

## **Internement at Tost** **From November 26<sup>th</sup> 1940 to May 31st 1941**

**November 26<sup>th</sup> - 29<sup>th</sup>**

Our journey began at 2.20pm from Lille station where we were sent in busses. The sick list of 15 were given three compartments in an old French 2<sup>nd</sup> class wagon without WC, but two of the kitchen staff came in saying they were ordered to do as they were told, as there was no room elsewhere. So it made things very uncomfortable, as we all had much kit with us. We learnt later that they had refused to get into another compartment 3<sup>rd</sup> class where there were only three men - it was evident that they simply wanted the 2<sup>nd</sup> class cushions and the chance, if allowed, to muscle on our rations. We reached Valenciennes about dusk and we asked to be allowed out ten minutes. The Germans made a great fuss about it, but eventually let us out to piss against the wagons with our backs turned to the public platform!

Then, on through the night after eating in the train - for four of us, for 3 days, we had three loaves, a tin each of bully and of pâté and some butter. Impossible to sleep as we were all journey up by the kitchen watchers, but I saw the plough continually to our left so knew we were going steadily east. I think I dazed about 4am and I believe that we touched Maastricht and got to the Brussels - Aix-la-Chapelle line. At Aix, Germany, we changed trains. So no longer question of special treatment for the sick. I was in a compartment with eight of them - impossible to move without chinking over each other and the baggage. We went north via Düsseldorf and via Magdeburg to Berlin, having cups of hot soup - good - given in by the German Red Cross twice on the way. One man who threw apple peel out onto a German platform was well told off - apparently the Germans don't mind pissing on French platforms but object to leave scraps of papers on theirs!

Wide country all the way, well tilled and very sparsely inhabited - plenty of "vital space" available there. Houses square and ugly. A deadly banality about their indication of character, no doubt. Very few people about in any town or village, but indication around Düsseldorf of any exterior RAF bombing. We reached Berlin about 1am or so and got our kit across to underground shelter, very jot and stifling where we got more soup and coffee. A German had helped me with my kit, for my rheumatism made its transport an agony; and when we left to board the metro at Postdamer Platz, he helped me again and indeed all the way until we reached one final train. He was a medical student, spoke a little English and better French and was very decent to me.

Again more soup in subway and finally to our next train which landed us at Breslau; there we were chased out, leaving kits and, as we thought, for a few minutes only, so we left our coats. More soup in a subway and then one and a half-hour wait on a cold platform until our train pulled in again. We left Breslau about 6am and eventually finished up most of us deadbeat at a station near here. Some of our kit came on a farm wagon and the rest we dumped in the waiting room and we marched up to this camp. We got a doe in the White House, but there was no heating and we had no blankets with us, so we just shivered and ached with cold after timing in at 3am and until reveille at 6am. They then gave us an excellent breakfast of soup, sausage (cold), bread and coffee. Parade about 9am and then off to inspection room, filled in a form, then had baggage examined, handed in all money, went before a doctor, taken to bath - 3 in a bath! - and eventually to our room (72 of us) on the top floor of the lunatic asylum, which the place was before. The camp strength is now 1130 all total. We have beds with boards, a thin paillasse, two sheets and two blankets. But there is no room to hang anything up, so we have to keep everything in our bags. I met Dutnall; He, like

many others of his group, looked bad and for though he had been here two months on good food, he still feels the effects of five weeks at Hay, where they were just starved and reduced to trying to cook potato peels for food. I gave him some tobacco, etc and have started to cheer him up a bit, for his morale is very low at the moment.

### **November, 30<sup>th</sup>**

A day spent getting to know the camp and its inmates, feeling much better after a night's sleep and real rest. Room is cold, being top floor and it is freezing here day and night already. Food is good and sufficient - anyone can live on it. There are about 120 officers and men of the "Ovama" sent in June last, in North Sea and a most wonderful collection of internees of all ranks and conditions. P.G. Wodehouse, the writer, is here too. I am hoping to be able to get down soon to Dutty's room and to get a bed on floor level (for the beds are in tiers of two and my rheumatism will not allow me to climb to the top one). The room will be warmer, more congenial and hot water, bath and WC all better and more handy. WC's and baths are all open - no doors at all - so that the lunatics were always under observation as indeed we can be, if necessary. We soon get used to performing our duty in public!

### **December 1<sup>st</sup>**

Went to church service this morning, run by Salvation Army: enjoyed it greatly for it showed a faith and earnestness and simplicity, which seem to me to be absent from Church of England services, which are more a reviewing of ritual than real prayer.

I received an issue of one card. But having found out that it takes letters about two and a half months for a letter to get to England, I have sent the card to Gaby Carlier. She will get it quicker and will then send off a 25 words Red Cross message to Gisèle to let her know my address. And I received a letter for Gisèle.

### **December 2<sup>nd</sup> - 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Days spent in getting around generally and finding out positions of hot water taps and so on. Had a glorious bath Monday evening. Am starting chess again, going to a boxing match tomorrow and considering learning German - at all events I think it will be useful to learn enough to be able to get home. Have a beastly cold - our room is on the top storey (124 steps) and rheumatism is getting bad again. I sometimes wonder whether I shall ever have a straight back again.

The days go very quickly. Sent letter n°1 to Gisèle. Have now found out that we were allowed 3 letters and 4 cards per month, but only one of these can go to England. So I shall send others to Amiens and also to Gaby and in fact try and centralise all correspondence with Gaby who will pass on everything round and act as secretary and also pass on news to Gisèle when she can.

We soon get used to things here - I am now quite happy sitting on an open WC seat, carrying on an animated chat with the next chap waiting his turn!

## **December 4<sup>th</sup>**

I believe that we are getting 8 camp Marks today to start us off with pocket money. Weather is cold - it has been freezing ever since we came here and I hear we get down to -30°C in winter with 1-2 meters of snow. It is a pretty cold job going across to dining-room - we feed in three shifts and food is good. Dinner is about 1/2 or 3/4 of a litre of soup and often we get about ten potatoes at the same time; For tea we get bread, coffee and saucisson or jam or cheese with a little butter occasionally. We save from the tea ration and eat with our morning coffee for breakfast.

Boxing match not much good.

The Hicks are acting very dirtily. At Lille when we had something else to eat we put away our tinned fish ration in one lot. There were at least 45 tins; they just grabbed the lot at Lille, handing me 3 tins instead of a minimum of 9 - really I think the number should be nearer a dozen. They are a mean lot and simply lie like the Germans when approached on the matter.

Played chess tonight.

## **December 5<sup>th</sup>**

Have been out taking exercise on the grass plot this morning - a nice day, cold after a little snow last night.

Certain men have volunteered to work for the Germans and will, I think, shortly be moved out to another part of the camp so I may get down to Dutnall's room soon - there is a good crowd there and a big bunch of educated men.

Yesterday, I received 8 Marks so now have some money in my pocket.

## **December 6<sup>th</sup>**

Fish soup today, rather sickly. Fall of snow last night, but not much. Very cold, particularly in our attic room on 5<sup>th</sup> floor. I have tried making my bed all ways for warmth and comfort, but so far without success; so tomorrow I am reverting to my fleabag and a final arrangement. We are supposed to use the blankets and sheets in a particular German way - a military way - and it does not work with big men like myself.

Have decided to learn German and will start next Monday.

## **December 7<sup>th</sup>**

We get a postcard today so I shall probably send to Amiens. Played more chess last night - it is a pleasure to get some brain exercise again, for I have had very little in the last four months. Up to yesterday it looked as if the last postcard sent off on the 1<sup>st</sup>, had still not yet left the camp.

Met a man, Asher, who spent the last war interned also at Ruhleben; another man, who looks after catering, is interned here for this war - his father was interned in England for the last one. Sent a postcard to Amiens.

## **December 8<sup>th</sup>**

Another Salvation Army service. Dull day with awkward meal times, for I feed on the 1<sup>st</sup> service, at 12 and 3.30 and Dutnall is on 3<sup>rd</sup> services, so we do not meet till the evening. Meanwhile our attic room is so cold and so dark that one cannot stay in it to read or write. I am forced to the lower corridors, sanding up for hours and getting a worse cold.

## **December 9<sup>th</sup>**

Like Sunday - a miserable day. A bit of chess and *jacquet* and also, at last! A game of bridge.

## **December 10<sup>th</sup>**

Wrote Gaby today. Am now keeping copies of all letters and cards sent, so that I can always see what I have asked for in previous letters. Played my first chess match this morning and lost it. Cold very bad now so have put on my Thermogene wool now; if it does not improve I shall see the doctor, but it is not so much doctoring which is required as it is some comfort, warmth and rest from standing about in draughts. Came a real purler on the slippery trodden snow in the exercise "park" today, so can look for bruises on my right thigh tomorrow. Rheumatism and cold are worse.

## **December 11<sup>th</sup>**

Lost another chess match today. Our room is slightly warmer today, so better but obviously other rooms profited and so were better still. Chances of getting downstairs are still remote apparently, as none of the work volunteers have left the camp. Have decided to send SOS postcards to Harstrich and Skindler Hotel at Ypres for tobacco.

## **December 12<sup>th</sup>**

Tried the library today and found it empty. Had German lesson also and have been to see the doctor - I am returning at 3pm for massage, etc and will see how things go.

Naturally all our news of the war here comes from German papers, so salt has to be literally used. So far as I can judge, both the German and the Italian dictators will require two definitive defeats before their people rise to upset them. Italy has apparently got the first one under the tail in Albania. I do not think that Hitler's failure to conquer England can be counted as such however. But if Italy takes another kick and capitulates then this, combined with the previous lack of success will be, I think, n°1 kick. Then we must wait for the second one and this must be a definite defeat in arms.

We get a paper, "The camp", in English, which gives football results, so it is obvious that England is not suffering too much. If she had only suffered a tenth of the damage in 1914-18 we should never have had this war. So I am glad that England is getting her medicine and glad also that Germany is getting hers, for both countries have escaped almost scot-free from damage at home in their previous war.

Nearly all the people I meet seem to want to win the war without fighting - by blockade, revolution in Germany, entry of Russia, United States or Turkey - in fact by any means except bloody bath. Yet, in my opinion only a result obtained by victory in battle will ensure a peaceable future and all I hope is that we just fight it out ourselves only, without allies, so that in the end we can apply the rule of the piper calling the tune. Bullies by nature though the Germans may be, yet they will show good fight - at the outset at least.

Another danger I see is this: I feel sure that if the German staff could guarantee the conquest of England by the loss of one, two, three or more million men, the dictators would not hesitate a moment and would sacrifice those lives. To combat this, we must have generals and politicians equally ready to make such sacrifices - which of course are less in defence than in attack. But there should be no question of abandoning vital positions for the sentimental ground of avoiding loss of life.

I find I am living alright on the rations which run to four slices of German wholemeal bread, a little butter, a little jam or *saucisson* or cheese and about 1/2 litre of a soup with an occasional bit of meat or fish floating in it, with about 9 potatoes. We could do with more bread - it is food and it is helping my constipation, I think, too. For our trouble is that if we open a tin of conserve of some kind, we have not enough bread to eat with it, as our ration is 5 to a loaf or some 220gr each probably.

We get another paper, "Le trait d'union" in French, printed in Germany of course, and designed to back up Germany's perpetual policy of separating England and France.

## **December 13<sup>th</sup>**

Massage yesterday, with ammonias, was well done and by an English -Dutch man whose profession it is. It did a lot of good and as I went to bed at 8pm. Had a good night, both rheumatism and cold are better today. I have more massage today and then again on Monday.

Sent today's postcard to Skindler - I think Madame there will help me out with parcels and tobacco and she surely is in a good position to get things.

## **December 14<sup>th</sup>**

Cold and back better again this morning and my cough is much easier. But I felt my appendix rather keenly this morning and more so than on others. So must look out for possible trouble there in the future. When the doctor examined me I noticed that he pressed a lot round that spot and that he asked me whether I vomited or had constipation.

## **December 15<sup>th</sup>**

Cold day - at least -10°C frost all day. Stayed in all day except for trips to meals.

## **December 16<sup>th</sup>**

Still colder - about -15°C, I think. We have had a white outlook for some days now and I think it will be permanently with us for some months to come. Some of the carts have had their wheels taken off and replaced by runners for use as sledges. Have been watching the

top hatted chimney sweeps busy on all surrounding roofs - the Germans of course make much of Christmas and Santa Claus and the chimney sweeping is thus probably a consequence of this belief. I fear he wont come down my chimney this year and nor can I unhappily drop down that of Gisèle and the boys. In my letter to Gisèle at the beginning of the month I omitted to send her Christmas wishes, not properly realising that I should not be allowed to write again before January. Now the writing of letters has become a fine art, for length is limited. So I make a draft out, putting in essential of all I want to say and then out here and there until it fits into the allowed space. Then I write the letter itself and take a copy of it. Letters and postcards this month are more in the form of SOS messages to such as can help me in France, plus extra news to Gaby, which she can transmit to Gisèle in turn.

Have had a bad bout of constipation again, so am "pilling" once more to avoid "piling" and appendicitis.

The German sentries here have had an issue of other boots - they step right into them with their ordinary heavy knee boots and they fasten at the back I think. By the way, I have often thought how useful their ordinary knee boots are when they seek either admittance or wish to close a door!

