Abstract

This is the story of famed harpsichordist, Zuzana Ruzickova. She tells of her childhood growing up in Plzeň in an assimilated, well-to-do Czech family. As a child, she was not aware of any anti-Semitism until the Nazi occupation and the Nuremburg Laws; she had always thought of herself as Czech with a Jewish religion. Looking for a place to belong, it was around this time that she became a Zionist. Her parents considered sending her to England on a Kindertransport, but she did not want to leave them. Although the family had affidavits to leave the country and go to the United States, Zuzana's father had an intense patriotism for Czechoslovakia and couldn't leave.

She tells of being moved from her home into combined flats. When the transports from Plzeň began, the Jewish children were forced to deliver the notices to those scheduled for transport. She and her family were sent to the Terezin ghetto in January 1942. It was here that she met Freddy Hirsch who took care of the children and elderly. Zuzana worked with him in caring for the children. At first Zuzana and her mother were together, but she was later sent to live in the Children's Home. On Sundays she was allowed to visit with her parents; and also visited her grandparents. Her father and grandparents died in Theresienstadt. In 1943 she went outside the ghetto to work in the fields; she describes this as a somewhat happy time. In late spring 1943 the Swiss Red Cross visited the ghetto; conditions were made to look good for their visit.

In December 1943 Zuzana and her mother were sent to Auschwitz; it was here that she was tattooed and made to sign a document stating that she had been arrested for anti-German activity. Freddy Hirsch had already been sent there in September; when she saw him at Auschwitz, he told her to say that she was 16 years old. Again she worked with Freddy, helping with the children. Zuzana tells of the horrible conditions at Auschwitz and the smell and fires from the gas chambers; and how people were thrown into pits, doused with gasoline, and burned alive if there was no gas. She recounts that the date of her gassing was supposed to be June 6, 1944, but the Germans needed men to fight, so she was chosen for slave labor instead. From

Auschwitz she and her mother were sent to Hamburg. In February 1945 they were transported to Bergen-Belsen which she describes as not being organized; a place where they were meant to die.

At the end of the war the Germans abandoned the camp leaving no food and disconnecting the water; many had bubonic plague. A Hungarian detail of the Nazi army came through, shooting into the blocks. They were finally liberated by the English. After her recovery she worked in the British General Hospital as a translator helping doctors and patients communicate with each other. Zuzana's mother was also very ill, and she thought going back to Plzeň would help.

The post-war period in Plzeň was difficult. She tells of survivor's guilt, how she tried to commit suicide, how she met her husband Viktor, and how she again took up her music.

Transcripts of taped interviews with Zuzana Ruzickova

March 27 - Apri1, 1991

Note: These interviews were mainly conducted in English, and transcribed here verbatim [with minor corrections] Occasional Czech words are retained here in Czech.

We begin by looking through old photograph albums and piles of loose photographs of the family before the Holocaust. "My father was a great photographer," Zuzana begins, and goes through the photographs with me. We spend the entire first session, and part of the second looking through the photographs. I am afraid to get to the real story, and perhaps she is also. Below are her and my comments, upon looking at the pictures:

[Revealed are pictures of a privileged life--servants, nannies, elegant houses, fine furniture, lovely clothes. In most of the pictures there is Zuzana, a much beloved, perhaps even

neurotically over-cosseted only child. Many pictures of a little girl in dress-up clothes - dressed as a maid, as a fairy]

Zuzana: I loved to dress up. Here is a picture of me as a služka [a maid, domestic]; a family outing to Dobříš (Doberschisch, Dobrisch) — mother, father, Zuzana. Then pictures of Zuzana and Dagmar, her cousin, with whom she was brought up, almost as a twin. They were often dressed in identical outfits. In this picture they are wearing little checked dresses with white aprons. Each child has a governess standing solicitously behind her. Apparently the governesses were in competition with each other over which little girl was finer, neater, brighter. Here is a picture of Zuzana with Karla, her nursemaid; another picture of Zuzana and Dagmar, in identical cloth coats and plaid scarves; a picture of Zuzana and her mother in mother-daughter outfits. A stylized photo of the school play; one child playing Mother Earth; Zuzana and other children dressed as spring flowers.

