

Interview with Antonin Vinter

March 6, 1997

Question: Mr. Vinter, tell me something about your family, about where you were born and in what type of environment you, uh--you spent your youth and childhood.

Q: How old were you when you went to Lety¹? What was your age at that time; how old--how old were you?

A: Eight years old.

Q: Tell me something about what happened in between the time when you were born and the time when you went to Lety. Something about your family, the village where you lived, the lifestyle which--

A: In Îebrák we had our own building. My parents at that time, my grandpa. Well and my mother went from that concentration camp to Terezín², however, she returned and later told us all about it. She was already--my grandpa and my grandma were on the transport out of Lety and they went directly to the gas chambers.

Q: If you would be so kind, tell me about your personal experiences. But for now let's return to the time when you lived in Îebrák in that building. What was your life like there: were you well off; what were the people from your village like; if you had some difficulties; simply if it was--?

A: We didn't have any difficulties at all because in this village we did not act like the Gypsies who steal hens and ride around with wagons and the like.

Q: And how did your family make its living?

A: In textiles. My--my father ran a shop along with my mother, but at, at markets and fairs.

Q: What do you remember, what nice or bad experiences (do you remember) from this period when you had--when you were still a child? (What memories) from Îebrák?

A: Well--

Q: What kind of life was it? Do you still remember?

A: [Sighs] At this point--I think about it but I don't remember anymore.

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Q: And now tell me how was--how did you get to Lety? How did it begin? How did it begin, what was the first--?

A: Czech police officers arrived in Lety.

Q: When was that?

A: That was before--(...) Now I am fifty--sixty-three, so count back to when I was eight, count back to when I was nine years old.

Q: Yes. Czech police officers arrived.

A: Czech police officers arrived. They loaded us in. They transported us to school.

Q: The whole family?

A: The whole family, entirely. Grandpa, grandma, everyone.

Q: How many children were you?

A: We were four children.

Q: They drove you away and then what?

A: They drove us to the sch--to the school. For two days we were at the school. They transported us to a concentration camp, to--my uncle was already there; he had driven there with his horses and with his wagon, with a type of caravan, and there in that caravan they put--they threw corpses in there.

Q: Did you see that with your own eyes?

A: I saw it with my own eyes how they threw them there into that wagon.

Q: Who threw them there?

A: Who threw them there? Our own people. The kapos. They were worse than the police officers.

Q: When you arrived in Lety, where did you stay?

A: We were--we children were put in a camp, there in these kinds of wooden buildings, yes in these wooden buildings.

Q: How did they behave toward you?

A: Toward us? How did they behave toward us? You know, those slaps in the face were not necessary.

Q: Did you also get slapped?

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A: Yes.

Q: And what for?

A: Innumerable times.

Q: What for?

A: My cousin--my cousin's brothers and sisters were there, and considering, however, that they were hungry, so in that--there was this kind of post there, and they tied him there with his hands like this and they pulled him up and they left him hanging there for two days.

Q: Did he tell you that or did you see it?

A: I saw it.

Q: With your own eyes?

A: With my own eyes. And my father was employed there in the kitchen as a cook. That too saved us.

Q: What do you mean by that? That he could once in a while give you something more to eat?

A: You bet, that's right. When we went for meals, so--with those mess kits--then he gave us more food, yeah; it's--it's obvious.

Q: You said that you saw how they loaded dead people onto wagons. How did these people die? What happened?

A: When they beat someone, for example, at that place they had in their hands--do you know what a pick ax is?

Q: Of course.

A: So, they had these sort of meter long sticks, these handles coming out of the pick axes. Well, but those were the kapos; most of them were those, yeah kapos —how can I explain this to you — also prisoners. Yeah and they usually hit you across the head, yeah and kicked you, yeah and when you were dead, then they would drag you onto that wagon. And once a week, or something like once in four days, in three day, in--when the wagon was full, then a train car would arrive and they would load an entire car and throw them into--they drove away with them to Terezín; there was an enormous pit there.

Q: Wait a moment, we were talking about Lety and now suddenly we are in Terezín.

A: In Lety, indeed. In Lety. And there they threw them into that pit.

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Q: Behind the camp in Lety? Or--? Behind the camp--next to the camp in Let--there was a pit in Lety?

A: Behind that--in short, they were in Lety, they were--this kind of a gate, so behind that gate there was a pit; there they threw them, they sprinkled them with lime and they filled it in and that was the end of it.

