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## **Interview with Marie Prochazkova**

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Question: \_\_\_\_\_

Answer: Yes, but they didn't take those Gypsies. Only me and one other, and her as well.

Q: So, Mrs. Procházková, introduce yourself.

A: My name is Marie Procházkova, of Fulnek, Milínská číslo 355, just so you would know.

Q: Yes.

A: Yah.

Q: When were you born?

A: October 13.

Q: Yes. So tell us about your childhood. Where you lived.

A: I lived in Regeptorec, which is near the Polish border. There we had our own little house.

And after that, when I came from that Nazi camp.

Q: Not yet, how you came from that camp.

A: Yes, like that.

Q: Let us stay for a while with your childhood.

A: So, my childhood. I was there. Went to school. They wanted to have me educated, but my dad was not able to.

Q: Did you go to school?

A: To \_\_\_ grade.

Q: To a Slovakian school?

A: Yes, there.

Q: Or was there a Ruthenian school?

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A: It is sort of Ruthenian, but not Catholic. We're not Catholics.

Q: Yes.

A: Just like the Russians.

Q: Yes.

A: So we went to school there, afterwards.

Q: You got as high as fifth grade? Or how far?

A: Nine.

Q: Ninth grade. Did you make it through a town school?

A: My dad didn't put me into a town school. I made it through grade eight and he told me, "No, I have only one daughter and I won't give her away. Like that.

Q: You were an only daughter?

A: Yes, from my dad's first marriage. Myself and two brothers.

Q: And two brothers.

A: One died, a second, and the third lives in Rumburk, in Bohemia. I haven't seen him for the past 20 years. I will go to him, so I was waiting for you. [laughter]

Q: What did your father do for a living?

A: He was a musician. He played places. He was a good musician. His main instrument was a violin. He was a musician.

Q: So he was often away from home.

A: Yes. He would go far away and play at marriages.

Q: And you stayed home with your mother?

A: Yes. My step mother.

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Q: With your stepmother.

A: Yes. As soon as my own mother died. I was eight years old, my second brother six and the youngest four. The one who was four is still alive now. The one who was six was here in Fulnek. He wasn't married but had kids. Then he died. It's been about seven or eight years, and now we are only two. After that, my dad got married and had two boys and three girls with her.

Q: I see many religious pictures here. Were you a religious family?

A: Very much so. You know, we had a house and a vicar would go around our house, and I went to school. So they always came, Maruška got dressed and we went. I believe in God. I pray. I do not go to sleep without praying. I am a believer. I am devoted.

Q: Once you made it through school, what did you do after that?

A: I went to work as a peasant. You know how it goes. Dad did not have the money for more education. He wanted to get me a teacher, but he was not able. When he would play, not like to weddings and made a few crowns \_\_\_\_\_, there was only enough to survive. So I didn't go.

Q: Did you live with that peasant then too?

A: No. We went to work like this. Here, in Fulnek, when \_\_\_\_\_ there's farming or nothing else. So we went to work in a **pomade** <tak jsme chodili dělat pomády. >

Q: So you always lived at home?

A: At home, yes.

Q: And you always went only for a day to help?

A: Yes, to help, yes.

Q: And you were always with one peasant?

A: No, everywhere where we were needed.

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Q: Who needed?

A: To dig up some potatoes, grain, and such stuff. You know, there was this small hamlet there at the Polish border where we would go with the cows. Poles would go across the border and then us back with them to the border. And now we're there.

Q: Did you have any animals yourselves?

A: No, except perhaps for the goat, which dad would buy or something. Poultry.

Q: Or fowl.

A: Or fowl. Otherwise, we were poor. Dad managed for years with his playing, so why not a few potatoes on the side \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: Did you ever have the feeling that you were a poorer family?

A: Yes, poorer.

Q: And how did they treat you or how was your relationship with others in the area?

A: They weren't evil to us. -- Later, dad, when I got sick, when I came back from the Nazi camp. Dad took a pot and each day it was in the milk. He bathed me every day in milk. Or when I came home, I could not see on my eyes, and arms, legs, my entire body. So he took me to the washroom \_\_\_\_\_, my dad carried me and washed me in that milk so that, there were there on the road like here. Black kinda, you know how they spread on the road. On those, so I had a mouth full, while we were walking. Like, well, you know how it was.

Q: Yes. We'll get back to that later.

A: Yes.

Q: We're not there for a while though. ... So, your dad got married again, as you said.

A: Yes.

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Q: Yes. How did it happen? ... Did some situation change concerning Gypsies, when the Slovakian state became independent. Actually, you were a part of Hungary, that part.

A: Well, I wouldn't say Hungary. I'll put it this way. It is about seven or fourteen kilometres to Zborov. That Bardej, our town, as if. When we had to go to a hospital, or anywhere, we had to walk 14 kilometres. We only lived in a small village.

Q: But there was a school there nevertheless?

A: A school yes. There was a school. A school was there.

Q: How did you speak at home? Gypsy or Ruthenian?

A: \_\_\_ Gypsy and Ruthenian. We had to learn both, cause if you go to a store or wherever and start talking Russian, it's not good. That is how we learned. That is how I got to know both languages.

Q: And what did your parents speak?

A: Both as well.

Q: As well.

A: Yes.

O: How did it come about that they took you away and about when did that happen?

A: I remember it being as around 1943 or 1945 when I was already running from the Nazi camp to home.