NARRATIVE BEGINS:

I was a forget-me-not here, and Dagmar was a daisy — we were properly educated. We went to a Cvičná Škola — where teachers were trained.

At one time when I was 9 years old, I had bad pneumonia. My parents were really worried — I had a high fever. My mother said if you get well you may have any wish you want. So then when I got well I said I want to take piano lessons. That's how it all began.

She tells of her first piano teacher, Marie Provazniková. We always called her Milostpani, Madame. She was titled Milostpani by my mother and father; she smoked.

She really loved me. She came on Sundays and we played and played. She never insisted on my practicing a lot. When she saw some piece of music which isn't going so well, she just changed

it. My mother used to worry about this, and Milostpani would tell her, the important thing is that she not get tired of music.

We went through the whole repertory. I still have a little notebook where I recorded what we played, and it still amazes me; we sight-read through everything!

Then she discovered very early that I was especially in love with Bach. She thought at first that I should play the organ. But then I had lung troubles, and the doctor said that it was too cold in churches. So she said all right, you'll learn the harpsichord.

One Christmas she gave me the Goldberg Variations and said, with reverence, one day you'll be able to play these.

She was my teacher from the time I was 9 to 13. After that, the Germans came. She allowed me to keep coming, though I had to hide my star; and it was dangerous for her as well. She taught me until the last moment; until we went to the camp. She was a very courageous and beautiful woman.

[NOTE: I don't pick up all the words "until we went to the camp". I am still afraid to go on. I want to stay at the 'before' phase for as long as possible; to keep dwelling on this happy, prosperous family, her piano lessons etc.]

Question: What year did you begin piano lessons?

In 1936, when I was not quite 9; to 1941.

In 1936 everything was still perfectly O.K., and I spent all my time at the piano from then on; I was in love with music and devouring it. My teacher was also happy with me; she said that I would fulfill all that she had dreamed for herself.

Phone rings.

So, 1936 was still all right. I was spending all my free time with music. In the end, the decision was made in favor of Madame Provazniková. I was allowed to take lessons in harmony and counterpoint with a composer who lived in Plzeň (Pilsen), Bartovsky. And Milostpani didn't waste any time and already wrote to Paris, to Wanda Landowska, whether she would be willing to accept such a child. I would have been 14. So, I had the prospect that when I finished my obligatory studies that year, I would be allowed to go to Paris and study at Saint-Germain-en-Laye (Laie) with Wanda Landowska.

I went to the classical gymnasium; that's where my way parted with Dagma. She decided to go into natural sciences; she wanted to become a veterinarian. She loved animals and everything to do with animals; and I wanted to have a classical education.

Started Gymnasium in 1938; I liked going to school. I had been so sickly as a child and had missed so much school that going to school was something special.

My only problem, when I came to school, I was extremely sensitive to noise. I was not used to being with many children, and the noise bothered me very much. Maybe that's why I chose the harpsichord, a silent instrument.

I remember when my father first bought a radio; I used to run away and scream because it was too loud for me.

I remember when my mother consulted our pediatrician about the problem with my sensitivity to noise. The doctor told her: *You should quarrel more; your home is too silent.*

I remember in Plzeň there was a spring festival of opera; we had a family box. I used to get so excited that I would almost always get ill.

I would say I was an overly sensitive child, even a neurotic child; always having terrible anxieties about my parents — whether they will come home, whether something terrible would happen to them.

My mother certainly was over-protective of me; my father was not. He was himself a little handicapped by his wound, [CHECK] but he was very devoted to sports and gymnastics. He always said: *I want you to be a sporting girl;* which I was very bad at. But I had to ski, and to skate, and very early, I had to swim; which I loved above all sports. I played ping-pong; I wasn't allowed to play tennis. My father loved tennis, but I wasn't allowed to play tennis when I started the piano because of my hands.

My father didn't want me to be educated as an intellectual child. Sometimes my mother would worry; she'll get too tired, she'll catch a cold. But in the end my father always prevailed.

In the end it saved my life, that my mother was overanxious. The whole family was always saying, oh, why don't you leave her alone, a healthy child. But it saved my life, insofar as when I went to the camp, I was a healthy child because of all her care.

The tragedy was that just at the moment when I became a normal child — because when I was a little child, I never wanted to eat anything — and suddenly I became very hungry; at that moment it happened. It was around puberty that I became healthy and wanted to eat. I also started menstruating.

