Interview with Antonín Hlaváček

June 20, 1997
Antonín Hlaváček  
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Question: Mr. Hlaváčku, good day.

Answer: Good day.

Q: Could you be so kind as to introduce yourself and inform us where you were born and tell us about your childhood?

A: My name is Hlaváček Antonín. I was born on October 11, 1926 in Kaliště, district of Písek. I come from a nine member family, with a father, mother, and seven offspring. I went to school in Ratiborskejch horách in Tábor. After that, I continued my studies in Opatovic nad Labem, where I stayed a year. At that time, at the start of February in 1943, they started to pick out which of us were darker, and took us to Let.

Q: Let us slow down a bit. Did your parents or dad work somewhere?

A: Yes he did.

Q: What was his function?

A: He worked in a factory.

Q: He worked in a factory.

A: In Tábor.

Q: Did you all live together somewhere at some point?

A: Yes, all together.

Q: In a house?

A: Yes.

Q: Did you go to a Czech school?

A: Yes.
Q: Why did you then go to a reformatory?
A: Why? Because I was a bad boy, that’s why.

Q: A hooligan?
A: Yes, a hooligan.

Q: Were you the oldest of your brothers and sisters?
A: No. Somewhere in the middle.

Q: You said that, in 1943, you moved to Lety, but wasn’t it in 1942?
A: No, no, no, no.

Q: Only until 1943?
A: Yes, in 1943, but I was there only a short time.

Q: Wait a second. So how did it happen then that you moved to Lety? Did they come for you or did they --
A: No, protectorate gendarmes escorted us.

Q: The whole family?
A: Not the entire family. My parents were not there, they were at home. I was by myself.

Q: So where did they take you from?
A: From Opatovic nad Labem.

Q: Did they have any authorization to do this or did they just go get you?
A: They did not have any authority. They just simply came to get rid of gypsies and Jews, anyone who was kinda dark. For example, there were the Procházka boys, and Zikmund, who were no gypsies. There were eight of us darkies in all who were taken from Opatovic.
Q: I guess none of you expected anything like this to happen. It must have seemed abrupt to you.
A: It certainly did.
Q: They just simply came without warning?
A: Yes. They went and visited about three months beforehand, and then no one knew anything about me after that.
Q: What did they take you away in?
A: In some kind of smaller and barred car. We were taken away in those uniforms, the kind of uniforms we wore in Opatovice. In those pumps and that blouse.
Q: So they just took you out of that institution in that way to Lety.
A: There were eight of us, yes.
Q: Eight boys. And that camp was already set up when you got there?
A: Yes. We were isolated on this sort of block.
Q: The eight of you were isolated?
A: The eight of us, yes.
Q: Interesting.
A: After a month, they then moved us to Pardubice to an old Sokolovna exercise club for youngsters where they brought in Gypsies from Brno, from Hodonine, all over, until there was, I don’t know how many exactly. I was only a boy. Then they loaded us into pig wagons and hauled us off to Ostrava, where the Germans took over control of us.
Q: Did you not get out from --?
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A: No, no. We got out and went in a normal train. I don’t know. There were families with kids. The younger kids were thirsty. Then there came this..., I don’t know what position he held, but...

Yes, a German he was, and he sent two to carry buckets of water. Then we waited about two hours in Ostrava. From Ostrava, they then moved us to Birkenau, or Ausschwitz. Osvetim was after all a wooden camp.

Q: Yes.

A: From there, we went on foot.

Q: So you arrived to the Osvetim train station and then you went on foot.

A: From there we went on foot.

Q: Was the train full of people?

A: The whole trip.

Q: Only Gypsies?

A: Yes, only Gypsies.

Q: Yes.

A: No one else. We saw women carrying sand from one pile to another and back again, running back and forth.

Q: Did you know when you were in Lety to where you would be taken?

A: No. They told us that they would be taking us to work in Germany. No one knew anything.

Q: And how was your arrival in Osvetim?

A: (Laughter/sneer).

Q: Explain it a little.
A: German shepherds, dogs - they forced everyone out of the train.

Q: Did you have any luggage with you?

A: I did not have anything. I came from a reformatory, so all we had was what they gave us there. I never had anything anywhere else; nothing.

Q: Yes.

A: From there, we went on foot to ________. That was in March and I lost my boots ---

Q: Lost?

A: Lost, in the mud. Then they forced us to some block.

Q: That was already Birkenau?

A: It was… Osvětim.

Q: So to Osvětimi it was then.

A: Yes, to Osvětimi.

Q: To where were those wooden, constructed, brick buildings.

A: Yes, no, they were wooden.

Q: Wooden.

A: There were barracks in Birkenau. Used to be Polish, no? Then they forced us to some block, where they did nothing with us, at least for four days.

Q: Did they give you any food?

A: Yes, they gave us food, if you could call it that. But everyone was so scared they did not feel like eating at all.

Q: Did they shave your heads?

A: No, not at that time. Only once they issued us numbers, using ink pens for the old and the young.
Those who were able a bit, then those pins for tattooing. That’s how they gave us numbers.

Q: Can you show us your number?
A: Wait, well, I am very tanned now you see, so - -

Q: I see it a little. What number is it? Can you tell us?
A: 1996.
Q: Yes.
A: Can you see it?
Q: A little.
A: So can I hide it again?
Q: Yes.
A: (Sneer).

Q: So you got there, and four days nothing. How did they treat you? Were there any superiors there or were you just among yourselves?
A: Just ourselves. There were bunk beds, in stacks of three, with stairs kind of. Yes. Perhaps 24 would sleep in one bunk. Yes. There was an oven on one side which led out through a chimney through the wooden side, with smoke coming out the other. That’s how they heated up the place. We were not allowed to drink water there.

Q: Because there was no drinking water available?
A: No. Because, apparently, the Polish poisoned the water while retreating. The well was - - We had to wait until it rained and that was all we drank.
Q: Yes.
A: Then they gave us those numbers. Those for whom they used ink pens went on one side and those on whom they tattooed the numbers were on another.

Q: So there was some selection process?
A: Yes, yes, yes, yes. Some sorting system.

Q: A sorting system.
A: They must have known that -- Because many died there.

Q: Okay. So you were four days in Osvetim, if I understand this well.
A: Yes.

Q: Yes. And after those four days they -- and did they give you some clothes? Or did you remain in those you came in?
A: No, we were still in those we came in, in our civilian clothes.

Q: Yes.
A: Until later, there came this basically Stubenältester (Shtubinist, ph.) who gave out food. Then there was Kapo, Lagerkapo a Oberkapo. Yes.

Q: Yes.
A: Obrkapo was the one who led the camp.

Q: Were those people from your own gang or were they already there when you came?
A: No, they were there already; mostly Poles, Germans, separated by various means. We wore black Winkel <triangle shaped colored concentration camp clothes>, which meant less intense work. Then there were those with green Winkel, who were murderers, put in such and such functions. The red were the politicians. The Jews had these like ______ stars with a cross across it. Each of the races and nationalities were labeled with some Winkel.
Q: Yes.

A: Then they went there - - . After those six days, those who were able went to work. They were the so-called - - . I did the so-called Kartoffelkommando (ph), in the bunkers where potatoes were taken.

Q: And before then, like you said, those first few days, were the men and women together?

A: All of us were together.

