

ages, for he speaks and understands English well, in addition to Czech, Polish, German, Slovak, and Russian. He is equally at home in the sciences and in the arts subjects—an indication that European students, generally speaking, receive excellent academic training. We are happy to be able to give him the opportunity to continue his studies and we hope that his stay with us will be a pleasant one. But here is "Lol" to tell his own story:

—W. D. '50

HOW I CAME TO ST. DUNSTAN'S

Let me introduce myself. My name is Alois Sliva and I am from CSR (Czechoslovakian Republic). People refer to me as a Czech, but I myself don't know what I really am. You see, my father was born in Rumania, he grew up in Hungary, attended a German University, settled down in Poland, and finally practiced as a lawyer in CSR. My mother had a German name from her father, a French name from her mother, yet her ancestors lived in Slovakia.

I, therefore, find myself in difficulty deciding what nationality I really am. This question was answered by the teachers and students of St. Dunstan's. Living with you I can see that it is unimportant whether I am referred to as a Czech or German, a Rumanian or Hungarian. I really don't care. I will rather try with all my mind and all my heart to be what you are—good human beings.

It is natural for you to be good human beings. There is no question about it for you; yet I am a European and in Europe people are not what they should be. Hunger, suffering, low standards of living, incessant wars and consequent demoralization have upset many a European.

But let me come to the point. I was born in CSR in 1930. CSR is only a small country, about twice the size of Nova Scotia, with thirteen million inhabitants. German aggression succeeded in 1938 in getting control of a part of CSR known as Sudeten. Our family had to flee to Southern Czechoslovakia which was not yet occupied. In 1939 all of CSR was annexed by Hitler. By this time I had discontinued study, because all Czech schools of Higher Learning were closed down.

After years of humiliation our nation was liberated by the Allies in May, 1945. From then until 1948 I attended a Czech high school at Opava, my native town.

On February 24, 1948, Communists overthrew the Government with the direct aid of Soviet Russia. Great numbers of Czech people protested. Our last hope was our President, Dr. Edvard Benes.

The Communist party, under Klement Gottwald, held the policy that the new government should be almost exclusively Communist. The President, relying upon the Army, resisted. Drastic steps were at once taken against the "non-progressives". Hundreds of Army officers were arrested, secretaries resigned, i.e., a statement was handed to the President wherein the secretary asked for approval of his resignation, yet none of those who "resigned" knew that he ever had written such a letter. All was well prepared; nobody on the outside knew what really was going on. Demonstrations were performed by the students. Before the President's office hundreds of them protested against such alarming methods. As a matter of fact, armed police forces were alerted by Communists and upon their command the demonstrating Czech students were shot at.

Dr. Benes did not betray his country. He did not break under the strain. To the last moment he fought for democracy. Yet he and the vast majority of the country, were too weak to resist. He resigned rather than surrender the whole nation to Communism.

Communists drew up their own Government without any representative of any democratic party. Actually, all party offices were taken over by Communist "Supervisors"—all democratic activities being sacrificed to Marxistic teachings.

Students, including myself, were then forced out of school because we simply refused to comply with the new ideology. Most of us were working at so-called CCs—Concentration Camps—in which, during Hitler's reign, our best people suffered for their convictions.

I had to spend March, April, and May at "forced labour" at such a CC. Let me give you a brief description of such a camp;

We lived in big barracks with only single wooden walls. No heat, therefore we trembled with cold. Hunger and hard work was all we had in plenty. Most of us were poorly clothed. Nobody

was allowed to write letters, to go out of town to work except with a guard, neither letters nor anything else could be received. Even our relatives did not know where we were.

On May 25th I finally, after many vain attempts, succeeded in crossing the border into Germany. But in what condition?—with one shirt, one suit, no money at all—emptyhanded.

Today it is a different story. Due to the generosity of St. Dunstan's I now have a new suit, plenty of stockings, trousers, sweaters, shoes—the nicest I ever owned.

I arrived in a DP Camp in Germany to find my father already there. Life in a German DP Camp is only slightly different from what is called an "existence" in a Czech CC.

Thanks to my knowledge of the German language I was admitted to a German high school at Schweinfurt after having passed the required entrance examinations.

For one year our family lived in Germany under inadequate conditions; four persons in a small room measuring about four by five yards. In this same room my father had his lawyer's office, my mother prepared the meals, my brother, then three years old, played, and I was supposed to study. It can be readily seen that it was simply impossible. Therefore, we divided the day into several parts. When clients came to see my father, all had to clear out; when mother cooked we all had to sit on our beds in order to make room for moving; when the others slept at night I started to study.

We had food, yes, but just enough to be left hungry after every meal. For me the difficulties proved to be especially serious. I had to study in a foreign language, without books or any other help. Moreover, I wanted to graduate in June, 1949. I don't think I need tell you that one becomes gradually unhappy under such conditions.

The only way to escape this desolate situation was to concentrate on studying. My only aim was to continue. Having experienced things like the overthrow of our Government, Communism, and conditions of life in DP Camps in Germany, you can imagine that my view turned towards the two countries, which, in my opinion, came closest to the ideal of real humanity—Canada and the United States.

I simply decided to study in the New World, not knowing how to achieve this dream. You see, ways and means of getting out of Germany are very limited. I wrote precisely forty-five letters

to various institutions and people, such as: University of Chicago, University of N.Y., Columbia University, University of Abilene; I wrote to President Truman, to General Eisenhower, to the ambassadors of Canada, to the ambassadors of the U.S. in Germany, as well as to many other individuals. I always got a reply—but no scholarship!

