IVANKA'S JOURNEY

by
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(November 2007 – final edit July 2012)

Preface

Ivanka (née Maté) Dimnik left her homeland of Slovenia, in 1945, and came to Canada. Listening to her experiences during the Second World War and her time in an Austria refugee camp, I felt compelled to record the events of these pivotal years in a young woman's life. Interweaving her personal life with the historical events of that time has been both a challenge and a joy. Her story has enriched my understanding of the power of faith, courage, and commitment, and for this I am truly grateful.

It is said that all memories fade in three generations…and so our lives go.

IVANKA'S JOURNEY

This story begins in Slovenia, a small, beautiful country in Europe, population 2 million, nestled in the Julian Alps and bordered by Italy, Austria, Hungary and Croatia. **Ivanka's Journey** recounts the life of a young woman coming of age during the Second World War and her exodus to a refugee camp in Austria where she lived for three years before eventually immigrating to Canada in 1948. Her journey mirrors the lives of many others who fled their homeland during and immediately following the Second World War reluctantly leaving behind loved ones for the promise of a brighter future in an unknown land.[1]

Background History

In ancient times, Celts and Illyrians inhabited the territory of present-day Slovenia. Although inhabited for tens of thousands of years the country's modern history begins with the arrival of

[1] In Slovene pronunciation, č = ch, š = sh, ž =zh, c = ts, j = y.

the Romans in the 1st century BC. They built villas along the coast and founded the inland urban centers of Emona (Ljubljana) and Poetovio (Ptuj), which today still retain traces of their Roman Past. The 6th century AD saw the first influx of Slav migrants, the ancestors of present-day Slovenes, who set up an early Slav State. Through the ages until more recent times, Slovenian territory was incorporated into far-larger empires, thus relegating Slovenia to the role of "rustic, if charming, hinterland."[2]

Slovenia's history is one of amalgamation with other, more powerful nations. During the 8th century, the region came under the control of the Franks, and in the 9th century it was passed to the dukes of Bavaria. In 1335, the Habsburgs took control of inland Slovenia, dividing it into the Austrian crown lands of Carinthia, Carniola, and Styria. Meanwhile the coastal towns along the Adriatic had requested Venetian protection, under whose rule they remained until 1797, after which they, too, were taken over by Austria. During the 15th and 16th centuries, the Turks, eager to extend the Ottoman Empire across the Balkans and north to Vienna, made repeated attacks on the region. However, Slovenia remained under the Hapsburgs until 1918, with the exception of a brief period from 1809 to 1813, when it became part of Napoléon's Illyrian Provinces.

In 1918, after World War I, Italy seized control of the coastal towns along the Adriatic:

> "….the authorities began changing the first and last names of thousands upon thousands of Slovenes—and not just the living, but also the populations of whole cemeteries. This annulment, lasting a quarter of a century, reached its ultimate degree in the camps, when the individual was reduced from a name to a number."[3]

As for the inland Slovenes, they joined with other southern Slav peoples in forming the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes under King Peter I of Serbia. In 1929, this Kingdom was renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia. In 1941, Hitler declared war on the Kingdom of Yugoslavia and with the invasion of Belgrade the country fell to the Axis powers. Slovenia was divided between Germany, Italy, and Hungary.[4] The war years were a time of hardship for many; each occupier oppressing and assimilating the population. Germany sought to absorb the Slovene economy for its war time efforts and established plants to build aircraft engines and equipment in Maribor and Kranj. The Italian zone of occupation included the area around the capital of

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[2] fodors.com/miniguides/mgresults.dfm?destination=slovenia@248

[3] Boris Pahor, Pilgrim Among the Shadows (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1995), p.17.

[4] See the "Crushing of Yugoslavia", Appendix I, A.