Had a good bath this morning about 11.30 - before lunch when the room was getting warmer.

## December 17<sup>th</sup>

I have lent Dutnall my brown jacket - really Maurice's now - for he has only an unlined tweed coat and I have my brown tweed one plus my golf jacket. I did not ask for the brown one but Mme Pezron sent it up - she did well although she could not forecast the climate here. It is colder now than even it was last Winter at Escalles and nights give -20°C whilst at 11am (9am sun time) it is -12°C or so. Apparently in hard winters it gets to -40°C, so I may have an opportunity of testing one of Jack London's statements - that spit freezes before touching ground with a crack like a revolver shot. Turning out at 7am (5am-sun time) for coffee, one is glad to have a nose to breathe with - opening one's mouth is asking for trouble. I sleep in vest and pants, pyjamas on top of them, my green fisherman's stockings and with three blankets and I keep very warm; a bath towel suspended at the head of the bed stops the draught from the window behind me on to my head.

I have cut the Hicks right out. It is as well that I give the reasons. Before leaving Lille, a bottle of vinegar was put on my bed and I got a message asking me to carry it. I did so for the three days journey and the handed it over to G.Hicks for I thought it belonged to our party's mess. Later I learnt that it had been handed over for carrying by a man called Pollard, occupying room 2 at Négrier and that it belonged conjointly to all the ten men in that room. So I called on G.Hicks to hand it back. He replied vulgarly: "*Ces gens-là nous font ch...*"<sup>1</sup>. I gave him an opportunity of returning it, but eventually had to summon him again. Then he produced another bottle, 2/3 full only; so even caught in the act of actual theft, he still arranged to net return the lot and stole one third. Henri is with him of course. At Négrier too, whenever we had tinned fish and had anything else to eat, we put our tin of fish on one side for future use on rainy days. The last time I looked in September, there were 3 salmon tins, several tins of tuna fish and tomato and 19 small tins of herring, plus several crab tins of the same. Really my share of these, Albert being gone, should have been one third. Well, they have just looted the lot and pretend that another man has pinched them! They showed me the valise in which we used to put our stock, very naively but did not open up their other two

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<sup>1</sup> These guys are a p...s

valises and sacks and I was just too disgusted to insist on that. I preferred to get out at once and entirely of their company.

## **December 18<sup>th</sup>**

This morning I tackled the camp authorities as regards room 501 and asked to be moved to Dutnall's room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, n°309. In the afternoon whilst waiting in the dinning-room for my massage, the order to move came through, so I missed the massage and got busy at once. I have retained my bottom bunk and on the top one is a big man named Buke - a real elephant of a man. He has gone through the planks of two beds up to now, so my position is perhaps one of some danger! However it is a warm room, good educated fellows in it and I am next to Dutnall and have only three floors to climb instead of five. So I have spent one more cheerful evening than the previous ones. I parade on that floor but for meals still have to work in with room 501, so am still at table with the Hicks, who maintain a sullen silence.

## **December 19<sup>th</sup>**

A little warmer today, but still below zero. Yesterday it was -19°C. Have had six laps in the exercise park and now am waiting for massage in the dinning-room. Much happier in the new room. My postcard today is to Mme Harstrich; as for Skindler, I am asking her to help with tobacco, biscuits, sweets, Elesca and Kut to be repaid by me later.

Gisèle should be happier again, as by now the boys will be at home again - may they all enjoy their Xmas! I think that when Gaby, Skindler, Weat and Harstrich once begin sending things off I shall get plentiful supplies of good things to make up the rations here. And then, much later no doubt - in 3-4 months or so - I may get something from Gisèle and the boys if the Red Cross can still tackle it. In any case, I can exist quite well on the present rations.

More massage today.

## **December 20<sup>th</sup>**

Massage again - it is doing good. The way I work the rations is this: starting with dinner, this is generally a soup of potato and vegetable of some kind of which we get 1 1/2 ladle or 2 ladles on lucky days; also we generally get about 9 or 10 potatoes cooked in their jackets of which I add 3 or 4 to the soup. Then at supper we get coffee, one day's bread ration and butter and sausage or cheese or jam, also for one day. So at that meal I probably eat half the sausage, 3 more cold potatoes and half the bread and butter. Thus in a week I manage to get one bread and butter ration saved and in hand - quite useful if hunger sets in.

## **December 21<sup>st</sup>**

Dutnall and I have decided to try baking a bit. We have a supply of old crusts so have set them to soak in water and we then propose to squash up the pulps into a tin, put some bits

of butter on the top, add jam jelly, made liquid with hot water and sprinkle with sugar and then bake on the radiators. I will let the result be known later.

A man in the next room - an IWGC gardener from Arras - tried to commit suicide tonight by cutting his throat, but I think they will save him alright. Such things must be expected here.

## **December 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Exercises this morning and church after - the Salvation Army service. By the way, I saw the German commandant yesterday as regards giving cheques to Gisèle on a London bank and to others in France on Barclays' Paris. I shall have the answer tomorrow and think he will allow me to put a cheque in a special letter, which will not count as my monthly letter to England. So much the better, for probably Gisèle is alright for money and would rather have my news.

## **December 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Had a piping hot bath after 8pm parade last night and then straight to bed. I sleep pretty well on the whole, particularly since my cough has gone - though one seems to have a snivelling cold here all the time.

Weather a bit warmer after more snow, but still well below zero.

"Cinderella" panto is being played on Boxing Day, so we are going to it. With 1100 men in such a camp there is obviously plenty of talent of all sorts. I have just learnt that one of those astrologers - horoscope merchants - from Brussels is here, so shall get in touch with him some day.

The General Commandant did not turn up as promised this morning. However, there is no urgency on this cheque question for the moment.

We hear that we are to have a meat dinner on Xmas day! Normally, all meals can be eaten with a spoon and we only use a knife for cutting bread and spreading butter or cheese.

Yesterday afternoon an American journalist came in to see P.G. Wodehouse, who is in our room too. He took a photo of Wodehouse and some of us, including me, grouped round P.G. and also asked me about our supper ration - Germans were of course present all the time. So, perhaps Gisèle will one day see this photo in the paper - I doubt if she will recognise me.

## **December 24<sup>th</sup>**

Christmas preparations are on and we have even had a spare parade room decorated with fur-trees and a Xmas tree - all the oddments such as stars being made with much ingenuity from the cardboard of parcels and silver paper from cheese, whilst paper streamers are made from labels of tins and so on.

I only want one Xmas present and that is even a few words from Gisèle and the boys. But that, I fear is impossible, though I am now in the 8<sup>th</sup> month without it. I don't suppose I shall even get a reply now to the letters I sent from Lille through the Padre. For any replies would go to his unit as shown by the censor stamp and as they moved from Lille and we don't know each other's addresses, my replies will be hung up indefinitely, no doubt.



Plenty of snow still about and likely to remain for several months until we get a temperature above zero again.

## **December 25<sup>th</sup> - Xmas Day**

Well... Some difference between this Xmas and last when Snow White and the dwarfs were all lined up at Escalles! Last night we were allowed to have lights out at 10.30, so Dutnall and I supped on half a box of sardines and potato, all heated up topless and with a slice of his wife's plum pudding thrown in and washed down with beer.

Today we have had a good dinner - mutton stew, beetroot and blowmange. So our tummies are distended to more than their usual proportion and we shall feel the pangs of hunger as we come back to our normal rations again and until tummies are once more reduced in size however it was worth it! We have permission for lights again till 10.30 tonight. Dutnall received a Xmas parcel. By the way, our bread pudding was a huge success and we are going to make another as he now has more sugar available from his parcel.

## **December 26<sup>th</sup>**

No news yesterday - I could really expect it after all. But as each day passed by, I feel that I am one more day nearer to getting that news, which I want so hardly.

Dutnall says that I look much better than when I came in here - I feel it too, for the massage has done a world of good. I can now straighten up my back much better, whilst constipation is gradually disappearing - I think that the bread must be a bit laxative.

The hard cold climate here will not do us any harm; it is healthier than the climate at Calais in inter, for here the air is always dry and the temperature always below zero and changing little. I am getting used and acclimated to it and can go across the dinning room with a scarf only - it is best so, for my overcoat is very light and will be useful later on, when we get into the really low temperatures. If I wear it now I shall get no advantage of it later.

## **December 27<sup>th</sup>**

This morning I took part in a "clock" chess tournament and lost 4 games out of 5. All games start at the signal given by the umpire, white making first move; then, 15 seconds later, black is ordered to move and soon, both moving at the same order, every 15 seconds. Quite good fun and one can make plenty of bad mistakes in the short time given for moves.

## **December 28<sup>th</sup>**

General rows everywhere in the dinning room - there are certainly a lot of scroungers attached to the servers and the whole crowd do themselves well at the expense of the rest of the camp. Service is badly organised. For instance, today we on the first sitting got one ladle of soup and no second helping, whilst those on the third sitting got 2 ladles to begin with and an extra ladle too. It should be simple to make a firm arrangement of 1 1/2 or 2 ladles each and cut out second helping. But the rooms - and the language! - make one realise that if this was once a lunatic asylum, it could still be one today for wild animals. It is all very disgusting.

The panto had been put off as Cinderella's dress is still not complete, but a general hunt is being made for rags and we hope to have it about New Year.

## **December 29<sup>th</sup>**

Dinning room arrangements much better today and much fairer - hope it goes on so. But another cause of discontent has arisen. We are now to have 2 letters and 2 cards per month only, instead of 3 or 4. This applies to all internees, except those who came from Holland - these chaps got in first and run the camp and they have a distinct tendency to pull the blanket to their side of the bed. So the matter is being put up to the German commandant again. It is obvious that if the reason is to relieve the German post office, all should be limited without exception. If it is to relieve the censors, then the Dutch are the worst offenders, both in quantity and length of correspondence and have already been called over the costs in the past for this. It is all very petty of course, but in a place like this the smallest matter or event takes on a supreme importance and provides a subject for discussion and the killing of time.

It is now a month since I put in a form asking to change some of my French money and still nothing has been done. I take comfort in the fact that it seems to prove that the much-vaunted German organisation is exceedingly cumbersome.

We have seen Graziani's dispatch in the German paper, though it is not reproduced in the official paper of the Nazi party. All are jubilant of course and we hope that this winter will see these macaronis crumble up. They are well named so, for like sticks of macaroni they have no guts inside them. But Germany will not sit still and do nothing and it seems to me that a drive to the Balkans is well on the cards as soon as weather permits of it.

## **December 30<sup>th</sup>**

I have spent most of the morning drafting my next letter to Gisèle - for January 4<sup>th</sup> - for it is necessary to draft them. I put down most of what I want and then cut here and there, put bits in, etc... and gradually work it out so that it will fit into the writing space allowed. It is a long job, but the result is useful and the time passes. The result is anything but a letter - they read more like telegrams with short staccato phrases.

Food and health are the great question here. Health, because my own aim now is to conserve mine and so be fit enough to start again what will probably be another hard struggle with ups and downs as I have known them from 1919 until at least 1933. Whilst food takes on an extraordinary importance. We can live on the rations given us, but could not do a day's work on them and every bit of food takes on a supreme importance and nothing is thrown away at all. Our crust puddings are a success and we are very proud of them.

Tonight the whole camp had to go- by floors - to the White House to hear the sentence read out on the 40 men who were singing ribald songs, derogatory to the Germans to the time of the Quartermaster's stores. Well, quite apart from the German point of view, it must also be admitted that the language used was anything but the King's English and contained with weary repetition those beastly words b..., y..., f... and g... They all get two days solitary confinement on bread and water and a plank bed with two blankets but no pailasse or heating and will not be allowed to write any letter in January.

## **December 31<sup>st</sup>**

New Year's eve! I wonder what the year holds in store? I can hardly see the war finishing in 1941, though it is a war of surprises. If liberation comes, I shall be agreeably surprised and if I am still a prisoner I shall not be disappointed. I am sure this is the best attitude to take up on a racket like this. If only I could get some news! It would make such a difference. From now on I can hope daily for letters from France and perhaps Gaby will get news from Gisèle before I do and send it on. Even such indirect news will seem wonderful.

## **January 1<sup>st</sup>**

Last night we had lights out at 12.15 so Dutnall and I celebrated with a couple of bottles of beer. The German commandant made a tour of the building, visiting each room and wishing us all a Happy New Year - very courteous of him.

Heavy snowfall last night: a fall from the roof missed my hot soup by inches when I was bringing it back from the kitchen. Hope I escape other snags as easily for the rest of the year.

## **January 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Dutnall and I went to the panto last night - a very good show. It's wonderful what can be done with so little material of all kinds though naturally there is plenty of talent of all kinds in a camp of over 1100 men.

Saw the German commandant again about cheques to Gisèle and to France on English and French banks, but he cannot yet give a reply and has put me off until Monday next, saying that the paymaster's branch, which deals with money matters works rather slowly. I think he is right, as they have already spent a month without changing me the 240F I applied for.