You may think it was of little help to receive nice words instead of actual help, yet I, in my desperate situation, was really thankful for those words. It was a pleasant experience to see that so busy a man as President Truman found time to reply to the letter of a Czech student who, unfortunately, happened to be in such a situation. It was the feeling that there still exist humanity and unselfishness that gave me the courage to continue.

Meantime our situation grew worse. My father hardly earned enough to make a living for the family. In order to continue study I had to take a job as typist, and besides making translations, I helped to balance our bills.

From June 13th to 17th I passed my exams for a degree—the worst week of my life, I daresay. A fortnight later I heard from Mr. Van Hoogstraten, the representative of ISS in Germany, that a delegate of the ISS for Canada would visit Germany, Austria, and Italy to interview and select students for scholarships in Canada.

A little spark of hope sprung into my mind. It was not the hope that I would be chosen that made me feel happy, but rather the fact that somewhere in Canada there were people who took an interest in us, the European DP students.

At that moment, more than ever, I realized that real humanity and Christian love still exist. I daresay, it was the nicest experience of my life to learn that a university, namely, St. Dunstan's, stretched forward its hand over the ocean, offering one DP student in Europe the opportunity to come to Canada. The unselfishness of this very small community, enabling one of us to escape hunger, misery, dirt, and hopelessness, gave me what I needed—the new strength to restore my faith.

In brief: I went to Munich, the capital of Southern Germany, where I met the representative of ISS, Professor Marcus Long of the University of Toronto. Some thirty students from all over Europe were crowded in a small room in the cellar. Dampness and cold were the main features of this abode. After waiting for nine hours, from 8 a.m., I was introduced to Prof. Long. I found myself in a

room furnished with a table, which, I am sure, nobody in Canada would keep even in his attic because of its antiquity. Two shabby chairs completed the furnishings of this "hole". But this is Germany, remember. One of the chairs was occupied by a gentleman who kindly invited me to take a seat. Before him lay a few sheets of paper, on which he wrote the information he found to be necessary. I have to admit I was very excited, yet why shouldn't I be?

One great question filled my mind: will he strike out my name after I leave? I thought he would. The whole interview lasted hardly five minutes. On leaving, he said, "thank you". This little word gave me new hope. It was really a brand new experience to be treated like a human being rather than a number.

But the hardest time was yet to come. A number of German universities refuse admission to foreigners, and no jobs are available to them, in a country that itself is overpopulated and has to support thousands of unemployed. This country, where people starve, could offer me no bread. My mother sometimes couldn't get the money for a loaf of bread, not to speak of butter.

Completely desperate, I decided to join the U.S. Army. My idea was that there, at least, I could get some food. I hitchhiked across Germany to Frankfurt-on-the-Main, the capital of Western Germany. Another disappointment—no non-American citizen can enlist.

Upon coming home I found a small letter—just a small, ordinary envelope. Yet I felt it was an extraordinary letter. For me it meant "to be or not to be".

It read: "Dear Colleague; I am glad to inform you that Prof. Long of the University of Toronto has chosen you as one of the candidates for a Scholarship Opportunity in Canada. It is anticipated that you will leave for Canada by the end of August '49."

I had better not try to express how I felt about this letter. It was hard to realize the meaning of the few words, "You will leave Germany!" One has to know what it means to live under such conditions in order to feel happy about the change.

In August I left home, travelling several times from Southern to Northern and from Eastern to Western Germany, in order to get the required passports. On the 7th of September our transport crossed the German-French border.

One hundred and seventy one DPs on the transport felt great happiness after five years of misery. This may seem strange to you who are living in a democracy, but someone who experienced totalitarianism can fully appreciate liberty.

Not only women and children but men, too, had tears in their eyes. One simply couldn't help crying. Then after spending two of the happiest days of our lives in Paris, we proceeded to Le Havre and on the 10th of September we embarked on the Samaria. At first we thought that the American students, quite proficient in using their arms to elbow their way through the crowd, would ease us to the side; it seemed almost as if the poor DPs would be left behind, but upon a word from the authorities, all had to step back and the liberty-seeking people went aboard first.

After seven days' smooth voyage we finally arrived in Quebec City, where ISS delegates from Laval University awaited us. On the 19th of September a taxi brought me to St. Dunstan's University. The Rector, Rt. Rev. R. V. MacKenzie, gave me a cordial welcome. Representatives of the student body took further care of me.

Although I have been here hardly three months I have had ample opportunities to study your outlook on life and to acquaint myself with the elements of your happiness. Every minute I live with you brings me new experiences. Attending classes, talking to your teachers, finding that they are interested in my problems like my own parents would be, listening to students holding a "bull session," attending the "socials"—all these activities give me a good deal of courage that will fit me better for the struggle of life. In a word: I was and am the recipient, you are the benefactors.

Let me summarize my experiences in a few words. You are what we Europeans strive to be—good Christians. You don't know hatred; you love your neighbor. Where we despair, you hope. Where we fail, you have faith. In a word—you are good. I feel extremely indebted to you. Perhaps you expect me to say, "Thank you". Yet I won't. I will not say, "Thank you" and then turn around, just to forget what all of you, the faculty and student body of St. Dunstan's University, have done for me. Please, let me keep this "Thank you". I rather will try with all my mind and all my heart to be thankful to you, who unselfishly gave me the opportunity to start a new life.

—ALOIS SLIVA '52