Q: So, in 1946 then. How did it happen then that they took you to that camp? Did they come for you, did they invite you, were you supposed to get somewhere on your own?

A: Germans came and took us.

Q: Germans?

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A: Yes. Ours didn't do that. Rather Germans came and took girls and boys. My dad was also in the camp and died there. Some eight or ten years. They took us, by force.

Q: Did your dad go ahead of you at the same time with you to the camp?

A: My dad came after me.

Q: After you.

A: Yes, they took me.

Q: So, one day when you did not expect anything.

A: No. We weren't expecting anything. The Germans just went into our homes.

Q: Were they wearing uniforms?

A: Yes. There weren't even cars at that time. They had horse pulled wagons. They put us in those and took us away.

Q: About how many of you did they take from the village?

A: They took many of us. They took two Gypsies. Yes. But those, \_\_\_\_\_ there weren't too many of us Gypsies there. Only my dad and one other - only two families of us were there.

Q: Only two Gypsy families were in this one town.

A: Only two families were in this town, yes. It was a small town, at the Polish border. And those girls.

Q: And from those Gypsy families they only took two girls?

A: Yes. There were only two of us. Otherwise, the rest were boys.

Q: And did they tell you they were taking you somewhere to work, or what did they tell you?

A: Nothing. They simply came and took us. My dad cried, me too. They took us and.

Q: Were you able to take something with you?

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A: No.

Q: Not even a small package? Nothing?

A: Nothing at all. Only what I was wearing, that skirt. They didn't even give us a chance to get dressed. One skirt and a smock. And \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: And they threw you into a wagon. And this wagon, were others there as well? Was somebody else already in the wagon?

A: No, because there is only one hamlet near the Polish border.

Q: I see. It started with you.

A: Yes. It started with us and then they started in all the other villages.

Q: They took others later.

A: Yes, they took others. Boys as well.

Q: They took boys as well later.

A: Yes, boys as well.

Q: But only younger people.

A: Younger, yes.

Q: Neither children or elders.

A: Elders yes. Dad was already gone then. When they went to get me, dad was already in the camp. \_\_\_\_\_

Q: But you said that he went after you.

A: Yes, first they took us and then him.

Q: I see.

A: Yes.

Q: ... So where did they take you to then?

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A: Well, my dear, it was Dubova. It was a Nazi camp, to the camp. Yes, that was there and.

Q: Where was that Dubová approximately?

A: ...I'll tell you. It was in Poland. It is about 30 kilometres from us to Slovakia. That's how it was.

Q: So also at the Polish border.

A: Yes, at the Polish border. It was fenced off there and they put us into these buildings.

Q: You say it was fenced off.

A: Yes, fenced off. Yes it was.

Q: And what kind of buildings were there?

A: There was one tall one there and other smaller ones. They put the guys in one and the women in another.

Q: Were the buildings wooden?

A: Yes, not from brick. And there was this really tall wooden gate and the rest was all surrounded with wires. But back to the doors, you know, they had.

Q: Wires around.

A: Wires around. So that we could not run away.

Q: And in those buildings, did they also separate the guys from the girls.

A: Yes, yes they did.

Q: And in those buildings, how did you live? What was there? Were there some beds there, or **<kavalka>** ? Or bunk beds?

A: No please. We slept on the floor.

Q: Only on the floor?

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A: \_\_\_\_\_ One next to the other we slept on the floor. --And we, when we looked out the window, then the guys were below us and they hung there on these strings, these thin strings. So we didn't want to look anymore, because they hung them there on these thin strings.

Q: We'll get to that later. And did you have straw or anything on the floor?

A: Not even that. Why would they bother to do something like that. On bare ground we slept.

Q: Totally bare like that? You didn't even have a blanket for covering or anything like that?

A: For sure not. We slept on that with our rags.

Q: And was that in the summer or when?

A: I'll tell you, I was there almost two years.

Q: And when they took you?

A: When they took me it was between 1943 and 1945, when the Russians came.

Q: I don't understand.

A: We ran away.

Q: I know. But that was. Was it cold or warm when they took you?

A: It was around fall at that time.

Q: Fall.

A: It was fall already. It was already cold. \_\_\_\_ our legs froze, my legs froze. We only slept on the floor.

Q: So it was a bare room where you slept on the floor.

A: Yes.

Q: Not even a table or chair there.

A: Certainly not. There were no tables there. \_\_\_\_\_.

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Q: Nothing. And about how many of you were there?

A: Many of us were there. I cannot tell you exactly, but in one room there could have been around fifty of us, or something like that. \_\_\_\_\_, so we laid in rows, sat on the ground, when someone gave us something. But we went to work.

Q: Yes. So tell us, where did you go to work?

A: We walked, they took us in wagons. And there were dead people, soldiers, Czechs, not Slovaks and all sorts, in the fields. So we took watches there. You see, you can remove a wrist band but not a ring. So they gave us these sword of knives or swords.

We cut off the fingers to take the rings off. We took the watches and rings.

Q: I see.

A: And there were wagons there, I mean, what did you want to say? There were wagons there into which they would put the boots, and. And there was a wooden box for the watches and the rings. But we had to cut off the fingers.

Q: Were those soldiers killed in action, or what were they?

A: They were soldiers and other sorts.

Q: Civilians also?

