping inflation was poor management and the fact that very few of our enterprises were oriented to the more demanding western market. However, the Russians had bought everything from Yugoslavia, and paid almost nothing. As soon as the goods were exported to USSR, the Yugoslav producer(s) were paid by the Central Yugoslav Bank. Based on these exports, the Central Bank kept emitting more and more money, which was not covered by any real value. Gradually, some most-used consumer goods like oil, washing powder, toilet paper, gas, brooms, and so on became scarce. In 1984, the gas had been rationalized, and we got only forty liters per month. This was just enough to drive the distance Ljubljana-Vienna, which is about 400 km. (Fortunately, on the other side of the border, we could buy as much gas as we needed.) Since even this was not enough to decrease the gas consumption, we were allowed to use our cars only every second day; one day those with the even license plates, the other day those with the odd ones. Car pooling was used by the employees. To curb spending money abroad, the authorities had introduced a deposit to be paid at the border by everyone, who went out if traveling without a serious reason. The money should be returned after one year when the ever increasing inflation swallowed some 80-90 percent of the original value being paid.

Since I had serious reason(s) to bring Jacqueline back to school, when the vacations were over, I needed a special permission to be freed of the deposit, which was valid three months. Once, when the custom officer at the border wanted to keep the permission, I asked him to return the document, the value of which was three months. In the discussion that followed I told him that I had been used to similar problems years ago. He asked me, when this was, and I told him:



The Philharmonic building, with the Ljubljana Castle in the background. When in 1701 the *Academia Philharmonicorum* has been established, they could not imagine, how 310 years later, the loudness of music will be abused (up to 120 dB), by the electronic equipment which is being prepared in front of the building,. Three big windows belong to the small Philharmonic Hall, where my brother Rudi has spent several days and night, in the early 1945, to avoid being arrested by the “Slovenian Police” . . .

“During the war, the town Ljubljana has been encircled by the barbed wire fence and to go out everyone must have a special permission, a so-called *lasciapassare*. But then we said, these are our enemies, the Italians. We just have to be patient, awaiting the liberation, to be freed of such crazy limitations.”

The custom officer covered his mouth by hand to muffle his smile, returned me that “*lasciapassare*” and left without saying a word.

Every time I needed the new permission, it was more difficult to get it, and more documents had to be submitted for this. They even asked for the personal documents of my daughter and granddaughter in order to prove that my daughter was indeed employed there. Zorana sent the copies of her OPEC documents and of her daughter’s. When the clerk asked me to prove that she dwelt in Vienna, Austria, this was enough for me. I went straight to the Austrian Embassy in Ljubljana, where I explained the difficulties. The ambassador had written a “diplomatically caustic” letter for me, to show it in that office. For the time being this was enough to get the permission. Next time, when even all this was not enough and facing a threat that I could not bring Jacqueline to Vienna over my free weekend time, I had lost my patience:

“Well, I will not bring my granddaughter to Vienna to start her obligatory school on Monday. Instead, I will inform her school authorities, that our state wants to be paid to leave me out (by that infamous deposit). You may imagine what all the Austrian journalists will write, when they will learn of this.” I got the document at once.

But I had also very nice memories of my journeys to Vienna. Once, when I just came across the border, I went to a shop to buy something. After we continued the ride, Jacqueline said:

“Ata (she calls me ata, which means dad in Slovenian), your German is not good enough. Now, I will teach you how to improve your pronunciation.” She did not criticize my grammar; she was just not pleased with my Slavic accent. Then she, the girl of eight years, had taught me of the correct pronunciation until we arrived to Vienna. As amused as I was, I had learned much from her, and I hoped my German had become better ever since.

The last time I was giving her ride to Vienna was when she was twenty-five years old. Since then, she already had her driver’s license, I had driven the car only the first half over Slovenia and she, from the Austrian rest station near the border, further to Vienna. Then I could watch for the first time the scenery around at will, which I could not do in my previous rides to the Austrian capital, because I had to watch the road and traffic. It was an unusual feeling, sitting on the right front seat, whilst my granddaughter was driving. Already then she was a very good and reliable driver.

At the institute, I had designed and built the second spectrometer, which was partly different and more demanding. When I attempted to start designing the third one, my August salary was suddenly cut by some 15 percent on the grounds that I could not be a researcher, because I did not have a PhD degree. I objected by quoting that two employees, who were modifying just a single module of that homemade spectrometer, about fifteen years ago, had acquired their PhD by doing just that. Later, when rebuilding that spectrometer, I found their module did not work as it was supposed to. So I redesigned that module, the rest of the whole first spectrometer plus the second one. Why was the title more important than the work done? Besides, I could acquire my PhD degree, providing I would get some time to work on my thesis.

The complaint did not move my boss. He also told me that I could not be given any time for my PhD Thesis. By considering the fact that the inflation rate had risen to 2500 percent in that year (1988), the unexpected cut of my salary had hit me hard. At that time, Yugoslavia was already bursting at all its seams. So I decided to look for the employment at another Institute in Ljubljana.

2.21 Moving to Milan Vidmar Institute; PhD Thesis

At Milan Vidmar Institute (our acronym EIMV), just some 200 m from IJS, I had a friend Prof. Maks Babuder, BSEE, whom I knew well from our common ascent to Stenar in Julian Alps. However, he knew of me already from the years, when I had just graduated and designed an oscilloscope for the High Voltage Laboratory, where he eventually became the head. I visited him, asking if I could get a job there. My previous work and our friendship from the mountaineering was a good reference. Besides, he knew of several of my professional articles and also of those, which I had published in our daily newspaper Delo. So I got the job. When I asked bashfully how high my salary would be, he told me the amount, which was almost twice as much as I had at IJS. Besides, he said, it would be desirable if I would make my PhD Thesis, for which I would get enough free time. These conditions were way more favorable than those I had at IJS, so I had accepted the job. My work at EIMV was measurements of electromagnetic fields caused by high voltage power lines, designing some special measuring instruments, teaching the young engineers how to use sensitive modern electronic instruments, translating some instruction manuals and such.

Since I had graduated in times when the curriculum at the Faculty for Electrical Engineering was five years, my status was something between BSEE and MSEE. In order to bridge the missing part toward the MS degree, the PhD candidates had to submit enough published professional articles and pass a special examination of different subjects at three professors. That examination (called *rigorous*) was at all three professors at the same time. I had no problems submitting my numerous technical articles. For the *rigorous* I got a list of the

subjects I had to study. Most of them I knew already; to study those, which I did not know, I got enough time at EIMV. The date set for the *rigorous* was on the first week in June 1990. However, just in that week I had to urgently go for my prostate operation. So it was agreed to move the date to the last week of June.

The operation was successful and on the third day after, I had no more blood in my urine. Two weeks later, when I appeared at the examination committee, I was already much better. (Just before the examination one of the professors even asked me of the particulars, for he too, was the candidate for such surgery.) Then I had to stand and answer the questions for one and a half hour, which was for the first time after the surgery. This put much strain for me. After I had passed the examination I went to toilet to empty my bladder, noticing blood in my urine again. Later, I told one of the professors that I was probably the only candidate to piss blood after that examination.

After the examination, all three professors invited me to the dean's office to have a drink. Then the dean, Prof. Baldomir Zajc, who was the chairman of the examination committee, told me I had left the maximum of five years to complete my PhD thesis. I answered I will not need so much time. (For my Thesis I needed just to select some chapters of the English book I was preparing, translate them into Slovenian, change the English text in the diagrams and figures, then making the whole writing self contained and hardbound, for which I needed less than one year.) So I had defended my thesis on the June 14, 1991, just two and a half months short of my sixty-seventh birthday. Besides my closer relatives, several others came too. Among them were the director of EIMV; my boss Prof. Maks Babuder; two elder, retired engineers from that institute, who were with me in Campo Concentramento Gonars; my friend, professor of mathematics, Niko Prijatelj, whom I had met (then as a gymnasium student) in that Campo for the first time; the mentor for my engineering diploma work, Prof. Slavoj Jenko; and so on. I had invited also two former colleagues at IJS, Hermina and Silva, who came too. Since the content of my thesis was so very much special, the usual examination committee of three had been extended to five professors. I had defended my thesis successfully. The custom was to invite all professors of the examination committee to a lunch, which we had in the International Hotel Union. There they told me that I was the oldest candidate defending the PhD thesis at the Faculty of Electrical Engineering and Computer Science. (This is the new name of the former Faculty of Electrical Engineering.)



2.22 Struggle for independence of Slovenia

Less than two weeks after I defended my thesis, fateful events happened in Slovenia, which eventually led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia. To refresh the necessary background, which is generally unknown to English readers, I had to jump back in time all the way to the year 1918. Then at the end of WWI, the new state had been established, named “The Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes”⁵¹ (eventually renamed to Yugoslavia). The north-western part of the newly formed state was a combination of the former, southern part of Austrian-Hungarian Empire. This was inhabited by Slovenes, Croats, and just partly by Serbs, whilst in Bosnia a mixture of Croats, Serbs and Muslims lived in different enclaves. The southeastern part, the Kingdom of Serbia under the King Peter I, was multinational too. In her flat northern part the Hungarian minority lived, whilst the southeast was inhabited by Macedonians and in the south by the Albanian minority, now known as Kosovars. Before WWI the Montenegrins (they were Serbs too) had their independent Kingdom Montenegro (*Crna Gora*, with the King Nikola I.), which had been “annexed” by Serbia after the war. Though the Slovenian and Croatian languages are different, they both write in Latin, like the Hungarians in Vojvodina and the Albanian minorities do. Serbs, Montenegrins and Macedonians write in Cyrillic, whilst the Macedonians speak a language similar to Bulgarian. The religion is predominantly Catholic

⁵¹ The Macedonians and the minorities of Albanians in Kosovo and Hungarians in Vojvodina (north, flat part of Yugoslavia), were not acknowledged in the prewar Yugoslavia. (All three speak very different languages.) After WWII Macedonia became the constituent Republic, while Kosovo and Vojvodina became the Autonomous Districts. Though the Serbs of Serbia and Montenegro were larger than any other national group, they were smaller than all non-Serbian nations together.

in Slovenia and Croatia, Orthodox in Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia, and Islamic in Kosovo. In Bosnia, the religion is Catholic, Orthodox or Islam, mostly depending of the particular district, but even in a single town, a mixture of the citizens of all three religions could be found.

When this multinational entity had been established after WWI, the non-Serbian nations expected an arrangement in the common State to be the optimum compromise for all constituent nations. However, the Serbs had usurped such arrangement to be optimum only for them. This original sin was the reason for frequent clashes, which eventually escalated in the bloody disintegration of the common State. Since it is not my intention to write of the numerous details of the turbulent history of Yugoslavia, I will describe just the main, recent events, which caused the disintegration, and those of which I was a witness. For the more interested readers, I suggest reading the books: Viktor Meier, *Wie Jugoslawien verspielt wurde*; Laura Silber and Allan Little, *Death of Yugoslavia*; and Charles Ingrao and Thomas A. Emmer (Editors), *Confronting the Yugoslav Controversies*. The first book (at the time of this writing only in German) describes the reasons why Yugoslavia fell apart, the second the course of her disintegration, and the third the aftermath.