Ljubljana where more systematic tactics were employed to control and annihilate resistors. Deportations to Italian concentration camps and the execution of Slovenian hostages were daily occurrences: "Between April 11, 1941 and September 8, 1943, the Italian occupation forces executed nearly 1,000 hostages and sent 35,000 Slovenians to concentration camps."[5]

Armed resistance to the occupation began almost immediately by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia led by Josef Broz, or "Tito," as he became known. Tito's popularity as a leader[6] and the Party's communist ideals flourished during this era:

> "…the Communist Party of Yugoslavia took a clear and unambiguous stand. Fighting for the vital interests of the working people and of the whole nation and for seeing the threat of the Fascist aggression to the nation, the Party, headed by Tito, became the most consistent and, under the circumstances, the only true champion for safeguarding national independence."[7]

Based in Serbia and Bosnia-Hercegovina, Tito's anti-Fascist army steadily advanced across the country waging war on the occupiers. Many were opposed to Tito's communist ideology and thousands of Montenegrins, Croatians and Slovenians fled to northeastern Italy and southern Austria.[8] When the armistice was signed between Italy and the Allies in September 1943, Italian soldiers stationed in Slovenia surrendered their arms to the Communists in accordance with orders issued by the Allies. In some instances, Italian units joined with Tito's fighters.[9]

With the capitulation of Italy, German forces assumed control of the Italian zone of occupation. Prior to Italy's surrender to the Allied forces many Slovenes were part of a military force called the *domobranci.* One historian contends that they were "simple peasants protecting their families against a foreign, alien philosophy"[10] citing that "desperate decisions [were made] in a

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[5] "Naša Pot" Cleveland, Ohio newspaper publication, June 1, 1995, p. 2.

[6] Excerpt by Slobodam Penezič in Tito: "I first met Tito in Užice in 1941, somewhere around the beginning of October. His arrival in Užice left a very strong impression on myself and all the other members of our detachment's headquarters. It was the same with all the people in Užice. It gave them a feeling of security and faith in the cause for which we were fighting. After that, every action we undertook on the free territory seemed somehow easy. This was greatly due to the feeling that we were under experienced leadership, and that Tito was with us. Besides, he simply won people over by his straightforward manner and by the fact that, although he was the Commander-in Chief, he spoke to people with great understanding for their most trivial, day-to-day problems." (unpagenated text under photo of Tito's Monument in Titovo Užice.

[7] Unpagenated text, Tito

[8] Quote taken from Naša Pot/Our Jouney June 1, 1995, Cleveland, Ohio, Pg. 4-6

[9] This newly constituted Italian-Partisan military alliance in turn assaulted Turjak Castle on September 19, 1943, overran its defenders, and executed those who surrendered.

[10] Paul Borstnik, Voice of America, Retired

desperate time."[11] Soon a bitter civil war ensued between the *domobranci* and Tito's anti-Fascist partisans.

With the acquisition of formerly Italian controlled areas, the Germans offered Slovenian General Leon Rupnik (formerly of the Royal Yugoslav Army and mayor of Ljubljana) the position of High Commissioner of the "Province of Ljubljana." He responded that he would accept the offer only if the following four conditions were met: administration of the "Province of Ljubljana" must be exclusively Slovenian; Slovenian must be the official language; a Slovenian Home Guard must be established to combat Partisan activities; and The Slovenian Home Guard was to act as a police force within the boundaries of the "Province of Ljubljana" and not be engaged in military or police duties on foreign soil. Thus the Slovenian Home Guard, Slovensko Domobranstvo (Domobranci) was created on September 24, 1943. By the spring of 1945, the Domobranci comprised of nearly 15,000 officers and enlisted men. Its function was to resist Communist activities:

> "…from its inception to the end of the Second World War, the Domobranci was an exclusively Slovenian formation. Its officers and enlisted ranks were composed of Slovenians (many of them were former members of the Village Guard, the Slovenian Legion, or deserters from the Communist Partisans) and orders were issued in Slovenian."[12]

Even within a reasonable 'time perspective,' it is never easy to write a balanced account of a revolutionary upheaval in any society. The Domobranci in its aims and ideology was anti-Partisan, anti-communist and functioned like most collaborationist forces in Axis-occupied Europe during World War II. It had limited autonomy and at first functioned as an auxiliary police force that assisted the Germans in anti-Tito operations in Slovenia, while still having German officers in command.