A: You know, without legs, arms, just dead and bloody, lying there. And those \_\_\_\_\_, I'd rather not even think about it.

Q: But you weren't working. ... They sent you there so that you could collect the watches.

A: Yes.

Q: And the rings and whatever else you could find.

A: And do you know what I did? You know, the watches and rings were made of gold. And before then there were only shirts. There were no bras. Only now, that I have \_\_\_\_\_ for the

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guys. No. I did not steal anything there, you know. Or there were these beautiful. A box full of watches and beautiful rings. (chuckle) And when I bent over, it fell out. I did not have any bras as they weren't worn then. You know, how the Germans beat me, and also some older women. They were really fierce. They beat me until I was just a lying sack of bruises on the ground. Then the others put me on the wagon and sent me to the infirmary. I was all bruises, so I wasn't seen for about a month. I only lied there.

Q: And who watched over there? Who brought you back to life?

A: Germans.

Q: In uniform?

A: Yes, in uniform. ... Male and female Germans. But the old women were worse; like the guys. The guys did not work like the female Germans \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: And the males and females were both in uniform?

A: Yes, they were.

Q: Do you remember what colour? Black, green?

A: My dear lady, that was so long ago. --But, if I remember correctly, there were more of those female Germans than the males. And they were worse. Tougher, like the guys. The older German males, you see, still had a little feeling. -- We were young, hungry, torn here and there. If you saw my little skirt, all torn up and that. And we were walking among the brush, gathering the watches, among the dead. --But how I came to another, he was a Slovakian, a young boy. He had a watch but no leg, so I didn't want to take it from him. And then the German woman hit me twice with a baton to make me take it. So he then handed out his little hand. I can still see it before me, how he held out his hand, that young boy, how he held out his hand so that I could take his watch.

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Q: That's how it was. There were the dead and the inflicted, right?

A: The inflicted, the dead - all was there all together. Lying there in the fields.

Q: But you didn't go for this type of work every day.

A: We went for this kind of work every day.

Q: And where did they get all these dead and inflicted? You went to a different place the next time?

A: We didn't go to a different place, no. We were going through all the villages.

Q: ... From one village to another, in the surrounding area you walked.

A: We went in the surrounding area, where the dead were. And we grabbed all that stuff and put it in the wagons, the watches, rings, chests.

Q: Yes, so you were taking their jewellery.

A: Yes.

Q: And clothes as well?

A: Clothes no.

Q: Only boots.

A: Boots. Clothes no, we didn't drag that. Only what was found on the arms and such. -- And once I found in a pocket this sort of black, hard bread, you know. (laughter) That kind. We broke that up and ate it. We ate that bread if we ever found any. Breaking our teeth like that.

Q: And the second question I would like to ask you. What did you eat. Did you go somewhere and eat or did they carry it to your building. How was it?

A: No. We carried these sort of army cups.

Q: Cups.

A: Down there, there were these kitchens, so there \_\_\_\_\_. They gave us something there.

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Q: What did you get in the morning?

A: Nothing in the morning.

Q: Nothing at all. Not even coffee?

A: No. Nothing. Not even coffee. Back at home, I used to drink up about five cups. My dad would say, "Don't drink like that, my little girl. They say you'll get sick."

Q: So when did you get food at noon, or did you only get food once you came back from work? Or what?

A: Only at noon. And we came from work like that. And in the evening, when we had some of that hard bread that we took from the dead, otherwise nothing.

Q: You never got any bread?

A: No. We never got any bread there. Only that one lunch. --I came like that, my dear. I weighed 95 kilos. I was a strong girl.

Q: You must have been. --Did they count you sometimes too?

A: Yes.

Q: And how did that take place. In the morning before going to work, or?

A: In the morning, when we were standing, and later in the courtyard. They counted us to make sure none of us had run away. They counted us.

Q: And they counted you when you got back?

A: Yes, to make sure none of us had escaped.

Q: And did they drive you to work or did you have to walk?

A: We had to walk.

Q: So it was only there in the surrounding area.

A: In the surrounding area.

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Q: Do you remember a little how that camp looked? How many buildings there were approximately?

A: Well there was that wooden one, as you know. There was nothing there, only straw, and the guys were on one side and the girls on another.

Q: In one building?

A: \_\_\_\_\_. Yes.

Q: You were both males and females in a single building?

A: We were like on the ground and the guys were below us.

Q: Oh, I see. You were on the ground and they were below.

A: Like this. Yes, below us. But it was huge. They made that camp out of wood. It was long, like I am saying, like in a train station or something. That was something. Wood everywhere. There weren't even windows there.

Q: I see. --And in the building, in the room where you slept, was there anyone there who was like you leader? Some **kapo** or however it is referred to?

A: No.

Q: None of your own people was like that.

A: No one. Only Germans and such.

Q: And when they wanted to tell you something, did they tell you all at once, or how?

A: You know how it was. There were these Polish women who were educated and who were part of the SS.

Q: So there were some Polish women there?

A: Yes. And German women, and our people, so there were people there who would translate and explain.

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Q: And they lived with you as well?

A: No.

Q: And in the camp, when you came to it, were there already some prisoners there?

A: Yes there were. There were boys and older women.

Q: And they were all only Gypsies?