I think I can begin to look forward to parcels by the middle of the month. I have been amusing myself - and others too - by imagining 4 pairs of nimble hands putting the finishing touches to parcels on New Year's day and 4 pairs of equally nimble feet trotting down today to the local Red Cross with the finished articles! The 4 pairs of hands and feet belong of course to my little fleet of maraines - Gaby, Mme Harstrich, Marguerite Mead and Madame from Skindler at Ypres.

More snow last night and very cold today - about -23°C I think. Most light carts are transformed into sledges and lots of kids skate on the frozen snow on the roads and pavements whilst other use skis.

## **January 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Colder still today and we hope that we shall not be left as we were yesterday, without heating except for a short burst of steam through the radiators in morning and evening.

Later. The top attic room, in which I was first, was so cold that a question arose as regards bringing all men out and crowding them into the other rooms. Then the Germans put a thermometer in the room and tried keeping the heater on steadily all day to see whether this

would make the attic habitable. It did so, so the Germans decided that no move would take place and that the heating would in future be kept on all day on every cold day. So we on the lower floors profit by this extra heating too and the number on men in the room (62) remains stationary. The only snag is that the Germans can always say that it is not cold and cut down heating at will.

Much snow and temperature still the same, -21°C.

### **January 4<sup>th</sup>**

More snow last night and very cold again. Today I shall get a letter to send and it is already drafted out to Gisèle. It is impossible to put much in these wretched letters of 250 words except just bare facts stated very shortly. And the letter must appear very dry and matter of fact when compared with my usual long screeds.

### **January 5<sup>th</sup>**

Wonderful rumour going round today as regards Italy, not only seeking peace with us but also coming in on our side! Well, this is a war of surprises after all. If such a thing did happen, then it would be the first time in history when a nation admitted in fact that it wanted to be on the winning side just for what it could get out of war. We have seen the dispatch from Graziani in the German papers of course. It is obvious that something is happening, which is altering the outlook quite a lot, for a German paper, some ten days ago or so and probably inadvertently, showed that the Pound Sterling had risen from about 16 to 17 Francs on the Zurich exchange and this is very significant.

Went to Salvation Army service this morning and we had a food stew dinner - 2 ladles each. But we are now on cabbage - 1 ladle - 4 days a week and fish soup, 1 ladle, 2 other days. Pretty mouldy staff. From now on I am going to take rather more note of food, as the food treatment meted out to us will also show - I think so at least - something of how the war is going.

### **January 6<sup>th</sup>**

Meals	Dinner	1 ladle cabbage, potatoes
	Tea	Coffee, bread, sausage, grease
	Breakfast	Coffee

No extra rumours. As regards Russia, everyone, who has spoken to me of Russia in the last five months and of her possible entry in the war, has envisaged only her coming in on our side. Why should she? Is there not more than a possibility of her trying to drive south through Asia Minor towards Egypt?

Funeral today of an internee who died in a nearby hospital - the Germans did it well and the commandant attended and sent a nice wreath. Bitterly cold waiting out in the snow and I have never seen so many red ears and noses at one time before.

Dutnall and I had more of our bread pudding tonight - made without grease or butter this time, but with some chopped dried apricots - very good. We hear that there are 1700 Red

Cross parcels arrived for the camp, so even I, a new comer, am likely to get at least half a parcel.

## January 7<sup>th</sup>

Meals	Dinner	1 ladle sauerkraut, 1 spoon mincemeat
	Tea	Coffee, bread, margarine, cheese
	Breakfast	Coffee

The grease is "ersatz" containing about 20% fat - not bad, used on bread as dripping with salt. But one soon has enough of it. Still, no doubt it contains some vitamins and we waste not even a crumb here. This afternoon I was vaccinated and also had the first dose of inoculation against typhoid - two more doses to come.

Lice have appeared in our room again. The sailors' room is bad whilst another room is alive with them. No doubt we shall all have to go through the purification process in time. To do any good, but it will rot our poor stock of clothes.

## January 8<sup>th</sup>

Meals	Dinner	1 ladle cabbage, potatoes
	Tea	Coffee, cheese, margarine
	Breakfast	Coffee

Today I received my first letter here, from Gaby. It brought much pleasure though I would rather have had even those 25 words from Gisèle. But Gaby has been to the Red Cross and is hopeful that those messages will soon be through to Lille and she will get them sent on there. She has sent off a parcel by now (on January 2<sup>nd</sup>) and is adding to her own some things, which came up from Lecat at Soissons just after we left Négrier.

Have put my old schemes for learning languages into action today and have been translating part of a short story into English with the help of a dictionary whilst making up my own. I came up with a word "Himmelschartsnase", so looked it up. I found that "Himmel" means "heaven" and that "Himmelscharts" is the German for "Ascension Day"; looking further, I found that "Nase" means "nose", so I eventually translated "Ascension Day nose" or "Heaven ascending nose" into "turned up nose"? It is rather amusing and like following up clues in detective novels! The man beneath me challenged me last week for my position on the chess ladder and I lost to him. Then the one below him challenged me but I won through easily. And tomorrow I have challenged my supplanter.

Gaby tells me that Romain Vigneron has retrieved the 2 valises from Boulogne and that Deguines now has them.

## January 9<sup>th</sup>

Breakfast: coffee  
Dinner: cabbage stew – 1 ladle potatoes  
Tea: soup, coffee, saucisson, grease

Learnt that Bardia has fallen and that things are really going well for us in Africa. Learnt also that the Germans are now, once again, collecting the English women and children and sending them off to Troyes. So many in the camp are very downhearted. Well, thank God I am alone in this racket and that Gisèle and the boys have none of this prisoner misery to fear – that fact alone keeps me cheerful, though I very badly want news.

## January 10th

Breakfast: Coffee  
Dinner: fish soup (ugh!), potatoes  
Tea: sausage, grease

Got another 10 marks camp money this morning. Had another letter from Gaby yesterday evening, so she has received my Noel card and n°1 letter alright. I beat my chess opponent and so regained on the ladder and now am looking for another victim – in the person of the Salvation Army man, Esdell who is next above me.

Apparently people in France are limited in the number of parcels they can send us monthly, so I am giving Dutnall's name and number to Gaby when I write next and he is giving my name and number to his wife – thus we can double up our supply each. One becomes very ingenious in these times.

## January 11th

Dinner: cabbage, potatoes  
Tea: sausage, grease

Horrible cabbage stew containing, in my bowl, also the cardboard end of a Polish cigarette!

More good news from Africa – we are evidently getting ahead fast there. Also a man has come in here from another camp where he met RAF prisoners who speak of England as well supplied with food and standing raids well. Another man from Breslau hospital says Germans getting drunk at news of Italy's defeat – perhaps because they think it signifies the near end of the war. I think that the chances of getting home this year are quite good. My impression for some months has been that both dictators will require two really good ones under the tail before they give in. Italy has already had n°1 and looks like getting n°2. Hitler with the failure of his promise to conquer England in 1940 and with Italy's weakening may be said also to have had n°1; it now remains to give him n°2. I hope that the French can come in and take a really glorious part in the final episodes – that will do much to avenge their present humiliation and will stop them from being, after the war, a nation seeking revenge.

## January 12<sup>th</sup>

Dinner: potato and carrot and meat stew  
Tea: cheese

There are plenty of signs of Germany being short of food now. Since I have been here even our bread ration has been cut by 20%, our cheese ration by 33%, sausage by 25% (the

average thickness now is not much more than a centimetre or so); whilst we are now getting artificial grease rather than margarine or butter. And the dinner stews are simply cabbage after cabbage, with odd bits of carrots and swedes thrown in.

Went to the Salvation Army service this morning. Now another fellow, Johneson, a lug preacher, wants to start a rival Church of England service – he is a limelight lover and always butts in with considerable absence of tact. It is a pity I think.

Dutnall and I are now making our pudding regularly out of our crusts, with sugar and chopped dried apricots. They are the real cat's whiskers.

A request was made yesterday for names to be given in of all certified or unfit permanently and all over 60. So I put my name in as I suppose it is on the collective medical certificate, which came with us from Lille. Possibly it may mean repatriation. I have no real hopes, but leave no stone unturned to try and obtain such an end.

## **January 13<sup>th</sup>**

Dinner: fish soup and potatoes

Tea: sausage, grease

A decision as regards the Red Cross parcels has been come to: 1042 men get 2 parcels each and we new arrivals from Lille get nothing this time but are promised one of the new lot, but we shall get some cigarettes and tobacco each. I rather doubt whether the Red Cross would approve of such an arrangement – at the same time it must be realised that these 1042 men are, and probably for the first time in their lives, getting something for nothing. So far as I am concerned I am quite happy about it, for Dutnall will get his and we shall share it and he will come on mine later. But other men in our group from Lille are not so well placed and could badly do without a share.

## **January 14<sup>th</sup>**

Dinner: cabbage and potatoes

Tea: Sausage, jam, no bread

The Red Cross parcels are marvels – tea, milk, chocolate, sugar, yeast, tinned meat, fish and bacon, tinned fruit, jam, cigarettes, soap... about 18 tins in each parcel. We have put a tin of bacon on the radiator to heat up. I have had the joy today of getting my first small parcel from Gaby, with tobacco, biscuits, sweets, tonimalt and darning material with needles and cotton. Biscuits a bit crushed but nothing is thrown away and such oddments are eaten with a spoon.

War news seems good generally with still another change announced in the German paper of the Italian crime in Albania.

Saw the commandant again this morning about cheque for Gisèle – still cannot obtain any satisfaction: I have been kept dangling on a string on this matter for one month now.

This afternoon had another short interrogatoire as regards physical fitness, height, colour of eyes, etc plus details of education and last work done.

## **January 15<sup>th</sup>**

Dinner: beetroot and potatoes

Tea: sausage, grease, double bread

Our bacon this morning was a huge success and we ate the rind and all! We have more over, for either supper tonight or breakfast tomorrow. These Red Cross parcels appear to worry the Germans – they are all under the impression that England is starving and think that these parcels are sent to us as propaganda to try and disprove their ideas! They will get a rude awakening – and very soon now I think. All the letters coming from France seem full of veiled optimism – no doubt much because of Italy's setback: well, these macaronis are showing up as we imagine they would with their swank and bravery evaporating quickly as soon as they find themselves up against other men paping down the sights at them.

I get my second inoculation today. I think there must be another parcel on the way from Gaby and am hoping for marmalade – she will leave no stone unturned to find it: in our family parlance she is the real cat's whiskers! Time seems long but is flying: 8 months without news but surely it will come soon?

## January 16<sup>th</sup>

Not very fit today – inoculation is evidently working. But much improved by the Red Cross parcel. Its contents are worth nothing: 1 Xmas pudding, 1 cake, 1 sardines, 2 big cakes, Nestlé's chocolate, 1 Pascall's sweets, 1 Irish stew, 1 kippers, 1 tin beans and tomato, 1 St Ivel cheese, 1 tin stewed mandarine, 1 tin Nestlé's milk, 1 tea, 1 sugar. I think that when I get back home once more I shall take infinite pleasure in making up such parcels for the boys! It is a great joy to receive these things. In addition I have 100 Cupstar cigarettes. Received first letter from Amiens yesterday – they are alright but still have nothing from the American consul or from Soissons. I hear today from Ratcliffe that he has just received a letter from England dated 14<sup>th</sup> December. So if my first card reached Gisèle in about a month, there seems to be a possibility of getting a letter from her next month. I so badly want news – I go on here from day to day trying to assume that all is well, but perhaps am living in a fool's paradise – after all, this is an ex-lunatic asylum!

## January 17<sup>th</sup>

News today, by camp orders that only relations are to be written to. Rather a snag, as I can no longer write to friends at all.

Dinner: fish soup, potatoes

Tea: sausage, grease

Feel alright today.

## January 18<sup>th</sup>

Dinner: beet and potato

Tea: cheese and grease

A letter came into the camp yesterday from England dated 21/12: so perhaps my time is getting near for a letter from Gisèle. This long wait is getting on my nerves and I am beginning to imagine all kinds of catastrophes as having happened.



## January 20<sup>th</sup>

Dinner: beetroot, potatoes

Tea: sausage, grease

Dutnall is going sick with grippe – it looks as if an epidemic may well break out for we are very crowded up in the dormitories. So I am turning nurse and cook combined and looking after things generally; I have a cold myself and am full of the usual aches and pains but they are probably rheumatic, as I feel well enough.

## January 21<sup>st</sup>

Dinner: fish soup

Tea: soup, sausage

Dutnall having a rather miserable day and the facilities here are not much help in relieving matters. Today it has thawed – most extraordinary – and all is slush. Sent off a letter to Gaby today, n<sup>o</sup>3.

## January 22<sup>nd</sup>

Dinner: choucroute, mince, potatoes

Tea: sausage, grease

Continued my nursing and cook's work with Dutnall – he is beginning to get over it and is a bit more cheerful today and tackled a Red Cross kipper for breakfast. Either I am in for a dose myself or else the rheumatism is back again in force due to the change of weather – back and ribs are one long ache and my scalp is uncomfortably sore too. There are 12 men down with it in our room and I sleep between 2 of them. The Germans all seem to be very bad tempered today, so perhaps the news is good for us.

Made 4 bread puddings this morning, for our stock of crusts has been mounting up whilst we have tackled the Red Cross tinned staff.