When the Allies took Belgrade on October 20, 1944 they recognized Tito and the Communists as the sole legitimate political and military force in Yugoslavia. Slovenia became one of the six constituent republics of Yugoslavia, with Tito as president. Almost all Domobranci members fled Slovenia and took refuge in the Southern Austrian province of Carinthia at the end of the war in May 1945. All but a few were returned to Yugoslavia by the British military administration, and were executed by the new communist regime; the total number of deaths is estimated at roughly 10,000.

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[11] Mlakar, Boris.Slovensko Domobranstvo 1943-1945. Ljubljana: Slovensak matica. 2003.
[12] Unpagenated text, Tito

As for rest of the Slovenian population, "… the majority of Slovenians chose to stay. They had to choose between joining with the Communist regime or enduring it. This lasted for nearly 50 years. Several thousand Slovenians chose not to stay. Their story should also be told."[13] Invanka's journey is one such story.

Ivanka's early years

Ivanka Maté was born August 4, 1922 in Ribnica, Goriča vas, Slovenia. The tenth child in a family of eleven, her life began within the structure of a devoutly Roman Catholic family. *"I have five brothers and five sisters. I'm the tenth one in the family. There were six girls, but one died when she was small. So there were eleven of us all together."*[14] Her father, Jacob Maté also came from a large farming family. The French sounding name Mate suggest early Slav ancestors might have migrated from what is now modern day France.

Although he had apprenticed as a tailor, Ivanka's father was able to build his own house. A friend introduced him to Ana Žužuk, one of five girls living on a nearby farm and they soon married. Although they had their own home they did not have surrounding land to farm. To earn more money for the family, Jacob soon emigrated to Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A. where he worked as a tailor sending money home to his wife in Slovenia. After three years in Cleveland, Jacob's employer, a childless couple who operated a dry cleaning and tailoring business, offered the business to Jacob. In those days of economic upswing for America, it must have been an exciting business opportunity for Jacob but it would mean moving to the United States. Returning home to share his good news, Jacob learned that Ana had made other plans and did not want to move to the States. She had been saving the money he sent home and with her earnings working for another farmer had purchased the land surrounding their house. She was eager for them to have their own farm. Jacob returned to America, working and sending money home for two more years before returning to Slovenia. Devoutly Roman Catholic, the Maté family navigated a path through the Second World War that was fraught with hardship, personal sacrifice and the loss of loved ones.

The Second World War (1939-1945)

"Our country was occupied, half Italian, half German. The part in which we lived was Italian, the part where my sister, Maria, lived was Gorenska and was German-occupied. I lived with her for awhile. We heard that the German soldiers would pick up young girls and take them with them

[13] (N.P. pg. o "The Miracle of Vetrinje.)
[14] Oral tape recorded conversations 1998-2007. Editing and additions to text bracketed [ ] by author.

so my mother sent notice for me to come home [to Ribnica] right away. So I went. I was working [in Ribnica] in a lawyer's office. I was finished my schooling. One morning, I came to work and Italian soldiers were there in the office. A policeman was there. Of course, I didn't ask anything. I grabbed what was mine in the office and I ran home. I heard after that during the night, that lawyer and his whole family vanished. And we never knew where they [went] and I never saw them again.

I was home [in Ribnica] for about a month or so. There was a kind of co-op store [managed] by the Slovenians. There were never any ladies working at that store, just men, because it was hard work. You had to move sacks of flour [and other supplies]. And then the Italians took many of the men away from that store. Who was going to work in the store? Because I [had taken] a bookkeeping course, typing, shorthand, they asked me if I could look after the books, so I did. Of course, I had to do everything. Everything [came] on Russian carts, like flour, rice, oil, sugar, everything. People came with their points, their ration cards. So I worked there. Then the Italians came and said I needed to [give] my office to them. I had to take all my books [away]. There was a lady, a private home, she said [I could use her] house…so I had all the books in her kitchen and I worked there. Once a week, or twice a week the people [came] with the ration cards. I had to be in the store, you know, to give it to them. And then I recorded everything. Every month. The Italians gave us the material and we [had] to show how much we sold. It was all Slovenian people, our people running the store but the Italians provided the materials.