Q: Did you see this?

A: I didn't see it; they told us all about this.

Q: Who told you this?

A: Who told me? It seems to me that my cousin did, but he is dead already.

Q: Do you remember the names of those kapos who beat people?

A: I don't remember anymore, but they beat everyone.

Q: And do you remember the staff of Czech officers at Lety? Their names? Their behavior toward you?

A: When you were here, you showed me some photos at that time.

Voice: I have them here.

A: Show me those photos.

Q: But before he shows you these photos, what did you do? You were--you were a small boy when you were in Lety. How--how--how did the days pass for you, what did you do--what did you do all day?

A: Yeah, nine years old. What did I do?

Q: What did you do from the morning to the evening?

A: Well, we were locked up in the barracks.

Q: And what did you do there?

A: Well, what did we do there? Well, you know what you--what we did there, yeah. We cried out of hunger.

Q: Were you hungry?

A: Yes, you kn--

Q: What did lunch, breakfast, dinner look like? What did they give you?

A: We ate grass there. (...) I will get my glasses. Wait a moment.

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Voice: Stay where you are; you have a microphone on. I will hand them to you.

A: Oh, pardon me. Please, there in back, my glasses are there.

Q: Before he brings you your glasses...this means that [there was] no school, no learning?

A: None at all

Q: No work? Not even work? You didn't go to the quarry, for example?

A: Not us children.

Voice: Fedor, please ask him, every picture that he wants to talk about, first hold it like this to show_____

Q: If you would be so kind, turn the photo toward the camera. Turn it — the photograph — to the camera. Show it to me. Show it.

A: This here was a Gypsy.

Voice: Good._____

Q: Yes.

A: and he killed at least twenty people.

Q: And why when he was--when he was a Gypsy and when he was a prisoner, why did he kill people? I don't understand this.

A: Yeah, why?

Q: Why?

A: Why? Yeah, why, explain to me why? (...) There in back--

Q: Show it to the camera, please Mr. Vinter.

Voice: That one? That one again. Sorry.

A: Here behind, that one--

Q: Turn it to the camera.

A: This was my father.

Q: Your father?

A: My father.

Q: This here is Mr. Vinter's father who was a cook.

Voice: Wait. One more time, Fedor.

Q: This here is Mr. Vinter's father who was a cook in Lety.

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Voice: It's reflecting light, it's reflecting light. Shade it [to prevent the glare].

Q: Like this?

Voice: Good. (...) But--sit down, Fedor.

(...)

Q: Please, leave it near you.

A: In this, in this quarry they worked.

(...)

Voice: Continue some more. (...) OK?

(...)

A: These are the buildings where we lived. (...) I went around dressed like this. I think that this is me. (...)

Q: Why do you think that that is you?

A: I went around dressed like that.

Q: And who was that man in front? Do you know him?

A: (...) Yeah, that man I know.

Q: Say something about him.

A: I don't remember anymore, but I saw him there innumerable times, but that person abandoned--

Q: He was only a doctor. Doctor Bohyn.

A: Doctor Bohyn. Yeah, yes, right.

Q: He was—a white guy. A Jew.

A: Yeah. This was my uncle.

Q: Which one?

A: The cook.

Voice: Wait just a moment.

(...)

A: How is it possible that the wagon isn't here. Here is where the wagon stood.

(...)

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Q: As you are looking at these photographs, do you remember how it all ended at lety? How did it end when you--when was the camp...

A: Suddenly the Germans came, and they lined us all up. Right? From tallest to shortest.

Q: Aha.

A: From these--this here is also my uncle.

Q: The seated one? The cook--

A: This one here too.

Voice: Need more time, Fedor. It's too short _____

A: Well, and here you have my cousin, as he is hanging.

Q: So. This here is your cousin and--

A: Jane%oovsky.

Q: Why is he hanging there?

A: Because there was a storehouse there, over here, with food, and he broke into it so that he could give his brothers and sister food, and they caught him there. So for that they hung him up there.

Q: How long did he hang there?

A: Well, all day and all night.

(...)

A: Look here, I will tell you something frankly. (...) You know at this point now, that was an awfully long time ago. (...) Yeah, that one there was my uncle.

Q: Which one?

A: This one.

Q: What was his name?

A: His name was RŮiãka³. This one here was the cook's commander.