Q: All together. Was that in a Gypsy camp?

A: Yes, in a Gypsy camp.

Q: I see.

A: All of us together.

Q: Families, males, females - all of you were in one building together.

A: All in one block. The train load which they brought were divided into two blocks because we would not have all fit into one block.

Q: Yes, you would not have fit. Were you forced to bath as well?

A: Yes, and then they shaved us totally.

Q: When you got those numbers, did they then bath and shave you?

A: Yes. Shaved us. There was this bucket there in which there was a brush. They always wet our heads before _______. And then some kind of disinfectant or something.

Q: Yes. And did that apply to men, women and children - all?

A: No, not the women.

Q: Only those who were selected as in condition to work?

A: Those who were chosen as capable of working.
Q: Those who had the tattooed, real numbers?
A: Yes, yes, those who were able to work.
Q: Yes.
A: And they had an interesting, special habit. When you went to work, brass band music would be playing and a girl in a white dress would be standing there. Totally dressed in white. And when we were leaving work, in a red dress, once again with the brass band music playing.
Q: Where? On the podium where the music was playing?
A: Where the main exit out was, at the main gates, which is at each of the camps. I don’t know if there were four or five of those camps, or maybe six of those cellars (slip of the tongue), blocks, and at each there was a main gate. He got the order for example that 200 of us are to go to work, of which let’s say a hundred had to go back. Those so-called plow-boys, those fararbajtr (ph.), they already had their people who would bump anybody off who could not put out.
Q: What kind of work did you do?
A: I was with those who were handling the potatoes.
Q: Yes.
A: We were in these kind of halls.
Q: So I guess they didn’t manage to kill someone there or something? That was easier work?
A: Also.
Q: Really?
A: Also. Yes.
Q: For example, if he didn’t like someone, he just punished them or something?
A: Yes, they had... they thrashed them with the shaft of their shovels. I mean, we both know quite well that some 6,000,000 died there, no?

Q: That means the morning after assembly or when you went to work?

A: Yes, after assembly, yes.

Q: After the assembly.

A: Yes.

Q: How long did you have to work for?

A: About 12 or 13 hours.

Q: Did you get any food during that time? At work?

A: We didn’t get anything at all. Nothing. There was definitely a certain advantage in the halls because there was a Pole there with a green Winkel, basically it was run by the Kapo <supervisor>. So basically they just let us boil our potatoes.

Q: Yes. And otherwise, those Kapos you just talked about, the hierarchy of the individuals - - . How did they treat you? Do you remember anyone in particular?

A: Yes. I remember one person in particular because I was looking for him in Prague, but I found out he was already dead. He was also a Gypsy, who led things there.

Q: Why did you look for him? Did you want to punish him in some way?

A: Yes. He cost a lot of people their lives.

Q: Did he beat them or something?

A: Bumped them off, yes he did.

Q: On the block?

A: On the block and - -

Q: Outside also.
A: At work as well.

Q: These Kapos, did they go to work as well? Were they with you there?

A: Yes. He had his own office, and the Vorarbeiter (ph) were like a foreman in the plant or something. Such commandos had perhaps 200 people under him and there were about 30 of those Forarbeiters, yes. They had their own special food, got white bread, butter, and we got bread which was practically baked on like sawdust. They were long wheat, kilo bread broken into six parts.

Q: You said there was a Jewish camp next to you. Did you have the opportunity to somehow talk with them through the fence?

A: No, because every night there was a count and no-one was allowed to leave the block. If someone was found missing, he could have been shot. Also because the fence was electrocuted.

Q: The children and women who did not go to work, were they allowed to leave the block during the day and walk freely?

A: Yes, they could have, but only in front of the block.

Q: Yes, only in front of the block.

A: In front of the block.

Q: Were they allowed to go to the washroom?

A: This is how the washroom (toilet) was: where the smoke came out of the chimney there was this sort of a latrine. There was this barrel there, across which there was a plank of wood. But you couldn’t get to it for 14 days because, when someone died, they threw them there. When there was a larger number, they then came and loaded them up. Many were dying there.
Q: Were you in the camp, … no, there was something different I wanted to ask you.

Did you know or, since when did you know, what Osvetim means? That people get gassed there? Did you know that?

A: We didn’t know that because, when we got there, the crematoriums were underground. Only the smokestacks were showing. We were told that factories were there and that they bake bread.

Q: Yes.

A: But we found out soon enough. Within a month. Then trainload after trainload would come, with the train tracks going right up to it. The screams we heard were terrible because there were children, above all children with their mothers - all to the gas chambers.

Q: Were you able to see the train loads right to the end?

A: Yah, we were able to see them.

Q: Yes.

A: We were able to see from the Gypsy block.

Q: Did other Gypsies arrive to the Gypsy camp?

A: No more people came there.

Q: But your trainload came there - -

A: Our trainload was full - there were enough people on it.

Q: You spent most of your time at work. Did you go to work daily?

A: Yes, daily.

Q: Saturday, Sunday, all the time?

A: Yes, Saturday, Sunday, all the time.

Q: You didn’t even get Sunday off?
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A: Nope.

Q: No. And in the camp, those who you referred to as not having to work, who had some free time. They must have had some private time or perhaps the kids had the opportunity to play a little?

A: They were only allowed to play on the block.

Q: On the block. Only on the block. Yes. How long did you stay there in the end?

A: I was there three months.

Q: From the spring of 1943?

A: From March. I know exactly. It was from the ninth of March until the end of April.

Q: Until the end of April.

A: Yes, until the end of April.

Q: Of 1943.

A: Yes.

Q: So, before we continue, let us return to some matters. On the one hand, you were talking about looking for that one Kapa after the war. Do you happen to remember his name? Because he was generally behaving badly?

A: Yes, generally.

Q: Yes. You were also mentioning how you were throwing the dead into the latrine.

You saw it yourself, this - -

A: Yes, when someone died, they dragged him off to there.

Q: Yes.

A: They left them in a pile until there was a larger number of them. Mostly the children and women were dying.
Q: Why were they dying. Were they sick or dying of hunger?
A: Mostly hunger I would say because, for example, the children were not able to
drink milk. They weren’t allowed to get any of those kinds of goodies.
Q: When someone got sick, for example a fever or diarrhea or something, did some nurse come?
A: Well, let me just tell you what happened to me. We were not allowed to drink
water. I did drink some and my legs bloated immensely. It turned out that there
was a hospital after all, also a wooden block, in front of the crematorium, and that
is where they put me.
Q: In the ward.
A: Yes, and there was a doctor there, a Jew, who said, “Hlaváček, Hlaváček”,
because he was not allowed to announce himself by his own name.
Q: By a number.
A: Yes, only by his number. He also came from Ratiborsky Hory. He saved my life.
Q: How?
A: Well, because he said that - - put me back to health _______ my legs were still
swelling, - - So, one day I walked out of there and the next day they burned down
the entire hospital.
Q: And he certainly knew this was going to happen.
A: Yes, he knew it was going to happen.
Q: So, even though you were sick, he sent you back.
A: Yes, he sent me back.
Q: Did he tell you this?
A: Yes, he told me.

Q: You were also talking about that chimney going through the building.

A: Yes.

Q: And that it was heated on one side and smoke came out the other and that it was truly being heated there.