A: No. There were Slovaks, Czechs, Poles, a mixture. Not only Gypsies. There were only a few of us Gypsies. There were only two of us from our village, and there perhaps one, two or whatever. There was only a few of us. There were many Slovaks though. There were many

of them there. \_\_\_\_\_. --And my dad, when they grabbed him, he was farther away from me, as far as that basket is over there. He wasn't with me in that camp.

Q: Was anyone able to send you anything there? Or bring you something?

A: Not at all madam. For those two years, I did not get to see my dad or any of my relatives.

Q: No one at all.

A: No one.

Q: And you didn't know anyone there.

A: No one

Q: Did you at least get any news?

A: Nothing at all. But when the Russians came, the Germans were running and we were too. Away from the forest.

Q: We'll get back to that later. I'm still talking about the camp. Who cooked for you there? Was there any sort of kitchen there?

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A: There were these guys there and this room. All we got was simple soup. And there were some German women there too. No, only German women. None from any of us, or the Slovaks or others.

Q: No?

A: No. Only German women would cook there. -- And one old woman, she didn't want us to get poisoned or something, so she said, "Girls, don't take any of this." To which I responded, "Out of hunger I will."

Q: How did you wash there?

A: We would go to this sort of stream there. Into the brook in the morning. Bathe though we didn't. --I came home in such a state that my dad wouldn't have been able to wash me. That's how dirty I was. My legs, my hair. I had so much hair I wasn't able to wash my head. My hair went down to my belt. My dad had to cut my hair. Oh how I cried when my dad cut my hair. Full of lice, and my head full of sores. I don't wish this on anyone, nor that there would be a war anywhere.

Q: So you were only allowed to wash in the stream?

A: Yes.

Q: Was that away from the camp? Beyond the gate or something like that?

A: Yah, yah. Otherwise, it was not possible to wash.

Q: And how was the toilet facilities? How were they?

A: The toilets were the same. We went to the forest, in that that was nearby. That was a catastrophe.

Q: Did anyone try to escape?

A: That was impossible.

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Q: Well, since you were saying how easy it was to go to the forest.

A: No.

Q: No.

A: No one broke away. At least not while I was there, I didn't hear of anyone escaping. No, we were all scared. We were all young. I was only a 17 year old girl. The older ones wouldn't try either, not at all. -- My dad was also there. Then, when we got out once the Russian came, I went on foot. We ran away on foot to the village, where we ate bread if someone gave us some, or some water to drink and so on.

Q: And what did they punish you for when... You said that you were beaten when you did not want to take that watch that one time.

A: Yes, they were punishing us. Me for not wanting to take the watch.

Q: Or perhaps that you were not working hard enough, something like that?

A: Yes, they beat us. Not the German guys, as I said, but those old bags.

Q: The old German women.

A: I can't stand them I tell you. Those German women as I see here \_\_\_\_\_ (laughter), but they can't help themselves. Not every person is the same. But I am disgusted.

Q: Yes, yes. Did you have the opportunity to help one another in any way?

A: No. She watched over us, that SS woman.

Q: And what would happen if someone got sick?

A: Whoever got sick got sick. They weren't interested in our problems.

Q: Was there any nurse there? Anyone like that?

A: Not at all. Nothing of the sort. --When people died, we saw how they carried them away in stretchers and carried them down the stairs.

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Q: And where did they take them to?

A: That I can't tell you. I don't know.

Q: I see. You were never sick yourself?

A: No. Thanks to God. Only once I came home. Then I lay in bed for three months. Before that though I was never sick.

I'm going to stop now for a while, okay? I can hear the camera a lot. Gotta go now. Yes, yes, you may. Yes.

Q: Mrs. Procházková, before we continue, I would like to ask you for several details. Do you by chance remember how many of those supervisors were there, be they male or female?

A: Many of them.

Q: There were many of them?

A: Many, yes.

Q: And they were watching over the camp all around?

A: Watching, yes.

Q: And were they in the camp as well?

A: There, I don't know, if they had some vehicle or how it went. If they drove one another, we didn't know cause we wouldn't look out the window. Those female supervisors, those old bags kept walking there and watching over us so closely to make sure we didn't do anything.

Q: Do you by chance know what kind of work the men were doing?

A: Well, those guys went to work there and buried those dead bodies or something. I don't know. We always saw from the window that they had shovels. So maybe...

Q: And what did you say about those ropes? That they had them around their throats or something?

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A: They were hung down below. We were up top and they guys were below. Sort of a spaghetti, you know, and they hung there on those.

Q: And do you think that they hung them or that they hung themselves out of lost hope?

A: No, they were the ones that did it. We saw it because we were above, how those two German guys..

Q: Did the Germans hang them in the living quarters or outside?

A: They hung them outside. There is this large balcony, a sort of barracks or something. So it was on the balcony, and whenever we were by chance looking out the window, or so they wouldn't see us. That is when we saw those ropes and how they hung there. How they swayed back and forth there.

Q: Did you see it often? Did it happen often? How many times do you think you saw it?

A: Many many times, my dear lady. Every day.

Q: Some other male would always hang there every day?

A: Yes, we saw this.

Q: Or maybe several men?

A: That's for sure. You know, under my window, there was this large building there was. And under each window, for sure, 10 or 20, I don't know. I can't say for certain because I myself was not outside. -- Only in how we went, how we took those watches and those fields with those dead people in it. Otherwise, I don't know how many.

Q: Did it ever happen, as you yourself said, that there were very young girls there, so that perhaps some of the soldiers might have allowed themselves to...?