But meanwhile there were Communist Partisans in the bushes, waiting. And if you were not with them… they killed lots and lots of people. We didn't agree with them. We didn't want to go with them. They were communists and they killed so many priests. They burned the churches."

Ljubelj Pass

"When the Italians capitulated, they left, but the Germans took over. And when the Germans were finished, then the communists [Tito's partisans], they were in the mountains, they came down, and of course whoever was against them, they killed them or put them in prison. So we thought, maybe for only a week or so, the English will come down and take over. My mother [told me to go] to Ljubljana, to find an easier job, and [she told my youngest sister] Vida, to go Velike-Lašče, where my mother came from and stay there and then we will both come home [after things settled]. Vida said: 'wherever you go, I go,' so we went together, and we stayed in Ljubljana. Two of our friends had an aunt there and all four of us stayed there [for a short period of time]. One morning they said: 'you better go, the partisans are right behind,' so lots of people went on the train to Italy. But we walked, we couldn't go [on the train] because it was so

packed, they wouldn't take any more people." Predominately a Catholic country, many Slovenes in positions of power were religious. Catholics were the Communists' main rivals for power and vied with the Catholic Church for control of the population. Former Communists today claim that there was no need for people to flee and no one gave orders for them to go yet 'the decision spread like a virus.'[15] *In those tumultuous and dangerous times where social change seemed possible many with personal grudges used the opportunity to exploit their neighbors and seize their property.*

We walked from Ljubljana to Austria over the mountains. There were thousands and thousands of people. We had a 'traveling office,.' It was for registering the people who were walking towards the border. I was working for this office to register people, and when we stopped we knew how many people were behind us and how many people [were ahead] others were constantly [checking] up and down [the line] to tell us. So when the people [ahead of us moved] then we moved, and when they stayed, we had to stay.

We came to the [Austrian] border and we had to wait there. There was shooting and we were very scared but we had to go. There was a tunnel through the mountains, but the German soldiers wanted to go first, so they wouldn't let anybody go through. Some people had horses and wagons and they went over the mountains [to cross the border]. We probably would have gone too, but a friend said nurses were needed to help [the wounded in Austria], so the Germans let us go, Vida and me through.
When we came to the [Ljubelj Pass] tunnel[16]*, our friend told us to go there and stay there quietly and of course it was dark. He went back, and brought two other friends. Because we were friends from the same village, we all four came together and we went through. It was dark, night was coming, [and we wondered], where are we going to stay? So we had to walk and walk. We lay down on the ground and we were in a cemetery and didn't know it until morning.*

Then we walked and we came to a place called Vetrinje, in Austria, and we were on a field and there were thousands and thousands of people. Nothing, just the field and sky. When we lay down to sleep, in the morning we were all wet. For three months we stayed there.

After, we went to the bushes and cut some branches for shelter. There was a river there. It wasn't very good. There were still Germans there and the horses went there, as well. We washed the clothes [in the river] and there was lice, we didn't have much but we went to wash and [hang out the clothes] and you could see the lice. It was so terrible. And with nothing to eat, that was a problem. They killed the mules and we got a piece of meat, and we boiled this

[15] John Corsellis andMarcus Ferrar, Slovenia 1945. (New York: I.B Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2006), pg. 8.
[16] See photo of Ljubelj Pass into Austria. Photo #1

and drink that soup. My friend she was so sick, we thought she was going to die. We didn't have bathrooms, just a hole and some branches and when she had to go, the three of us we have to hold her or she would fall in. It was very hard.

After, some English came. They supplied some crackers. We went to help to do something in [the supply stores], whoever worked there [might get] a piece of soap or a piece of bread, or something like this. Then of course winter was coming and we couldn't stay [in the field], so they put us all in different camps. We went to Spittal, that's a town in Austria."