A: Well, I wouldn't say it was heated in there. They heated it a bit in the evening, perhaps an hour, or an hour and a half, and that was it.

Q: In the beginning, you were talking about how they divided all of you up, giving some of you numbers with an ink pen and others with a real, tattooed number. Who was it that did this? Who was making the divisions?

A: There was a doctor there who had the position of some kind of a major.

Q: It was an SS (ph.), in black?

A: SS (ph.), no, SS (ph.) no

Q: No?

A: No.

Q: **Wehrmacht**, green?

A: Yes, yes, yes, yes.

Q: And you had to walk in front of him?

A: Yes. We had to strip down to raw in front of him. He searched us, telling one to go there, the other there, etc. etc.

Q: Women, men, all of you were made to strip down and walk before him naked?

A: Yes. Small children not though. They knew that they - -

Q: Yes, they walked through automatically.
A: They went straight into the gas chambers.

Q: Yes. It sometimes happened that you met a - - Sometimes officers, Germans, higher ranking officers, or maybe commanders would pass through there?

A: I did not have the opportunity to see any of that.

Q: Mostly the Kapas would see that.

A: A Kapo would watch over a block, a Oberkapo (slip of the tongue) Lagerkapo would watch over the entire camp, and the so-called plow-boys <Pohunkovy> watched over the camp.

Q: Yes. And when they were dividing up the people, did they also divide up the food? Those functionaries?

A: No. That was the one who led the entire block. The Shtubinist (ph).

Q: Yes.

A: Yes. He was in charge of the food.

Q: Yes. And do you feel that they were handing out the food in a just manner or - -

A: (Sneering) One cannot even use such a word there. There, you got a turnip, two unpeeled potatoes, and that was it.

Q: And that’s all you got when you came back from work?

A: Yes.

Q: Yes. And when you went to the latrines away from the barracks, did you all go together or were you allowed to go each separately?

A: Each of us went alone but none of us could go out. It had to be inside within the block.

Q: In the block.

A: At the end of the block, yes.
Q: And at night?
A: Same thing.

Q: The same way. Yes. Then you mentioned that, after those three months, you went, or -- we'll come back to that later. That there was also some kind of division or was it automatically according to the tattooed number you had?
A: No. We had to go before the doctor again.

Q: The doctor came again.
A: Again.

Q: So all of you had to go before him again - -
A: To undress again so that he could once again examine us, putting some here, others there.

Q: Did he really examine them or just kind of quickly look them over?
A: Only on our bodies, on our bodies, as - -

Q: If someone was strong - -
A: If someone is strong, or weak.

Q: Yes. Were there people there who were very weak after those three months?
A: There were many of those.

Q: Did you meet any of your friends or relatives when you came there?
A: No, because my parents and all my relatives stayed back home.

Q: Were you able to maintain some relationship with them?
A: No.

Q: No. You weren’t allowed to write any letter?
A: No. No one knew anything about me until after the war. No one at all.
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Q: They did not know that you - -
A: No, not at all. Not whether or not I was alive, not at all.

Q: Did you live in the camp for your self or did you have some friends or a group of 
   friends which you were with?
A: Well, I was with those Prochazka and Zikmund boys which I came with.

Q: Yes. You had your little gang, so to speak?
A: Yes we did. We held together.

Q: Did you help one another?
A: Yes.

Q: Like - - can you give me an example?
A: Like for example when..., with the Germans, there was this excellent thing that 
   when someone stole someone else's small portion of bread, they killed him. Even 
   though he had little and took someone else's, then he was just simply put to 
   death.

Q: Who killed him?
A: Again, those - -

Q: Those who were there in jail together with you?
A: Yes, them.

Q: Like how? Like they threw a blanket over him and…
A: Yah, some way - -

Q: … they found a way. Did you ever fear for your life at that time?
A: I did not fear dying.

Q: No?
A: No.

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Q: Did it not occur to you that - -
A: No.

Q: That something similar could have happened to - -
A: No.

Q: No. Because you didn’t know that that Gypsy camp was going to get wiped out at a later point?
A: That I did not know. That is true.

Q: Therefore, when they later picked you out, when they made that next selection, after those three months or exactly in April of 1943, what happened then?
A: That is when we moved on to Auschwitz, to that Birkenau.

Q: From Birkenau you then went on to that first camp - -
A: To that first, to those barracks, the Polish barracks.

Q: Yes. About how many of you were moved there?
A: About 40 - -

Q: About 40 from the entire Lager?
A: No, only from that block.

Q: From the block you were in?
A: Yes, from that block.

Q: Also with some of the women?
A: No, no.

Q: Only men?
A: Only men.

Q: Did someone come from you or - -
A: They started gathering us up again. Basically loaded us up and took us over there.

Q: And where did you go to? In that Auschwitz, in that base camp?

A: Well, we got there - - , first, they put in this school and explained us how to put up walls and everything and then the next day they put us right into construction.

Q: I see. Did they then give you some new clothes, seeing - -

A: That is when we got those striped clothes.

Q: At this opportunity when they moved you.

A: Yes, at this occasion.

Q: So you were in this sort of brick laying school?

A: Yah, it was practical in a way. They just told us how to do things and then they just put us on the construction site.

Q: What did you build? Practice walls or something?

A: No, no, we were repairing.

Q: Your own camp or something else?

A: Yes, our own camp.

Q: Did you also have to leave the camp grounds?

A: Not outside the camp.

Q: No. Did you ever have some opportunity to find out what was happening outside the camp walls, such as the war situation?

A: Not at that time.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: And were living conditions better there than in the Gypsy camp?
A: Much better. We slept on beds, iron ones three on top of one another, and blankets.

Q: You didn’t get to have blankets in the Gypsy camp?
A: There were those bunks and blankets only.

Q: And blankets. So iron beds one on top of one another.
A: Yes, yes, yes.

Q: Were there straw mattresses there already?
A: Yes, there were straw mattresses.

Q: Straw mattresses and blankets?
A: Yes, blankets.

Q: But forward - - the point is, you only had the one set of clothes to wear.
A: Yes, only one set. One set.

Q: Yes, so, day or night, only one set of clothes.
A: Yes.

Q: And then with - - there were only one set of clothes there as well?
A: As well. Day and night.

Q: Tell me, was there any particular incidences with those clothes? How did it work?
A: Well - -

Q: How long did it take?
A: They pushed us out into the courtyard and then the one in charge of the block, his little heathens added up how many of us there were and then he would yell out:
“Achtung, Mützen ab!”, which means “hats off!” Then the main guy came out, put everything in order, told us to get going and we had to get back into the barracks.

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Whoever didn’t move their ass at that point got it with some baton or stick.

Q: Yes. Did it ever happen that someone happened to escape from Osvetim?
A: Well, we heard of such cases, but - -

Q: It never happened from your own block?
A: No, never.

Q: Not even in Osvetim, while you were there.
A: Doubt it. No, I’d say no.

Q: How many of you were there? Were there less of you in the block in Osvetim?
A: Are you talking now about the brick laying camp?
Q: Yes, there.
A: That was a two story building.
Q: Yes. But I am referring to that one room.
A: There were 20 of us in that room.
Q: 20, then from this point of view alone it was much better.
A: Yes, it was.

Q: Did you have the opportunity to wash yourselves there sometime?
A: Yes, there was.

Q: Was there a sink perhaps.
A: Yes there was.

