

## Bruccini, The Italian POW



This picture was taken in Spremberg in 1945, and this is an Italian soldier, Bruccini, who was courting me. On 13th April 1945, we were rudely awoken by the Aufseherin supervisor women, in the barracks of the Leipzig camp, we had to line up with all our blankets and belongings (which was hardly anything at all,) because this camp was to be evacuated. The invading troops were coming. For ten days we were walking round and round, and one night all our supervisors disappeared. The second phase of our German travels started. We were just walking and walking, trying to find a way home. At a large crossroads, a soviet soldier was directing the traffic and we were trying to ask, in mime, about the nearest Red Cross station and the direction of Budapest. Behind us, two young men on bicycles came along and when we started off in the direction we'd been shown, they joined us. These two young men- as it turned out, they were Italian, but had gotten into German captivity-

joined us because they misheard Budapest as Bucharest, and they knew that would be roughly the right way to go home. In the beginning, I was very angry, and I told the others: wasn't it enough to fight against the Russian soldiers at night; did we also have to put up with these ones? Later, my opinion also softened though, since we had nothing and these men sat on the grass at the edge of the forest and they invited us too-of course, this was also just in mime, they only spoke Italian; one of them spoke just a tiny bit of German- they took out a big pot of a dish with yellow peas and a whole grilled chicken, and we had a nice feast. Usually, we found accommodation for the night after our daily trek, in derelict houses. There were many of these everywhere, and in some of them, we even found food. On 9th May 1945, we reached a camp where men and women from all different nations, were accommodated separately, in houses. This camp was Spremberg. We four women were accommodated in one room, on the top floor of a house. Here we received some food every day, mainly bread and potatoes, but sometimes sugar, flour, and very rarely, some meat. The two boys, Bruccini and Nello were put in a different house, with the other Italians. The two boys began to court Etel and me. We took long walks every day, and basically, apart from taking care of ourselves, we had nothing to do, we just rested and sunbathed. I got hold of a notebook and pencil, so when I was walking with Bruccini, I started learning a bit of Italian; the book became my dictionary, and slowly we became able to talk. As it turned out, he lived in Luca, he was a 29-year old technician. He knew that I was a married woman, and that I had two little girls at home. He fell in love with me, and I had to promise him that if my husband didn't come home, he could come to Budapest to take me to Italy together with my children, to be his wife. On the 17th June, those whose way home was towards the East, were lined up in pairs. Of course the two Italians didn't belong to this group, so we bid them farewell sadly, and I had to repeat my promise again, about the marriage.