After the shock caused by Tito's death in 1980 was over, the Serbs began tightening the screw. Besides increasing their economical and financial exploitation of Slovenia and Croatia, which were the "working horses of Yugoslavia," they reached also into the cultural field. In order to strengthen the "unification," better said the assimilation, in 1983, they attempted to introduce the so-called *skupna jedra* (common cores) in the schools. This would mean that we should teach just a small, proportional part of our, Slovenian literature, the rest would be mostly the Serbian one, to which our intellectuals rebelled in word and deed. The leaders were the writers of *Nova Revija* (New Review), where they devoted the full fifty-seventh issue to the Slovenian National Program (published at the beginning of 1987). There our leading intellectuals exposed the critical social and political status of Yugoslavia and wrote of the unbearable circumstances of Slovenian nation in the common state.

A hail of critics followed, all the way from the Slovenian Central Committee of Communists (CK) down to the communist-led veteran organizations. Their requests were to punish the writers, but this was refused by the Slovenian attorney general. Eventually, the federal attorney general requested sharp punishment. However, his request had triggered the widespread arguments of how much the federal government could mix into purely republican (Slovenian) matters. Though the communists all over the State were for some improvements of the impossible Yugoslav economical situation, they were against the badly needed essential change: To step down from power, which would be the first necessary action, to prevent the threatening downfall of the whole State.

The Serbian assimilation pressure was not only in the field of education. Since 1945 the Slovenian enterprises *had to* employ a certain percentage of workers from the southern Republics. Though the majority of those from down south had very low education, they were favored by the authorities. It was much easier for them to get an apartment than it was for the locals. They exploited our Medicare and Social care to the limits. And of course, most of them did not learn our language, expecting we had to adapt to them. I remember one electrical engineer from Montenegro, who worked thirty years at Milan Vidmar Institute. He did not learn Slovenian all this time, expecting that we would speak Serbian. The compromise was reached that we were speaking Slovenian to him and he spoke Serbian to us.

The main event, which triggered the secession of Slovenia from Yugoslavia, was the arrest of four Slovenian dissidents in the August of 1988. They were: a journalist of the weekly Mladina and a presidential candidate for the youth organization ZSMS, Janez Janša; the lieutenant Ivan Borštner; as well as two other journalists of Mladina, David Tasič and Franci Zavrl. The three civilians were arrested by the Slovenian Security, but Janša and Tasič were eventually handed over to the military authorities, where the lieutenant Borštner was already in the military custody, whilst the fourth accused, Zavrl was allowed to go home, but he too had to be available for the following court procedure.

The formal reason for their arrest was the secret army document, dated May 8, 1988, suggesting the battle readiness of the troops in Slovenia, issued by General Svetozar Višnjič. The copy of this document, brought by Borštner, was found in the desk drawer of Janša at the Editorship of Mladina. Eventually, the arrest of this foursome had become known as the "JBTZ affair." However, the informal and the main reason, which was not mentioned in the press, was the secret document of the session of the Central Committee of the League of Slovenian Communists (in short CK ZKS), under the leadership of Milan Kučan. There the members of ZKS assessed the circumstances in Slovenia and discussed of the necessary actions including the possible arrests of the leading dissidents. Based on the tape recording of this session the weekly Mladina printed the article "The Night of Long Knives," insinuating to Hitler's suppression of the Storm troopers (SA) in 1934. But the Mladina issue where this article had been printed had been confiscated. Besides Mladina had already published several other articles, exposing the army for being the *seventh republic*, requiring that JLA gets thoroughly reorganized and be put under the government control, to allow nationally homogenous units (like that one in Switzerland), and to decrease the overblown budget for the armament.

The fact that four Slovenes, three of them civilians, were handed to the Military Court, where the procedure was run in Serbian, excluding the public, was too much for us. Daily a great crowd of citizens of Ljubljana filled the whole

street Roška cesta, where the Court held sessions, in their quiet demonstration against the process. Nevertheless, the accused were sentenced: Borštner got four years, Zavrl and Janša eighteen months, and Tasič five months of jail. In spite of such wide public protest, the accused had to begin serving their terms, which were made milder, because they had been reduced by the Slovenian authorities.

The parasitic Serbian economy was the reason of steady increasing inflation. In 1989, the new banknotes were issued, replacing the old ones in the ratio 1 new Dinar = 10,000 old Dinars, which were supposed to be convertible in the ratio 7 Din = 1 DEM. However, the foreign banks did mostly not admit the convertibility or at least not the ratio 7:1 to the German Mark. Yugoslavia kept sinking into debts. Due to proximity of Austrian and Italian shops for us Slovenes, the shortage of many commonly needed goods and items (oil, washing powder, toilet paper, brooms, gas, and so on) was worse in Serbia and down south.

Among many public protests the most significant was the mass meeting on Kongresni Trg (Congress Square) in Ljubljana, on May 8, 1989. Since it was in the afternoon, when I was not working, I went there too. The crowd of some twenty thousand people had filled the whole Kongresni Trg, the adjacent park Zvezda and the parts of the streets leading to the square. There the requests for the independent Slovenia were clearly expressed by most speakers. Then the novelist Tone Pavček read the "Declaration of May," where three essential points were written:

1. We want to live in a sovereign state of Slovenian nation.
2. As a sovereign state, we will independently decide of our connections with southern Yugoslav—and other States in the frame of the renewed Europe.
3. By considering the historical struggle of Slovenian nation for political independence, the state of Slovenia can be founded only on the
 - respect of human rights and liberties,
 - democracy, including political pluralism,
 - social order, which will warrant spiritual and material prosperity according to the given natural possibilities and human capabilities of the citizens of Slovenia.

Signatories:

The Society of Slovenian Writers,
Slovenian Democratic Society,
The Bound of Slovenian Farmers,
Slovenian Christian-Social Movement,
Social-Democratic Alliance of Slovenia

In addition, the development of international events worked in favor to Slovenian independence. The milestone was the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, which was the symbolic start of the disintegration of the Soviet Eastern Block, eventually leading to the fall of Soviet Union. The strength of the communists in Eastern Europe was overrun by the rebelling masses in the former Satellite Countries. Consequently, also the other, west-European communists were losing much support and sympathies.

For our communists, seeing their world collapsing was a prediction that their time would soon be over. Though already in times of “fat cows” they secured their substantial financial basis abroad, the circumstances began deteriorating also on the domestic front. On the fourteenth Extraordinary Congress of the League of communists of Yugoslavia, on 24 January 1990, the Serbs tried to enforce their dominating politics by the Central Communist Organisation (or else by the army, which was under the Serbian command). This was too much for the Slovenian communists and they walked out of the hall. This act meant also the disintegration of the Yugoslav League of Communists. After this walk-out, the Slovenian communists had lost all chances in case our independence would be suppressed. If so, they would, at best, be replaced by the obedient pro-Serbian apparatchiks. The new Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević, whose program was to reform Yugoslavia into Great Serbia, would have no mercy for them. For the time being, the Slovenian communists had to—at least on the surface—fully cooperate in the struggle for independence. Even as the knowledge of the mass graves of the people executed after the war were not widespread yet, the books describing the postwar cruelties, which were printed abroad, began circulating. In the expected democratic system, the still living predecessors of the leading Slovenian communists might be made accountable for their past crimes.

On the eighth and twenty-second of April 1990 we had the first multiparty elections in Slovenia after fifty-two years. The winners were the united oppositional parties in DEMOS (Democratic Opposition of Slovenia)⁵² under the leadership of Dr Jože Pučnik.⁵³ However, the party of the former

⁵² It would be distracting for the reader to list all parties, which were participating on the elections.

⁵³ Born in 1932 Jože Pučnik completed doctorate in sociology at the University of Hamburg where he migrated after personally turbulent decade in Slovenia. From mid-1950s to the mid-1960s Pučnik was twice sentenced to prison for heretical writings (in *Revija 57* and *Perspektive*); he served five years of a nine-year maximum security sentence (1958-1963), and another two years from 1964 to 1966. In 1966 he moved to Germany, where he was granted political asylum and worked as a laborer while once again studying at the university as his degree was taken away

communists, poorly disguised under the name SDP (which is the Slovenian acronym for the Party of Democratic Renewal) got the most votes as a single party. Unfortunately, the leaders of the newly formed DEMOS were no match for the communists, who were the masters in subversive activities and cheating. The democratic parties were planted with communist's agents, spies and moles; the judges (almost all communists) retained their positions; the press, radio and TV remained well controlled too. Thus, the very birth the new Slovenia, which parted from Yugoslavia to escape totalitarianism, was contaminated at all social levels, with the bearers of that very totalitarianism. On the other hand, the fact that the Liberation Front and the revolution were almost inseparable, like the scrambled eggs, which can not be unscrambled, made the full break with the former totalitarian system almost impossible.

So it was no wonder that the former general secretary of the Slovenian League of Communists, Milan Kučan had been elected for the "President of the Presidency" of the new democratic Slovenia. Instead of renouncing his membership in the League of Communists, he just "deposited" his party identity card. This meant he was playing a double game. However, the minister of defense became the formerly arrested and sentenced dissident Janez Janša, a graduate in defense of the Ljubljana University. Since the former communists in the government had no support abroad, they were forced to play the game as the circumstances required. And the circumstances kept worsening.

The Serbs were not pleased seeing such development in Slovenia: they responded with more repression. Our boys, who were as a rule sent to serve their military term in the southern republics, were given "special treatment," which was occasionally so severe, that some recruits were returned in the sealed coffin—with the name of the deceased written in Cyrillic. Serbs began boycotting Slovenian products. In spite of the recent monetary reform, the inflation was not tamed. Since all this meant Slovenes had no future in

from him when he was arrested and Slovenian authorities refused to return it to him. From 1971 to late 1989, Pučnik taught at the university. Upon returning to Slovenia in late 1989, Pučnik at once became involved in political activities, joining the Slovene Democratic Alliance. The SDSS joined the Demos coalition in 1990 and Pučnik became president of the coalition and its presidential candidate for Slovenia in April 1990. His candidacy was unsuccessful but he did receive 41 percent of the vote in the run-off election against Milan Kučan. As president of his party, Pučnik promoted independence for Slovenia working hard to bring about the plebiscite for independence in December 1990 and continued to push separation from Yugoslavia thereafter. After the election of December 1992, Pučnik became a Member of Parliament and head of its SDSS delegation. (This footnote has been taken of the text from the Institute Jože Pučnik web page.)