Q: And in the Gypsy camp?
A: Well, we washed there, every - -
Q: Was there also a sink of some sort there?
A: Yes there was. There was this green trough into which water was poured.
Q: So water ran into that trough?

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A: Yes, water ran into it.
Q: Yes, so there was the option.
A: It was possible to wash there, but sometimes we were not allowed to drink the water.
Q: Oh yah. There was one other question I forgot to ask you about the Gypsy camp. Maybe I’ll go back to a previous point, but how was it between the people there? It must have been terrible conditions after all - cramped conditions, children, adults, everything happening in the open. What were the relations between people like there, between the prisoners.
A: I think we got along there to a certain degree.
Q: So you got along to a degree.
A: Yes. Sometimes the older ones who got a piece of bread would give it to one of the children because they knew that parents, after all, can handle more than the youngsters can.
Q: Yes. Did the children sometimes cry?
A: Yes. As you might think, out of hunger.
Q: Were there also children there without parents?
A: No, I did not see any of that.
Q: So they only brought children who had parents?
A: Yes, only with parents.
Q: So now we’re back at the base camp. You would go to work there at more regular
times or was it like a robot factory also?
A: The work would vary a lot.

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Q: It would vary a lot, but it would be every day.
A: Yes, every day.

Q: And they would always send you somewhere else where it was necessary.
A: Yes, yes.

Q: Was there some foreman there or something?
A: Yes, he walked with us.

Q: It was also a jail though?
A: Yes, a jail too.

Q: Did you ever have the opportunity to meet any civilians, such as a Pole?
A: No.

Q: No. Not even during that work to where you went?
A: No.

Q: No - - Can you think of any interesting story that happened to you there, be it
there in the Gypsy camp or later here, which would be worth - -
A: Yes, for example, it happened to me with that doctor, as I already said - -

Q: And how’s that?
A: You know, from that doctor, that he pulled me out of - -

Q: Yes.
A: But later, in Auschwitz, I can’t think of any.

Q: That doctor, did you know his name?
A: No.
Q: No, but did you get to know him, or meet him at a later date?

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A: No, cause he died there.

Q: He died there?

A: Yes, he was a Jew.

Q: Yes, but some of those people also got to work here, even some of the Jews.

A: No, he was doing as a doctor _____ in secret, because – there was an interesting thing there, which I would like to get back to - -

Q: Yes.

A: There was a commando there who would burn. After those three months, they - -

then the new ones would have to burn those, yah - -

Q: The Sonderkommando (ph.).

A: Yes, yes, so that no information would get out. The entire - -, what was happening there. I know we were told that they got a towel and soap, that they went to take baths. The place was sealed and instead of water there was poured gas.

Q: But in this same manner, the rest were gassed as well?

A: Yes. So I know that those - - Still there, in Osvetim, I know that the old from other camps went there on foot to the crematorium. Those who knew that they soon will die. They went there on their own.

Q: Yes.

A: And I also forgot to tell you that there was that thrust from - - back in 1943, those Polish Jews, German Jews, French Jews, basically all those chosen by the Germans - six transports daily. And then the crematoriums were not even enough, so they made those pits, surrounded by those birches. This all happened at night,
between two and three in the morning, and the dogs would all force them down in there. I did not see this myself. I myself cannot - -

Q: That they did not gas them but burned them alive?
A: No, they didn’t even have the time to burn them.

Q: They didn’t even have time to burn them?
A: No - -

Q: We then had to - - those dead - -
A: _____

Q: Besides in the crematorium, they also used fire to burn them?
A: They were insane, totally insane. They lost their nerves so much that they sometimes jumped in there themselves.
Q: So, we last ended with you telling us how, although you yourself did not see it, how they, some of them, jumped themselves into the fire. That they were insane. You heard about that, it was talked about, yet you yourself did not see it?
A: No. I did not see it myself.

Q: No. But I would like to return to those - - in that Gypsy camp, even though it is also interesting in that other camp. The conditions of those Kapo who lived with you in the barracks was better than yours?
A: Yes.

Q: How?
A: Yes, how. They ate better food, such as butter and white bread.

Q: And accommodation?
A: They lived separately.

Q: They lived in the same - -
A: On the same block, but - -

Q: Was it separated somehow?
A: Separated and nicely furnished.

Q: And they lived each on their own?
A: Yes, each on their own.

Q: And when you were talking about when someone stole a piece of bread or something like that, that they would kill them. Did it happen often? Or was it a singular case, such as at your block?
A: I only remember about that one particular case.
Q: So, only one?
A: Yes, only one.

Q: And did you partake in this in any way?
A: No. None of the prisoners would kill any of the other prisoners.

Q: No?
A: Those, the *shtabinists* (ph.), - -

Q: The Stubendienst (*shtúdinast*, ph.), he killed him?
A: Yes. The one who handed out the food. He had one room as his responsibility.

That was _______ further more, yes, each, let us say, had one floor, because, as you might imagine, each of the barracks had room for 12, no, nine, no. Yes, so each of them had one room as his responsibility.

Q. Yes.
A: Held everything under control, about giving out food.

Q: So they did this. And I feel a little silly asking this, on such a detail, but did they beat him to death right in the barracks or did they take them out first?
A: Directly in the barracks.

Q: Yes. And what did the other prisoners say about this? Did they agree with it?
A: Well, they couldn’t say anything about it because all of us were too scared.

Q: Certainly - - but, I don’t mean like that but - -
A: Well, later on, between themselves, they - -

Q: Yes.
A: But otherwise, to offer any sort of resistance, that - -

Q: Simply wasn’t possible.
A: Was simply inconceivable.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: Let us say the slightest bit of resistance, such as an internal resistance. I don’t mean to directly stand up against the Kapo but that you resisted in some way, by perhaps singing or something like that. Did you do anything like that?

A: No, not at all.

Q: No.

A: Because when the there were Lagersperre (ph.), the entire camp was closed in. All it took was that one would stick his head out the window for them to fly in and start to tear the whole place apart. We weren’t allowed to look out the window at all.

Q: Yes.

A: Those, so-called laagrshpere (ph), yes.

Q: And when would the laagrshpere (ph.) be there?

A: After any challenge.

Q: After a challenge it was all shut down and then there were laagrshpere (ph.).

A: Yes, shut down, and no one was allowed to - -

Q: Right up to the morning?

A: Yes, except the kapy, who were allowed to walk freely. They went to divide up the work and were allowed to walk freely about the camp.

Q: Yes.

A: But otherwise, none of the prisoners were allowed.
Q: Were any of those kapy - Did anyone from your transport become kapers?
A: No, except perhaps that guy I tried to find in Prague - can’t remember his name.
Q: Yes. And when you were talking about that special commando who was helping
during the gassing. What did you yourself know of these people? Did you ever
meet any of them?
A: No. No one ever met any of them. They were totally isolated.
Q: So then, you managed to find all this out from someone else?
A: Yes, from someone else.
Q: Yes. So what did you find out about them?
A: Well, simply, they didn’t want it to be known that, after three months, all those
people were being burnt.
Q: Yes.
A: But, even so, it somehow got out.
Q: And they lived totally on their own?
A: They lived on their own, yes.
Q: Did you even know whether they had it at least a little better?
A: I don’t. We did not come into contact with them at all.
Q: No.
A: No.
Q: So then, all you knew was that they were prisoners, who --
A: Yes.
Q: Who helped - -
A: They burned their friends. One group of nationals which were great there were the Greeks. When someone told any of them that their friend was gassed, he went with them.