Q: What was he like? -- Markus, just let it be already.

A: They said he was good. This one here is my uncle and that one is my father too.

Q: Your father and your uncle.

A: Yeah. This too is my father.

(...)

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Q: You started to speak about how the Germans came and they lined you up in a row. Please continue, what was next.

A: They lined us up in a row and whomever they liked, [went] to one side; whomever they didn't like... In short whoever was white, well, they [went] to one side and those black and dirty Gypsies, they [went] to the other side. Yeah and my grandpa should have gone between--my father automatically went with us to the one side with the children, since he was white, as you can see in the photos. He said that he wasn't any Gypsy, that it was a mistake and my mom and my aunt — Jane%ovská — went to Terezín and from Terezín they went to Auschwitz--to Auschwitz. They were in Auschwitz.

Q: Did they survive?

A: Mom survived it; my aunt didn't survive it. They were at that point standing in front of the ov--_____

Q: _____ well, may we?

Voice: We may.

Q: And what happened then when they stood in front of the ovens in Auschwitz, that's where you ended.

A: Suddenly something happened and all of these people had to--perhaps it was an air raid or something like that, so they went back to the barracks, and they were saved.

Q: You said that they took your entire family to Lety. Tell me what happened to all of your family, your parents, your relatives?

A: But that's what I'm telling you.

Q: That's two of them [of your family members].

A: They went to one side and those to the other side. And we went to the side where our father was so we returned to Ky%ic to our house. But mother went to the concentration camp.

Q: You returned to your house?

A: And we returned to our house.

Q: What then? How did you live after that?

A: Well, you know how we lived, yeah. Like normal people. Like normal people.

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Q: You didn't have any trouble?

A: We didn't have any trouble since the people there liked us. We went to school there, yeah, and --

Q: Concretely what did you do? _____

A: Concretely, I went to school.

Q: And then?

A: Then I studied how to become a cook, and then I worked with coal.

Q: You didn't speak much about your life up to the age of eight, before you went to Lety.

Don't you want to return to that theme again for a bit?

Voice: Did you have a horses--horses?⁴

A: We didn't have horses. But my uncles had horses. (...) But we didn't have horses.

Voice: [In English] Fedor, can he take off his glasses, if he doesn't need them anymore?

Q: If you don't need your glasses, take them off because otherwise they shine in—the television.

A: Sprachen Sich Deutsch? [Do you speak German?]

Voice: Weiss ich nicht. [I don't know.]

Q: Do you remember some specific stories from Lety that have stuck in your head till now?

How did they behave, for example? Who was the boss of that camp? Do you remember?

What was his name and what was he like?

A: He was a good man.

Q: You're kidding.

(...)

A: No, that's not him. That is not the boss.

Q: Does the name Janovsky mean something to you? At one time he was the camp's commander. While he was there, there was a typhoid epidemic.

A: Yes.

Q: Do you remember this name?

A: There was typhus there. Yes. There was typhus there. No.

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Q: You don't remember this name? Do you remember the name of any one of those police officers who worked there?

A: No. Please, like last time I--you showed me a photo. I cried at [seeing] it, and his name fell out of my mouth. (...) Well, so that one.

Q: Take off your glasses.

A: He was a commander, that German.

Q: And can you say something about him?

A: Well, what more can I tell you, huh? Whoever fell into -- into his hands, he beat. Or that person had to sing a Gypsy song for him.

Q: Sing a Gypsy song? Did you hear that with your own ears?

A: With my own ears, I heard how three children sang for him Gypsy, Gypsy songs.

Q: Did you yourself ever come into this kind of contact with him?

A: I did not come into contact with him since most of the time I hid whenever there was some kind of yelling and, or when--in short, honestly, I was clever.

Q: What did it mean to be clever in Lety?

A: To hide.

Q: Where could you hide?

A: Well, where could I hide? Under the straw, under a blanket.

Q: Your parents were there with you. Was it possible to meet with them, to talk with them?

A: Yeah. With father. With mother too.

Q: How often and what did you speak about?

A: Every day. Well, what about? How good I thought the food was. (...) Little packages arrived there.

Q: From families?

A: From families.

Q: And did you receive those little packages? Where did they disappear to?

A: They threw it into--everything, whether it was marmalade, whether it was flour, whatever it was, bread, everything; they didn't even look inside it, they threw it into the kettle, poured water over it and began to cook it.