WHEN DID THINGS FIRST START GOING WRONG?

I've been thinking about it a lot now, seeing those children with the gas masks [Gulf crisis - children in Israel wear masks; TV full of this]. My first terrible trauma was when we were given gas masks in school. I came home and cried bitterly, 'There will be war, there will be war.' The moment I was given this mask it was, for me, the end of my childhood. I realized there could be war; that my father could be going into this war and could be killed. Until then war was something historical.

I had some inkling, from the conferences behind closed doors, with my cousins and my uncles. I knew something was going on; that was Moravec from Vienna. My parents tried very hard to keep all of it from me. I thought maybe there were some worries about the shop; sometimes they had conferences when something went wrong, about taxes or something. But gas masks proved that there will be a war.

There were only five or six Jewish children in my school. As a matter of fact, I didn't really realize that was the good and the bad thing. I didn't realize that we were something special. Of course I went to a different religion class, but Catholics went to a different class, and Protestants, and Jews went to a different class. There were special times when people took religious classes, and we went each to ours. We had a special class for all the Jewish children of all the schools at the synagogue, a big lovely synagogue in Plzeň. Once a week, we went, for religious instruction.

I really wasn't aware of any anti-Semitism at all. Maybe that was special because other Jewish children have told me they had classmates who made jokes about it, but I never did. So I felt it as a natural thing that I'm a Czech with a Jewish religion, and that's that.

It didn't start until Hitler came, until the occupation. Then, suddenly, some of my classmates turned very nasty. They didn't talk to me, separated themselves from me. And in our building there was a German family. The boy had always been very friendly; I have some photographs of me with him. Suddenly he started wearing a Nazi uniform.

When the Nazis came, the Nuremberg laws were enforced, and that was that. I was perfectly shocked, and asked questions, of course, and wanted immediately to be informed. If I don't belong here, where do I belong, was the childish question. How come that they didn't tell me that I don't belong here, that we are a different nation, different race. So immediately I started reading any book on the Jewish religion, Jewish history; and I became an ardent Zionist immediately. At that time, the natural conclusion was, if I don't belong here, I belong somewhere else. Where do I belong to? To Palestine — I'll go to Palestine.

My mother was terribly worried that this would hurt my father's feelings as a Czech Jew, so she told me not to bring those books home. Then my father found out about it, and he talked with me like an adult. And he told me to get informed about it. He didn't feel hurt at all.

There were discussions about leaving. My father started to learn Spanish, because he thought Latin America would be a possible place. We also had English conversation classes with an Englishman. And my mother started to learn sewing ties, because she thought that maybe it would be a good idea to earn her living like that.

Then there were transports of children [Kindertransport] going to England. My parents considered that, but I was terribly opposed. I'd say, 'I would die if I would leave you, and I'm not going.' I was treated as an adult. I was always asked my opinion.

About the Zionist thing, my father was always very understanding. Even afterwards, in Theresienstadt, when I joined a Communist group; not as a believer, but I wanted to get informed and started to go to classes in Marxist-Leninism. My father always told me to get informed. I went there and didn't like it.

He could have been ridiculed for it. People might have said: *Now you see this assimilated family, and the daughter is a Zionist!* But I used to have big discussions with friends of my father. I'd say: *Now you see that assimilation doesn't work.* I don't think my father ever changed his mind. He always was devoted to this county, but I think he could see my way of reasoning.

I'd say: *Look, this doesn't work.* Looking back in history, there were always pogroms, Jews were always persecuted. The only way to get out of this, I'd say, is to form your own state. I tried to find out what was the source of anti-Semitism. I really didn't know about the existence of anti-Semitism until the Holocaust.

Even in Dobříš where there was a large Jewish community, my grandmother was almost like part of the gentry. When a child was ill, she sent a doctor, sent baskets to the poor. The children from Dobříš who joined our little group — I don't even know which of them was Jewish. It was fun for me to go to the synagogue; it was fun to go to the Catholic procession. The anti-Semites come from Moravia or Slovakia. In Bohemia, under Masaryk, it was very enlightened; not a single anti-Semitic incident.

