

Fighting With The Partisans In Yugoslavia

"So I was sent back to Maribor. I did solitary confinement there. Twenty-one days."

We expressed our horror. Miss X commiserated. The Sergeant's soft smile, the matter-of-fact way of putting it, as if it warranted neither sympathy nor astonishment, made our feelings seem absurd. Someone asked, "What did you eat?"

"One meal a day. A square of bread and a bowl of soup. I was weak. But they made us work. I wasn't allowed to speak to anyone, but each day they took me out, and other solitary confinement men, and gave us a job. There was a Russian P.O.W. camp about a

Miss X asked if Sergeant Denvir knew any stories about Tito—any little anecdotes. Surely he was a hero to his people? Did they not tell any little stories about him?

"Of course he's a hero to them."

We felt squashed. No little stories. Long pause. The forefinger rubbed at the side of the Sergeant's head. He looked at the carpet.

"I didn't see him much. I was in Slovenia."

Mr. Y. asked where he had been fighting most of the time.

"Austria some of the time. We crossed back. I was in Maribor once. Not in the town—on the hills outside. We did a job there. That was good."

I asked Sergeant Denvir about the men he was with—who were they, what they were like, what could he tell me about them?

"In what way do you mean exactly?"

"Well, what were they in civil life—city people or peasants?"

"Doctors and lawyers mostly."

"What the Nazis would call 'intellectuals,' then?"

"Oh, yes. They were intellectuals."

"Fairly interesting then?" I thought this would lead somewhere.

"Very."

Long pause. Try again: "Were the doctors there as doctors or just as men?"

"Fighting men first of all, but doctors too. They were very good. Most of them were German-trained."

"Any Jews?"

"No. Slavs."

"What did they wear?" asked Miss X. The question earned the gentle smile that we had seen once before.

Equipment and Supplies

"Half were in British battledress, half in German uniform."

We gathered that supplies were received from the British by parachute and heard a little about the equipment, mostly captured from the Italians.

There was also some artillery, and every time an enemy supply train was destroyed there were acquisitions of further equipment, or food. Miss X asked for details about the food.

"It all depends on your actions. Say you attack a German supply train. The stuff is divided up among the battalion. In one day you might get half a kilo of bread each."

"And meat?"

"Say half a cow to a battalion."

"How much would you get?"

"Same as everyone else."

"Yes, but how much?"

"Oh, it's fair enough. You get enough."

There was also a kind of local tea, a syrupy brown liquid, made from the leaves of some tree, and occasionally there was German beer. The subject was exhausted.

(continued on next page)

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MAJOR-GENERAL STANE, commander of the Slovenian forces, getting ready before the victory of Novomesta, last October. His weapon is a captured German Mauser with a detachable butt.

mile away, and every day we had to get the Russian dead on stretchers and carry them through the town and bury them. Each one we buried, a German knelt down and said a nice little prayer. At the end of 21 days I had to be helped to walk by a boy.

No "Little Stories"

"Well, I escaped again in December, '41, and got back to Yugoslavia. Things were pretty bad then as you remember, and I wondered what to do. I knew there was no way of getting out of Europe. Then I heard of Tito's little band when I was in Ljubljana and decided to join them. They had about 100 men then."

"Can you tell us about Tito himself? Did you see him much? What does he look like?"

Sergeant Denvir had returned to his reticent mood. A fire of questions became necessary again.

"Well, I suppose I can tell you roughly. He's middling sized, dark, a very forceful sort of chap. Middle aged. A Croatian."