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Q: Why cook it? _____

A: Well, they just did it like that, right. And then they scooped it up and gave it to us to eat. Or a beet. They grated the beet, yeah, and they made a soup from it. *Eintop*⁵ (...) In my opinion, a pig wouldn't eat what they gave us to eat there, because it was without fat, unsalted and it was a hodgepodge. Well, and we were happy and when we--when they chased us outside, then we pulled up grass, and we ate that grass. And for that we were beaten.

Q: Who beat you for that? The kapos?

A: Those kapos. (...) However, I don't recall the actual Germans being mean to us.

Q: There were some Germans in Lety? They say that there weren't.

A: Well, so, five, six of them were there. Otherwise, there were police officers there. Yeah, and those police officers beat people. They beat us. Yeah, as soon as they saw that we had eaten grass, we received a beating.

Q: Did you have there...when someone was si--sick, did he have the opportunity to go to a doctor or to lie down or to get better?

A: Not in my opinion.

Q: Did you know someone who became sick at Lety? Did he have to go to work or--

A: To tell you the truth, well, they were glad to go to work because they did not want to get sick because they knew that they would be dead.

Q: If they got sick?

A: If they got sick.

Q: Why?

A: Well, because they would kill them.

Q: When they got sick?

A: When they got sick.

Q: Do you know of a case like this?

A: I do.

Q: Tell us about it.

A: My father actually got typhus there when I was--the late Chládek, that was my uncle, he gave me tea from the kitchen, and I always climbed in there through the little window and I

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gave my dad that tea. Well, and, and since he did not get well quickly--it seems to me that once, that I--that mom gave me some pills, and I gave him these pills. Either it was Chládek or it was my mom. But it seems to me that it was my mom.

Q: You said that two--when they divided you into two sides, two members of your family went to Auschwitz and the rest returned home, right?

A: We returned. Yeah, and grandpa got out of that--he was already in that tran--in that--in that line where there were the Gypsies and he said, "Why are you putting me among those Gypsies? I am wealthy and I am not some Gypsy." So then one man, that German said, "Raus," and he sent him among--they stood him next to dad, and we went home. And those others went into a train, into train cars, and they drove away. And mother was among them.

Q: She returned after the war?

A: She returned after the war.

Q: You said that after the war you lived in comfort. Didn't you ever have problems because people recognized you as Roma or something?

A: As I was telling you, we were in Ky%oice, but we were so assimilated that they liked us, that they did not take us to be Roma.

Q: And when did you leave Ky%oice?

A: We went from Ky%oice straight to the concentration camp when I was eight years old.

Q: And when you returned... you returned to Ky%oice, and then when did you leave Ky%oice?

A: We left Ky%oice for Prague.

Q: When was that?

A: I was about fourteen years old.

Q: And what was life like in Prague? And what were the main differences between life--your life, the life of your, of your family in Ky%oice and in Prague.

A: In my opinion, good.

Q: You didn't have the feeling that you were foreign here or that people didn't like you, that there was some sort of aversion to you? That you had some difficulties that you wouldn't have had if you were a Prager?

A: I don't remember that anymore, but I think I didn't.

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Q: That you didn't. (...) Markus, go ahead.

Markus: What did the surroundings look like when you went for walks? Did you go for walks?

Q: Does this photograph mean something to you?

A: This doesn't mean anything to me.

Markus: The pond?

Q: Near the Lety concentration camp there was a pond where--some say that they went there to wash themselves, to bathe once in awhile.

A: I don't know about that.

Q: You don't remember?

Voice: It looks different today. But you walked in the woods there; what did you see there?

A: I don't remember anymore.

Q: Can we stop it for a moment?

Voice: Yes.

Q: We are stopping.

End of Tape 1

Tape 2

Q: ____ we may. Could you say what you remembered.

A: Once we returned, my father went with grandpa to our house, and I had a mental illness so I went to Bohnice⁶. I was in Bohnice for about a year as a child, then they let me go home. I went to school, and then I went again to Bohnice. So I--and I was also at Myslivečka.

Q: Your illness was connected to your stay in Lety? That's what the doctors told you?

A: Yes.

Q: And do you know what the illness was called? What kind of illness was it?

A: Well, I was crazy, yeah.

Q: And after that you didn't ever have these problems again? Only at that time? When you were older and you returned--did the memories and the illness return?