Still no news of Gisèle at all. Received card from Vigneron.

## January 23<sup>rd</sup>

Dinner: Cabbage

Tea: Sausage, grease, soup

Notice in today that all over 60 and all who consider themselves as suffering from an incurable disease are to hand in their names tonight. So half the camp is putting the name down! I am too of course as I am already recommended for liberation by the German medical board at Lille. One never knows one's luck after all and it appears that certain names will be retained for possible repatriation through a neutral country – possibly Switzerland. Rheumatism so bad again that I went before doctor again this morning and got a chit for more

massage. Am off colvar and think that the grippe microbe is in me but has not been able to make any real headway. News that Torbruck is almost fallen is in the German papers today – so this probably explains their apparent nerves and bad temper of the last 48 hours.

## **January 24th**

Dinner: soup, 5 potatoes

Tea: sausage, grease

Dutnall is now alright again. Today went on to the 11am sick parade, but heard there was a letter for me, so bolted back to the room in the hope it was one from Gisèle. No luck – it was from Gaby and she seems surprised too that she had had no reply to any of the 4 Red Cross messages she has sent to Gisèle since I left Lille. I am getting more anxious every day and nerves are getting a bit tant.

## **January 25<sup>th</sup>**

Dinner: carrot and turnips, potatoes

Tea: sausage, grease

A great day! I prayed last night for news of Gisèle and the boys to come through and today I got a card from Madame G. Naz of Geneva – Mme Stewart's cousin – saying that she had been asked to obtain my address and saying too that Gisèle is near the boys and that all three of them are alright. Unfortunately she did not give me the date of Mme Stewart's enquiry. But I imagine that at least one of my letters from Négrier has got through perhaps in late September or early October; then Gisèle found that she could not write to me until she obtained address from Croix Rouge, got in touch with Mme Stewart and hence this card. So it seems that, up to at least about October 15<sup>th</sup> last, they were still alright and well. A happy day for me.

We went before the doctor this morning – it all seemed rather a farce as some 500 men have been handled in about 3 hours. We expect that a certain number of names will be retained and these men will go before an International Medical Board very soon. If I am on the list it will be because of age only I think. Apparently I am still thinner than before, for the masseur who had not seen me for at least 3 weeks was quite surprised when he saw me stripped to the waist on Thursday. I feel alright but a bit weak and three flights of stairs give me as much fatigue as 5 flights did when I came here. The trouble is that one cannot get fresh air and exercise for the snow just seems to freeze one's soles. Actually the thaw is still on and it is very slushy.

Dutnall went also before the doctor for either a dilated gland or a tumour in his throat; they seemed to him to take it seriously. So I have been trying key him up a bit – he rather dreads having an operation here in German lands but realises now, I think, that medical men sink all ideas of nationalities when they do their humanitarian task. Personally I should have no qualms at all if I had to submit to an operation at German hands.

## **January 26th**

I am not going to bother to show meals any longer – I have put enough to show something of their weary monotony and coarseness.

Went to the Salvation Army service this morning – it has started to freeze again so now our real winter spell is probably beginning. One can feel the moisture on one's nose freezing on turning out in the morning. Germans are now worrying us by coming round a few minutes after the bugle has sounded reveil at 6am to see if we are out of bed: very silly for if we all get up at once it simply implies hanging about until a free washbasin is available – and there are 6 on this floor for some 100 men or so!

## **January 27th**

Wrote midland Bank today about £150 for Gisèle. Also sent a postcard to Geneva. I hope that both of these are allowed to go. When I first got here, we had 3 letters and 4 postcards per month, one only of which could be sent to England. Then, for this month, those internees from France or Belgium were limited to 2 letters and 2 cards per month of which one to England.

Had more massage today and, as before, it is doing me good.

## **January 28th**

Frost still keener – now  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$ . air is wonderful of course, being just bone dry. Announcement this morning that we were back to our old quota of letters – 3 letters and 4 cards per month – and that the limitation of one letter to England is removed, so I shall be able to write more often to Gisèle next month. Am expecting a parcel from Gaby any day with marmalade, tobacco, mustard and onions, to all of which we are looking forward. I have almost dropped German, for I cannot lay my hands on a German grammar book and have missed many lessons for different causes in the last month or so.

The commandant sent for me this morning and told me that whilst he could allow my postcard to Geneva, he could not allow my letter to the Midlands bank.

## **January 29th, 30th, 31st and February 1st**

Some days, which seem to have gone very quickly: I have been playing chess most of the time and have gone up 3 places on the “ladder”. This coming after a period of long non-success has made me quite enthusiastic so I am now beginning to study chess strategy more seriously.

We learn from the German papers that the fate of Dema is sealed: rumours have been rife as regards revolt in Northern Italy also, but are probably the usual camp rumours.

Our food has been the same weary round of sausage and grease varied only by grease and sausage. And talking of sausage, I remark that I have not yet seen a dog pass in the road outside. Cats apparently are worth 30F a piece in France and this is an indication of the coming famine on the continent – for come it will. Went with Dutnall to an excellent piano recital on Saturday – 3 players of the very highest class took part.

## **February 2nd**

Well, one month of this year has gone and now, for this month I have more correspondence allowed to England, which is a good thing. No news of any kind from anyone, but Dutnall generally lets me read his wife's letters. The Germans put on our order board today that those wanting to attend the Church service must parade first and then march there. This was their "reprisal" for the service starting last Sunday before the Germans arised: actually they were late so the fault was theirs. Of course, some of their staff are present at all gatherings, no doubt as censors, and sermons, concert programmes and so on, all have to be submitted to them in advance for approbation.

There are some new German stamps with Hitler's and Mussolini's heads on them and I have asked to obtain some for the boys, but so far have no reply to my request. If I could only get the Germans to put the stamps on and censor postcards, how glad the boys would be. I am handing over one of the pocket jack-knives to Dutnall as he is short of one, but we will replace it for the boys afterwards, or one of them can have mine and the other the remaining new one.

Now I find that the Germans refused to allow the Church service because the men refused to it as a parade!

## **February 3<sup>rd</sup>**

4 letters today: one from Gaby, one from Harstrich, one from Amiens and the other from Mrs Dutnall. It makes a good day but I want news so badly from Gisèle – It would make such a difference here. I find that I am getting still thinner, for now my shirt sits down so low on my shoulders that my vest can be seen in the collar opening. I have a postcard tomorrow to send to England.

## **February 4th**

No postcard has been issued! We are now told that we may expect it tomorrow. It is a lovely day tomorrow!

Good news of the African campaign – I think Italy will very soon be finished there and may give in altogether – if so then it remains to be seen how the Italian people will accept the probable German occupation. Germany must move soon and do something spectacular if she is to keep her people quiet – I anticipate either 1) a drive through Greece, 2) a drive via Turkey towards Egypt, 3) a walk through Spain towards Gibraltar, all of which can be combined with a possible attack on England with gas or bacteria. They may try to get us to move our troops from England by one of the three drives mentioned, just litter the sea with their U-boats on the transports' routes and then, when we are expecting to fight elsewhere, bolt back themselves for the attack on England. I can hardly see them standing up to another winter, so this year may yet see us all at home again. Certainly another winter will see famine on the continent whatever happens in England – I think that Gisèle and the boys will be undernourished in these important years for them.

## **February 5<sup>th</sup>**

Much chess these last two days. Now I am starting keeping a record of games – it is helpful and instructive afterwards to go over them and to spot the errors made. We learn from France that no parcels can be sent to us without special labels and these labels we are supposed to send ourselves to our relations: we are not allowed to write to friends. And here we are told that such labels are not issued to internees, but only to prisoners of war! So it looks as if we are all going to get stuck for parcels pretty soon, so that tobacco, our main solace, will soon be lacking.

I have pretty well abandoned German – I wasted 6 weeks trying to see the commandant whose days for reception coincided with the German classes: so that I lost touch and cannot get hold of a grammar to tackle it myself.

Today had a very pleasant surprise in the form of a parcel from Garchette with 350gr of tobacco and some biscuits – it's jolly good of him – I expect he got my address from Romain Vigneron.

## **February 6<sup>th</sup>**

More good news in German papers as regards Africa – we should soon get the Italians completely licked. They would seem to have very poor Intelligence Service, little provision and, above all, cold feet. News also of 17 English planes down near Calais, so we gather either an attack on German attack concentration or on the big coastal batteries – in any case, if we have lost such numbers, it is evident that we have made a very big raid and that we have probably attained some results from it.

Albert Hicks has arrived here with another batch – we must be about 1200 now.

## **February 7<sup>th</sup>**

Yesterday we got our letter for sending to France but still lack our postcard due on the 4<sup>th</sup> to England. This morning general parade for a speech by the commandant – some silly asses have been tearing down German propaganda posters – in German – which were put up for the benefit of their own soldiery. He spoke well and reasonably too.

Still more snow – one gets very sick of the weary white landscape. More chess today – good chess too – I think I am improving a bit.

## **February 8<sup>th</sup>**

Still waiting for our postcard for England due to be issued to us 4 days ago. More good news from Africa. I think that the German will have to make a move soon to tranquillise their own people and also to try and instil new faith into the Italian people.

Our windows looking out on the road have been painted over so that we cannot see out, and as working parties going outside have also been stopped, it looks as if there are big troop movements likely which they do not want us to see. New arrivals have brought in news of how France is getting her back up again and now we learn from the German papers that there was apparently un coup d'état getting rid of Laval on Dec. 13<sup>th</sup> last. I feel that we are on

the eve of very big events and that they will soon start with a view to getting things over this year. Unless there is some marvellous secret weapon in German hands, I don't see how England can possibly lose now. Italy must soon crack and I think that will do a lot to help, particularly if the French come in North Africa.

### **February 9th**

Usual dreary day relieved by a game of chess and an extra hour lie-in in the morning. But still no news of Gisele and no card to send to her yet. I am warned to go to the co-commander's office tomorrow morning – I don't know what for – but possibly it is about that cheque for Gisele or some other way of sending money to her. Thawing today and path to dining-room is very treacherous indeed. Darned my socks; I manage fairly well on the whole.

### **February 10th**

Still waiting for the card due on the 4<sup>th</sup> for England! This famous organisation is not so good as we had heard. The visit to co-office this morning was just to say I did not need any clothes of any kind. I have already said so twice before.

### **February 11th**

At last we have got our card for England, which we should have had on the 4<sup>th</sup>, so I shall get this off to Gisele tomorrow. The thaw has continued, but all is still white.

### **February 12th**

The last few days are bringing us good news from Africa, the shelling of Geneva and Livorno and English bombing of northern France - no doubt Calais area – and naval shelling of the Flemish coast. Big events are looming up and it looks as if we are breaking up German concentrations in France and coastal Belgium, or alternatively trying to put the German coastal batteries out of action. Thaw continues – soon we shall be able to get out a bit, but lately the snow has been too icy cold for our feet even with 1/2 inch socks and now all is slush; still I have been out a bit today; fresh air is very pleasant after the atmosphere of rooms and corridors.

### **February 13th**

News still good – it would seem that Weygand is in Algeria on our side. Won two chess games today. Thaw is still on and rheumatism is bad.

## **February 14th**

More snow today but it will not last. American embassy man has been round on inspection with German officers. There is still a chance that men over 60 or under 17 will be released or exchanged – so he says. But I'm losing hope of this since the Lille episode.

## **February 15th**

All men over and nearing 60 (59 well advanced) and boys under 17 had to parade before the doctor this morning: it looks possible that we shall be released to a neutral country – for I am on the list. I prefer once again not to hope for anything.

No letters or parcels from France now for some time – probably indicates that we are stirring up the German line of communication a bit. News from Belgium indicates a coming famine if indeed it has not now begun. Wild rumours tonight about armistice signed with Italy and German attack on England with landing at Eastbourne – attack failed completely. It's a great rumour factory here!

## **February 16th**

Rumour regarding Italy is stronger this morning – now said to be confirmed. We can often judge a bit how things are going by the attitude of the Germans on our parade – this morning they gave up a couple of "Achtung!" and they did something like a funeral march down our lines. Am challenged for my position on the chess ladder this afternoon; so the day will go fairly quickly – Sundays seem very long somehow or other although we get an extra hour in bed in the morning.

Reading Daniel's prophecy in the Bible, I console myself with the fact that if, from the extraordinary stroke of luck or genius, Hitler captured Egypt, then we could assume that the prophecy was in course of completion and allow 1290 + 45 days as from the "beginning of the abomination" – either 28/10/38 or 25/11/38 as the dates of the announcement of the persecution of the Jews and of the burning of the synagogues. Then the war would end, in our favour, about 22/6/42 or 21/7/42. Thus I shall manage to conserve my optimism even if Germany has such a spectacular success.

Lost my chess games this afternoon, so shall challenge my opponent next week to a return match.

## **February 17th**

I am beginning to feel very weak here – in fact I have now as much fatigue in climbing 3 flights of stairs as I had in climbing 5 flights when I first came here in November 29<sup>th</sup>. If I do it on an empty tummy, I am shaky all over. It is not surprising as there is so little nourishment in our food. And now that we are getting no parcels from France and no signs of anymore Red Cross, the food problem will soon be difficult – however we shall be kept in skin and bone no doubt. Smaller men than I can obviously manage better on the rations.