Camp Life

"They just took groups, families. We came from Ribnica [so we went] together. One camp was Lienc– more educated people because they had a high school and there was lots of professors, you know. In Spittal, at first, we had a little tent, the girls were sleeping there.[17] *When we laid down, we laid down one way, if you wanted to turn, all ten had to turn at the same time. I was the one to collect up a loaf of bread, and I had to cut it in 10 pieces, a piece for each one. We were pretty hungry and because the English soldiers were there, we went in the garbage and picked up things, sometimes a big piece of bread, a can of something, and we took it and ate it. In the barracks were other people, some Hungarians, some Germans, and when they moved out we moved into their barracks. It was a big long building and we had a big room. There were 13 girls and we lived together in that one room. For three years, we lived in that barrack and [things improved slightly]. Two of us were working in the office, and the rest were teachers. They started to organize a school because there were lots of children and they needed schooling. They organized the school and I helped with the kindergarten, before I [went to work] in the office. The children didn't have enough to eat so we applied, especially the teachers, to make a special kitchen, just for the children so they [could have]a little bit more nutrition. We all went with a little dish to get food but it wasn't enough for the children. So they made another kitchen for the children and I helped there. Then I [had] a little bit more to eat too; soup, bread, potatoes, and after some meat [was supplied]. We were not supposed to take anything out from there, but I took all the butter off from my bread, put it on a piece of paper, and [gave it] to my sister. So she can have a little bit more.*

After that, they brought people from other camps and said we are going to have one big camp. That's when I started to work in the office. They needed somebody, more people, to register [others], and then I stayed there until it finished. At that time we had a little bit more, because whoever worked in the office had a separate dining room. It was little bit better."

[17] See photo of young women in camp. #2

One Christmas

"One day I came home from working in the office. It was raining outside and it was muddy, and my sister saw a piece of paper in the mud. The Communists sometimes came to the camp and tried to bring people back home, and they brought all kinds of newspapers. They told people how nice it was going to be, and nothing will happen to you, if you come back. Not to force them…there was lots of people with families [left behind] and in camp were fathers, mothers with the children and of course they would like to go home. My sister, Vida, picked up that piece of paper, all muddy, just a piece of paper and it was an obituary about my father. It was just before Christmas. That was so terrible.

We wrote a letter to a friend in Klagenfurt, Autstria and I corresponded with my mother [through my friend.] I put my friend's name and her address on the letter and sent it back home, and [my family] sent the letter to my friend in her name and then she sent it to us in camp. I asked why nobody told us, that Ata [my father] had died. My sister wrote and explained everything. She said [he died] right before Christmas, [and they] didn't want to spoil our Christmas, they knew how hard it was for us to be away from home for Christmastime. I wrote to her and told her how we found out…that Christmas was so terrible."

Brighter Moments

"In the camp sometimes we [had] celebrations at Easter or Christmas, and Mass. Sometimes there were plays and music and when we [gathered] together it was so nice. We went on hikes and spent some time together as a group.[18] *Even after I moved to Canada I received a birthday card from a friend who spent time with all of us girls saying those [times together in Camp] were some of the happiest moments ever."*[19]

Immigration to Canada

"Then people started to [emigrate]—Argentina took families. Some went to Venezuela. Some stayed in Austria. Some people married and stayed in Austria together. We could go to Argentina or Canada. The uncle of one girl was already in Argentina and he sent a letter to his niece saying it was not good for single girls to go to Argentina. Canada was asking for working people like families to work on the sugar beet farms or for single girls to do housework.

[18] See photos #3 and #4.
[19] Phone conversation with Ivanka,

I had a cousin in Cleveland, United States and I wrote to her but she was a little scared to [sponsor] both of us. That's why we signed a contract [for domestic work in Canada]. We [Vida and I] had to go through a medical examination; you had to be really healthy. My sister wanted to go with her boyfriend's family who were going to work in the sugar beets but she wasn't accepted because they were not married. So we were going to go together, but she [would have to make] another application and we would have to wait for three months. That is why she went [before me] with another group of girls in another camp. We didn't go together. We split. For three months we had to wait. We were kind of scared but after about three months there were 85 single girls that were going to Canada. We went on a transport truck to [the port town of] Bremen, Germany and, in 1949, departed for Halifax."[20]

On the Ship

"The boat ride was very hard. We were on the boat for a week and we were very sick. Sea sick. That boat was an army boat before. Vida was on a different boat and when they had lunch they [sat] at the table. We had to stand up but we were so sick that we [couldn't] eat. Many times we [didn't] want to go but [those in charge] said we had to eat something so went but we [mostly threw] everything in the garbage. One man helped us [with our sea sickness] by telling us to go up top and lay on our stomachs and this really helped."