Yugoslavia, the DEMOS parties, proposed a public referendum. The Slovenian communists hesitated and procrastinated, because this would mean they would certainly lose their power. Since the circumstances were not in their favor, they were eventually forced to “swallow the toad”; the date of the referendum was set to December 23, 1990. On that date, many Slovenian workers from abroad usually come home to celebrate Christmas. Some Slovenes, who had the Yugoslav citizenship, but were too far to come (e.g., in USA or in Australia), had voted already before, by mail. The referendum took place at the date set.

Two days later, the results became known. It was stunning: the participation was 93.2 percent and 88.2 percent of the ballots were for the independence of Slovenia. According to law, this decision had to be enforced within six months. The Serbs did not stay idling. On January 8, it became known that the Serbian authorities had sabotaged the Yugoslav financial system by secretly “borrowing” 18,243,000,000 Din from the National Bank of Yugoslavia. At that time, this was an equivalent to 1.4 billions of US\$. This was more than one half of the planned common credits of the primary emission, which should be distributed to *all* Yugoslav banks in 1991. In addition, the Serbs confiscated many Slovenian enterprises in Serbia, they simply “forgot” paying the Slovenian shipments and eventually they had even introduced special duty on Slovenian goods.

To such looting, the Slovenian financial authorities had to act fast. At first, we stopped sending the money, cashed for the duties at the borders (to Italy and to Austria) to the National Bank in Belgrade. We also began softening our financial ties with the central financial institutions. To beat the inflation caused by the Serbian uncontrolled printing of money, we had introduced our own, Slovenian currency. This money had been prepared already before the Serbs had intruded the Yugoslav financial system, so it could be put in the circulation right away. The first, temporary banknotes from fifty to five thousand units did not bear any name of the currency and only the title REPUBLIKA SLOVENIJA was printed on them. In October 1991, after we became fully independent, the new, permanent banknotes from ten to ten thousand tolars⁵⁴ and the coins ranging from ten cents to two tolars were put into circulation. The relation to German Mark was seven tolars (7 SIT) for 1 GEM. Again, though tolar should be convertible, many foreign banks did not admit this, or at least they did not accept the ratio 7:1.

To prevent the maltreatment of our recruits in the Army, we stopped sending the boys to the military service. This act was cemented, when our authorities moved the complete Central Slovenian Military Register from Ljubljana to a secret location.

⁵⁴ The name came from the old (silver) Austrian *Joachimstaler* which was the currency in the 18th Century.

The Serbs felt the autonomy of Districts Vojvodina and Kosovo, which were established by the request of the Croat, Tito as a great injustice. Their existence had truncated the Great Serbia and limited her influence in the Federal Parliament. Besides, Kosovo was considered the “Cradle of Serbia.”⁵⁵ At first, the Serbs had enforced such leadership of Vojvodina and Kosovo, who always voted in favor of Serbs in the Federal Parliament. In this way, the Serbs had created a pat position in the Parliament. The Slovenian, Croatian, Bosnian and Macedonian delegates on one side, and those of Serbia, Montenegro, Vojvodina and Kosovo who could never introduce any decision which was not in favor of Serbs, no matter how useful for the common State.

In May 1991, someone, speaking English, whose name I had forgotten, called me by phone from USA, suggesting to write to the US President George Bush and inform him of the current circumstances in Yugoslavia, which could escalate into civilian war. He had given me also the Washington DC address, to where I should write. Indeed, I had written the letter. I wonder if the President ever got my letter to read. But those who had read it could conclude how precisely I had predicted the future.

⁵⁵ There, on Kosovo Polje (The Field of Kosovo) the Serbian Army, under the leadership of Knight Lazar, and the Turkish Army, led by Sultan Murad, had the decisive battle on of June 22, 1389. Then the defeat of Serbs has pushed Serbia into Turkish slavery for the next 400 Years. In the prewar Yugoslavia, we have always celebrated the day of this Serbian *defeat* in the schools. On the other hand, Slovenes and Croats did not celebrate the common and decisive *victory* over the Turkish Army, led by Hasan Basha at the Battle at Sisak (now Croatia) on the 22th of June 1593.

Peter Starič
(Street address deleted)
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Slovenia, Yugoslavia

May 19, 1991

Mr. George Bush
US President
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, D. C.
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. President,

"When in the Course of Human Events it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds which have connected them with another, and to assume among the Powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the Laws of Nature and the Nature's God entitles them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to separation".

In these turbulent days Slovenes, the people of the northernmost republic of Yugoslavia, are in the same position as the American people were in the year 1776, when on the 4th of July the Declaration of Independence, from which I have quoted the above sentence, was issued. Let me write down only some of the most important causes which impel us Slovenes to secede.

Since the formation of Yugoslavia in 1918 until the present day, the Serbs were exploiting the other Yugoslav peoples in a similar way to that in which Great Britain exploited the people of America. During the last year, when the Serb Borisav Jović was the head of Yugoslav Presidency the situation worsened to such an extent that today we are on the brink of civil war. The main dispute is that Serbia does not admit the sovereignty of Croatia, sending there terrorist groups to kill or even massacre the Croatian policemen, declaring independent Serbian enclaves there, blocking the roads and railways. Whenever Croats want to restore order **on Croatian territory** the pro-Serbian Army is sent to preserve the impossible status imposed by Serbs. In addition, Serbs have killed at least 95 Albanians, mostly young boys in the district of Kosovo, and they have also dissolved the local parliament there. Nevertheless, they insist to have a pro-Serbian candidate, representing the non-existent Albanian Parliament in the Presidency of Yugoslavia. At the end of 1990 Serbia unlawfully printed and spent Dinars to the value of c. \$ 1.8 billions to keep their disintegrating economy together. These are only some of the Serbian actions, which reveal their idea about the equal rights for the non-Serbian nations of Yugoslavia.

Recently the Serbian lobby in the Federal Parliament prevented the inauguration of the Croat, Stipe Mesić as the first non-communist president since 1945. In this way Yugoslavia is without a leader and thus the pro-Serbian army may intervene in the republics which would prefer to secede rather than to live in "Serboslavia".

Mr. President, in the recent past you expressed your desire to preserve a unified and democratic Yugoslavia in the hope, the democratic republics, Slovenia and Croatia would convince Serbia it should go the democratic way as well. This would be like something urging Jews during the Nazi Period in Germany, to convince Hitler of the need to introduce the democracy, to abandon the extermination camps and gas chambers. In view of the Serbian usurpation, you will have to decide either to have democracy in part of Yugoslav territory or to have unified (and communist) Yugoslavia. I am afraid that soon you will realize that it is impossible to achieve both of your goals. I sincerely hope you will change your US politics before civil war starts in Yugoslavia.

Sincerely yours



Peter Starič

Already some months before my surgery in summer 1990, I had submitted the article *Electronics in Yugoslavia*, to be published in the British monthly magazine *Electronics World + Wireless World*. Though the Editor asked me for the article with such content, he procrastinated its publication. Since it became clear (not just) to me that Yugoslavia would soon fall apart, I urged him to speed up, before the article became obsolete. Eventually, it was published in January 1991 issue under the title *A case of neglect*. Six months after the referendum, on the evening of Wednesday, June 26, 1991, Slovenia had declared her independence, which was symbolically celebrated at Trg Republike, in English: *Republican Square*. (Its former name was Revolution Square and a big, ugly, bronze monument, celebrating the communist's revolution, which had taken so many innocent lives, still stands there today in June 2011, as I am writing these lines.) When this date was approaching, the head of the Secret Police UDV, Tomaž Ertl began hastily sending the compromising archives to the paper mills. The Secret Police agents strictly supervised the destruction all the way to the shreds. However, the destroyed documents were just copies, because, as a rule the originals had to be currently sent to the Central UDV Archive in Belgrade.

Since the celebration on Trg Republike was crowded with people, most of us had watched the ceremony on our TV receivers. At the same time the Yugoslav People's Army (JLA) troops in Slovenia started their action. Their aim was to re-occupy all State borders to Austria and Italy, which were already taken over by the Slovenian Territorial Defense (TO).⁵⁶ To make the expected task of JLA easier, already on May 14, 1991, the Supreme Command of JLA issued the order to fully disarm TO. Though the newly elected President Ku an was informed ahead, he did not inform the Slovenian TO staff in time, to prevent the disarmament of the local army, which could defend our independence. Instead he waited until May 17 when the Executive Council of the newborn Republic Slovenia was sworn. In this way, the former communist's leaders could not be made accountable for the events that followed. This act, which could be seen as the high treason, caused almost 80 percent of the TO arms to be handed over to JLA. Already in March, the numerous communists' agitators, who could not imagine Slovenia out of Yugoslavia, began actions to make a peaceful settlement with Belgrade, for which they were even collecting signatures. Since Slovenes did not want to live together with Serbs, at least not after the financial diversion committed by our "Serbian brothers" at the end of 1990, the results of the Slovenian communists' actions were scanty.

⁵⁶ These local units were formed already in 1968, to resist possible Soviet troops occupying Yugoslavia, like they did then in Czechoslovakia.

My first confrontation with the unusual reality was already on the next Thursday morning (June 27), when I was driving to work. On an important street crossing, I saw the makeshift barricades, consisting of personal cars, buses and trucks loaded with sand. The armed troops of TO were guarding and they helped guiding the personal cars of the people going to work, in the circuitous way through the barricades. In the town I saw more efficient tank barricades made of railway tracks. Later I watched on TV how the JLA tanks simply ran over personal cars and forced their way by pushing the trucks and buses to the side. The armed conflicts between our TO and police troops against JLA took place on different locations in Slovenia, which was also shown on TV and/or reported of by radio and the press. The most violent struggles were on the border checkpoints to where the JLA troops were sent. Though our TO was mostly disarmed by the order of JLA, they replaced part of the arms by secretly collecting them or buying them abroad in time to resist the first blow. So TO won the battles and re-occupied the border check points. Besides TO has confiscated much of the badly missing arms, especially the antitank bazookas and also tanks, of which they had none. Since the untouched JLA stocks were seized by TO, our troops became soon armed more than ever before. In addition, those JLA troops in the Army barracks were partly incapacitated, because TO had interrupted their telephone and electrical lines. Slovenian boys and officers among JLA deserted sporadically and the offensive actions of JLA failed shamefully. Our TV has shown how the captured Serbian officers were emptying their bags, filled with rare goods, which were on sale in the Duty Free shops at the border; video recorders, photo cameras, bottles of whiskey, and such. Soon the JLA in Slovenia had become pure Serbian Army. They were cheating in many ways, for example, sending their reinforcements and ammunition by helicopters bearing the Red Cross sign, not honoring the signed agreements, and so on.