## **February 18th**

This morning we all turned out to parade outside – cold mist after sharp frost: we were told 1) that it was because we needed fresh air and later told 2) that it was to teach us to stand still on parade. I am inclined to think that n°1 reason was right and that the Germans considered that fresh air was a meal in itself for the midday repast was of 4 potatoes and one tablespoonful of a sort of black pudding!

## **February 19th**

I acted as reveille this morning and woke the whole room with a fighting and shouting nightmare: I had 6 German sweets yesterday and had tummy ache after, so perhaps it came from that. This morning we were again paraded outside and then later brought in for a kit search each of us accompanied by a soldier; So the outside parade of yesterday was craftily designed to put us off the scent and certainly it worked on all of us, as we were unsuspecting. Quite clever. Some parcels came in yesterday from France, so I may soon expect one from Gaby with tobacco and marmalade and a few other things I asked for. Garchette's parcel saved me for tobacco, though Dut would have seen me through for a bit no doubt. We are trying to make an initial stock of a kilo each and then get 1lb a month as well to keep the reserve intact. Mme Harstrich has a parcel ready for me but can't send it without a special label to be supplied by me and I cannot supply it – such labels are for military prisoners and not internees! Thaw goes on and fine sunshine now for two days.

## **February 20th**

Still no news, either from England or France and no sign of a parcel at all.

## **February 21st**

Thaw continues. This morning found the Frigolosly Legends in the library, so have taken it out, Maurice's Lorna Doone is going round a select circle of friends but I may put it into the library later.

Still no news and am getting a bit rattled I'm afraid. One of the over 60's has packed his bag – so sure is he of leaving soon.

## **February 22<sup>nd</sup>**

Strong rumours again last night of imminent departure to Switzerland of those under 17 and over 60: I am apparently on the list with birthday next month. More men and boys in today, from Boulogne area including John Staple's youngest boy of 17.

Lice are again becoming dangerous and so far I have escaped and I am still trying to get insecticide powder through the canteen. Still no news from France – there is a big hold-up for some reason we do not know and can only surmise.



## **February 23<sup>rd</sup>**

Mother's birthday and John Oldham's; and a lovely day for it. Usual long and tedious Sunday relieved by darning my pants, chess and jacquet with Dut at ten pfennigs a game. News of 714 more Red Cross parcels arrived and more expected tomorrow.

## **February 24<sup>th</sup>**

We learn today that working parties are going outside again tomorrow after a spell when none has been allowed. So it looks as if any troop movements which the Germans did not want us to see in this area have now been carried out. German papers are very odd these days – there is evident tension. It is very significant that the pound has risen sharply as against the Swiss franc. Red Cross parcels are under 1100 I hear – so I am not likely to get one. New men came in again yesterday and the camp is now over 1200 men.

## **February 25<sup>th</sup>**

Announcement last night that letters and parcels from France are stopped because we are not sending return letter forms and parcels labels from here! Yet 3 weeks ago we were told that such were unnecessary and that we should tell our people in France to apply to the Kommandantur if the French post office and railways refused to give satisfaction by accepting letters or parcels! Now we are told that the Germans received an order to have such letter forms and labels printed and then mislaid the order, so that it is only now that printing is started. It means that we shall probably be 2 months without letters or parcels. If the story given us is true, it is another proof of the feebleness of the supposed wonderful German organisation.

There are apparently parcels for 1027 men only. So again our group from Lille and other later comers will go short. At the last issue, some 1040 men got 2 parcels each whilst we 115 or so got nothing. Certainly this was never the idea of the Red Cross, nor could be the idea of any fair-minded man. Then later we got 1 parcel each, when all the others also got their third one. As I have said before selfishness is the guiding principle: decisions are largely made by Englishmen from Holland, though other countries are also represented and each group has its representation. But these men are out for popularity and for hanging on to their jobs and so make decisions for their own group and neglect the interests of any other groups; so one little lot from Lille only has one voice as against at least 10 others and nothing can be done.

I am inclined to think that the mess-up as regards letters from France, etc. Is due to the Germans wanting to cut down postal facilities to zero in preparation for an offensive movement and so keep their railways free.

We have seen Mussolini's speech and I judge from it that he is meeting with internal criticism which is so strong that he publishes figures to the whole world to show Italians that he has done what he could in the way of arms and men. Naturally, world criticism of the defeat of such numbers will not be allowed to filter in back into Italy. I think he must feel that he is between the devil and the deep sea, but that he prefers the devil being ignorant as to the depth of the sea. He will lead his country into German bondage until the end of this year at least.

We are now getting practically no hot water. So baths and washing of clothes are becoming increasingly difficult and the lice menace more and more serious as time goes on.

## **February 26th**

The Red Cross parcel question is still acute but our group is going to obtain satisfaction I think – we have got so far by threatening to put the whole matter to the Germans. Still no news.

Have ambled round the exercise path a bit today – Dut and I have spent too much time in the room this winter weather and we have got very lazy.

Hear today that in future letters have to be addressed to “my dear wife”, “my dear brother”, etc and that cousins are ruled out as not being near enough relations. So cousin Gaby will be taboo also for letter writing.

Am miserable today – physically weak and generally low toned with the absence of news from Gisele and the terrible monotony of this place. We hear that P.G.Wodehouse has – through interviews – told the world what a splendid place it is and how well we are treated, etc...! Well, two days ago he told Dut that he did not mind which side won as long as the war finished soon – and that shows his mentality as a so-called Englishman; he is like many other men whose success in life keeps in close touch with other countries, internationally rather than nationally minded. But such men can do a lot of harm and, although successful in fiction in peacetime, they should stick to the truth in wartime.

## **February 27th**

Have obtained the insecticide powder – 2 boxes – so feel a bit safer. Red Cross parcel business still bad: the committees who should deal with it have tried to shelve their responsibilities by taking a general vote of the camp on the distribution; as 80 of the men will certainly vote one way, the result is a forgone conclusion – they will get 2 parcels and we one if we are lucky. Still no news at all from Gisele or from France.

## **February 28th**

Got a Red Cross parcel this morning – see correspondence book for detail of it) – Dut got a letter from his wife - I had a hunch last night that I was going to have news also, but so far – 3pm – no luck.

Changes have been made in those running the camp – the Germans dismissed the others as they impeded the sale of German propaganda in the canteen. I have been approached to see whether I will let my name stand for the vote to a vacant place on the contact committee and have agreed to do so if asked. I am also going to change my mess table and get away from the Hicks crowd to Dut’s table.

Later. I have not had the hoped for news, so my hunch although it kept me awake and excited until 2.30am this morning has been largely wishful thinking – I think that the life here is made up of much of that. Blizzard outside now – the sunrise was very red and a sure indication of rough weather.

## **March 1st**

A rather disappointing day so far.

1. I am induced to stand for the contact committee by a group in the room; then another man came forward and as he had been here longer than me, they all voted for him, so that I got only 1/3 of the vote.
2. The chance of changing table is off also
3. No letters.

All this in spite of saying “rabbits after midnight! Perhaps in view of March it ought to be “hares”! I have also lost a chess match and it is raining!

But the worst is the absence of news. Today we have new forms to fill in stating passport numbers, last address, address of dependents and so on. We have 8 forms of different kinds to fill in, I believe.

Went to an excellent smoking concert this evening, which rather cheered up an otherwise poor day. But tomorrow is Sunday – no letter day, which means that I can now only look forward to Monday for news.

## **March 2nd**

Well, I have changed my table after all and am now at the same as Wodehouse, Webb, Davies, Rainey, Sarguison, Dutnall, Youl, Pickard and Barryball. Much better in every way. Usual dreary Sunday – they are always longer than other days however.

## **March 3rd**

Hope springs up once more of getting news of some sort. We have tucked in well into the Red Cross parcels this weekend but we take the precaution of setting in on side as vivre rations such things as bully, sardines, cheese, etc. The chocolate and sweets are just wolfed in one sitting, of course!

Later. No news; I’m afraid I am getting a complete “cafard noir” – I have never felt more miserable in my life than I do at present. I have bought a ruler as a little souvenir for Binkie and am looking for a cigarette holder for Maurice; but the canteen contains practically nothing at all – otherwise I would get some pleasure out of finding little articles for Gisele and the boys; for the moment there is nothing for Gisele at all, which could suit her nor, I fear, is there to be.

## **March 4th**

Cafard. Bad cold. Wrote postcard to Amiens.

## **March 5th**

Cold better. Cafard slightly relieved by a postcard from Garchette and a letter from Gaby – any letter is a godsend.

Gaby is very worried about parcels. The history of them so far is as follows: the dispatch of parcels was stopped from Jan. 17<sup>th</sup> to Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> whilst during this latter period we here and also senders were informed that parcels could only be sent off if we – the prisoners – had previously sent a special label to the sender. Such labels were not available here as this is a civil prisoner camp and not a military one. The matter was taken up with the Germans here and they said the fault lay with the French post and rail authorities. We told our senders so. Then a few days later, the Germans said that they had made a mistake – that we ought to have such labels and also special letters and cards, which contained a return reply form; they said that such were being printed. Meanwhile the Germans in France were returning all letters and cards to our correspondents. But Gaby, at 27<sup>th</sup> January, was still left with two 5kg parcels, unable to send them off whilst Mme Harstrich has been waiting since early January. Now we are told that neither labels nor special letters are required and I suppose that the situation will alter once more in a few days with some new orders! But those things, although they may seem very petty when viewed retrospectively in conditions of liberty later on, are perpetual thorns in the flesh in our present situation. Somehow or other I suppose I shall manage to stick this life though I don't quite know how. But one cannot but feel ashamed very often that our camp may be considered as representation of England. For there are so many from so different countries, who do not even speak English and have simply gone "native". The W.C's are an indication and in these days when toilet paper can be bought from the canteen and other newspaper is available it is astounding to find that many – very many – so called Englishmen apparently use their thumbs and wipe them after on the wall! Such things get one down badly, particularly when presented daily to one's view.

## **March 7th**

No news has come in to Lille yet in reply to the 25 Red Cross messages I sent off in November to Gisele and the boys. For Gaby has kept in touch with the Lille Red Cross, ready to send me on details of the replies if they came in. Some Red Cross parcels have come in from Rumania and are being distributed but they go as far as n° 1102 and as I am n° 1105 I just miss – a pity as they contained bacon, marmalade chocolate and cake.

## **March 8th**

No news, no Rumanian parcel yet. The food has deteriorated a lot since we came in here 3 months ago – an indication of the state of things in Germany, no doubt. Usual beastly dinner of swedes today. They give us enough to keep body and soul together, but one would not be surprised if one's soul was filled with an irresistible impulse to seek a more congenial and more hospitable domicile at some time.

Another Sunday tomorrow, with no chance of letters, so I shall write the letter handed to us on the 6<sup>th</sup> which I have held up on the chance of news from her reaching me.

## **Sunday, March 9th**

Usual dull day but relieved by a decent meal in the evening – Dut and I opened a Red Cross tin of hashed beef and potato and a tin of peas and we washed it all down with some beer. A pleasant change.

## **March 10th**

Another rumour last night – of a 5 power pact with England, Russia, Turkey, Italia and Greece! There must be something in the atmosphere of this country, which makes for untruth or, to put it modernly and politely, for propaganda. Have just learnt that there are tow parcels for me at 2pm and as I am on my last packet of tobacco, they will be opportune – at the moment I am very excited! I shall enjoy making up parcels for other people for the rest of my life!

Later. Parcels were from Mme Dutnall for us both and from Gaby for me – tobacco, biscuits and playing cards. Now we are OK for tobacco for the best part of 2 months on our present system of self-rationing. I have got Maurice's cigarette holder.

## **March 11th**

I got a Rumanian parcel today – 1kg of bacon (!!!), sugar, cakes, cigs, soap, pair of socks, jam and a tin of sweets. All very good and we are getting some of the bacon baked tomorrow so that we can eat it cold. Duts gets another British Red Cross parcel tomorrow and I shall come in for one on the next lot after.

## **March 13th**

Still cold and raw. Today we hear that the women are being picked up again in Lille area. There does not seem to be much order or system about this internment and people seem to be picked up at all kinds of odd dates and irrespective of sex.

## **March 14th**

News today of bombing of Liverpool by “hundreds of German planes”.  
Two parcels today – one from Mme Dutnall and the other, a big one from the Carliers : both excellent.

## **March 15th**

We got some of our bacon sliced up and baked in an oven and have been eating it cold since. For the first time for months I have even felt greasy round the corners of the mouth! We both feel better and stronger for it, for there is a great lack of all grease, which is fit to eat. The “axte grease” supplied to us by the Germans is uneatable.

## **March 16th**

Tomorrow I am starting an office for swapping; so that men who have things to exchange will be put in touch with others who have other things to exchange. It will mean plenty of work as Red Cross parcels average about 10 tins each and many like exchanging. So I shall have an occupation and more, shall be able to sit down and smoke and get an occasional easy chair – well worthwhile. Also I shall learn first of all good swaps which are going!

## **March 17th**

Snow again after a lovely day yesterday. The swap office is not yet en route as it gets a certain opposition from the local Pooh-Ba, one named Mackintosh. We shall see how it goes in time – there is no urgency. Am going to try and see the dentist this week and get a general overhand started for teeth are getting very bad.