A: No, never.

Q: Never.

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A: No. There were Germans there. No, no.

Q: When you were taking that stuff off of the soldiers, or the dead or inflicted who lay there, those rings and so on. Did they have weapons with them, or were they already gone?

A: They still had their weapons.

Q: And you collected those as well?

A: No, only the rings. And if the ring wouldn't come off, then we would cut off the finger.

Q: So you would cut off the finger.

A: And now I see before me that murder, how I murdered someone.

Q: I'm sure you only did it to the dead.

A: Dead. Dead, no. Those dead. -- I didn't tell this to my kids yet. They didn't know (laughter), they know that I was in it, but.

Q: And Mrs. Procházková, did you have the opportunity to meet with those men who were in the same camp, who lived there?

A: No.

Q: Not even talk to them through the window, to call them or something?

A: Not at all. You know, those old bags were worse than the guys. Those old bags would beat us in a flinch of an eye. I was fat and young. I had all sorts of bruises on me when I got home that my dad would wash me in milk for three months.

Q: We'll get to all that later. So, you were beat so often that you were full of bruises?

A: They beat us often.

Q: Yes.

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A: Often. We, when we didn't want to go to those fields, to those dead. Then she, as soon as we would say something, then she would say, "Don't be a sluggard". She beat all of them.

\_\_\_\_\_.

Q: And when someone was sick, were they able to stay at home?

A: Certainly not. Unless one were lying on their death bed. Otherwise, all were taken. That German woman would come and say "**Komm, komm**", and off we would go.

Q: And when you returned in the evening, from work, were you able to leave those buildings to the courtyard or something?

A: Certainly not, my lady. She wouldn't even let us get near the window. She kept coming to inspect us, one German woman per room.

Q: And in the evening, did you perhaps talk or sing to one another, or something like that?

A: Certainly not, singing. There was rather crying. Because we were hungry and stuff. Hoping they wouldn't kill us. Later, when the Russians came, then.

Q: Let us leave the Russians for now. We will get to them later. I would still like to ask you if you had some friend there or if you experienced all this on your own?

A: I did not have a friend there.

Q: No. No one was with you.

A: My friend or my friends from my little village, we were all divided up between the different buildings. Therefore, we were not together. From each hamlet one person, so I was alone.

Q: And you did not even make a new friend there?

A: Not at all. No new friend.

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Q: With all those other Poles, French, and you said Czechs, you did not make friends with any of them?

A: No one, no. They were, let me tell you, no one was in the mood for anything. Went to sleep in hunger and woke up in hunger. We were beaten, full of bruises, no one was in the mood for anything. Nothing. Only until we got back to the barracks did we meet each other again.

Q: So you were there a full two years?

A: Yes.

Q: Something like that, yes? Until 1945 and then someone freed you? Or how was it?

A: It was the Russians who freed us.

Q: The Russians then. That must have been sometime in 1944, right? Or when was it that the Russians freed you all?

A: That was in \_\_\_\_\_. They were already everywhere, those Russian. It was spread around that they were everywhere.

Q: So then, they went into the camp?

A: Yes they did.

Q: And the Germans ran before them?

A: Ran, yes. We stayed there ourselves. Then they came, and were kissing our hands, crying. We were young women at that time.

Q: And what did they do with you? Were you still sick or the others?

A: They put me into a vehicle. There were about ten of us from the hamlet and they drove us back home.

Q: Did they give you some food?

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A: There was no food.

Q: Not even the Russians brought you some food, from their military kitchen or something?

A: They didn't have anything. Nothing. They didn't have anything like that there.

Q: But, at that time or later, when you could have left from the camp, did you go to some village and ask people there for something?

A: Not at all, for sure not. It happened, so we ran away and started walking.

Q: From where did you escape?

A: From that camp, as soon as the Russians came. The Russian then let us go.

Q: But you said that they drove you home.

A: In vehicles \_\_\_\_\_. But they let us go, you know, from those \_\_\_\_\_ and we later into those vehicles \_\_\_\_\_.

Q: I see, so those Russians then let you go from that camp.

A: Yes.

Q: And each of you went where you wanted to? Or did you somehow go together?

A: Yes, each to our own little hamlet, my dear.

Q: And did you let yourself get driven somewhere along the way, or how was it?

A: We didn't hitch hike.

Q: No.

A: We were too scared for that. No.

Q: But you said that they put you into some vehicles.

A: They drove us from, you know, those rooms, barracks. They drove us a bit away from that camp and then threw us out. Let us go wherever we wanted to.

Q: And did you know the way or where to go?

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A: No.

Q: So how did you get there, by foot?

A: Well, we went on foot and asked people which direction we should go, how far more still. We were then all crouched up in the forest. It was raining, as the \_\_\_\_\_ came after us. That was real tough, it was. Don't even want to think about it. It was real tough.

Q: And what did you eat in the forest?

A: Nothing, my lady. We didn't eat anything. We were hungry since they let us go, when the Russians came, for about three or four days. We didn't eat at all but only walked. I wasn't even able, my dear lady, to make it home. I then passed out in the train station.

Q: At the train station you said? Then you took a train as well?

A: No, only by foot.

Q: On foot.

A: The trains weren't running at that time.

Q: So you eventually got there. How many days did it take? It must have been long. A week or something like that?