Q: What was that?
A: He went with him to get gassed.
Q: He went with him to get gassed.
A: They held wonderfully together.
Q: Later, at Osvetim, when you were in those barracks, were there also kapy there? Was there the same hierarchy, those shtbdists (ph) and so on?
A: Yes, it was all the same.
Q: Yes.
A: Yes, it was the same.
Q: And were they behaving the same or was it at least a little better?
A: Well, I wouldn’t really say better. Based on how those who were with us were behaving - -
Q: Yes.
A: You see, everyone wanted to avoid any sort of attention or problem.
Q: So you never had good experience with any of the leaders? Like you (plural) never helped anyone for example?
A: Never.
Q: No.
A: Not at all.
Q: Like if someone were sick that they would help them or something?
A: No, nothing like that.

Q: Did you yourself ever get sick?

A: Well there was that --

Q: I mean, besides that one time?

A: No. No more after that.

Q: No more after that.

A: No more after that. We'll get back to that later.

Q: Yes. When those men or 40 males that later came, were they single men? Mostly young?

A: Young, yes.

Q: Of those of you who came originally together, they all came?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: Only two of us returned.

Q: No, but from the Gypsy camp, later to Osv - - to that Auschwitz, not all you went?

A: Only eight of us went.

Q: That much went.

A: Yes. All eight of us were in Auschwitz. All eight.

Q: Yes. And all of you did that brick laying work?

A: Yes, all.

Q: Were you totally convinced that you would survive the war?

A: No, I wasn’t.

Q: You weren’t.

A: No.
Q: No. You feared that something could have happened to you, but did you fear that you might be eventually gassed or something like that?

A: I'll tell you one thing. Your head was so in the dark that you would not think of anything like that - if I would ever make it back home. Or to think about my parents, if they too are in some camp.

Q: When did you find out about the liquidation of that Gypsy camp?

A: In Auschwitz.

Q: And what exactly did you find out?

A: Well, that they burned it all within a matter of two days.

Q: And how? That they threw them all in the gas chambers or - -

A: Yes, they hauled them off.

Q: Yes. So, how long did you stay in that base camp?

A: About half a year.

Q: Half a year, and still nothing changed during all that time?

A: No, nothing at all.

Q: You certainly must have come into contact with a lot of prisoners, from various nationalities.

A: There no. Only until Buchenwald, but there no.

Q: And here you continued to live only in the Gypsy camp.

A: On one, yes one - - no, there were more of us.

Q: There were already other nationalities there?

A: Yes, Poles, Russians, yes. There were already more of us there.

Q: Yes. And how were the relations between those various nationalities.
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A: Well, I would say good.

Q: Good.

A: Yes. Because each of us knew what was awaiting us, so we held together.

_______ one hurt the other.

Q: Yes. You had the opportunity to help in some way. When one couldn’t, then

someone else should have been able - -

A: No, it wasn’t possible.

Q: No.

A: No. As it was shown, either - - He couldn’t work so, as is said, he was liquidated

and - -

Q: Did you hunger a lot?

A: Yes, we were hungry. I certainly cannot say that we weren’t.

Q: So how long did you stay there afterwards?

A: I was there half a year.

Q: Here in the base camp.

A: Yes, in the base camp.

Q: And how did you get out of there?

A: From there they started selecting and I took the first transport of death.

Q: And how did they do the selecting? Was there some other selection process?

A: More than 2000 of us went out of there.

Q: Was that around 1945? In January of 1945?

A: No, no. That was at the start of 1944.

Q: They just took you without selection - -
A: They basically just liquidated the entire camp. They basically just gave you a single blanket, one blanket and in a bowl, in that sort of hat, a half a kilo of rye.

Yes. _______ it ________ they then loaded us into these swine wagons. In each wagon stood one with an automatic rifle on _______ also an automatic, yah, and after two kilometers, the dive bombers destroyed the locomotive. They did this ten times, one after another. Then they forced us out of the wagons and we went by foot.

Q: Were you still in Poland at that time?
A: No, now we were in Germany.

Q: In Germany. And to where did they take you?
A: To Buchenwald.

Q: How long were on the road for?
A: 14 days.

Q: It would be good if you could tell us a little about the trip.
A: They rode around us on horses, yes - -

Q: The guards?
A: Yes, they were Germans, the guards.

Q: Germans. Yes, I think Germans who were guarding you?
A: Yes. And who wasn’t able, simply into the ditch to be shot.

Q: How did you eat on the road?
A: Well they - - wait. I'll tell you exactly how it was - how they did it. As the evening was approaching they forced us all into the middle of a large field. They had tents
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with them, everything. Even a kitchen. They surrounded us and with reflectors lit
up where we were lying.

Whoever tried to make a dash for it got gunned down by the machine gun. We lied
there on the ground and each little piece of grass we found was eaten by morning.

After five days, they came and gave us Heringe. Do you know what that is?

Q: What did they give you?
A: Salted fish, those herinka yah.

Q: Herinky.
A: Yes. Whoever ate survived.

Q: That was all that you guys ate?
A: Yes, that is all we received.

Q: You didn’t get any bread?
A: Yes, we got bread, as I said, from that, that one large broken down into six pieces,
with nothing to drink.

Q: What was the weather like? Was it cold?
A: Well, the weather, - -

Q: There was still grass, as you said.
A: Yes, there was still grass. That is true.

Q: Yes. And was there a lot of losses on the way? Did many people die?
A: Yes. 2000 of us set out, although I cannot say for sure, but only about 600 or 700
made it all the way.

Q: Yes.
A: I cannot give you the exact number for sure.
Q: And those who were around you, on those horses, they were SS (ph.)?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No, definitely not.

Q: But they were soldiers?

A: They were Wehrmacht.

Q: Wehrmacht. Did you sometimes find yourselves passing through German towns?

A: Yes we did.

Q: And what about those people? Did any of those people ever give you anything?

A: No, never anything.

Q: You never spoke to anyone?

A: No, never. That was never possible.

Q: Never possible.

A: I know for example that there was a certain commando who gathered the dead, and then they dug up a ditch, threw them in and then continued on.

Q: And what state were you yourself in? After that transport? Were you able to walk still?

A: Yah, I was able to walk still. I was always able to keep walking still.

Q: So, you arrived in Buchenwald, less than half of you as you said.

A: Yes.

Q: And what after that? And then the prisoners in some way or another - -

A: That’s when we went on this so called delicing- -

Q: Yes.
A: Yes, we went through this washroom, you had to take your own towel, which then went through this so called steam so as not to spread around sickness, which was there. Impossible. That was already something different.

Q: Did they separate you from the other prisoners into blocks or did you stay - -

A: No, into blocks, among the others onto blocks. There were Poles there, French, Germans, Greeks, Poles and Russian.

Q: Was there a sort of camp self-administration?

A: Yes, there was.

Q: What affect did it have? Did it in some way affect camp life?

A: No, it couldn’t. After all, that Zápotocký was imprisoned as well.

Q: That too.

A: But that is not based on truth at all. After all, he was as fat as - -

Q: And why is it not based on truth? He was there, after all.