Dutnall has a parcel of 1kg from Gaby today: as people are limited to 3 parcels a month to an internee, his wife sends me 3 parcels and Gaby sends him 3 also each month; and we receive 3 others direct and so all is going well and the parcel trouble seems to be over – for the moment at least. Probably the Germans will soon find some other method of “petite misère” for us.

## **March 18th**

Today received n°3 parcel from Mrs Dutnall – 5kg one. So in the last week we had 12kg from her and 7kg from Gaby, so are well stocked up for my birthday tomorrow. I really feel more fit, more active and alert generally after last week’s bacon and oddments – it was getting very necessary. Cold day – frost and cold.

## **March 19th**

Well, my birthday. It is to be livened up by opening a tin of something this evening and meanwhile we have breakfasted of: pâté Gaby, bacon Romain, marmalade Romain.

Now letters in and my hope for birthday present of a letter from Gisèle has not materialised. I can’t understand it at all: one man in our room had a letter from England today, which had taken on 17 days. Perhaps Gisèle is writing letters, which are too long for the censor? I am very worried and anxious and nerves are getting pretty tent.

## **March 20th**

Still another man has a letter from England dated 3<sup>rd</sup> March. Now I hear however that someone who wrote last month and said that he was limited to one letter and 2 cards per month to England has had his letter destroyed. I feel certain that I told Gisèle in December that at that time (as in January) I could only write one a month. So perhaps my letters have been destroyed too: the Germans do not like us stating facts too much probably. From now on

I understand that, when letters are destroyed, we shall be informed, so far such has not been the case.

I put my nose outside the camp yesterday for the first time, so to go to the dentist. I had hoped to be able to effect a general overhand here and so not waste time and also get my mouth in really good order for I well realize that when I get back I shall always plead being very busy in order to avoid visits to dentists! But now I doubt if it is really possible to have much more than temporary repairs or extractions carried out – at all events my first visit leaves me the impression that no real professional interest can be taken in us: I hope I may be able to change my mind about this later, but meanwhile have started with the stopping of one tooth in top jaw on the right. I left there at 5pm, very hungry and also with the injunction not to eat before 2 hours! Still a bad cold: we cannot really get rid of them here for the place is always dirty – it appears that here there are no brooms available of the usual kind and we have the brushwood article which is almost useless.

### **March 21st**

Dull day of no news. We went to the revue tonight – very good show and quite cheerful.

March 22<sup>nd</sup> !!!!!!!

I think this is the happiest day of my life so far – I have 4 letters from Gisèle (two of 13/2 and one of each 20/2 and 25/2). I have read them several times and shall read them again and again – her letter of 13/2 of 16 pages is just wonderfully full of news and runs along like a stream. Backed up by this, the sight of bayonets, barked wire, fish soup and even German sausage can be faced for some time to come!

Tonight too, we have news which indicates a semi – state of panic on the Berlin stock exchange: there are all sorts of straws showing the way the wind is now blowing and we have been watching the rise of the pound sterling in Switzerland for the last two months with interest and now the French franc is also up in Switzerland. A happy day! Thank God for it.

### **March 23rd 24th**

Two days spent reading and re-reading Gisèle's news! Joyful day!

### **March 25th**

Received a letter from Brossel's today. Also a Red Cross parcel full of good things and another will come to Dutt this afternoon and possibly a second to me tomorrow. Any way, we have a tin of roast chicken in stove for supper tonight!

Have seen the contact committee again today as regards gingering up the American embassy for Gisèle's parents: it is a long business getting anything arranged and as my bank account is blocked by the Germans, I can do nothing direct at all. So far the contact committee has been very dilatory – Mc Kintosh just simply forgot to send one letter and lost me 6 – 7 weeks.

## **March 26th, 27th**

We have had the news about Jugo-Slavia - only to be expected, for our diplomatescan only promise a problematical rosy future whilst the Germans can menace an immediate hell. It has sent the pound sterling down a bit on Zurich but the fact that it is now holding to show that things are alright. The pound - unless it le being engineered by our own people as part of a special plan - is perhaps the best guide for us here where news is of the German variety only.

Sent off my letter to Gisele and could have written 3000 words instead of 300.

## **March 28th**

Today the wireless has been put in with loud speakers on each floor - it apparently cost about 2,000Mks or 40,000 and we have all subscribed 1 Mark to it, but have elected a committee to choose programmes; even so the Germans having got our agreement to subscribe and control our programmes, there is now a rumour going round that the Germans will choose the programme. A few nights ago, when the question of choosing programmes came up WB all voted for having the news in English (from the German source of course) provided that we did not get Lord Haw-Haw: we were assured that he was now out of it and that we need fear nothing on that account; but tonight, the first night of all, we heard him and his beastly creaking door voice!

I have now had 2 teeth stopped on the right side of my mouth - one of them was condemned in 1938 by the French dentist in Calais. On Monday I return to have the whole lot scrapped and polished and no doubt other holes may then show up, and if so, I hope to be able to get them done here. We have 7 Marks a month credit for dental treatment, so it may go on for some months.

## **March 29th**

Last night we got the news about Jugo-Slavia having kicked out the Ryent and making demonstrations in favour of England - all on the German news. This morning the Germans do not look particularly downhearted on our parade however - I expect the hostile demonstration in Belgrade against German shops will be taken as an excuse for entering the country to protect their nationals! Well, thank goodness another country has dared to stand up to them and say "No". Have strated chase again with 16 competition games to play off, so shall be busy now for some time to come. My study off German has lapsed but I am inclined to take it up again and am trying to get hold of a grammar.

## **March 30th**

Got 4 letters yesterday - letter from Gaby and cards from Giot, Vigneron and Amiens. Gisele's mother has heard from Gisele through Red Cross Geneva so at last no doubt, a reply has come to one of the messages (25 words) sent off. In November, I sent Gisele's mother one of the forms for such a message as there was no Red Cross in Amiens and she would either get it handed in by Henri in Paris, or she would send it back to Gaby so that she could hand it in at Lille. She has received 700Fr from Mme Leat at Soissons but still has nothing from the American embassy. That man Mackintosh has lost me 6-7 weeks in this through neglect- I don't trust him any longer. Supposedly a professor of comparative theology at the university



of Hong-Kong, picked up whilst "on holiday" at Boulogne, he seems to have achieved popularity with the lower elements by a liberal use of their vernacular and by being very anti-German in his behaviour. Now, however, he appears to be turning "Yes-man" to the Germans. I may well be mistaken of course: there are many mystery men here and one learns to trust no one and keeps one's mouth shut. My mistrust however, is based on the fact that he was the principal instigator of the decision to let 1,000 odd men have 2 Red Cross parcels each and let another 100 go empty; and that later, when I wanted to run an exchange office free for all, so that men could get in touch with each other for exchanges of food and clothing, he adopted the role of an unselfish purist and said that no exchanges ought to be made but that men should give away articles they did not want. Such an altruistic attitude coming after the previous attitude, has roused my suspicions.

### **March 31st**

This morning we were called out for a second parade - a switch of the wireless outfit had disappeared. They kept us standing on parade for an hour and now have confined us to the building for 3 days! The best of it is that the switch is ours and not theirs for we paid for it! Its loss was reported by a man known as the snake; even prior to this his gory death after release had apparently been promised to him in many different ways by many different people: but now! - well, I don't even know him by sight but I think he will go through the hoop alright. He is said to be Pro - German and to be a spy upon us. Have been to the dentist again and have finished there for the moment. Gennan news now says that the loss of Italy's African colonies was allowed for in advance and is of no importance! Seems also to be working up a nice campaign of vituperation against Jugo-Slavia for spitting on German memorials there; of course, the Germans just dynamited the French monument at Lille, but that, according to their ideas, would be a nice clean job and quite justifiable! Coming back from the dentist, we found the building door locked of course. Now, in France, the German guard would have kicked at the door and, if he had not seen it opened in 5 seconds, he would have shot the lock away! Not so here, so we kicked it ourselves to attract attention.

Later. The punishment has been lifted! The Germans apparently realize that they are making fools of themselves one day too early in the year. They can prove nothing and everything points to the snake having done a put-up job badly for them. Still better news is that our letter ration is to be increased to 4 letters and 8 postcards a month. And finally, we learn that 360kg of ham and 1500 more Red Cross parcels have arrived in the camp for us. So tonight the atmosphere is gay. The Germans must gnash their teeth when they hear how we howl with laughter at Haw-Haw - for they have their spies in our midst.

### **April 1st**

A day relieved by the issue of the ham, which, as the boys would say, is "super". We got a good chunk of it each and tomorrow's breakfast will be a notable event: it has been hard work restraining ourselves from nibbling at it tonight.

## **April 2nd**

Two small boys, 16 and 14, came in yesterday: they are really Poles but have English nationality. Their father is interned in one camp and their mother in another. They were taken from their mother a month ago and have spent a whole month travelling from Constance to here, with halts at 9 prisons on the way and actual travelling done in prison wagons !! The inhumanity of these Germans is just staggering-even now it has probably not occurred to them to send these boys to the same camp as their father. Well, they will pay dearly for it one day, no doubt.

## **April, 3rd.**

A much better day- really a taste of spring in the air and so I spent 2 hours in the exercise park after tea. Had another Red Cross parcel today, with a pound of chocolate, so Dutnall and I are going to have a real old guggle for a couple of nights ! His wife, dear little soul, has hunted up people (who do not know me) to send me parcels. Had a letter from Gaby today, dated 4th March - all well with our friends apparently. Gisele's mother in her postcard, was not very clear about either Gisele or about money matters but I think that she must have got an answer to the Red Cross message all the same.

## **April 4th**

Lovely day: morning frost but bright and sunny and it really begins to feel like spring. No letters. Still waiting for Gisele's n°3 which seems to be lost.

## **April 5th, 6th, 7th**

The promise of spring was not fulfilled. We are back to cold, snow and east wind again. Much military traffic on the roads towards Yugoslavia no doubt. The Germans by their papers and wireless news, seem to have been caught napping on the Y.S. question and are consequently resentful. They now return to 1914 for propaganda purposes and talk about England's unprovoked aggression on Germany then, conveniently not remembering that their troops were on Belgian soil before England even declared war. Well, lions they are ; and, as a people has the landers which it merits, such a designation must apply to all units of that people. As such, from our standard of honour and truth, we must regard them, though quite possibly, according to their German standard of honour, they are considering themselves as emblems of truth !

Have written Gisele's mother with the news and she will pass on to Gaby who will distribute to all friends as usual.

## **April 6th**

About 4 inches of snow this morning: this may be a healthy climate, but they can keep it for themselves so far as I am concerned. German officer in shocking bad temper this morning - evidently poor news for them as regards Yougo\_Slavia. Trying again to get money

from the bank sent here - then I shall be able to send it back to Gisele's mother. For I still have no satisfaction - or even a reply- from the American Embassy as regards helping them.

### **April 9<sup>th</sup>**

We have had the bad news today as regards the taking of Derna in N.Africa and also the loss of Salovika ; anxiously waiting to learn if it is really true. Germans on their way to Egypt ! If they get there I shall feel that the prophecy of Daniel is being fulfilled. But we are all in the dumps for the moment.

### **April 10th**

Yesterday's news seems to have been exaggerated in importance as a sop to the German people, even so it is not good for us and this N.Africa business an unholy muddle. We now hear that as from Monday next we are to have reveille at 5am instead of 6am. It will just make our days an hour longer, that's all.

### **April 11th - Good Friday.**

Fish soup day, so we struck and opened a tin of meat and vegetables and followed it up by apricots and cream made from Linglord milk powder and a biscuit and cheese. A good meal. Snow still on and shall be glad to see a green landscape eventually.

### **April 12th**

Had a parcel this morning from Mrs Dutnall. Still cold and white. Received Gisele's missing letter n°3 - she had addressed it to Oflag VIID instead of VIIID. Also got hers of 19th March (n° 11). I can not make out at all what she has received from me yet, but letters n°6-10 are missing now, so I can look forward to her news coming in steadily if erratically. A good day!

### **April 13th, 14th, Easter**

Bad news day - Germans seem to have taken N.Africa in a few days whilst we took several weeks for the same job. Even so, one is still quite hopeful, for all letters from France Belgium, Holland and England seem to contain a note of optimism which is stronger than what ordinary wishful thinking and cherring up of prisoners would warrant. More, the pound sterling seems to have had a big rise and held it - though we do not know what recent quotations are on Zurich. Again Hitler's much advertised submarine campaign is for some reason not yet launched - so possibly there was truth in Churchill's statement that we have a new and efficacious method of dealing with them. It is noticeable that the Germans never announce the loss of a submarine. Those who were interned during the last war tell us that German propaganda and German "victories" went on right up to the very end. As far as I can reckon Gisele is now alright financially up to about March 31st next year. But I can't make out

what she has received from me in the way of letters: in one of hers of 13/2 she says she received "une lettre de ta main, mais bien vieille"; again in another letter of 13/2 she mentions "une lettre de ta main datant de novembre" (well, I only wrote the one long letter of 25th in Nov. and she has that one. Then in her letter of 25/2 she says "reçu ton message envoyé de Lille". And also "cela me semblait terrible avant ta lère lettre du 3dec. de ne pas savoir..." and finally, in hers of 19/5, she says:"je n'ai jamais reçu de lettres de Melle Carlier ni aucune de France - certaines personnes en ont reçu de France non-occupée mais jamais de la zone occupée". It's a bit of a Chinese puzzle all round.