A: Yes, weeks. More than three, four weeks it seemed. It was quite far away. Whenever nightfall hit us, there we would lay our heads. I tell you how I got home, and dad was still in the camp also. But dad wasn't there at that time.

Q: And when you came home, your dad wasn't there yet?

A: Not yet.

Q: Who was home then?

A: Only my mom and my two younger brothers. One of them was, I don't know, some six or seven years old.

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Q: That was sometime in the summer of 1945?

A: It was already fall, yah.

Q: When you got home?

A: Yah, because, as we were going through the fields and all, there were pears and apples. Around August or something.

Q: But, along the way, you must have sustained yourself somehow, at a peasant or something.

A: They wouldn't even let us into their homes, my dear lady.

Q: Mrs. Procházková.

A: We were all torn up, looking like that.

Q: Well, you couldn't have survived several weeks like that without food. I mean, you couldn't have made it all that way like that.

A: But go we did. I'm telling you, when we found some dead body, a soldier or whatever, we would search its pockets, like when we were taking those rings, like that hard bread. I'm glad

that I still have my teeth. We gnawed and worked there but a pear or an apple along the way no. Rather we would dig through the garbage can and take \_\_\_\_\_. I can't remember now.

Q: So, after some time, you got home. And then your father returned as well.

A: Yes.

Q: Where was he?

A: He was in Levoce and also in Slovakia. We were near the Polish border and he was near the Hungarian border.

Q: And he was also in some camp?

A: That was also some camp.

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Q: And did he tell you a little about it later?

A: No. I didn't ask him, cause he asked me. (laughter) And he cried too.

Q: And did he come home in such a God-forsaken way as well?

A: Yes, he did, the poor soul. When he died, which was about ten years ago, here in Fulnek. So he came. But I was lying in bed for about three months.

Q: Three months you were sick and lying in bed?

A: Yes. At that time, I couldn't even see. I couldn't even walk.

Q: And your daddy was washing you in milk, as you were saying?

A: Yes.

Q: That helped you?

A: Well, as you know, I had those rocks, those, those. You know, as is on those trees, inside the body, you know.

Q: Some kind of thistles?

A: Yah, some kind of thistles, you know.

Q: You had those in your body?

A: In my body, yes. So he was washing me, my mom no. My stepmother was mean, but my dad was good.

Q: Did some doctor come visit you sometime?

A: No. The nearest doctor was seven kilometres from us.

Q: Oh yah, I forgot about that.

A: Yes.

Q: Was there any doctor in the camp?

A: No.

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Q: Not even a nurse of some sort?

A: Nobody.

Q: Nothing of the sort.

A: Nothing like that at all.

Q: Not at all. If someone was sick, either they survived or they didn't.

A: They didn't do anything like that. Yes, it's like you said. That's how it was.

Q: Pills, applications, nothing of the sort.

A: Nothing of the sort, my dear lady.

Q: Good, so you were home now. Later, you must have gotten your health back, after some time, after those three months.

A: Something like that.

Q: And how did you earn yourself a living after that?

A: Well, dad was a musician. He came home and started playing again, yes. I was begging.

Q: Your dad continued in the work he was doing before.

A: Yes. I was begging, walking from town to town and asked for a piece of bread. With us, you see, those Russians, we were Russian, like the Podkarpatsky Russian. So they gave.

They knew that I was from that camp, so they gave me bread, milk, even let me into their homes. I could barely even stand. They even started crying, that I might die. I couldn't see, I was young, fat, and my body and legs were all chewed up. They carried me outside to the toilet. In their arms.

Q: And after that?

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Q: So, Mrs. Procházková, we would like to ask you for some more details. Something from that camp still.

A: Yes.

Q: There must be something still that you remember.

A: Yes.

Q: Like for example, if you by chance remember how many of those buildings were there. Was it some space, clearly organised? Could you see from one end to the other? I asked you how it looked and you now say that it looked like some barracks?

A: Yes.

Q: They were barracks, that is all?

A: Yes.

Q: You said buildings beforehand.

A: Yah.

Q: Or were they barracks?

A: Barracks, a very large building. There must have been, I don't know \_\_\_\_\_, or something in there. There were many rooms there, as you know. We wouldn't have even found a place there.

Q: So you were in one of those barracks.

A: Boys. Yes.

Q: And when you saw into that courtyard, how they were sentencing the men to death, was it on the barracks courtyard?

A: Yes. We had the window opened a bit, so we saw how they hung there, those men.

Q: And did you also have those assemblies in that courtyard?

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A: No.

Q: When they were counting you, or where did they do that?

A: They never did count us.

Q: They didn't count you?

A: No. We were always shut in. Always. They did not count us.

Q: And when you were talking about how they were hanging those men, do you happen to know what it was for?

A: No. Because they were down there below and we were up there above. We didn't come into contact with the men at all. We didn't even talk to them or anything. If we did, then those German women, those SS, they would have given it to us.

Q: But you said that you went out to wash in the brook and to the toilet in the forest.

A: Yah, but that was close.

Q: But if they were barracks, then there must have been some sink or something like that.

A: Those German women had that for themselves. They wouldn't want to get dirty from us.

Q: Not even the toilet, or the water. You all had to walk.

A: There, yes.

Q: Could you describe how your average day went, from beginning to end?

A: That would be difficult.

Q: You can't remember very well.

A: I was hungry a lot.

Q: So your day was tough.