A: Yes, was (sneer).

Q: Yes. And there you were put to work again?

A: Yes. There, we walked to the quarry.

Q: Where, to the quarry?

A: To the quarry. But there were these deadly stairs. There were 240 of them and there were even cable cars behind me. After that, they didn’t carry the rocks on their shoulders anymore. It was so far, and they shot anyone inevitably when they couldn’t go anymore.

Q: So, did you carry stones there, collect them or break them into pieces?
A: We were breaking the stones.

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Q: Yes.

A: We put them onto these wagons which then went up on those cable cars. A so-called stone breaker. You must certainly know how those factories were terrible at that time. They already had the atomic bomb at that time. I had my hardest times there - the first bombing, which was precisely on my name day, which is June 13.

Q: June 13?

A: Well, yes, my name is Antonín, after all (chuckle).

Q: Yes.

A: They sounded the alarm, which is when we stopped working. Each crawled into a shelter, which was allowed. And the alarms kept going. The first 70 Mes (ph., probably Messerschmidt) could be seen on the horizon. But they could not fly lower and there were Wehrmacht on the high hills, so they bombed from the heights. The camp was battered - the factory, the hospital, everything was bombarded. And the one bunker there, the general of the camp - I don’t know what his name was - he was an SS (ph.), his two children, mother, father and wife died there. That bunker got a direct hit.

Q: This bombarding started to occur with greater frequency?

A: It was only once I had to live through that.

Q: You only had to live through that once?

A: Only once. We ran away from there. All of us ran away.

Q: You ran from the worksite?
A: From the worksite, because they were guarded by vlasovec (ph.). That was
general Vlasov (ph.) at that time ______ so the Russian army guarded there at
that time. They guarded Buchenwald.

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They wore black uniforms. I managed to hear how he shouted: “________” and
then they started to fly. That is when I ran out of the forest into a field. There were
many of us there. And those who were in the quarry, who worked, that is where
the Prochazka boys died, during the bombing, and Zikmund, hence there were
only two of us left. The others died during the bombing.

Q: You mentioned that Vlasovs (ph.) were guarding you there. Did you know any of
them? Why were the Russians guarding you?

A: We didn’t know.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: Nobody spoke to any of them?

A: No. No one ever got into any contact with them.

Q: No. And in Buchenwaldu, that order, the regime in that camp, was it better than
the one in Osvětimi?

A: It was a bit better.

Q: In what way?

A: It was better, but, then again, not really - - Whoever ran away, there were these
four polar bears. Whoever ran away they would shove in with them. I saw that
myself. They sentenced 12 Russians to death in that way.

Q: With those bears?
A: No, no, no. There was some revolt at that time because Buchenwald, at that time,
was already --

There was this underground movement that the Russians were to bombard 
Buchenwald. But the wings beat them to it and Buchenwald was bombarded by 
the Americans. Buchenwald was bombarded by blacks, as we learned later.

Q: Yes.
A: Because we got out of those forests to the field and on to home, those - - That 
German defense was, after all, Hitlerjungen.. no, that can’t be true. They carried 
these short guns and uniforms, and the local _______ to this, yes, and they took 
us to the mayor.

Q: Wait, we are still talking about Buchenwald.
A: I know. I am saying this. They were bombarding it _______

Q: Yes.
A: All of us ran where we could, because it was not possible. And they took us to the 
mayor, that town, who then gave us each _______ six boiled potatoes.

Q: How many of you were there, approximately?
A: About 40 of us.

Q: Yes. So, I see that enough of you managed to escape and that you were all 
adults, I guess none from any of the children.

Q: And the Russian who managed to escape, as you said. Did they also escape 
during the bombing?
A: No. There was that sort of revolt in the camp at that time.

Q: I see.

--

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A: The revolt was in the big courtyard, where there was 12 gallows, and the whole camp had to watch as a message of warning against us.

Q: Yes. And what led to this revolt?

A: I don't know. We did not find out.

Q: Yes. How did you feel when you saw that something was about to happen? Were you rooting for them? Or did you have no clew what was about to happen?

A: We didn’t know anything.

Q: No. So then you returned back to the camp.

A: It was they that led us back to camp.

Q: When that - - end

A: Yes, the raid. _________ constantly over the gate, and the commander of the camp just stood there and he there nothing to anyone.

Q: Yes.

A: When his wife, children, father and mother died in the bunker and when they were collecting them all, that was the most terrifying thing to watch. They put everything into the courtyard. The dead from the bombing and poured lime all over them. They then lied there a full 14 days.

Q: Yes. But then the next day continued the - - And you continued to work in the quarry?

A: No, we didn’t work there anymore.

Q: No.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.
A: No, we no longer worked there anymore. They liquidated the camp again.

Q: I see.

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A: That stayed because there was this experimental hospital there. For example, they might have operated on women’s breasts. German doctors were teaching themselves in this way.

Q: It is - - You knew that it was an experimental hospital there?
A: Yes, we knew it.
Q: Yes.
A: We knew it all right.
Q: Do you know of any details?
A: No.
Q: You don’t. No.
A: No, not at all.
Q: No. So, when they liquidated the camp, there was another evacuation?
A: Another evacuation and another transport of death.
Q: Yes. And were you all together or were you broken down into several groups?
A: No, no. All of us were together. The hospital stayed there and all those who were incapable, otherwise everything else was taken away.
Q: Yes. So, explain how you got out of there.
A: The same as when we got there. One clog, one blanket and a half a kilo of rye.
Q: Nothing else? You didn’t even get some bread?
A: No, no. Nothing like that. It wasn’t very far. We went to Grossrosen.
Q: Was that already in 1945 or was it still in 44?
A: The same year, at the end of 44. That was the end.
Q: Were you also that long on the road?
A: No. We were on the road for about seven days only.

Q: And were you also that time always on foot?

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A: Yes, the entire time. After all, those wings ________ they were retreating. The closer they came then the camp was evacuated. They liquidated it. Yes?

Q: Yes. But weren't you weaker by then?

A: Yes we were, yes.

Q: And with the same - - with the same results, as in, who couldn't go further - -

A: They liquidated as well.

Q: So, that was in winter, as you say, being the end of 1944.

A: It was cold, yes.

Q: So that must have been a lot worse.

A: It was worse, yes it was. But we were in Grosserosen a week. It was a single block. They made us go there.

A: Only those of you from Buchenwald?

A: Only the transport from Buchenwald.

Q: Yes.

A: How many in all I do not know. That I can’t tell you. And after that week we went on. The front lines kept retreating and they, once again, liquidated the camp. One thing I can say though, that it was a true German, a good German. The worst were the Sudeten Germans. The Germans, the true Germans, they more helped than those - -

Q: Can you give us an example, how - -

A: Hmmm. Like, for example on the train tracks. They purposely walked around and threw something out of their pockets. Like from a pouch for example. Once there
was a piece of salami, for example. They felt compassion for us - - they knew that
the war was coming to an end - -

Q: Yes. It happened more than once that someone had helped some of you?

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A: Yes. Only some of them though. Not all of them.

Q: No.

A: No, couldn’t say all of them.

Q: Did they take you through the towns or rather around them?

A: Through the towns. And then on that field, and through the town again, and there
again. We did not move in the evening. Only during the day.

Q: They used those reflectors again?