The Serbian Army suffered the most shameful debacle not at the border, but at the place Medvedjek, where the freeway passes the forest Krakovski Gozd. There TO have blocked a big column of tanks and military vehicles, arriving from Croatia. Since the road there is laid in a gorge, the blocked tanks could not act, because they could move neither forward nor backward, nor sideways. Behind this clog, a long column of civilian trucks, mostly foreign, had to stop. Then the Serbian Army sent fighter planes that bombed the trucks; their cluster bombs caused horrible carnage among the civilian drivers.⁵⁷ All

⁵⁷ When this was shown in Bosnia by Sarajevo TV, already during the transmission a hail of phone calls began. The callers expressed their violent protests against such transmissions, which tarnish the reputation of the JLA. A year later *they* had shown similar or even worse events, which happened right there—in Sarajevo.

this was shown on our TV and—by the UHF links—also in the neighboring Italy and Austria.

To prevent such news to be watched abroad, the Serbian Army had sent planes to damage our TV and broadcasting transmitters. In this way, the current information, how the Army was employing tanks and planes against civilians, would be prevented. The planes had damaged our main radio and TV transmitters. That main broadcasting transmitter in Domžale, which the German Stuka had destroyed in April 1941, was damaged out of operation by the JLA planes almost exactly fifty years after, and the transmitter crew has barely saved their skin. The TV and relay transmitters on the peaks Kum (there were some casualties), Krvavec and Nanos were attacked too and some of them several times. But in a strange way I could still watch our TV programs, because some transmitters were either soon repaired, or replaced. I also remember seeing the Slovenian re-transmission, where the struggles at Gornja Radgona close to the Austrian border were being recorded by the Austrian TV.

The international community was informed also via other, mostly private channels. Telephone connections still worked. My former son-in-law Dieter Bedke phoned me every day from Vienna to get fresh, firsthand information of the events. At that time, my wife Cveta, MD was with the children colony at the Adriatic town Poreč in Croatian Istria.

On Sunday, June 30, the sirens in Ljubljana sounded the danger of the immediate air attack. We run into air-raid shelter built after WWII, in a small park, surrounded by the apartment buildings. I was never there before. When we were placed inside, we loudly expressed our bewilderment: This shelter was built to protect us from the enemy. And now, we were there, because the planes of the “brotherly” Serbian Army threatened to attack us. A Serbian lady from our block, who was also in the shelter, had heard this and I saw her crying.

The politicians of EU, USA and UN attempted to prevent the threatening disintegration of Yugoslavia. EU Diplomatic threesome, the Belgian Jacques Poos, Dutch Hans van den Broek and Italian Gianni De Michelis; the British Lord Carrington; the Americans James Baker, Cyrus Vance, and other foreign diplomats visited Belgrade often, but way too seldom (if at all) the other republican capitals, where they could be informed of the true reasons for the approaching break-up. It was hard to understand how all these foreign diplomats still nested the hope to patch the disintegrating Yugoslavia together. The most important exception was the German Foreign Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who was against the Serbian “Tank Diplomacy,” reminding the World to the similar events, which happened in Eastern Germany (1953), Hungary (1956), and Czechoslovakia (1968).

In that “ten days war” I had to break my work at the Institute once and go to the air raid shelter again. At that time also the Federal President Ante Markovi ,

who was on his visit in Ljubljana, had to go to the shelter to be protected from the attack of the planes of the Army of which he was (better, he should be) the Supreme Commander. After “all clear” was announced, I returned to my laboratory to continue my work. Then suddenly a supersonic fighter flew low over that part of the town, breaking the sound barrier. Fortunately, I had part of the big window open; otherwise, all glass would go into splinters.

The planes of the Serbian Army had attacked also the Ljubljana Airport Brnik. There they had strafed the parked passenger planes, making them useless. The Serbian Army, which arrived to the Airport had destroyed a car with the clear signs PRESS and killed two Austrian reporters. One of the Serbian pilots at the military airport near Brežice (SE Slovenia, close to Croatian border) even threatened to attack the nuclear power plant at the nearby Krško. Since that plant takes the cooling water from the River Sava, which falls to Danube at Belgrade, this was not realized, or the citizens of Belgrade might have to drink radioactive water . . .

Let me stop writing of further, interesting events. Eventually, the struggles and skirmishes recessed. The casualties were: thirty-nine soldiers of JLA; four members of Slovenian TO, and four of the Slovenian Police; five Slovenian civilians and ten foreign civilians. If compared by thousands of victims in the years to follow, when the Serbian Army attempted to impose their domination over the former southern Yugoslav republics, the price we paid for our independence was extremely low. The most merit for such easy parting from Yugoslavia goes to the Defense Minister Janez Janša and his reliable assistant Tone Krkovič, who secretly assembled and armed the Core of the Slovenian Territorial Army. The Serbian leaders had realized that they could not hit Slovenia with full power, because of the proximity of the western borders. Besides, the rebelling Slovenia would cause only difficulties in achieving their main plan—the Great Serbia. This should include all territory SE from the north Croatian town Virovitica, in the vicinity of Hungarian border, along the would-be border forming the long bow down to Karlobag at the Adriatic coast. If so, Croatia would be truncated by some 3/4 of her territory.

The EU diplomats eventually met with our politicians on the Island Brioni (a former Tito's residence) pushing us hard to allow the Serbs back to our borders and to enforce several other concessions in their favor. *If we would accept all their proposals, Slovenia would never become independent.* On the June 7, 1991, a three-month moratorium, acknowledging the territorial status quo, had been agreed to. In this time, the whole Serbian Army had to leave Slovenia. The details are quoted in the relevant literature.

For my successful PhD graduation, achieved in so unusually short time, the Milan Vidmar Institute had given me a week of sabbatical leave. I decided to visit my Swiss friend Camillo L. P. Kind, whom I did not see for almost

fifteen years. In the meantime, he retired and moved from his apartment in Zurich to Maloja, the District of Engadin. He was my reliable and important supporter (by letters) when I had to pass the difficult times in the communists' totalitarian world. In Maloja, he had built a classical farmer's house, standing alone at about 1900 m level.

So in September 1991, I flew by the passenger plane from Ljubljana to Zurich. At the Airport, Kloten, the immigration officer, asked me of the circumstances in Yugoslavia. In our short conversation, he said that before the breaking up, it was better. I replied, he would not say so, if he would live in Slovenia. From the Airport, I had taken the train to St. Moritz, which is close to Maloja. The scenery on the ride was magnificent; first, the train went along the long lake Obersee, then Walensee, then right up toward Chur. When we reached this town, it was already dark. There I had to change the train, because the track was nearer (from 1.435 m to 1 m) further up to St. Moritz. After that, I remained the only passenger in the carriage. When we continued it seemed to me I was also the only passenger in the whole train. At about 9:00 p.m., we arrived to the end station St. Moritz, which is at 1800 m level. It was dark, except for the lights at the station platform, and nobody seemed to be there. What now? However, when stepping out of the carriage, there were Camillo and his wife Margarita, the only people at the platform, waiting for me. I hugged them both at the same time and I could not suppress tears of joy and relaxation to be received so friendly in the FREE WORLD.

Camillo had packed my luggage into his caravan and we were off to Maloja. After a while, Camillo said, "Now it would be a surprise." And he turned to a nearby makeshift parking place. Then we took my luggage and began walking on a lonely trail some 100 m higher up, arriving to Camillo's house. Next morning, I had a fantastic view from my bedroom down to the lake Silser See. The closest peak was Piz de la Margna ((3159 m). Far away were snow-covered Piz Morteratsch (3353 m) and several other peaks, all of them over 3000 m. Left and behind was Piz Lagrev (3165 m). When we went to Maloja the next day, I saw from the road up the cascades of the source of the River Inn. In the days to follow, we made the journey over Julierpass (2284 m) to Davos and Via Mala. Both places I knew just from reading the novels by Thomas Mann, *Der Zauberberg* and *Via Mala* by John Knittel. On the way, we passed several interesting villages. Some houses bear the inscriptions in Romanch language. With the knowledge of the Italian, I could translate what was written.

Since I brought also my basic mountaineering gear with me (boots, pack, and so on) my Swiss friends gave me the ride to Pontresina, from where we had taken the chairlift toward Pic Languard (3262 m). However, we did not go so high; after the first stretch of the chairlift, we continued walking to the Chamanna Paradis, to have a rest at the cabin there.

In the late afternoon we visited the village Soglio, where we had dinner. After we finished eating, a lady from another table came to us, introducing herself as Dagmar Rohm. It came out that years ago Margarita and Dagmar (she was Austrian) were contesting at an international ski race in Zürs, Austria. Let me mention that Margarita and Camillo were both first class mountain climbers, skiers and airplane pilots. Both were also machine engineers, graduated at the famous ETH (Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule) in Zurich. Camillo was the fighter pilot during WWII, defending the Swiss sky against the German airplanes in their shortcut flights over the neutral Switzerland to bomb France. The joy of the unexpected meeting with Dagmar was great. After we had left the dining hall I saw a piano in the adjacent room. Since nobody was there, I went to play something, but my playing was not to my usual standards, because I had drunk slightly more wine than I was used to.

Finally the day of departure came. On the Sunday morning of September 15, I started from St. Moritz railway station back to Zurich-Kloten. The day was nice and the scenery, which I did not see at my arrival, because it was dark, had to be nice, too. But a Swiss passenger, with whom I began talking, was so much interested in the events of the disintegrating Yugoslavia, that I had shown him a well illustrated book *Vojna za Slovenijo* (War for Slovenia). Since the book was in Slovenian, I had to translate the descriptions of the photos. So I did not see much of the scenery, but I noticed (not only from him) that Slovenes got a great credit for successfully resisting the much greater Serbian Army in our struggle for independence.

Contrary to the proverbially accurate Swiss railway or air traffic, the departure of our twin-engine propeller plane of the Swissair had several hours of delay. The reason was that the Belgrade authorities had closed the air space over Slovenia. In the late afternoon, we eventually took off to land in Klagenfurt, which is the closest Austrian Airport to Slovenia. After several hours of waiting, a bus came from Slovenia to transport us home, where we arrived late in the night.

The Serbs did everything either to prevent, or at least to delay the break-up with Slovenia. Eventually, they had to give up. According to the Brioni Declaration, the Serbian Army had to leave Slovenia within three months. This was accomplished a couple of minutes after midnight on October 26, 1991, when their last soldier had left. Already, before this date, they had sent some heavy arms and armored vehicles down south by train. They also had taken all military planes, but—fortunately for us—it was impossible for them to take the complete and abundant arsenal they had piled up in Slovenia. At their departure from the Adriatic Port Koper, the Serbian soldiers were allowed to take just their personal arms.

Thus, Slovenia became independent, we abandoned the communist totalitarianism by introducing democratic government, escaped the Serbian hegemony, had our own Army and our own currency. Gradually, the foreign countries, even USA, had acknowledged our newly born State, which eventually became also the member of the United Nations. This should mean I arrived to the end of my narrative. Now, twenty years after our State became independent, I had to nevertheless add an extensive Epilogue, with a summary of how our great hopes were fulfilled or—better to say—how and why they were not fulfilled.