A: To tell you the truth, innumerable times. We talk together, and then I think for a very long time afterwards about what I said to you. So, it left behind scars.

Q: And do *specific* experiences, memories, incidents from Lety haunt you? Even now?

A: In my sleep.

Q: And what do dream about in such instances?

A: Well, innumerable times I have dreamt about how, for example, I spoke with my mom there, how there I--my father gave me food. Well, I cannot remember, well, the various--and, for instance, many times I've dreamt about something, and I wake up and I have forgotten it.

Q: I want to ask you, can you remember the doctors who were in Lety? Do you remember any of them? Can you picture a face or what they did there, if they were there at all?

A: I remember that once I went to the sick bay, and there I was beaten.

Q: What was wrong with you, why did you go to the sick bay?

A: Somehow my head was hurting or something like that.

Q: Who beat you there and why?

A: The doctors. Instead of giving me some kind of pill — I had some kind of fever. I was getting typhus— well, they beat me and threw me out. Yeah, and after that incident I didn't go there anymore.

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Q: Do you remember the typhus epidemic in Lety?

A: I do remember it. My father was there.

Q: Say something about that. How many people had that illness? [Tell us] whether or not many of them died, whether or not someone cared for them.

A: Well, to tell you the truth almost no one cared for them. They let almost all of them die.

Q: And your father had typhus?

A: My father had it; at the beginning he had typhus and for this reason I brought him pills and I brought tea there to him; in fact I always went there through the window--

Q: As you--

A: So --so I saved his life there.

Q: How did you get a hold of tea and pills?

A: Again, that uncle gave them to me, the one who was also in the kitchen. He cooked.

Q: And how did he get a hold of pills? I can imagine tea, but pills? How?

A: My mom gave me the pills, but how she got a hold of them, I don't know.

Q: Do you remember how they behaved toward girls, for example toward pretty gir--pretty girls_____

A: My mother was--she was a Madonna.

Q: How did the kapos and guard, the police officers, in the camp behave toward her? Didn't they abuse women, or rape them? Did something like this occur there?

A: Please, there is a photo there. Could you please take out that photo. We are there--my mom is there, and me and my brothers are there.

Q: Do you remember whether one of the staff, of the guards, of the police officers in Lety abused the girls there? Do you remember?

A: Once again I will tell you something honestly. I am--I've heard of this [happening], but I don't know if it is true. If a woman was pretty and she could get him into bed, then she had it well off thanks to him.

Q: From whom did you hear that?

A: Well, we children talked about it.

Q: Did one of the children who talked about it, see it happen or did you only hear about it from someone else, from the adults?

(...)

A: [Sighs]

Q: Show us.

A: Well. This here is my mother. Tell me, was she pretty or was she not pretty.

Q: She was pretty.

A: Yes. (...) So (...) This here was my aunt--

Q: Give me the photo. Yes, talk.

A: With my uncle, who--who didn't go to the concentration camp, but in Prague--

Q: Take off your glasses.

A: If you would hang them up there for me please. My uncle and my aunt were in Lysa. They had their own house there. They had horses there; they fed pigs. Once he slaughtered a pig and brought him here to Prague and there was some sort of head officer here, I guess he was a German or I guess he was a police officer, I don't now. And, in short, whatever my uncle wanted he got a hold of. If my deceased mother had not gotten typhus, not become sick with my aunt, then she would have come home with us. This uncle, who is now dead, would have brought her home long before that.

Q: Did he bribe the Germans so that you could get--or someone so that you could get out?

A: No, as I was telling you, he slaughtered a pig and brought it here. And he had enough money, and he also paid people off with this money.

Q: Nothing at all happened to him during the war, right?

A: Not a thing happened to him during the war. We lived there — the children — at his house and we had it good there. There were about 20 of us children there.

Q: I want to ask you, have you told people many times during your life about what it was like in Lety?

A. I haven't told anyone about it until those two and that one were here. When we went outside, I had a halter over there, a sort of small one that you put on horses. He liked it, (so) I

said that I would give it to him as a gift and he said, "I will also give you a gift." To this day I am waiting for that little gift. Do you remember that? Isn't it true?

Q: I'm going to continue asking questions. Do you have any children?

A: I do.

Q: And why haven't you ever told them about Lety?