Halifax and Quebec City

"In Halifax, they told us where we had to go. We didn't stay at Pier 21 because it was crowded from a ship before us. We had to go on a train to Quebec City. There we were put in hotels. I [learned] that my sister and her group had just left a few hours before we came. We stayed in

[20] "…a surging tide of post-war immigration, people from many countries in search of a new beginning. In the 1950s, Halifax welcomed an average of 45,000 immigrants a year, roughly one-third of the annual average received by Canada." Trudy Mitic, Pier 21, (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Ltd., 1997), p.131.

that hotel for one week. It was nice. We could have a shower, sleep, and wash our clothes. We had nice food, different food. In the morning they gave us cereal and cold milk. We just looked at it—we were not used to having cold food in the morning; nobody ate that.[21] *People were friendly. They wanted us to sing because they said there was a group before and they were singing. Slovenian people love to sing. We had a concert. People were so happy to hear us sing. They [brought] us some chocolate, and some oranges."*

Preston, Ontario

"Later we learned where we were going. I [found out that] my sister went to Brantford, Ontario and I wanted to be close to her. They said I would go to Preston which was not far from her. Some stayed in Quebec, some went to Ontario. There were four of us who went to Preston, a small town of about 5000 people. The hardest thing was that we didn't know where we were. We had name tags on with the name of our [new employer]. When we got to the train station in Guelph, Ontario the people looked at our name tags and said: 'You go with me.' We stood there…we thought we are just like animals. That was the most discouraging time. We were very sad. Very scared. We couldn't speak English. There were five of us girls in that little town of Preston but we didn't know [how to find each other]. We didn't know the town or where we were."

Domestic Contract

"I worked for a family with four children, four girls. He was a doctor. His wife was Polish, his second wife, she was younger than me. I was paid $35 a month. When I came to the house I put my suitcase on the veranda in the back and the doctor said take it all out. So I had to take out [my clothes] and put them on the [clothes] line. He saw that everything was clean, everything ironed, and everything was nice. He said ok, ok. He showed me to my room. It was a beautiful room but I wondered, 'What am I going to do? What kind of work am I going to do?' Cleaning the house, yes, but I had never seen a vacuum cleaner or washing machine before. I had to [learn many things].

Vida was with a doctor's family too. But that lady was really good to her. She took [Vida] to Toronto and bought her new clothes and [she received] $10 more pay than I did and uniforms. I had to wear my own clothes. Vida didn't know where I was but they found out from the

[21] "…a food item that proved to be a nuisance was one that was distributed to immigrants in the form of free samples. The Kelloggs Company began the practice of handing out small boxes of corn flakes to all arrivals. Not recognizing this to be breakfast cereal, many of the recipients sought to dispose of the corn flakes after initial examination. More often than not the floor of Pier 21 was thickly littered with corn flakes and empty boxes." Trudy Mitic, Pier 21, (Halifax: Nimbus Publishing Company, 1997), p. 148.

employment office and [her employer] brought Vida over to see me. That was the happiest moment to see each other again.

I worked there for [that family] one year. After I worked in a shirt factory, ironing shirts. Then I went to Lethbridge."

Lethbridge, Alberta

For two years Ivanka had been corresponding with a young man named Anton Dimnik. Having met in the refugee camp in Austria, they had only known each other for a few months before Ivanka immigrated to Canada. Anton had been a member of the Domobranci who had fled Slovenia during the exodus following World War II. He and his family immigrated to Alberta in 1949, to work on the sugar beet farms. After many eloquent letters, often written as poetry,[22] Anton proposed marriage and Ivanka accepted. She moved to Lethbridge, Alberta and they married on July 29, 1950.[23] And so began another chapter in the story of Ivanka's journey.