Epilogue

After we had abandoned the totalitarian system by introducing democracy in the independent Slovenia in 1991, we had to get used to this. In forty-five years of suppression, the whole society had become sort of mentally crippled. We became accustomed that the State cares for our free education, employment and Medicare. The salaries and living standard were about 1/3 of those as, for example in Germany, but the employment was secured for everyone, who did not directly oppose the system. Many citizens had built big, durable brick-houses for which they got loans from the banks. Since the inflation rate was high, they actually paid only about 1/10th of the real value of the house, or less. On the other hand, saving Dinars meant loss. So we were changing Dinars (officially and much more unofficially) to foreign currency, US Dollars, Swiss Franks, German Marks, Austrian Schillings, and so on, and saving them. To advance to a higher position the membership in the Communist Party was mandatory. This represented a ceiling for any average citizen, who wanted to stay out of politics. On the other hand, the awareness of this limitation had suppressed any initiative of many competent people, who could run the State economy much more efficiently. Even as sporadically someone tried (like I have tried in electronics) such ones were quickly shown to where they belong. On the long run such State could not compete with those abroad, who had not introduced such crazy regulations and limitations. This became evident, when we were allowed to travel abroad, for example to neighboring Austria or Italy, where many goods could be bought, which were not available here. Smuggling had become our national sport. Our *Gastarbeiters* (guest workers) who were employed in Austria or in Germany, receiving three to four times greater salary than they would get here, could afford all these goods, which we could mostly not. When they came home for vacations, they were driving their reliable Volkswagens, Opels, Mercedeses, BMWs and such, whilst we were still driving our shabby Zastava cars made in Kragujevac, Serbia, which need frequent repairs and some spare parts for them were hard to get. (See Ch. 2.12.)

Though I had worked three years in USA, the years before my leaving to the States and especially those, after my return in 1970, had “conditioned” me well, to become almost equal to the rest of the crowd. In order to mentally escape this hostile world, I instinctively turned toward professional matters, music, and mountaineering, which had become some sort of a refuge for me. Now, in a free Slovenia, I had to look for my career, as late as it was at my sixty-seven years (in 1991). Frankly, my transfer to Milan Vidmar Institute, where I had got all necessary time and help to acquire the doctor’s degree, already meant a great change. There the PhDs were rare birds and not as common as they were (and still are) at Jožef Stefan Institute—where I was just a “humble” BSEE.

I had sent a copy of my PhD Thesis, with the abstract in English, to my Swiss friend Camillo to see and to forward it to someone, who might be interested. Since he was a machine engineer, he had sent the Thesis to the library of Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule in Zurich, where he had graduated. As a consequence, I got an invitation to participate on the eleventh European Conference of Circuit Theory and Design, from August 30 to September 3, 1993, in Davos, where I should have a thirty minutes lecture. This was the first time for me to have a lecture at an international conference. I prepared the four-page article first, and then my wife Cveta and I were off to drive my Eastern German Wartburg car (not the infamous “Trabant,” with its stinky two-stroke engine) to Davos. The driving went via the Austrian Kitzbühl, Innsbruck and further along the Valley of Inn to Switzerland. At such, we had to turn right up to drive over the 2383 m Flüela Pass down to Davos. There the participants at the Conference got free tickets for local transportation.

While I was at the lectures, Cveta had investigated the surroundings. Once we went together around Davoser See, and we were surprised, how friendly the squirrels and birds were there. The birds came to the stretched palm to eat seeds and the squirrels climbed over us to come to the nuts, we had on our palm. We had also taken the first stretch of the cable car to Strela Pass. But when we ordered tea to the Serbian waitress in the bar-restaurant, she did not want to serve us. We had to call another, Swiss waitress. Apparently, the antagonism in Yugoslavia splashed all the way to Switzerland. Instead taking the cable car at the return, we went down walking. The way passes the famous “Berghof,” the TB hospital, where Dr. Behrens was treating the patients as it was described in the famous novel *Der Zauberberg*, by Thomas Mann. This is now a recovery home for children, we were told.

When my lecture was approaching I was slightly afraid how I would speak *ex cathedra* in English, since I never did this before. The times, when I had to explain something at the group meetings at Tektronix, were far behind. But after hearing a French lecturer, I was sure I could do better, for I could

understand his English just, because I had learned French four years in Realka. Besides, he had shown very long formulae, where he had corrected them on the transparencies, whilst displaying them. On top of this, he had to be reminded seven times to stop talking, after he had already spent his time. To prevent this from happening to me, when it was my turn, I adjusted a cooking timer to thirty minutes and put it on the table. Since my way of presenting the matter was entirely different from his and I had finished my talking just some seconds before the timer ran out, I gained the applause of the listeners. I will never know if this was for the accurate timing, or for the quality of my lecture. On the other hand, though the Chairman saw my timer running on the table, he nevertheless reminded me that I still had two minutes left. Since Swiss watches were known for their accuracy, he apparently did not trust my cooking timer. What had surprised me was the fact that I was the only lecturer from Slovenia from the whole former Yugoslavia.

Since Cveta and I had much luggage, I have left a hefty tip of 10 SFR for the maid to carry the suitcases down from the second floor to the car. However, after waiting for almost half an hour, I asked the landlord in the reception, why she kept us waiting for so long. He too did not like such neglect and went up. After his angry intervention, the maid has brought the cases down. She was Serbian and she disliked us Slovenes, who were “guilty” for the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Then the landlord told us of some serious clashes, even fighting between the Serbian and Croat personnel in other hotels. Eventually, the authorities threatened to send all such rebels swiftly back home. This has helped. But in some hidden places, the hatred resurfaced again in the form of boycott, as was our experience at the Strela restaurant and in this hotel.

When Camillo and Margarita learned we would be in Davos, they proposed us to visit them in Maloja, when the conference was over. We drove west from Davos, past Tiefencastel, then right up to the lake Marmorera (1680) and further up over Julier Pass (2284 m) down to Silvaplana (1815 m), turning right to Maloja. In the days to follow, our hosts had shown us some interesting places, the village Guarda and, by cable car, to Muotas Muraigl. From there, we could see the Morteratsch Glacier, for which we were told that it was much longer some sixty years ago. Since I had forgotten my mountaineering trousers in Ljubljana, acquiring another fitting pair in Pontresina could be disturbing for my hosts, for which I was sorry.

Already before my retirement, I continued working on my book *Wideband Amplifiers*, which I did in my spare time at home. Though the text and drawings were about 2/3 finished, I realized that my knowledge of up-to-date circuits and modern computer routines was insufficient. Fortunately, I managed to convince my thirty years younger friend at Jožef Stefan Institute, Erik Margan, to write the missing parts. Besides, he had created all my meticulously completed ink

drawings, by computer, checking the diagrams at the same time and recorded the whole book on a CD. Since this was enormous work, we agreed that any of us was a 50 percent author of the book. The whole work required several years to complete.

In the meantime, my Tektronix colleagues Bob Ross and (later) John Addis visited me here, and I had introduced them to Erik, which proved very useful for the book. When Bob came here in 1994, we ascended Mangart together. For him, this was the first time, and for me, it proved to be the last time. On the descent, a sixty-eight-year-old Austrian mountaineer had lost his balance, just at the very end of the climbing part. Since Bob was a fifty miles runner, we drove some 200 m lower by car, and Bob ran slightly up to the cabin, alerting the mountaineering rescue service. The unfortunate Austrian rolled from the cliff down to the scree slope. When the rescuers came, he was unconscious with wounds on his scull and with some broken ribs. As far as I knew, he recovered. In 1996, Bob came here again, this time with his spouse, Joanne. They ascended the mountains Velika Baba in the morning and Krn in the afternoon.

Sorry, I could not accompany them from the cabin at Lake Krn, where we had spent two nights, to neither of peaks mentioned.

In 1994 I retired but continued working part time at Milan Vidmar Institute for the next two years. It proved that I would do better to cease working right at my retirement. Being retired, I could devote more time to some other projects, almost exclusively to writing.

As a small intermediate project, I started writing a book on the making of the atomic bombs. In 1995, Bob Ross and Jacqueline Varga sponsored my visit to Portland and further to New Mexico. There I visited Bradbury Science Museum in Los Alamos and then National Atomic Museum in Albuquerque. In both museums, I got some essential documentation and many photos for my book. This was published with twenty thousand copies as the thematic issue of August 1995 number of the monthly magazine *Življenje in Tehnika* (Life and Technique) for the fiftieth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Besides, thousand issues with plastic coated covers were prepared for non subscribers. When in Portland, Bob, who possessed a plane Cessna, offered me a flight around the volcano Mt St. Hellens, where I had made spectacular photos. In Portland, I also met some of my former colleagues of Tektronix, Inc.

Besides writing of the actual problems in the daily newspapers, I had written many popular science and technical articles. Since I saw those *Liberators B-24* and *Flying Fortresses B-17* flying over Ljubljana during the war, I had described these planes in the review *Obramba* (Defense). However, when my description of the *Super Fortress B-29* was published, the editor suggested writing more

articles of this kind. So the articles of the atomic bombs, of the gas warfare in WWI at Bovec, of radar, and so on, followed. Our opulent cooperation ended abruptly, when my article of the German occupation of the British Channel Islands (Guernsey, Jersey, and so on) was censored without asking my consent. The sentence, "Since no communists, who might abuse the situation to start a revolution were on the islands . . ." was deleted. When I expressed my objection to the editor, he told me, "I am a communist, and I will not allow such sentences in this review." Ever since, I did not write any more articles for that magazine. This was for me the first sign that we got rid of communism, but not of the communists and much less of their influence. Much more was to follow. Gradually my critical articles of the previous system were refused by the editors of daily newspapers. However, the influence of the former communists became felt in other, much more important matter.



In 2005, Erik and I have completed the book *Wideband Amplifiers* and submitted it to Springer/Kluwer in Dordrecht, Netherlands, where it was accepted for publication. We had got a very kind editor for English language who, to our surprise, also understood the contents well. In addition, the manager Mark de Jongh and the secretary Cindy Zitter were very helpful. They deserve full credit for being extremely patient with me, an "old fart." Neither Erik nor I had any idea, how much work was still to be done, before the book was ready for the market. It was younger Erik, who carried the main burden of the numerous backs and forths between us and the publisher, for I had somehow "run out of steam" already. Eventually, our book was published in 2006 and reprinted in 2007. To our disappointment, the material reward for our work did not in any way reflect the amount of time and effort we spent. Frankly, we

were paid per hour less than a street sweeper. On the other hand, the book got excellent reviews, and so far, we did not notice any serious competing work. Since the book had taken twenty-five years of my time and about a half so much of Erik's, and because never before such complete basics of wideband amplifiers were being discussed in a single book, we hope our work will be interesting for the market for at least some twenty years.