A: To tell you the truth, I divorced from my wife when Îanda was a year old, and I went away to Germany, so we get together very infrequently. We have gotten together about ten times and when I arrived in Prague from Germany now, he was too mischievous--my son was--so I took him away from here and (then) kicked him out, and now I don't have any contact with him. In fact it is exactly the same as that Englishman, whom I would not allow to come here at all, and on top of that maybe I would even spit in his mouth.

Q: Stop.

Voice: I'm filming.

Q: I want to ask you, tell me something about whether or not people escaped from Lety, if you knew someone who succeeded in doing that? How was it exactly? Life was bad there. Did they escape from there? Did they attempt to escape? Did someone succeed in doing so? Did you know someone who did (...) You don't know whether--about anyone who succeeded in escaping?

A: Well, I'll put it to you this way: it wouldn't be difficult for someone to escape.

Q: Then why didn't someone do it? Why don't you know of anyone who could have done it?

A: Well, because you were scared that they would shoot you right away.

Q: You didn't think about whether or not you could escape from the camp?

A: Well, and where would I run to? To my uncle's home? So that they would kill them and so they would go to a concentration camp? My mom said this to me--I told my mother, "Mama, I am running away to Ed's." And she told me, "Don't let anything like that get into your head, because the police would immediately take Ed, and he would immediately go to a concentration camp, and he would go to the gas chambers."

Q: There were a lot of you in Lety. What were relationships like among you? Did you have friends there? Did you look out for one another? Did you steal food from each other or were

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you kind to each other or what was it like? What were the relationships like between you children and between you and the adults, for example?

A: We never were among adults at all and (...) and the children didn't talk to me because they were angry at me for being full when they were hungry.

Q: Because your dad was in the kitchen, right?

A: My dad was in the kitchen, and my mom had a good position there. And because mom was--my mom was extremely beautiful and she was a Madonna, and later she said to us there that in Auschwitz there were again only Germans, and she worked there--in Auschwitz, they brought, they brought to--to the building--they brought a pot with food, with that Eintopf (and) bread and mom gave it--ga--she distributed it. She was like a type of kapo in the women's barracks. Well, and that is what saved her. That is what also saved my aunt.

Q: And you didn't share with your friends when you had extra food and they, for example, had less?

A: Well I was glad, so I ate it somewhere in a corner--there in the kitchen for example--and I didn't bring anything (back).

Q: Tell me, did you know at the time of the war, did you know what was happening to Roma in the Czech lands? Whether somewhere--whether they were--whether you knew about the concentration camp in Hodonín⁷ or whether you knew something about Auschwitz or whether you knew at all that there were people somewhere who were in the same situation as you? Somewhere else outside of Lety?

A: To tell you the truth, I became sick in the head there so really I didn't go immediately from there to my deceased (Uncle) Ráãek's, and they immediately sent me to Bohnice.

Q: And one last thing. After the war, did you meet with acquaintances, close friends? Did you speak at some point about what happened before the war, what you experienced, what others experienced in different camps?

A: They were my uncles and they are all already dead, and they did not want to talk about that.

Q: They didn't want to?

A: No.

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Q: And where were they?

A: Well, they had their houses here. Most of the time they drove around to fairs--

Q: During the war--during the war were they in some other concentration camp oth--other than Lety, was someone in your family (in a different camp)?

A: They were.

Q: Where?

A: In Buchenwald.

Q: And not even those who were in Buchenwald and survived wanted to speak about it with you after the war, to talk about how it was there, what they did there, what they experienced there, what they saw there? No?

A: Well, they didn't want to speak to me because they thought that I was crazy.

Q: And did they speak among themselves about it sometime? Were you ever present at such a time?

A: I don't know. They talked about it only when they were drunk. Then they talked about it from what I heard.

Q: And did you ever see some wagons around the cam--around the camp at Lety?

A: I understand you 100% al--the way you put it, there were no wagons there except for that one there, which belonged to some Jano%ovsk~ — he was my uncle, he was the father of the one whom they hung on that post. And that wagon they placed in the camp, that one, and they threw the corpses on it. And otherwise, when, for example a transport arrived, then they brought them into the school, there in Tere--in that—well, there where we were in that camp.

Q: In Lety.

A: In Lety, in Lety. They put them there, in the school and from the school they [then] brought them into Lety. And from what I've heard, then they immediately burned the wagons there, and they gave the horses to the farmers who showed up there.

Q: Did you see some truck there in the woods? A small truck?

A: No. No.