A: Yes, they used them again. At that time, we had to lie in the snow.

Q: But did you feel that the war was coming to an end?

A: Yes, we thought like something like that was about to happen. Yes, but - -

Q: And where did you go on from there?

A: To Langeshalcau (ph.).

Q: How?

A: That was Grossrosen (ph.) this - -

Q: And from Grossrosen?

A: Langeshalcau (ph.), that was a plane manufacturing plant. We were there only
three days, in these halls. They simply manufactured planes there, but there was
nothing there at that time. Only a large hall.

Q: Yes.

A: And there, that was something else. We each got a piece of bread. And that
coffee! That was brewed from some acorn, or maybe not. I don’t know exactly, but
you simply couldn’t drink it. After that we went on, a third transport of death, this
time to Dacha. This time I know for certain that more than 3000 of us went.

Q: Went out?

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A: Went, yes. And by estimate, it would be pretty difficult for me today to - - more
than half of those were gone.

Q: And you went on foot the whole time again?

A: The entire time. And that was back in 1945.

Q: Yes. And how did you yourself feel? What state were you in? Were you still able
at that time to - -

A: I couldn’t go any longer. If it weren’t from my friend, that other friend - - I caught a
strong does of typhoid fever. So they kind of held me between each other so that
no one would bump me off, because the last few kilometers they had to carry me
totally, apparently. Then they just put me into that hospital - -

Q: At Dacha.

A: Yes. And I can tell you that I drank a lot back then, because one gets mighty
thirsty on typhoid fever. That was the only luck I had then. I must have - - I must
have been watched over by God. I can’t say. After two days, no one knew how our
western army got there.

Q: So, two days stay in Dacha?

A: Yes.

Q: They freed you?

A: Yes. _____ our western army.

Q: And how did that go?
A: How did it go? That friend flew over and says: “The Americans are here.” Like that. No one even on the towers knew how they got there. No one knew anything.

Q: Were the Germans still there?

A: They were, yes.

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Q: Did they put them in prison?

A: The prisoners, no, they wanted to throw them from the towers, they wanted to - - I learned about this later on, only once I was at the American Cross in their hospital there.

Q: Yes.

A: Yes?

A: They wanted to - -, but they got them. Yes? Everyone gets a just end. Yes? That’s what saved me in the end. Otherwise, I would not have made it back. That’s where that Red Cross took us over - -

Q: Did they treat you?

A: Yes, with a piece of chocolate, a spoonful of coffee and a piece of cake because they were not allowed to, because that - -

Q: I understand.

A: Our stomachs would have exploded instantly. I laid on that for 14 days.

Q: That was already some sort of hospital?

A: Yes, from the Red Cross.

Q: Yes.

A: They had those tents - -

Q: Yes.

A: Their own. And after the 14 days, they took us by the first transport to Plzen.
Q: So that was already after the war?
A: That was already after the war.
Q: They took you in cars?

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A: No, yes, those cars had those camp beds. And those who were unable they transported them in those casket wagons.

Q: So they transported that from Bohemia to Plzen, right? Or did they separate you according to nationality?
A: By nationality. They stopped in the square in Plzen and rounded up the people.

The major then pulled out a pistol and said: "If anyone would like to add something to this, I'll shoot them right away!" And from there a special train went out which took us to Prague. I heard that - - I was lying. I weighed 35 kilos, _____, because my parents didn't know, because the first transport was returning and they didn't know if I would be with them. They didn't know that if by chance I was there and that my parents would be waiting for me.

Q: Did they broadcast it somehow?
A: Yes, yes they did.
Q: And you didn't hear that?
A: Well, this one guy was running and they came and immediately also an ambulance which took me to Ratiborsky Mountains.

Q: To Ratiborsky Mountains?
A: Yes. I lived there, worked there.
Q: And what about your parents?
A: Well, my parents, the doctor came to me immediately; a strict diet right away. I was 14 days at home, mom cooked a goose in the oven and then went away somewhere. I ate half of it and have been here ever since. That was luck.

Q: And how about the rest of your family? No one -

A: No one was anywhere. No.

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Q: How do you explain this?

A: Well, how do I explain this. I would say that I am not a Gypsy. My mother was named Procházková before she got married and the mother of my mother, some, great great great... I think it would be too difficult to explain this today.

End of tape 1
Q: So let us try to return a bit. You were talking about those incidents when they you
and - - the angel - - saved. The first concerned the doctor who threw you out of the
nurse ward just before they liquidated it. Perhaps you could remember some
details from there. Perhaps the doctor could have told you or if you knew why he
let you leave?
A: I did not know that.
Q: Were you not angry with him by chance because he did not heal you?
A: No, no.
Q: No.
A: Later, when I learned that they burned down the hospital - -
Q: Then you learned - - yes.
A: So then, he went through the Ratiborsky Mountains as well. Directly.
Q: But you did not know each other.
A: No. Him according to name, when I later told him my name - -
Q: Then he understood that you are actually - -
A: Then he understood who I was.
Q: It was then he understood you were a native.
A: Yes.
Q: Do you think he would have saved you otherwise? Perhaps yes.

A: If he didn't know my name, that it was I, that I came from Ratiborsky Mountains, then I doubt it.

Q: But he did it in any case.

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A: Yes, he did.

Q: For which reason you can now tell us something about what happened to you.

A: They all ran and hid themselves.

Q: They had shelters there.

A: Yes, they had shelters there.

Q: And they didn’t worry about the prisoners.

A: Only the <vlasovci> were on the towers.

Q: What were they?

A: They were always on the towers.

Q: They were on the - -

A: Even during the bombing.

Q: Yes. And did any of them die?

A: They died there.

Q: All of them? So, you were running and you knew that people were dying there?

A: That the rest of them were hit? Did you know of this during the bombing or did you find out about it afterwards?

A: Later on.
Q: Later.
A: When we returned to the camp.
Q: And in between that, you were at that mayor.
A: Yes, yes.

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Q: Yes. And you were talking about that typhoid fever. That you got it at a time when you were still able to save yourself. Like - - Perhaps you could tell us a little how it was with the Red Cross, how they - - from where they then put you into it, who took care of you, how it was there.
A: Well, from the camp they carried us on stretchers. Nurses from the International Red Cross were tending there.
Q: Were you unconscious at the time?
A: No, I wasn’t.
Q: No.
A: I was a bit conscious, although very weak. All I know is that I was very thirsty. But the doctor said, “No, you mustn’t! You must not drink!” A small spoonful and a quarter of a small chocolate and that was all before they put my body into some normal state. But I would like to return to Buchenwald.
Q: To what?
A: To Buchenwald.
Q: Yes.
A: There was this so-called canteen there. Yes. Who worked got those camp vouchers with which you could buy a snail salad, a salad made from snails, or from beet marmalade. Otherwise, we got nothing there.
Q: I see. And did you get the vouchers according to your output?

A: Yes, according to our output.

Q: So you did get something?

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A: Yes, I did. Even the others. Those guys were still alive before the bombing. I am not saying that, in the camp, you could only buy snail salad and --

Q: They gave it to you every day after work?

A: No, no. It was always only once a week.

Q: And how much? How much did you get?

A: They were these vouchers like at the Jáchymovsky mines, something similar. Basically, this piece of paper which you could use to buy something at the canteen.