Already when my Slovenian booklet *The Making of the First Atomic Bombs* was published on just eighty pages and only seventy-five figures, I had collected abundant material that a much more extensive work could be prepared in the future. Since I was very much interested in the related nuclear physics, I ordered several books and got many articles, published after 1995, containing some data, which were classified before. So in 2007 I had prepared a much larger work, a hardbound book named *Atomska Bomba* (Atomic Bomb), with 448 pages and 172 pictures. The book was published by Didakta, Radovljica, Slovenia in that same year. I had presented the book in the large hall at Jožef Stefan Institute. Again, Erik was very helpful in composing some drawings and editing the numerous photos, and my other friend Dr. Jože Gasperič, a retired employee of IJS had edited the Slovenian text.

For this book and for ten favorable reviews, I became "interesting." The result was a three-page interview in the Saturday attachment of the main daily newspaper *Delo*, a forty-minute TV interview on Ch. 3 of our National TV and a forty-minute "round table discussion" with two professors at our radio. All this happened in August 2010 on the sixty-fifth anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.



In the last ten years, I had to gradually abandon some activities, like many people in their eighties do. To describe all my health troubles in details would be boring for the reader. This is the matter my personal doctor must listen to, for she was paid for this. I had to give up mountaineering; however, I keep visiting my beloved Trenta some four to six times a year, where I spend one to three weeks per visit. The environment there has a very stimulating effect; I had written many articles and also parts of this book there. Since I had given up my piano playing, I gradually transferred my piano literature to the house of the local Dr. Zdravko Kravanja. His two daughters Ana and Vida study piano, and they have great talent. Just a couple of days ago, when I was in Trenta again (in 2011), his elder daughter, Ana, played Scherzo No. 2 in B-flat minor by F. Chopin and several other demanding compositions by Beethoven, Liszt, and Scriabin for me. The doctor's wife, Marija, rents apartments in their big and nice house, where I spend my time, whilst in Trenta. There I can cook my diet food too, so I do not need to eat in expensive restaurants. Fortunately, I still have my driver's license, so I may drive my car to many beautiful places in the valley of the River Soča. Some twenty years ago, the locals, who know me, were praising me for ascending high mountains. In the last years, they say how well I am to drive my car over Vršič Pass (where the road has 50 very sharp curves). So much the times have changed.



Now, let us see, what happened with our newly established Slovenia during this time. At first, it seemed all fine. We felt a yoke had fallen off us, when we got rid of the Serbian hegemony, abandoned the totalitarian system and introduced the multiparty democracy. The living standard had improved very much. An obvious sign was that in a couple of years there were no more Zastava cars on our streets, being replaced mostly by all sort of European, Korean, or Japanese cars. In addition, the number of these cars here had increased very much. The western commodities, like PC computers, TV receivers, domestic appliances, all sorts of power tools, and so on, appeared in our shops, now being affordable. When we entered EU and NATO in 2004 and, after 2007, when we had entered Euro-Zone and changed our tolar to euros (SIT to €), we might import goods from abroad, without paying any duty. In just twenty years, we also built our highway from north Slovenian border to Austria (at Šentilj) down south to the Adriatic Sea at Koper, crossing it by another one from the tunnel toward Austria at NW Slovenia down SW, to the Croatian border. Since Slovenia is very hilly, this “highway cross” has many long tunnels and high bridges. Only about 1/10 of these highways were built during all forty-five years of Yugoslavia. Every Slovenian citizen got a 400,000 SIT certificate, which was worth 57,142 DEM (German Marks) in 1992. On the surface, everything seemed good.

However, just on the surface, the communists realizing that they could not keep their power by political means promised to step down. The 88 percent of voters on the 1990 plebiscite, who decided against the previous, totalitarian system, were a clear sign that this had become mandatory. So they seemingly stepped down at the transition to return via the back doors after. They had just changed the names of their previous parties, which they did several times and regained their power in the key positions of the newly born Slovenia. Since the former managers (who were as a rule all communists) of the State-owned companies had no money, the banks had given them hefty loans to buy the companies, they were managing. As a warranty for the loans, they pawned the shares of those very firms they were buying. And since the new owners were not used to market economy, which was established, with time the value of the pawned shares had lost much of their original value. In order to decrease the cost many of these “new rich,” directors had simply dissolved their research and development (R&D) departments. Gradually, many of these companies became bankrupt and perished. Instead improving the efficiency, some of them simply closed their works and moved the machines and the whole production to the countries, where the cost of work is lower. Eventually, most of the new owners could not return the loans they had got from the banks. To prevent the insolvency of the banks, the government kept saving them with the taxpayers’ money. Occasionally, the shallow reports of this came out. But the rising unemployment was a clear sign that something is very wrong in

our state economy. Besides, in only ten years after the independence, when our government was led by the former communists (calling themselves liberal democrats), our tolar had lost about 90 percent of the original value and so did the state certificates we got.

Though the numerous frauds, mentioned in the above paragraph, were scarcely reported in the newspapers, the articles of this appeared much more frequently in the press after 2004, when the new, democrat government with the Premier Janez Janša was elected. Then also the circumstances began turning to better, although it was impossible to correct all mistakes committed in the past thirteen years⁵⁸ in just four years of the mandate of the new government. However, the new minister of finances, Dr. Andrej Bajuk, managed to balance the state budget for the first time since 1945! Besides, he succeeded to decrease the inflation rate below the limit set by the European Union, so in January 2007, we had introduced the Euro currency. Since 1991, when one German Mark was worth seven tolar, the inflation had risen for 1700 percent, at the time, when we had changed the currency to Euro. So we had to pay 239.98 SIT for 1 €. ⁵⁹ It was difficult to say farewell to our beautiful tolar banknotes, but the awareness that we have acquired much more stable money, with which we could pay not only in all EU countries but almost in the whole world, had prevailed. Many other positive regulations were introduced in spite of steady teasing by the communists. Our main newspaper *Delo* had published articles against the Premier Janša almost daily. When this government attempted to unify the tax rate, the leader of the greatest trade union (still that one from the Yugoslav times) had brought the crowd of about ten thousand workers in Ljubljana to protest in the wet snow slush, against the government and especially against the Premier Janša, who was considered the main culprit for anything, which was bad. It was found that the agents of the new, secret police SOVA (Slovenska obveščevalna in varnostna agencija = Slovenian Intelligence and Security Agency) had tapped the phone of the premier, but no one was found responsible for this. Besides, a policeman threatened Janša with murder, using Internet. He was discovered, but the court proceedings kept dragging so long, that the case became obsolete. He still keeps his gun and his job as a policeman. This was a clear sign that our judges remained heavily biased toward the “red” side. A couple of months before our country became the

⁵⁸ A short interlude in this period was six months of democrats’ government in 2000, where Dr. Bajuk became the premier. This was probably enough for him to see what all must be corrected in our state, which he did after 2004, when he was the minister of finances.

⁵⁹ When in 1998 the euro currency was introduced in the first EU states, the exchange rate toward German Mark was 1 = 1.96 DEM.

leader of EU (this was in the first half of 2008), the 571 communist journalists sent a Petition to about two hundred key addresses in Europe and the World, warning that the coming Slovenian presidency of EU would represent a threat to democracy. They were somehow supported by the Mayor of Ljubljana, who started several big excavation works and repairing projects in the main streets and on the central Prešeren Square. This made driving difficult in Ljubljana even for the locals. However, in anticipating such problems the Premier Janša had moved all EU activities to the new Press Center, which was built on the ground of Castle Brdo (a former Tito's residence).

After the new minister of health Dr. Andrej Bručan had prevented the "obligatory intermediate", an import company to cash hefty 30 percent commission for the operational tables, the press attacked him so violently and so frequently that he eventually resigned. The import companies were still staffed by the former members of the secret police and they did not want to give up their usual booty. They were used to make the business by secret agreement and not by public competition. The same is valid for the building companies. They got rid of the competitors by offering the lowest price on the auction. When they got the job, and after completing about half of the work, they as a rule, wound up the price by different annexes. In this way, the final price, which the State had to pay, became so high that they would never be selected, if quoting the final price already at the auction. The loss to the State caused by these annexes amounted to several billion euros. The fact that so far not a single of the culprits was sentenced and punished, means that all these frauds were agreed on a higher level. Gradually, it became obvious that a network of political-capital connections was created, which now governs and rules our state.

In the last twenty years, mostly in the years 2004-2008, we had discovered just about six hundred mass graves of the people killed after the war. The eyewitnesses, some few survivors, the excavations, and other data disclosed that women, young girls, and even small children and babies were murdered. As mentioned already the exact number of the people in those mass graves is impossible to tell; the estimate is about one hundred thousand to two hundred thousand. So these are true and the worst mass murders in Europe after WWII.⁶⁰ The most horrible recent discovery (in 2008) was in the abandoned

⁶⁰ In the week of this writing (May 2011), the Serbian General Ratko Mladić, who was responsible for mass murder in Bosnia in mid 1990s, when Yugoslavia was falling apart, was captured by the Serbian police. The world newspapers kept quoting that he was responsible for the world's worst mass murder in Europe after WWII. However, only the mass murders, which happened in Slovenia, mostly in May and June 1945, surpassed the Bosnian massacre in numbers and cruelty. This

mine “Barbara gallery” at Huda Jama (Fierce Pit), near Laško. There victims were hidden behind eleven (!) barriers of tailings (assuming about 100 m in length), stones, wood, bricks, or concrete, all spaced in the length of 250 m. The excavators needed more than two months to remove all of them. Eventually, they arrived to the first bodies. So far, they had recovered about 773 murdered people, half of them already in the horizontal gallery. Some three hundred bodies, which were found between the last barriers, were partly mummified, because of lack of oxygen. It was found that some of those victims were still alive, when the barriers were set, so they had died when oxygen was consumed. The recovered bodies were put in plastic boxes in order to make possible DNA identification later. However, behind the very last barrier the forensic team had found a 48-m-deep almost vertical (70 deg. inclination) shaft, full of skeletons and some half-mummified bodies. They were dumped down, many of them still alive. Due to weight and decomposition of the bodies, the shaft, which was probably full at the time of killing, had settled for about 7 m until time of discovery. Though just a layer of further 7 m of the murdered were excavated from the shaft, the skeletons of women were found among them. Then further excavations were stopped for several “administrative” difficulties, created by the new, left government (elected in October 2008). So the total number of the remaining victims in the shaft was assessed to about 3000. For the fact that the bearers of the former system had made eleven barriers to prevent the access to such a big mass of murdered people, we may suspect much worse discoveries if the excavations in the vertical shafts were completed.

If the democratic government would be elected in 2008 once again, the still living culprits for these mass murders and many of those guilty for the recent frauds might be indicted, sentenced, and punished. Besides, the role of the top politicians, who started their career in the past totalitarian system, could be investigated more closely. By doing so, more deeds, which were incompatible with our membership in European Union, could be discovered, like some of them had already been discovered. All this would certainly mean a “political death” for the parties of the former communists (SD, LDS, and Zares).