Q: And the corpses, right, they threw all of them into a pit or did they, for example, make a fire too or simply burn them?

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A: No. No, no, no, no. Into the pit, and they threw it on them.

Q: Lime. You talked about that.

A: Lime. And then they buried them and that was the end of it.

Q: Stop.

Voice: We're filming.

Q: Do you remember whether some child was born in Lety, whether children were born there? Were there newborns--newborns there?

A: As for my family, some, well a chi--rather, the child was already something like a year old and that man — he was either a German or a kapo — he crushed her little head.

Q: I'll ask you once again. Do you remember if in Lety — right in Lety — a child was ever born ?

A: I don't think so.

Q: You don't remember, do you?

A: I don't remember.

Q: And now I want to ask you: people there were terribly hungry; so what did they do to improve their lot? What did they do to obtain food? What were they capable of doing for food? Do you remember?

A: Of killing a person.

Q: And did this ever happen, that they killed a person over food?

A: Yeah.

Q: Did you hear or see this?

A: I didn't see it because it was outside the camp.

Q: And what did you hear?

A: That they, since there in the quarry--they went to the quarry to work--that someone died there so they put him on this kind of stretcher and carried him to the camp. And we children watched that, how they carried him there. And after each time, after each time, one, two (bodies)—

Q: They brought back.

A: They brought back.

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Q: Do you remember if someone was willing to steal something for the sake of food, to risk some sort of punishment, to take from someone____friendship or such?

A: No. No. Friends didn't have anything so you couldn't steal anything from them. With the exception of my frie--my cousin, Tonda Simerval Jano%ovsk~, well he dug a tunnel into that supply house.

Q: And for that reason they hung him up.

A: And for that reason they hung him up on that post.

Q: Now I want to ask you, did you sometimes have the opportunity to take a walk in the area surrounding the Lety camp?

A: (Doing) that didn't even come into consideration.

Q: You didn't know at all what was around the camp?

A: Well, from the periphery of the camp, they always chased us out of there.

Q: Where to?

A: There on the grass, well and there is where we pulled up grass and ate it or some beet when one grew there or such. He saw us doing this, then he immediately began to kick us, immediately he began to beat us. But he wasn't a German, he was that--that

Voice: Police officer?

A: Not a police officer. Also not a police officer. He was one of those from that--also a prisoner but above us.

Q: Above you. So in fact you, you cannot say that you know the area surrounding the Lety camp from the time of your stay in Lety.

A: No.

Q: No.

A: But from what I know, the police officers there weren't bad.

Q: I want to ask you, have you ever gone to look at Lety since after the war, so that you could per--so that you could see the place where you spent some time as a child? Were you there at some point?

A: To tell you the truth, when I went to Bohnice I drove with my wife there to show it to her, and I said, "You see, the Communists are swine. Then they--a concentration camp was at that

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place. There are people buried in the ground there, and those buildings weren't there at all, and they made--there was some kind of pig farm there.

Q: When was that? When did you go there—go with your wife?

A: It was—I will tell you exactly — in eight—in the year 1970.

Q: That was your first time there?

A: In 1970. In seventy-one, in seventy-one or seventy-two.

Q: Since then you haven't been back there?

A: I haven't been there since then.

Q: Do you know that a monument was unveiled there in the presence of the president in 1993 or-- 1993?

Voice: five--

Q: In 1995.

A: No, I haven't been there since that time.

Q: But did you hear about this, that there--

A: I saw on television how he laid--how they laid wreaths there.

Q: What occurred to you, what did you--what came to mind when you saw on television how they laid wreaths there?

A: I started to cry for no reason at all, and I turned off the television. Because many of my aunts, my uncles are bur--are buried there.

Q: Did you receive some compensation for having been in a concentration camp? For having had an illness that you most likely got in the camp? Simply, did you receive compensation now, or at anytime, for the time you spent in the Lety camp?

A: 20,000 [Czech crowns] here⁸.

Q: You received 20,000.

A: Yeah. That was some four years (ago).

Q: Four years ago you received 20,000.

Q: Nothing else? Never anything else?

A: Never anything else.

Q: Stop.

Q: When you arrived at the camp, what did you have with you, and what did they take from you?

A: They let us keep what we had on. First of all they took us to that school, like I told you, and from the school they placed us in that camp. And the entire—there was nothing around there.