The wireless in this place is just ghastly-loud speakers in each corridor, mostly badly adjusted, make the place sound like a fair-ground. Music is blaring and lacks tune: even when a well-known air is played, The Germans seem to murder it - apparently National Socialist ideals allow each man in the orchestra to make as much noise as his fellows executants and all seem to take advantage of this to exercise their right. One must frankly pity a German population which is only allowed to listen to national emissions.

Snow has gone this morning.

### **April 15th**

Busy day - bath, clothes washing, etc- which has gone quickly. Germans very angry about blackout blinds tonight: they give us wretched paper stuff with paper cords and make us responsible for damage now when we have all from time to time reported to them on the poor quality of the materiel. Nor do they give us any tools or paste or anything to carry out the repairs. Much movement southwards along the road and in the air these days and nights.

### **April 16th**

Two glorious parcels for Dut - one in my name - from his wife's cousins in Tourcoing today- including 2kg of tobacco, 200 cigs and 10 cigars, sponge cake, biscuits, pain d'épices, etc... So we are well set for some time. A fine day- I think the snow has really gone.

### **April 17th**

Got a parcel from Gaby today with 400g tobacco and some pain d'épices. This brings our baccy stock up to 5.9kg plus about 100gr in actual use. Now we can scout round and do some swaps for syrup, honey, cocoa, etc...

### **April 16th**

Received another parcel (5kg) from Gaby today - My luck is certainly in this week. She has her head screwed on the right way for she sent Kruschen as salt and straps for baggage as ceinture: wise little person. News of capitulation of Yugoslavia today. It looks as if a big clash is coming on the Egyptian frontier soon and it will then be interesting to see how British stand up to the German attacks. I think our men will match them alright; but I have been struck often with the German training. I have said it 80 often to so many people that I may have written it all down before. Their companies are divided into small groupes of 8 - 10 men who live, eat, sleep and fight together. And no doubt as soon as a German joins the army,

he is taught to forget all manners, to shout instead of speaking and generally an attitude of determination and command. Heroic courage is rare and it cannot be taught. But determination can be taught and I have no doubt it is so: a single man who goes into a room where there are 20 armed men and starts shouting at once is almost certain to get away with it for probably 18 will make a bolt for the nearest cover and only 2 will make an attempt to free their holsters. It is gangster training of course and to meet it we should train our own men as German men. I hope we are doing so. Of course here we get nothing but German news; and men who were interned during the last war tell us that the German propaganda and "victories" continued right up to the end. I am still optimistic anyhow, though I think England has much to suffer yet and may be very very nearly beaten before the tide turns. The Germans here are now very windy about our blackout blinds.

As my letter to Barclay's Paris was allowed on the 17th (after being put in on the 9th) I lose one to Gisele this month, for they refused my request to send the Barclay letter over quota. So I have only 3 postcards to come, for the 4th must go to Gaby to thank her for her parcels. It's a hard job to get all the news and information and question in, but by the end of the month I hope to have most things in order.

### **April 19 th**

Received John's letter of 11th Feb. today. Good weather and have spent some time in the park.

### **April 29th**

Yesterday a call was made for 150 volunteers to go to a separate camp for ditching work, with pay, better rations and -perhaps a little more liberty than here. The camp was described as a "barracks" but questions on this elicited the news that it was "huts". One way or another the camp felt very doubtful of the offer and only some 60 or so volunteered. So today, we were paraded outside at 2pm again and the commandant asked for more volunteers: a few only came forwards and then he showed his character\_ or perhaps I should say his character according to orders- by telling us that if he did not get the men he would feel that we were acting against him and that he would let us know what's what! So, by these threats, he eventually got his 150 men. But it was interesting to study these German methods of obtaining "volunteers". And we shall all remember it I think. Lovely day, so out most of the afternoon in the exercise park and have managed to get Dutnall out too.

### **April 21st**

Got Dut out again between breakfast and parade- a record! He needs it badly for his moral is very low and fresh air will do as much as everything to restore it I think. He is better since we have been together, but is far from being the smiling Dut of old days; perhaps I shall eventually lead him to it - I hope so. Today received a 5kg parcel from Mme Dutnall and a 1kg parcel from Harstrish - all good stuff. Our tobacco stock is now 6.880kg!! We shall have to fell trees to make pipes to smoke it! But tobacco is the best barter medium here and we can do ourselves well in cocoa, syrup, jam, honey and so on, which are more useful and better for us. Also had a letter from Gaby.

## **April 22nd**

I rather wish I had started a Rumour book at the very outset, but propose to begin now and note daily rumours, however fantastic. Today's so far are 2:

- 1) America ceases to look after our interests as from May 1st.
- 2) Warell has landed troops in N.Africa and cut off the Germano-Italian forces.
- 3) Turkey at war with Germany.
- 4) Later. America coming in as reason for ceasing to act for Us in Germany.

## **April 23rd**

- 1) America is now at war with Germany.
  - 1a. America broken off dips relations with Germany
  - 1b. Two above denied one hour later.

Had a card from Mme Harstrich yesterday. Played bridge this evening - rather odd game as everyone was really playing auction, but scoring contract points, enjoyed it all the same.

## **April 24th**

- 1) King of England has declared that the war will be over this year.  
Nothing else. Had a letter from Amiens and another from Gaby. Cold weather.

## **April 25th**

- 1) America has already been at war for 9 days.  
Cold again. Fish soup day, so we are opening a tin and have also made some Jelly which we hope will be set by teatime: set or not it will be eaten. The advance party of the ditching working party left the camp this morning- the remainder follow on Monday.
  - 2) Americans have landed at Bordeaux
  - 3) 3) Germany invades Spain.

Judging by Haw-Haw's wireless talks, Churchill must be doing his stuff and cy well indeed, as the Germans are so keen on getting rid of him. There seems to be no doubt that the Germans have suffered very heavily in Greece and may still do so; but their tactics, of advancing at any cost, can only be countered, in my opinion, by holding at all costs. Otherwise, they will always be able to get through whilst we save lives on sentimental grounds. I am inclined to think too that we have got back our line to Tobruks, for the German communique now omit any reference to Sollem.

## **April 26th**

Still colder today with N.E wind.

- 1) The Germans have destroyed the great war memorials, including Menin Gate and Notre Dame de Lorette.
- 2) 2) The advice note for Red Cross parcels has arrived (this is a rumour which recurs steadily like a recurring chemical).

Am warned for a parcel for 8am, Monday. No letters and usual hopeless Sunday tomorrow in stove - for there is no mail distribution.

German communiques now speaking of "the Tobruk front", so I think we are right and that we have pushed them back from Egypt. It will take them a week or two to admit it. They acknowledge losing 2 submarines!

## **April 27th**

- 1) Americans have landed in Portugal.
- 2) Big conference with Russia, Turkey, USA, Spain and Portugal.
- 3) We have taken 3 towns in Greece.

A long and dreary day, too cold to be pleasant outside and even chess and bridge have not relieve its monotony. Learned of the fall of Athenes today.

## **April 26th**

This morning's parcel was from Mme Dutnall - more tobacco and cake. Now I am warned for 1 more parcel this afternoon, so Monday is not too bad a day this week.

- 1) First instatement of Red Cross parcels has arrived (50)
- 2) Churchill has resigned.

Afternoon parcel (one only) was from Garchette. Chocolate is on our menu for nibbing in bed tonight! Gisele's letters are a long time coming through - I had hoped for greater regularity once they started. Sent Post-card to Gaby to acknowledge Garchette's parcel.

## **April 29th**

We hear that on May 1st our daily programme changes with reveille at 5.30am and parade at 7.30 and meals at 12 noon and 6pm, with lights out at 10pm- long days indeed which will only be appreciated when we get hot weather: probably it will be very hot here as the pine forest will retain the heat a lot.

Solbem and Bardia have come back into the German news- even so I think that Tobruk is probably more the center of the fighting. Learnt that Italians have now got Corfu again. A certain number of Red Cross parcels are actually coming into this camp - this is no rumour- I have seen them myself.

I don't like this news of bombing ports in S.E. England And I often feel that attack can come easiest from that side by cutting off Devon and Cornwall. Hitler likes doing these things the opposite way round and looking at the other side of the picture.

## **April 30th**

Still cold weather, with thermometer at about +2°C. Started a ladder challenge against Moore and lost first game. No rumours at all.

Today is holiday in Germany so we get no letters or parcels. And now we start a new time-table: reveille at 6am, parade 7.30, dinner 12 -1.30, tea 6pm, parade 9pm, lights out

10pm. Even by getting into bed immediately after evening parade it will make days of 15 1/4 - 15 1/2 hours long, which will be very tiring and trying.

1) We have been bombing Berlin for 36 hours.

Well today Binkie starts his new school career and I hope that the public school life will, above all, give him self-control. Gisele will be very lonely again today after their departure.

## **May 2nd**

Won my chess ladder challenge today and then challenged the man above me - beat him this afternoon and tackle him again tomorrow. Had a letter from Gaby, but still none from Gisele: this post from England is terribly irregular, for all the letters written between 25th Feb. and 19th March are still missing. I had hoped to get something each week at least. They may of course always be held back by the Germans. Red Cross parcels are not to be issued to us before Monday- just another little German way of being agravating - this adjective, by the way, applies to their character very well in a general sense.

1) If America is not yet in the war, she will be in by Monday.

Wet and beastly day.

## **May 3rd**

The day opened up with more snow, which is not likely to tie however. Either refugees or evacués seem to have been passing throug here on Wednesday and Friday. The news we get daily gives us magnificent German victories all the time, but we feel that they are getting it in the neck from the RAF all the same and that they are a bit rattled. Still no news from Gisele.

1) The USA are in the war .

2) Russia ia coming into it very soon.

Had a good bath and have done some washing, as a fairly busy day. One has to take advantage at once of hot water when it is on the tap, like the bees when the clover is on!

## **May 4th**

I have manage to beat my cheas opponent as have won 2 places on the chess ladder this week. I'm not quite certain whether I am playing better or whether they have gone off a bit - perhaps a bit of both. Have applied today for 800Fr for Gisele's parents - it will be sent off about the 10th and they should get it in June; also 400Fr for Gaby, for parcels and her postage expenses too which must be pretty heavy. This leaves me 200Fr only but it is enough as I spend little here. Cold day. Temperature about -20C.



## **May 5th**

Have put in a letter to the contact committee for American Embassy- hope they will send it; they have made a thorough mess of my case through sheer laziness and incompetence and my letter lays some emphasis on this. More snow today. No letters. Red Cross parcels not yet distributed. Why?

- 1) We are leaving this camp for France because Russians are massing on the Frontier.
- 2) There are skirmishes on the frontier.

Troop movements part of the day, past this building probably towards Greece.

## **May 6th**

Fish soup day: so once more we have struck and had a tin of meat and vegetable, reinforced by some of Gaby's curry powder - now getting very low. We can only heat our meat tins in cans of hot water- even so the result is not bad; finally some of Dut's dried apricots which we have soaking regularly: we add Beurax (recommended for expectant mothers!) and sugar. With tins we do earnestly hope that the claims for their vitamin content is partly true- if it was wholly true our bodies would be pure vitamin breeding grounds!

Much military transport is going through again; meanwhile the departure of the big working party to the other camp has been delayed: something thus does appear to be going on around this frontier. Red Cross parcels distributed today and I got one. Received Allen's letter of 8/4 but still nothing from Gisele.

- 1) The camp is breaking off next Sunday: the Red Cross is already painted on the roof!  
If I ever publish these daily rumours, I shall become famous as a great modern writer of fairy tales!

## **May 7th**

Still no letter from Gisele. I find this absence of news, now that I have heard from her, more disquieting than even the months when I had no news at all and could not expect any. My Red Cross parcel was a Xmas one complete with cake and pudding. Outside working party still stopped. Better day with perhaps a touch of spring in the air. With the new time schedule for the day we now work it out as follows:

Reveille: 6am

Coffee: 6.30 with biscuit.

Wash

Parade: 7.15-8.00 about - the parades are very long and tiring.

Smoke

Breakfast: about 9 or 9.30 with cocoa.

Smoke again. Then washing or chess or letter preparation or exercise outside.

Dinner: 12-12.30 dependent on which sitting we are: there are 3 sittings and we change weekly.

1.30-2.30: generally snoring. Then exercise in the park. A biscuit or piece of Mrs Dutnall's cake in the afternoon.

Tea: 6-7 dependent on sitting. One of us goes for coffee and rations for two and we feed together in the room - mostly at table, though often just bedside bites.

7 -6. 45: collection of rumours, wishful thoughts, smoking, etc.

8 45...9. 15: parade.

And so to bed.

Some holiday!

Rumours.

- 1) We get a second issue of 2 Red Cross parcels on Friday.
- 2) On Monday next, men over 50 go to another camp and men under 50 to a camp near Munich.
- 3) At noon Russia has declared war on Germany.