A: Quite.

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Q: But when you woke up, did they wake you up, did someone come after you, did they holler at you, or ring a bell or something else?

A: Yah, like that. The SS women would wake us up.

Q: They came to wake you up in the morning.

A: Yes. So that we would go wash ourselves and stuff.

Q: About six in the morning or something?

A: Well, I don't know, about seven or something. That's when they woke us up. They walked into the room, we were sleeping on the floor and they woke us up.

Q: Yes.

A: We cleaned, we had to clean.

Q: So you cleaned. What did you clean?

A: Well, those mattresses, those straw mattresses that they gave us. So we had to put them in a pile and then at night we put them under ourselves again.

Q: And you laid them out again.

A: Yes.

Q: Didn't you have some sort of mattresses, those straw mattresses?

A: Certainly not, my dear lady.

Q: No. ... I see. And one more time with that work. You say you were there two years.

A: Yes.

Q: And you only did the same work over those years, taking those rings off of those people.

A: Always only the one job. We only walked among those dead.

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Q: And did you walk every day?

A: Every day.

Q: To various locations?

A: Yes.

Q: Those locations.

A: And we put the things we retrieved into the trucks, be it watches or whatever we found on the soldiers.

Q: Well, if that is how you remember it than that is how we have to say it.

A: Yes.

Q: So let us return to when you finally returned back to your home. So, after that, you went to those Russians and were begging.

A: Yes.

Q: But I am sure it did not stay like this. After all, you were a young woman.

A: No.

Q: So how was it after that?

A: Well, my dad played places.

Q: Were times happier then?

A: Yes, they were. It was a happier time.

Q: Did you sometimes go with him?

A: No.

Q: No.

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A: He went to play. He was a musician. He earned himself some money. And my step-mother, she went and begged in the villages, a little bit of potatoes, a little piece of meat. That is how we survived.

Q: Yes. ... After the war, did you feel... I already asked you that, before the war, you said that you did not feel that those Ruthenians did not treat you so well. Did it change after the war? Was it still the same? Did you ever feel that they might have had some bad feelings to you as Gypsies?

A: Not with the people around us.

Q: No.

A: No. We were good and dad was a musician and. We had our own little cottage. Not even the girls I went to school with. I ended at ninth grade. My dad did not have money anymore. The school director told him to keep me in school, but my dad said, "I have only one daughter and I won't let her go".

Q: I see. Did you have some friends in that town?

A: I had many.

Q: Were they Russians as well, or only Gypsies?

A: They were all Gypsies they were. But they're all dead by now. One was here recently and said that no one from my grade is alive anymore. And me, who has suffered so much, am still alive. No one else though.

Q: Yes. So how long did you stay in that village?

A: Well, I'm here now in Fulnek.

Q: No, I don't mean in Fulnek but where you were at that time.

A: With my parents you mean?

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Q: At your parents.

A: Well, after the war, I went to Czech. To Vansdorf, that is where I was.

Q: And there you found some work. Or you found something beforehand?

A: I found some work there. I worked in a factory and found myself Mr. Prochazka.

Q: I see. And what kind of work did you find there?

A: There was this factory. This sort of textile factory, where I worked and found my man.

Q: And were you trained there or did you learn your work there from experience? What did you do there, work on a machine?

A: On a machine, yes. We trained for 14 days. The forewoman taught us. And after that I worked there, and that is where I remained.

Q: Did you enjoy that work?

A: Yes, it was a good job.

Q: Did you make good cash as well?

A: Yes, I made some good cash.

Q: Where did you live?

A: In Vansdorf, in Vansdorf.

Q: I know, but was it in some house or something?

A: In a little house, after the Germans, as you know. There were many homes left empty.

Everywhere you went there was furniture. I lived below and up above in the attic there was all sorts of furniture and everything. The Germans fled and everything remained. I didn't have to worry about anything.

Q: So you went there shortly after the war.

A: Yes, soon afterwards.

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Q: Yes. And your husband also worked in the factory? You met him in the factory?

A: I met him there, yes.

Q: In Vansdorf, yes?

A: Yes, in Vansdorf.

Q: And was he a Gypsy as well?

A: He was a Czech Gypsy.

Q: A Czech Gypsy. And did he have a similar experience as you?

A: He was, he's younger than I am, by about ten years. He wasn't, as I am \_\_\_\_\_.

(laughter) He was here, last week, he was here last week.

Q: Yes.

A: I haven't seen him for forty years and now he came. He had some babe there, some Masešku or something. He went after others, and now he came. I told him that I am not blind. We have five kids together and I gave them all an education. Each has its own trade and are now on their own.

Q: And do you think he would have liked to come back to you, now?

A: Yes, because I have my own home, which is mine. I bought it. With a giant garden, down there below, on your way to the butcheries. So it's mine now. They already offered me 200,000 Kc for the garden and I'm not interested in selling. I have a daughter across the way there. I have 11 children in all.

Q: Yes.

A: And the garden I won't give away.

Q: And when you had children, did you continue to work?

A: I worked. My maternal pay ran out and I had to get a job.

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Q: Yes.

A: \_\_\_\_\_ I worked, at JZD, afterwards it was a state estate. I worked my but off in a brick-kiln.

Q: And when you had that little home, did you also have some animals there?

A: No.

Q: No.

A: That one Hungarian woman was there below. Not a Gypsy but a Czech woman. And up above, in Vansdorf, we lived there yes. After the Germans.