Q: OK, but what did they take from you, like---did you have suitcases with you or some other clothing or--

A: Definitely, we had those things, but everything stayed in that school.

Q: And did they give those things back to you?

A: As far as I know, no.

Q: And what kind of clothing did the others have on?

A: Normal (clothing), like any other person.

Q: And when women arrived there at the camp, what did they do with them? I mean, on the first day. How did they welcome them or what did they do with them?

A: Into a line. The commander there had this kind of hanging, this kind of thing, and he had a list and when he named them, then each had to step out of the line, and when you stepped out of the line, then automatically that second one — he wasn't—he was the kapo — he said, "Run over there and then there into that barrack."

Q: And the women I guess had long hair?

A: It—their hair was cut off immediately.

Q: Right at the beginning?

A: Right at the beginning.

Q: In other words they looked lik--they had short hair and--

A: Bald, yeah. With a little shaver, and they were bald.

Q: Could you wash yourself somewhere?

A: We could in the morning in cold water, without soap, without anything, and then right away, quickly back to--

Q: And where did you wash?

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A: It was a sort of trough.

Q: Yeah there was a trough there, and a lot of pigs since the commander—that Janovsky—had a garden there and he had animals there.

A: We didn't see that. We couldn't go there.

Q: And that garden--did you ever see his garden?

A: There, we couldn't go there.

Q: And (did you see) his family? He had a daughter, a little girl there.

A: We couldn't see them.

Q: Well. And what—were there some workshops there or rather, did you, for example, make there some--did some prisoners make clothing? For example tailors? Or were there workshops there for boots, footwear and—

A: I didn't see anything like that in Lety.

Q: What was your daily program like? How did you wake up, what did you do?

A: Well, to tell you the truth, there were these sort of bunk beds there, one above the other. There was this thin, there was straw about this high I guess. You were issued a blanket, yeah, and these blankets, whenever it was cold the children stole the blankets from one another. Well, and the intelligent children, we covered ourselves in such a way that perhaps three of us slept under the two or three blankets.

Q: And could you go outside at night when you had to [go to the bathroom]?

A: No way, not at all. That idea didn't cross our minds.

Q: And when someone simply had to go?

A: Well, then there was this sort of bucket there, so we went in that bucket. There were doors there — on the right there was one room, on the left there was another room, and straight ahead there was this sort of half-sized room, where there was one bed and that is where he was, the kapo, and the kapo slept there.

Q: And what did you hear at night?

A: Crying.

Q: And did you sing?

A: Come on, really.

Q: No one was allowed to sing anything?

A: They were allowed to, but come on.

Q: No. I mean at night like when people cried?

A: Yeah, you were allowed to si--you could sing.

Q: I mean those--

A: But who would sing?

Q: Old women when they wept, they mourned. Old Gypsy women have these kinds of songs for mourning.

A: Yeah. That happened during the day. But, well, in Gypsy language, I didn't understand them. And they sort of prayed, that was their song. Understand this, when I arrived here in the year 1945, I came immediately to—here in Vinohrady⁹--to--it was sort of a half madhouse-- what was it called? I don't remember what it was called. And then, I went to a madhouse, and I have been there about three or four times, and they took away from me part of my rights, they took away from me, so (...) because I was sick. Well, but then my uncle pulled me out of there, and then I became friends with my cousins, so I got out of that situation.

Q: You were--

Voice O.K. _____

Conclusion of interview.

¹Lety is the name of a village in Southern Bohemia where a concentration camp for Roma was located. Approximately 1,256 people passed through the camp; 326 died there and others were transported from Lety to Auschwitz. In recent years, the name Lety has appeared in the media; a large pig farm is located partially on the site of the former camp, and protesters are demanding its removal.

²Terezín is the Czech name for Theresienstadt.

³This is apparently his last name.

⁴The speaker repeats the word because he is unsure of the case ending.

⁵Literally in German this means "one kettle," but it is also the name of a dish where usually meat, onions and potatoes along with other vegetables are thrown together in a pot and cooked for a long time.

⁶Bohnice is a mental hospital in the outskirts of Prague.

⁷A Nazi concentration camp that was mainly for Romani prisoners and was located in Moravia. Approximately 1,396 prisoners were held here; 207 died at the camp and 855 were sent to Auschwitz.

⁸At the time of this translation, 20,000 Czech crowns is worth approximately \$571US.

⁹Vinohrady is a district of Prague.