Q: Something to fight the hunger. That must have helped a bit.

A: Yes, it did help a bit --

Q: Not much though --

A: Not much, but a bit yes.

Q: So, over a week you had a bit of snail salad and marmalade --

A: Then they introduced this so-called female thing, where only kapa could --

Q: A female camp, yes?

A: No, it was this, where --

Q: Harem, you said.

A: Harem, yes, yes. Where only they were allowed to go. That block, Lagerkapo --

Q: You ended last by saying they introduced this separate -- Was that a separate camp?

A: No, no --
Q: Or building?
A: It was only a building.

Q: One building where the women lived - -
A: Yes.

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Q: Prostitutes - -
A: Yes.

Q: Or what - -
A: Yes, yes.

Q: And where did they get them from? Were they prisoners as well?
A: Yes, they took them from among the prisoners. Polish, German and Jewish girls too.

Q: They were selected or did they volunteer themselves?
A: They were selected, yes.

Q: And the kapys had some vouchers for this or were they able to go there _____?
A: Yes, they could _____, they must have gone there once a week. So that they could be more aggressive and harm us more.

Q: Did you have the opportunity to speak to any of these women? No.
A: I can say this, because they threw us bread. To the younger ones. Not to the older ones but only to the younger ones.

Q: From the window or from where?
A: From the window.

Q: They threw.
A: They were covered by these sort of wires, but the windows didn’t have bars.

   Nothing.

Q: Yes.

A: So, it was these that I saw this.

Q: Did they throw you some bread as well?

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A: Yes, me also. After all, we there - - They had white bread there, first class food.

   According to me, I think they had furniture there and everything.

Q: Yes. This is also important information. Is there anything else you can remember from back then?

A: Well there - - Now I remember, there was this Beran there who was a confidential clerk in the central bureau in Prague. He was also a prisoner there. He was a communist at that time, yes. I know that, after the war, how many times I came to visit him in Prague. He wanted to get me into school or to a higher position so that I could get somewhere, but I didn’t want to.

Q: And when you got to Buchenwald and that self-administration was there, were there also Czechs in that self-administration? Wasn’t there some way they could have helped you while there?

A: No. We would never get into contact with them at all.

Q. No.

A: No.

Q: But you knew of them?

A: The camp was sectioned in this way. We would never have access to them.

Q: Good. So now we are at - - unless there is something else you want to say.. We are now back in Prague. Or rather, you were back with your parents.
A: I was with my parents by then, yes.
Q: Were you still being treated? After your return?
A: Half a year.
Q: In the hospital or at home?
A: No, at home.

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Q: Did a doctor go visit you?
A: Twice a week, regularly.
Q: Yes.
A: Always an examination, listening.
Q: Did you have some disease or were you just weak?
A: Not weak. My body was being strengthened, yes.
Q: Yes.
A: Otherwise nothing, otherwise - - I am saying, after those 14 days, when I ate that half a goose, then - -
Q: Nothing happened to you.
A: Nothing happened to me and then, regularly, because I got from the International Red Cross those packages of clothing and various things.
Q: And after that, how did you continue in your life? I’m sure it must have affected you permanently in some way. In your head, that whole experience. Did you ever find work after that?
A: I later found some work.
Q: What did you do?
A: At first I worked in the forest.
Q: Did you continue to live with your parents?
A: I was there. Then I got married and moved here near Roudnicí do Doksan.

Q: Yes.

A: Where I later had two children.

Q: What did you have?

A: Two boys.

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Q: Two boys. And what did you do?

A: I worked in Lovosice.

Q: Where did you go to?

A: To a chemical plant. In Lovosice.

Q: Yes. Later, after the war, did you run into any hostile feelings in Doksany or at home from locals?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No.

Q: So you have only the best of experiences then.

A: The best memories, yes. No, I can’t say this, because no one felt sorry for me, just so they could hurt me further.

Q: Yes.

A: So I could not say then that - - even those who had returned: that Strnad, and then Beran was in Prague. He served as a police officer at Pankrac. Yes, I visited Strnad three times and Bernad about five times. But now they are all dead.

Q: You returned with these men?

A: Yes. They were there already in their later years.

Q: Yes.
A: They were over the ages of 30, 35.

Q: Once you mentioned one experience you had and into which I would like you to go into greater detail: that you had found yourself already one more time in jail?

A: Yah. This time after the war, right?

Q: After the war, right?

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A: Yes, I allegedly mentioned to my wife that I will shoot her and that I will shoot all the communists.

Q: And someone turned you in?

A: Yes, someone informed on me.

Q: Do you know who it was?

A: No.

Q: And how did that go? Did they come for you and __________

A: Yes, they came for me and put me in jail. I was at the KGB in Litomerice where I stayed half a year. Then they accused me and I had to spend four years in Jachymov. That was ______ That is - -

Q: That was sometime after 1948?

A: After 48. After the change already.

Q: Then after 1953.

A: After 1943.

Q: And did you serve those four years fully?

A: The full three, I mean four years, yes.

Q: If you were to compare it to those camps you were in during the war, would you be able to compare them somehow?
A: That is not comparable. I can't say that.

Q: You weren’t afraid this second time that you might lose your life?

A: No.

Q: No?

A: No.

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Q: No. But it must have been terrible anyway, right?

A: Yes, it was terrible. According to work, there, you received ______ for three food vouchers. One, two, three. The third one you didn’t eat. You got butter, bacon fat, milk. You would think that after the war - that in regular jail you would not hunger.

Whoever works then - -

Q: Yes.

A: Or, whoever didn’t want to work then they weren’t doing so good.

Q: Yes. And was it realizable on this - - on this highest standard?

A: Well, I wouldn’t say there were any standards there. I wouldn’t say that.

Q: Or - -

A: Because there was uranium there. I was mostly working on uranium - -

Q: And was it possible to get this highest standard, as you said, that he didn’t eat it?

Was it possible? Was it - -

A: It was possible, yes.

Q: Did you ever get it?

A: Yes, I did. I always got the third one.

Q: Yes. And the possibility to write and have visitors, was that possible?

A: Yes, this was possible. Everything was possible. But packages were not necessary there.
Q: You had to serve the full term.
A: All of it, yes.

Q: And when they let you go, did you return back to Doksan?
A: No. By that time I was divorced.

Q: You were divorced by then?

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A: From that time on I was on my own.

Q: When did you come here? Here to ______
A: I am here 14 years now.

Q: I see. And what have you been doing here?
A: I worked at an estate as a roof repairman. I took a course and worked at the estate as a roof repairman. I got to know one girl and then we got married. And that's my entire life.

Q: And you now have four children again.
A: She had four children, yes.

Q: (Laughing). So that makes six children in all.
A: Six, yes. One of them died in the army though - -

Q: Yes. And are you in contact with your children from your first marriage?
A: Only with the one remaining.

Q: No. And the new ones are still young.
A: They are small.

Q: Are you in retirement yet?

Q: So then, do you still work somewhere or only on your home?
A: Yes, sometimes I do still work.

This is a verbatim transcript of spoken word. It is not the primary source, and it has not been checked for spelling or accuracy.
Q: Mr. Hlaváček, I thank you for the interview.

A: That is all. I can’t think of anything else to say to this.

Q: Perhaps you will want to ask Mrs. Jana for something?

End of tape 2

Conclusion of interview.