Epilogue

Oral histories intertwine the personal with the historical. Recounting the events of someone's life within its historical context can be a means to develop, among other things, clarity, insight, understanding and compassion; qualities that define our humanity. Trying to comprehend the phenomena of war and its after-effects can be a daunting task. The futility of violence to solve our human problems seems obvious yet wars continue. Violence can never stop violence. Whatever change we want to happen outside should first happen within, and finding peace within often begins with a change of mind. I believe that oral histories have that power to change minds thus taking that first step towards peace within. Let the minds of the people who want war be changed and let Canada uphold its vision for peace in the world.

[22] Eulogy written by Michael Dimnik July 2000, on the occasion of Ivanka and Anton's 50th Wedding Anniversary.
[23] Together they raised six children, all of whom have excelled in their own lives. With his passing on Canada Day, July 1, 2005, Ivanka marked the end of a successful marriage lasting nearly 55 years.

Appendix I

Background historical information

A. "*The Crushing of Yugoslavia*" Michel, Henri. The Second World War. London: André Deutsch Limited, 1968.pp. 189-190.

"If the British had hoped to provide an obstacle to Germany's advance southwards, Hitler lost no time in destroying their illusions. On April 6, 800 aircraft pounded Belgrade and the main Yugoslav communication centres with bombs. Using Bulgaria as their starting base, German troops swiftly cut Yugoslavia off from Greece. Before the Yugoslavs had even completed their mobilization the Germans had taken Skopje on April 7 and Zagreb on the 11th. The Italians, Hungarians and Bulgarians all rushed in together for the kill; on April 12, Belgrade fell.

The British barely had time to pick up King Peter and the Yugoslav government and take them away to England, where the King joined the growing band of exiled sovereigns. Hitler decided to deal with Slovenia separately and set her aside for the moment….Yugoslavia was reduced to the tiny territory of Serbia and placed under German occupation. It was highly inadvisable for the little states to rebel against Hitler's Reich or oppose it."

B. Slovene Home Guard (Slovensko domobranstvo) or SD for short, was a collaborationist force, formed in September 1943 in the area of present day Slovenia (then a part of Yugoslavia). Much of the SD's equipment was Italian (confiscated when Italy dropped out of the war in 1943), although German weapons and equipment were used as well, especially later in the war. The majority of the SD forces consisted of infantry units, although they also possessed artillery units, which were, however, seldom used. The SD had no armoured units (except for a few armored trains), even though several tank crews were sent to Germany and received training. The chief inspector of Slovensko domobranstvo until 1945, when he was made its leader, was general Leon Rupnik. He was executed after the war.
http://en.wikipedia.org/widi/Slovensko.domobranstvo

Appendix II

Excerpts from Pilgrim Among the Shadows by Boris Pahor

Pg.17:

"The child who was once caught in the panic of a crowd as he helplessly watched flames destroy a theater in the center of Trieste had his vision of the future ruined forever. The blood-red sky above the harbor, the wild fascists who dumped gasoline on the proud building and then danced around its furious pyre—all this impressed itself on the child's mind, traumatizing it.

…condemned for using the language in which he expressed his love for is parents and with which he first came to know the world. In the process of punishment, the authorities began changing the first and last names of thousands upon thousands of Slovenes—and not just the living, but also the populations of whole cemeteries. This annulment, lasting a quarter of a century, reached its ultimate degree in the camps, when the individual was reduced from a name to a number."

Pg: 159:

"I believe a time will come when human beings will disband in search of greenery, forests, and rivers, and take stock in silence of all their past delusions. Not that they will repudiate civilization; but they will finally understand that urban conglomeration is no salvation. They will regroup and begin listening again to the earth. Assuming, that is, we don't first obliterate ourselves with the atom. That is the unknown in the equation."

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