## **May 8th**

Still no letter from Gisele. I wonder if she is getting mine. Bitter cold again today. Another Red Cross parcel which now reduces average time to 23 days interval between parcels. The result is that my tuckbox would now be the envy of any schoolboy. A notice has been put up for some days now - a letter from the American embassy which says that there is no prospect, immediate in any case - of those over 60 and under 17 being liberated. Camp is much too busy tucking into parcels and has no time to invent rumours today.

## **May 9th**

At last I have a letter from Gisele, n°20 of 14th April. So now I have n°1 to 5 and n°11 to 20 and all the others are missing. Nor do I know what she has received from me and so it makes it very difficult to write.

- 1) Rumour strong again about an early move from this camp.

Special general parade in the park this afternoon Commandant asked for another 250 volunteers for work in other camps. 11 men fill for it: so he has given the camp to Saturday evening to find the number. No doubt, if he does not get what he wants, we shall get collective punishment - and with the mixed mob there is in the camp it would be hard to get all the men to think and act alike on any subject. Some men will go for the work for "change and for something to do" ; others go for the money - they are told that they will get the same pay as the German workers, but when their keep and of clothes has been deducted from their pay, they get, I believe, 64 pfennigs a day. Others take the point of view that if work is done which would otherwise have to be done by a German workman, such work is probably of military value to Germany as releasing for service some civilian workmen.

## **May 10th**

- 1) Germany has entered part of Finland.

Cold day again, relieved by receipt of letter Ie 21 from Gisele. And she has now my n° 1 to 6 and the others are missing: it will be hopeless trying to keep any clear correspondence.

## **May 11th**

- 1) We have captured 2 towns and a German general in Africa.

Again cold and dull and usual long Sunday relieved by bridge and chess. I believe the "volunteers" are coming forward pretty well. Military convoy packed in the football field visible from here.

## **May 12th**

Rather a noisy night I think - military traffic and some planes too Morning more like a November morning in London than anything else.

- 1) Russia will be in at any minute and has 150 thousand planes!

News tonight as regards Rudolph Hess - looks hopeful: "When thieves fallout ...." I have been thinking out the question of plane deliveries from USA. It seems to me likely that we sent out an SOS last June, but that USA feeling it possible- and even. Likely - that England would suffer the same fate as Belgium and France etc within a few weeks, kept from immediate decision. But that later, towards end Sept., they thought that as we had got through so far, we should win through if heavily backed. That they started then the conversion of car works to plane wars production works whilst also, of course, all existing plane factories had been steadily speeded up. And if it took Ford one year to convert his factory just to change his car model, a similar length of time is necessary probably to convert to plane production. Thus and at the worst, if this has been done the USA should be on mass plane production from October onwards, with enormous winter deliveries which will, in the spring of 1942 , give us complete mastery in the air. Then, fighting blind men, the German numbers will be useless and our small army will be able to do as it likes with them. So, at the worst, I think that 1942 will see the end. Now of course this Nazi party trouble may help much more than we can imagine here.

## **May 13th**

Noticed young lads in mufti- but evidently Hitler youth - cycling past with light carbines slung on their shoulders this morning- 2 or 3 only. I hope that some day my idea of an international newspaper will mature. Such a paper, distributed free if possible - and it ought to make it possible - would give the opinions of all countries interested in the same political question: thus a German would see, in successive columns, in German language, the opinions of, say, England, France, Belgium Holland, Italy, Russia etc. And so each national, of whatever nationality; would at least learn that there are always several ways in which the same question could be viewed. I hope that this war has as a result the abolition of political control of newspapers and the axe of wireless too for political aims. Both seem to me very desirable. Unfortunately, man is so made that he likes following a groove: he adopts the opinions he reads, ultimately pronounces them as his own and then derives personal satisfaction from seing them"once more reproduced in print.

- 1) 5 German generals have gone with Hess.

## May 14th

Further news last night of Hess having landed in Scotland. Is it to spill the beans properly? or is it possibly a superbly acted piece of Hitler's, so that Germany can seek peace without apparent loss of prestige? I doubt this latter theory as being too far pitched, but all the same these Germans are as cunning as a cartful of monkeys. I received Binkie's little letter of February yesterday - disappointed at first of its shortness, until I realized that it was probably meant as a reply to my 25 words Red Cross message to him.

- 1) Himmler had been dead for some days.
- 2) Germans have evacuated Belgium.
- 3) There has been a truce of bombing for the last 48 hours.
- 4) No more letters or parcels after the present ones or those already on the way, are distributed.
- 5) Hess went, not with a plane but with a squadron.
- 6) There has been continuous bombing for 64 hours.
- 7) Russia is due to come and attack at any minute.
- 8) Russia has broken off diplomatic relations with Japan.
- 9) Russia has withdrawn troops from Mandchuria.

It appears that 40 anti-tank guns have gone past here today. Room 501 is celebrating an armistice and further rumour says that some of the Dutch are packing! It is evidently very true that hopes spring eternal in the human breast! Fine crop of rumours today and the morale of the camp is high. 120 of us, including Dut and I, went out to a playing field today - we two did not play but just enjoyed the peep of the outside world and the absence of barbed wire. It has done Dut a world of good.

## May 15th

- 1) America declared war at 11pm last night.
- 2) General Keitel ( CGS) has hopped it.

We all received 91 cigarettes and 1/3 of an ounce of tobacco today. Red Cross stuff.

## May 16th

Everyone seems to wish for America to come in: personally I can see no good in it, for it would entail the entry of Japan probably and, in any case it would mean that America would want to retain a much higher proportion of her armament production for herself than in the case at present: and that would be to our detriment. I dislike, too, the possibility of Russia's entrance on our side: for they would at once become "our gallant allies" and when the war was over, we should be unable to close the ports to their nationals and their bolchevism propaganda. I think it well possible that, when the England - Germany affair is over, we may well aid America in putting Japan back in her place; and too, that perhaps only a short time might elapse before we were fighting Russia with the Germans as allies. We have had two pretty decent days at last and buds on trees show signs of opening - no doubt they know this climate well and act accordingly. Started a new competition in chess with Queen's Pawn Gambit and have 10 games to play with 5 opponents. Won two of them yesterday. Won next 2

games chess from my 2nd opponent today. Perhaps it is possible that America can, by working 24 hours in shifts, change over her factories in 6 months; if so the war's deliveries could begin by April 1st or May 1st this year. I still have a faint hope therefore that this year may see it through. Had a postcard from Amiens today.

### **May 17th**

Today looks like being a real Spring day, though commencing with a sharp morning frost. Still it is sunny, so after morning cocoa we shall be out in the exercise park. General dearth of rumours since the big day this week. A camp paper the "Tost Times" is now being started. I mentioned earlier that I had hoped to start an exchange office, to which could come, free, any internee who had anything to swap, when he would be given names and numbers and room numbers of other internees who wanted his particular swap article. Well, that scheme, approved by everyone, was disapproved by the local Pooh-Ba (Mackintosh) on grounds of principles - his idea was that anyone who had an article he did not require should give it away. I very much doubted his principle at the time as he was the man principally responsible for that shameful decision as regards the first Red Cross parcels- that about 1000 men should have 2 parcels each and the remaining 100 men nothing. Well, now it turns out that the camp newspaper will accept paid advertisements for such exchanges/ however I suppose he will produce some other piece of humbug principle as an excuse for this volt face.

Received Binkie's letter of 15th March and also Pat's letter of the same date.

### **May 18th**

Cold day again. In the last two days about 50 men - mostly crooks but of all ages - have been interviewed by the Germans and seem to have the idea - from the question asked as regards domicile, prospects of work and means of support - that they are to be sent home. If such is the case, then it seems likely that those over 60 will also go and so hopes are rising once more - but only a very little.

### **May 19th**

Dut got a parcel from England this morning, so we have chocolate on today's menu. As Gisele must have sent hers off about 3 months ago, I can anticipate a bit too - it may soon be here now.

- 1) German planes are, in number, following example of Hess and are surrendering Scotland.

Was astonished at the ignorance of P.G. Wodehouse tonight - he asked naively whether Frag was near Allgesinia! Really meant it too.

### **May, 20th.**

Very wet and hot day. Dut has diarrhea so I become medicine man tonight and produce my pills. Had 2 letters from Gisele and one from Barclay's and find they can send me

1,000Fr a month, so shall be able to send the quarter back to Amiens and they in turn will hand over part to Gaby for my supplies and parcels. Rather a nice piece of work as long as it works! Getting bad toothache again.

Really bucked that Binkie's scholarship is really true- I thought Gisele was mixing up the Common Entrance exams. The Morgans have done a stout work to bring it off. Much new transport going past here today.

- 1) Russia is declaring war on England at 6pm tonight!
- 2) Russia is declaring war on Germany at 5pm tonight!

Quelle salade russe (written. by Gregson on Tost). The foregoing would be quite a good title for this diary!

### **May 21st.**

Another beastly grey and damp day, though not actually raining. I expect that when it is hot here, it is very hot- for the pine forest all around will detain the heat and radiate it - but the summer is probably very short. We seem to have noticed more slackness generally in our guards since the Hess episode. How we would love to have seen even the headlines only of the English papers for that week! We learnt yesterday of the capitulation of Italy in Algesinia: we judge that the situation in N.Africa is now in hand and that such is also becoming the case in Iraq. From the German papers we learn no news except of thin perpetual victories and of our own "futiles" attacks. We still bomb hospitals - it is surprising that there are any hospital left to bomb! Truth is reputed to be stranger than fiction, but the German news certainly does its best to dispose this time honoured saying. No letters today.

### **May 22nd**

- 1) Russia is allowing German forces to go through her territory to Iraq.
- 2) Russia has leased the Ukraine to Germany for 99 years.

A good spring day though it turned to rain in the evening. Had a letter from Gaby – she is fattening up a rabbit for our return sounds hopeful (or if it is a long time; the rabbit will be tough!)

### **May 23rd**

Received today my first parcel from England - sent from London - senders name unknown: pullover, shirt, 2 socks, soap, towel, etc, 1 vest and about 2lbs of chocolate. Probably from Commins or the AA people - for judging by Gisele's letter of 14/3 it does not seem to have come from her. I must try and get permission to send certain things back to France - I already have too much to carry and more is on the way apparently. There is a rare gurgle of chocolate in the stove!

- 1) All English who have resided in France for 15 years or more are to be sent back.

## **May 24th**

Lovely spring day- and warm! What a pleasure after these months of cold and rawness! I have finished my chess matches today and have won 7 out of 8 (for one man scratched) and thus am likely to be first in my section or at worst, have a tie. Germans claim that they have sunk the Hodd near Ireland, in news tonight.

## **May 25th**

Still another glorious day.

1) 250 sets of papers have come back to the camp of internees who are not considered as British. These 250 are to be liberated and the rest move to Munich in July.

## **May 26th**

Great day again~ . Received 9 Marks pocket money - first paiement since February. No letters.

## **May 27th.**

1) Hitler or Goenig has asked Roosevelt to approach Churchill with a view to making an honourable peace.

News that the Bismark is engaged against superior forces- looks as if the usual preparation is being made before admitting any loses.

- 2) Bismark is sunk.
- 3) Deutschland is sunk.
- 4) Remainder of German fleet has capitulated.
- 5) Ridhing in Berlin.

## **May 28th**

I have been rather hanging onto this diary for some days, urged by a superstitious hope that, like the one for Lille, its coming to an end would be the signal for a move and - perhaps - liberty! But rumours of release have existed ever since the early days at Lille and are likely to exist till the end. Had a letter from Gaby today. Definite news of the loss of the Bismark. Now curiously enough, whilst the German try and offset this by talk of the damage done to the Mediterranean Fleet, still they do not claim anything except the Hood in the Atlantic battle. It seems to me that their news control people are, for once, in doubt as to the grellibility of their readers. Every man knows that such big capital ships do not sail the seas alone. And it seems to me that the German news inventors do not dare to claim any sinkings t other than Hood in the Atlantic feeling and fearing that the German public will not believe that such can have been achieved without probable greater loss to themselves, which they can afford even less than ourselves. .If I am right, then this doubt as the attitude of the German public is a good sign and shows wavening fear in higher quarters.

The commandant, Buchlet, parade the lot of us today to say good bye, as he is leaving here, we shall probably have another parade to meet his successor

### **May 29th**

1) All who have domiciles in France are to be sent back: this camp required as hospital from 15th August; sailors to stay and clean it up.

This strong rumour continues to crop up. It is always possible if, in England, German internees who are ratepayers have been released. Wet day, with strong gale blowing. No letters.

### **May 30th**

Still wet but gale is abating.

- 1) Conference of all powers, including neutrals, going on in Spain.
- 2) Camp moving to Munich.
- 3) Germany will just push through if Russia refuses passage of her troops through Russia towards Iraq. Latest date is 8th June.

### **May 31st**

Better looking day and gale is over. Glorious packet of letters today - 4 from Gisele, 5 from the boys and 1 each from John and Stewart. Stewart speaks of his wife as if the case was hopeless which belies Allen's letter of early April.

1) 1500 German internees have been released in England. So all over 50 of age are to be released from here.