Therefore, to win the elections became the matter of survival for the mentioned parties. It meant much to have all daily newspapers on their side, but they were using also other means. In a couple of weeks before the elections the news were launched, the deal with the Finish armored cars “Patria” was heavily contaminated by hefty commissions, supposedly cashed by the Premier Janez Janša. This was announced by the former president of Slovenia, Milan Kučan as the “Big Bang.” Though the matter was regularly discussed in our

is only a small part of all mass murders, which happened in the whole Yugoslavia just in some months after WWII.

news for almost three years after, so far no firm evidence was found for this accusation. Nevertheless, all this was very helpful for the former communists, now Liberals to win the elections by a very tight margin.



When in October 2008 I had followed the preliminary (unofficial) results, which our TV began transmitting several hours before the voting places were closed, I kept entering the data in a diagram. At first, the Liberals (former communists) were leading by a ratio of about 60 percent against 40 percent. But already with the next reported data, their advantage began decreasing. The interpolation of further successive data formed a straight line which—if extended—should cross the threshold 50 percent against 50 percent before the preliminary counts would be over. However, when the percentage ratio of the reported data had reached some 54 percent against 46 percent in favor to the Liberals, the slope of the line suddenly decreased, displaying a well-distinguished knee. So the official end result of the elections was the victory of the Liberals by a margin of less than 2 percent. I could only say that knee in the diagram appeared highly suspect to me.

The new government claimed that they could run Slovenia better. Instead of getting the broader agreement, the important laws or other decrees are decided just in the narrow circle, reminding of the former Central Committee of the League of the communists. The legislation was applied selectively.

Those guilty of the big frauds, described in the former paragraphs, are either not indicted, or the court proceedings keep dragging. It had been discovered that the big building contractors did not pay their subcontractors. The workers they employed did not get their wages for months. Moreover, their employers were not paid the obligatory Medicare and the retirement fund for years. The institutions which had to react on the first digression of this sort, simply do not work. In less than three years of the new rulers the foreign debt of the state had more than doubled. The taxes were increased, and more items became taxed. True, the new government started their mandate just when the world recession was at its worst. On top of this, our government agreed to give 450 million Euros warranty to rescue Greece, where the employees live much better than in Slovenia. In fact, this money would not be given to Greeks, but to the banks of EU which had lent them money, neglecting the facts that Greeks were spending way over their incomes and avoiding paying their taxes.

Even as we had abandoned the “values” of the former totalitarian system at the plebiscite in 1990 by such majority, the new rulers keep introducing them again. After 1991 the former Titova cesta (Tito’s Street) was renamed to Slovenska cesta (Slovenian Street). But now another street was renamed to Titova cesta. Since it ran near the greatest cemetery of Ljubljana, this appeared symbolical to most of us remembering about six hundred mass graves of the people killed after the war. The archives from Yugoslav times are kept closed to prevent incriminating some top politicians, who presumably played double role in the transition to independent Slovenia. Though at the last referendum (see lower down) the people voted for an unhindered access to these archives, the access is still hindered by procedural intricacies. For the bearers of the former system the independence of Slovenia seemed to be just an unexpected annoyance in the continuum, which started in 1941 by the revolution disguised as the liberation struggle, to be cemented by mass killings in 1945.

The net result of all this is an army of unemployed, who were not protected by law, the increased prices and taxes, a general drop of living standard and the loss of patriotism for our still young Slovenia. Since the government did not look for a wider consent when planning new laws or regulations, the oppositional parties had enforced the referendums on the issues. Though almost as a rule people refused their consent on the referendums, the government still continued working in their way. A culmination was reached on June 5, 2011, when three referendums for three laws proposed by the government took place: the new retirement reform, the moonlighting, and the restricted access to the archives from the Yugoslav times. The people voted against in all three by over 70 percent. Also in two previous referendums the government had lost by about the same margin. The public pool discovered that less than one fifth of the population still supports the government. Since the ratio between older

and younger citizens keeps growing, the new reform of the retirement is badly needed. But not such as proposed by the government. By voting against, people simply told the government that it is time to pack. Nevertheless, the premier and the leaders of the coalition parties keep discussing how they would run the state for the remaining fifteen months of their mandate. On the other hand, the analytics predicted that our state would soon join PIGS (Portugal, Ireland, Greece and Spain). The rulers, not seeing the cruel reality and stubbornly sticking to power, had—as my friend Viktor said—apparently adapted the rule of the French King Louis XIV. They had just changed the first word to read:

Avec nous le déluge!

For a common citizen like the writer in his late eighties, it remains only to watch how the flood caused by the present coalition of the former communists, would eventually flush them away. This would leave a ruined state with a debt, which several future generations would have to pay.

In this, seemingly hopeless situation I had to think of the year 1941, when we were occupied by Germans, Italians, and Hungarians. Then Germany had already occupied half of Poland, half of Czechoslovakia, the whole Norway, Low Countries, France, Greece, and—together with Italy-Libya and Tunisia in North Africa. By BBC and Voice of America, we were daily informed of the German bombing of British towns, London, Coventry, and so on. In spite of all this bad news, we had hope that eventually Germany and their ally Italy would not win the war. Because they were bad and bad things never win in the long term. Fascism, Nazism, and communism in Europe had perished already, though at the cost of many millions of lives. The cost for the resurrection and full recovery of Slovenia—which I hope will come sooner or later—would certainly be very much lower. Unfortunately, I have not much time left and also not much patience, being tired of waiting for the necessary changes to happen. But they *will* eventually happen.

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⁶¹ Since English and Slovenian issue are planned in parallel, *all* relevant literature (also some published after 2011) is quoted. The author has entirely read about 90 percent of the listed literature.

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Short Life Story

Dr. Peter Starič was born on September 2, 1924, in Ljubljana, where he had completed all his studies. He had graduated for electronics engineer in 1961 and gained the PhD title in 1991. After his retirement in 1994, he and his coauthor, Erik Margan, had completed the book *Wideband Amplifiers*, which was published by Springer/Kluwer in 2006 and reprinted in 2007. In the year 2007 he had published the (Slovenian) popular science book *Atomska bomba* (Atomic bomb). Dr. Starič is the author of numerous popular science articles, reviews of books, and articles of general interest.

Index

A

Adamic, Zdenka 14, 144
Adela (sister of Peter) 118
Allied Powers 110-12, 116, 122
Ana (sister of Peter) 92, 127
Ancka (sister of Peter) 120
Andrej (colleague) 91, 167
Anti-imperialists Front *see* Osvobodilna
Fronta

B

Baba (pet dog) 269-70
Babuder, Maks 298
Bajuk, Andrei 321
Ball, Arthur 238
Betí (aunt) 16
Black Book of Communism, The (Curtois) 165
Brelíh, Miloš 47-8
Buchholz, Oswald 119

C

Central Committee of the League of
Slovenian Communists 303
Cermelj, Lavo 53
Cordaro, Mario 77
Crna Roka 109
Crvena Zastava 202-3
Cvenkl (colonel) 70

Cveta (wife of Peter) 109, 181-3, 185,
188-92, 250

D

Darine (friend of Peter) 42
Debevc (doctor) 96-7
Declaration of May 304
Democratic Opposition of Slovenia 305
DEMOS 305
Djilas, Milovan 192
Dolomitska Izjava 105
Domobranci 102-3, 106, 108-9, 123-4, 167-8
Doyle, Frank 225, 234, 256
Dušan (friend) 87, 158, 239, 290

E

Eden, Anthony 192
EI 238
Elektronska Industrija 238
Eric (friend) 208-9
Erlich, Lambert 58

F

Fiat 202-3
Furlan, Boris 174
Furlan, Tomaž 190-1

G

Grandjot (doctor) 220-1
Gregorka, Matic 264-5
Gustl (friend) 91

H

Harriet (friend) 208-9
Hitler, Adolf 22-3, 36, 38, 103
Hocevar, Miško 71
Hugo, Victor 227
Hvala, Bogomil 54

I

I. E. 287
IJS *see* Jožef Stefan Institute
Iskra 201, 233
Ivan (colleague) 135, 137
Ivan (schoolmate) 130-1

J

Jacqueline (granddaughter) 282-5, 296-7
Janez (friend) 91
Janko (fellow prisoner at the concentration camp) 88
Janša, Janez 302-3, 322
Jože (brother of Peter) 14, 17-18, 93, 180
Jožef Stefan Institute 288-9, 292-3

K

Kardelj, Edvard 263-4, 267
Kašanin (professor) 192
Kavcic, Stane 263
Kavcnik, Leon 161, 174-5
Kejzlar, Milan 228-31
Kezele (inflicted with dysentery) 76
Kind, Camillo L. P. 235, 235n26, 312-13
KNOJ 167
Korpus Narodne Odbrane Jugoslavije 167
Koželj, Vence 156-8, 195-6
Kravanja, Viktor 257-8

Kricac 43, 46-8
Kucan, Milan 175, 303, 305-6
Kuhelj, Anton 161-2

L

Lampenfresser 129
Lasic, Dušan 158, 239, 290
Lavric (professor) 189-91
Leskovšek, Hermina 291
Liberation Front *see* Osobodilna Fronta
Life-and-Death Struggle of a National Minority (Kermelj) 51
Lukanc, Maks 260-1
Luznar, Rado 46

M

M. H. 121
Macchi (colonel) 70
Macek, Ivan 144, 171
Margan, Erik 295
Marjan (friend of Peter) 22, 53, 137, 143
Mici (aunt) 16
Milizia Volontaria Anti-communista *see* Domobranci
Mimica *see* Adela (sister of Peter)
Miroslav (Peter's son) 183, 250, 254
Mrak, Franc 212-13
MVAC *see* Domobranci

N

Nagode, Crtomir 174-5
Nardin, Julij 184-5
Natlacen, Marko 29, 80
Nelson, Dave 237

O

OF 36, 40, 104-5, 109, 123
Oskar (Peter's former classmate) 63-4
Osredkar, Milan 46, 48, 291
Osobodilna Fronta 36, 40, 104-5, 107
'Our Own Design, or "Screwdriver

Industry"? 273, 287
Ovsec, Jože 86, 99-101
OZNA 122, 167

P

Pepi (uncle) 110, 170
Peterlin, Anton 155-6
Plemelj, Josip 155-6, 162
Poljanec, Pavel 210-12, 257
Poniž, Roman 157
Pooley, Dick 246-7
Preobražensky (professor) 159-60
Pucnik, Jože 305

R

R. H. 245, 253-4
Radio Osvobodilna Fronta 46
Rankin (doctor) 249-50
Rankovic, Aleksandar 259n30
Rohm, Dagmar 313
Roš, Tone 118
Ross, Bob 317
Rudi (brother of Peter) 14, 60-2, 117-19