Q: They were some flats or something, not houses?

A: No, they were flats. We lived there all right. Afterwards, dad was here in Fulnek, you know, so we went here for my brother and dad and came here.

Q: I see.

A: Yes.

Q: We'll wait a bit for that as well. And in Vansdorf, did you also get along with the people well there? Do you have any gripes against anyone there?

A: Yes, it was good. No worries. I worked there, so it was okay. But then he took off from me with another Prochazkova.

Q: Yes. Afterwards, when your husband took off, how did you manage to feed your children?

A: I worked, my dear lady.

Q: And where did you put your children while working?

A: Into nursery school.

Q: Did the older children take care of the younger ones?

A: And then he came back after 41 years. He was here last week.

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Q: Those men (laughter).

A: I didn't even recognise him. I asked him, "May I help you?" and he responds, "Marusko, you forgot about me?" So I says back to him, "No". "I'm Tonda, your man". So I stared at him, "Leave and don't make up stories, sir." I simply didn't believe him.

Q: And then you got married again?

A: This time as Hakele.

Q: Hakel was his name?

A: Hakel, yes.

Q: Was he a Gypsy?

A: Yes, a Gypsy.

Q: Also a Czech Gypsy, or from where?

A: Well, he was from \_\_\_\_\_ from Slovakia.

Q: From Slovakia then. And with him you had another six children?

A: Five.

Q: Five.

A: With the previous I had six, this one five, so that makes a total of eleven.

Q: So you had six from the first one and five with this one now.

A: Yes.

Q: And he died, your husband?

A: Died, yes. May of 13<sup>th</sup> was a year. He drank a lot, spirits and everything. He was a big drinker.

Q: He also went to work?

A: Yes he did.

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Q: Or did you have to sustain him somehow?

A: He worked and I can at least say that he did indeed take care of the children. That I can admit.

Q: And afterwards, when your dad finally came to Fulnek, that is when you moved here as well?

A: Yes. My dad came for me.

Q: And your dad kept playing?

A: He always played. He was a musician.

Q: Did he play on the violin, or what did they play on?

A: Yes, he played on the violin.

Q: Did he have his own band, or did he play in one?

A: He had a band. -- He got married right away, but that stepmother of mine wasn't good for him.

Q: And when you came here, was there also work for yourself?

A: There was.

Q: What did you do.

A: I worked at an estate.

Q: You worked at an estate then.

A: And later I worked at a brick-kiln, and then at Romo.

Q: Where to?

A: At Romo, the Romo plant, the washing machine plant. There I stayed and from which I eventually retired at a ripe old age.

Q: Actually, you didn't speak Czech when you first came to this country, right?

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A: No.

Q: How did you manage to converse? Did you learn the language quickly?

A: Yes, I constantly studied. I was embarrassed if I didn't know it, you see. I did not know how to speak. So my neighbours would come to me and I had friends as well. And then they would say, "See, Marusko, you know as well as we do now." And I kinda picked it up that way.

Q: Do you know how to write in Czech?

A: Yes, I do. I know everything now.

Q: So you learned it masterfully.

A: Later, I gave my kids an education. All of them are educated. One is a glazier, the one who has that house here. Another one is a machine locksmith, others are locksmiths, all sorts of trades. With the girls, the younger one, I didn't want to put into school anymore. She \_\_\_\_\_ . She cried. She wanted everything, so I said I'd give her too. What can you do about it.

Q: And what do your daughters do?

A: Technicians and stuff like that.

Q: So they are doing well?

A: Well, I would say. They are good girls. They come and help. The older one was just here and did some washing. I said to her, "Hey you, I can't anymore, my tooth hurts." Because I went for some drilling. I paid a hundred crowns for all that drilling, and my whole mouth was swollen because I took Alpa and everything else. Nothing helped. My teeth never hurt me, my dear lady, never. And now my old knees as well. I'm alone now, you see. It's sad.

Q: Are you sad?

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A: Yes.

Q: But your kids come once in a while?

A: Yes they do. And my neighbours are close as well. A daughter, another daughter, a son and that.

Q: How many nephews do you have?

A: Nephews? One has three, the other six, seven, eight, nine, 10, 11, 12, I'd say about 13 or 14 maybe.

Q: About 14 nephews and it doesn't stop there (laughter).

A: (laughter) I don't know if I'll have any more. They don't want any more children. My dear, I myself had eleven children, and raised them too. And he was a big drinker. Didn't want to give money to me but rather for the alcohol.

Q: My dear.

A: And the house I bought myself. It was shut down for three years, during which I was buying it. I worked, begged, borrowed and now I have a large garden. I'm not so bad off anymore. Now if only my health was a little better. Just to hold out a few years longer.

Q: One other thing interests me. What would you like to say from your life?

A: Well, what should I say. (laughter) That I hope that there will never anywhere again be a war, that there will only be peace, that people will all live happily, and stuff like that. That I would be able to live at least a few years more, and that I would be healthy.

Q: I thank you very much for the interview.

A: I thank you too.

Q: Perhaps Mrs. Jana will still ask you something.

A: Yes.

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Q: ... I bid you farewell then. I don't want to bother you any longer, in any case.

A: Thank you very much for the tape and wish you health in your life.

Q: And me to you as well.

**End of tape 1**

**Conclusion of interview.**