S

Sandi (fellow prisoner at the
concentration camp) 88
Schubert (friend) 219-20
Screamer *see* Kricac
Seliškar, Tone 132
Šilih, Niko 143
Sirc, Ljubo 174-5
Slovenia:
Allied air raids in 110-15
Anti-imperialists Front established in
36-7
atrocities in 164-78
dissolution of the army of 134
German occupation of 106-10, 116-
19, 121-4
Germans destroy broadcasting station
in 34-5

Italian occupation of 28-33, 38-41
partisans' arrival in 126-7
polarization of 102-5
struggle for the independence of 300-
12, 314
Sprinz (doctor) 213
Stalin, Josef 176-7
Stane (colleague) 137, 140, 146
Staric, Peter:
Cevta's marriage to 181-2
childhood of 14-25
confinement in the sanatorium 148-9,
188-91, 193
encounter with the Home Guard 135-7
graduate study of 154-63
and his employment in Elektrotehna
260-1
and his employment in Iskra 194-
205, 262-8
and his employment in Pržan 271-5,
279-82, 287
and his employment in Tektronix
235-8, 242-6, 250, 252-5
and his visit to Amsterdam 223
and his visit to Camillo Kind 312-13
and his visit to Denmark 221-2
and his visit to England 224-7
and his visit to Germany 218-21, 223-4
and his visit to Milan Kejžlar 228-31
and his work at the Jožef Stefan
Institute 288-92, 294-5, 298
and his work at the Milan Vidmar
Institute 298-300
and his work for Jacqueline Varga 285-6
infliction of tuberculosis 96-101, 106
lecture presented by 315-16
life after the war 180-4
military service done by 137-41, 143-6
mountaineering as a pastime of 206-
17, 257-9, 283-4
professional work as an instrument
maker 184-7
and the publication of Wideband
Amplifiers 319
radio repair work done by 128-9

released from the concentration camp
90-1

sent to a concentration camp 62-74,
76, 78-80

transfer to Campo Monigo 86-9

Stefan, Josef 288n41

Stevens, E. Dudley 215, 257-8

Strojnik, Aleš 184-5

Strojnik, Romeo 158, 184-5

Štukelj, Leon 107

T

Tasic, David 302

Tektronix 234-8, 240-3, 245, 247, 252,
256-7

TIGR 50-1

Tischer (department head) 223

Tito, Marshall 30, 132, 134-5, 177-8,
259n30, 276-8

Tom, Vida 47, 49

Trst, Istra, Gorica, and Rijeka 50

V

Varga, Jacqueline 283, 285

Varnostno-Obveščevalna Služba 56

Vaška Straža *see* Domobranci

Vollum, Howard 243

VOS 56

Vrščaj, Vinko 288, 290

VS *see* Domobranci

Vukmanovic, Svetozar 193

W

Walker, Bill 234, 241

Wedam, Albin 196

Wideband Amplifiers (Margan and Staric)
317-18

Wiesinger (doctor) 97

Writzl, Rudi 271

Wunderer, Hans 212, 226

Y

Yugoslavia, personal cars introduced in
202

Z

Zavrl, Franci 302

Zavrtanik (professor) 20, 23

Zega, Bogdan 74

Zinger, Vladimir 169

ZKS *see* Central Committee of the
League of Slovenian Communists

Zorana (Peter's daughter) 251-2, 255,
266, 296

Zrimšek, Drago 21, 120-1, 177

Figure Captions

Fig.1 My mother, Franja Starič, born Grablovic (1889-1962), at the time of her wedding

Fig.2 My father Jože Starič (1886-1965) in his young years

Fig.3 The first photo of me, when I was 3 years old

Fig.4 With my mother, being 9 years old

Fig.5 Sisters Adela (Mimica) at left, and Ana (Ančka) in 1933

Fig.6 Brother Jože, civil engineer, in 1945

Fig.7 Bomb craters after the bombing of Ljubljana radio station. In the background is almost completed concrete building, intended to house new, more powerful transmitter. For poor aiming, these bombs have missed the wooden transmitter building, which was inside of the fence partly shown on the right. (Archive RTVSLO)

Fig.8 Engineer Miloš Brelih looking at the ruins of the bombed out transmitter (Archive RTVSLO)

Fig.9 The same place as on the former picture, before the bombing, showing three units of the high voltage motor generator (12 kV DC), for transmitter output stage. (Archive RTVSLO)

Fig.10 Transmitter before the bombing; it was located in the white wooden house in the background, between both trees. (Archive RTVSLO)

Fig.11 In February 1942 the Italians have surrounded Ljubljana by 41 km long barbed wire fence and 70 bunkers with guards.

Fig.12 As soon the barbed wire fence was completed the Italians began raiding the adult male population. At first they retained only a bunch of the seized people. However, in June 1942, they sent most of the arrested to the concentration camp—without any court procedure.

Fig.13 My friend the dove. The picture was taken in front of the TB pavilion of the Ljubljana General Hospital, about 6 months after my return from the Italian concentration camp.

Fig.14 Sister Draga, visiting me in the hospital

Fig.15 Italian concentration camp on the Adriatic Island Rab (now Croatia). The internees, also women and children, dwelled in tents. On October 29, 1942 a catastrophic rain has flooded the camp, which carried away over 400 tents. Five children drowned and the content of the latrine was spread all over the flooded camp.

Fig.16 Children in the concentration camp Rab. Note the size of their heads vs. the emaciated bodies, hindered in growth for starving.

Fig.17 Janez Mihelčič, born June 12, 1885 at Babna Polica, Slovenia, was also among the Rab internees. He died on February 1943 in the camp. (When I returned from the camp Treviso, I was in the same shape as Mihelčič, if not worse, because I had 41 kg being 187 cm high.) The Italians have published this and the figures of children in the Book *Notte sull'Europa*, quoting that these is the internees at the liberation of the German concentration camp Auschwitz (which was liberated in 1945, almost two years after Italy has capitulated and when the camp Rab ceased to exist).

Fig.18 TB patients in June 1943; I am the 2nd from the left and the others are the members of Ovsec family. On the left is Jelka, the right half are Jože & Anda. Since Jože returned from the concentration camp only two months ago, his hair is still short. Anda has died TB in 1944 and Jože in October 1945, just 2 months short of his 22nd Birthday.

Fig.19 The auto-portrait of Jože Ovsec painted the last year of his life. (The original is color oil painting.)

Fig.20 Slovenian villagers of Dane, Loška Dolina being shot by Italian soldiers at Križna gora, July 13, 1942. The victims are (left to right): Franc Žnidaršič, Janez Kranjc, Franc Škerbec, Feliks Žnidaršič and Edvard Škerbec. (Delo Archives)

Fig.21 Another Italian fake; on the poster, mourning their exodus from Istria and Dalmatia, the Italians simply used the photo of the previous figure, supposing this are the partisans shooting the Italian civilians. Slovenian partisans have never worn helmets. (Delo Archives)

Fig.22 With my wife Cveta in 1950

Fig.23 The complete Starič family: parents, children, their spouses and grandchildren. (1955)

Fig.24 The parents with the grandchildren

Fig.25 Playing music in 1950 . . .

Fig.26 . . . and in 1976

Fig.27 With my sister Adela (left), aunt Mici and her daughter Valeria (both of Trieste). Just behind my neck is the room of the building of Sanatorium Golnik, where I had spent 6 months in 1953-54, being ultimately cured of TB.

Fig.28 My complete family

Fig.29 With children Miroslav & Zorana

Fig.30 Cveta's graduation for MD in 1957. At that time I was regularly employed at Iskra Horjul and needed four and half years to complete all the missing examination and graduate in 1961.

Fig.31 Cveta in her first years as the medical doctor

Fig.32 Zorana and Miroslav in 1955

Fig.33 Fifty-seven years after, at the celebration of Zorana's 61st Birthday

Fig.34 Brother Rudi, the Colonel and the director of the Militia brass band music, with my father

Fig.35 With my German mountaineering friend, Hans Wunderer (in 1972)

Fig.36 Thousand meters high north face of Triglav (2864 m), the highest peak of Slovenia (formerly also of Yugoslavia). In the front is the monument to all our mountaineers, who have lost their lives in the liberation struggles, in 1941-1945.

Fig.37 My first ascent of Triglav was on my 42nd Birthday in September 1966. Here I am on the peak, in front of the Aljaž's tower, erected in 1887. After WWII the original metal weather flag was replaced by a red star. Now the original flag bearing the number 1895 is back again.

Fig.38 Working at Tektronix, Inc, Beaverton, Oregon

Fig.39 With my British mountaineering friend E. Dudley Stevens (center), and his wife Heather; the black being I am holding for the collar is the beach Baba.

Fig.40 Gas coupons. For the shortage of foreign currency in 1983-84 gas rationalization has been introduced in Yugoslavia.

Fig.41 Granddaughter Jacqueline, at 9 years, on the peak of Stenar (2501 m). The mountain in the back is Triglav.

Fig.42 Granddaughter Jacqueline, at 36 years, with her daughters Madeleine (center) and Emilie in Trenta

Fig.43 Receiving the PhD Diploma in 1992

Fig.44 With my bearded friend, Erik Margan, the colleague and coauthor of the book "Wideband Amplifiers". Erik was also very helpful in preparing the pictures for this book.

Fig.45 Celebrating our 50th Wedding Anniversary

Fig.46 Presentation of my Slovenian book "Atomska bomba" (Atomic bomb) at the Jožef Stefan Institute, in 2008

Fig.47 View from the Castle tower toward the north of Ljubljana. During the occupation the hills and snow covered mountains across the River Sava were in the German occupational zone. They were not accessible for us, being confined within the barbed wire fence in Ljubljana. Storžič, my first ascent over 2000 is marked.

Fig.48 View down from the Castle tower to the old part of Ljubljana. The building 1 is the University and 2 my high school, Realka. Today most of the different University faculties are dispersed around the periphery of the town.

Fig.49 SW of Ljubljana; the arrow shows the roof of National and University Library, to where the German bomber has crashed in March 1945

Fig.50 Philharmonic building, with Ljubljana Castle in the background. When in 1701 the *Academia Philharmonicorum* has been established, nobody could imagine, how 310 years later, the loudness of music will be abused (exceeding 110 dB), by the electronic equipment which is being prepared in front of the building. Three big windows belong to the small Philharmonic hall, where my brother Rudi has spent several days and nights, in the early 1945, to avoid being arrested by Slovenian Police.

Fig.51 River Ljubljanica; the long building on its right bank (the design of the architect Jože Plečnik) is the end part of the main market of Ljubljana, which is behind and more right.

Fig.52 My farewell of Trenta, in October 2011. The highest peak in the back is Jalovec (2645 m), for which I had the luck ascending it three times. The monument was erected in 1953 in the honor of the mountaineer Julius Kugy, the pioneer of Julian Alps and a prolific writer. The statue was created by Jaka Savinšek, with whom I was together in the Italian concentration camp Gonars, during the war.

My letter to US President Gorge Bush SN. (Here I have erased the street address.) Unfortunately, my warning in the last sentence has not been considered.

—THE END—