I only remember one thing; my father was always very, very cross with Jews who were talking German. Then I heard about anti-Semitism for the first time, because I heard my father say, then it would be no wonder if people were anti-Semites because this is Czechoslovakia, and people shouldn't talk German.

After the occupation, what happened? We had to leave school, immediately. The Germans came in April; June was the end of school year. In September, no more school. There was a Jewish Gymnasium [High School] in Brno. So there were Jewish students from higher classes who came to teach us children; and even non-Jewish students volunteered to teach us. And then the Germans even stopped that; so no more school.

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MORE BACKGROUND: [looking at photos again:]

My parents were an ill-suited couple, though the marriage was very good. My grandmother was the musical one. She loved life, music, theater, concerts, traveling. My grandfather was a nature lover; spent most of his free time in woods, garden, natural history museum. Grandfather's great passion was identifying flowers. We all got this love of nature from him. This passion runs in the family; all Ružičkas have this trait, which is not very typically Jewish.

There is this legend about the Ružička family not being originally Jewish, being Czech Brethren, a Protestant group who were persecuted by Catholics; so quite a lot of them converted to Judaism. This legend runs in the family.

They had five children, Jindrich and Paula. Here is the whole family; here is my father, Jaroslav; his brother Karel; these are the daughters, Vlasta, Jiřina and Zdena. You will note that most of the names are Czech names; that was because the whole family was intensely patriotic.

My grandfather was evicted from Vienna for founding the first Czech patriotic committee that then turned into Sokol. There was a hate of Vienna and of the Austrian Empire. The whole family was involved in Sokol. My grandfather was even the chairman of the local Sokol group. [Sokol was also persecuted by the Nazis]. It was quite unusual for a Jewish family to be so involved in Czech affairs.

They were not observant. My grandfather used to go to synagogue for the holidays. My father did not; he was a declared atheist. Nobody kept kosher, nobody spoke Yiddish. The family was quite

assimilated much earlier than anybody else. So - that's the family.

[LOOKING AT MORE PHOTOS]

Here is my father's brother, Karel. He was a legionnaire in the First World War; deserted from the Austrian army. My father was wounded in the First World War.

Here is the whole family when my grandfather was 75; that was a big assembly. Here is Vlasta; she was the only one in the family who had aspirations to become an active musician. She had a wonderful voice. She married and didn't go on; but she always regretted it. Here's Jiřina and Zdena; both divorced.

Here is my mother; she came from a very different family.

Here I am! Here, with Zdena's daughter and Jiřina's daughter.

And this is Dagmar, the daughter of Karel and Kamila. I will talk about her later because she was very much involved in my life. She was exactly my age; she was a month younger. Because my father and Karel looked alike and were very close, we lived next door to each other; and we were like sisters. Mostly we wore the same clothes, went to the same school and were inseparable. Because I didn't have any other brother or sister, so we were like twins. Dagmar later got a baby brother.

This is Eva, who is still alive, in Israel; Zdena's daughter. She also took up a musical career, a soubrette in Operetta Theater in Prague. Her daughter, Jana, is a famous film star now here in Czechoslovakia.

We were very much influenced by our grandmother who took us to concerts and theaters.

Jindrich, when he came from Vienna, started selling old iron. He came back to Plzeň and sold scrap metal. Actually, he was a junk dealer. This then developed into a toy shop, which went very well.

So when I was born, it was quite a big shop. Both sons, daughters, and Paula worked in this shop. Then the wives started another shop, Filialka [the Affiliated Shop], and that went very well. My father went to Chicago for four years; went through this experience in the Ginsburg department store. When he came back, he started a sort of a department store next to the shop; sold jewelry, lingerie. So when people came to Plzeň to shop for toys, they could buy all these other things. The shop was called Ružička, Hracky [toys] Ružička. So that's the family; a thriving business and a thriving family.

My mother had a lot of business experience; she came from Dobříš. Her father had started as an assistant in a grocery store; met my grandmother on my mother’s side. She, like Goethe's Lotte, took care of her small siblings; she was an orphan. When my grandfather saw how she took care of her sisters and brothers, he said, I will wait for you; she was 14 then. He did, and he married her.

Women in Dobříš began to specialize in sewing gloves, imported leathers, founded littler companies. Soon this became a big business.

My mother at that time wanted to be a medical doctor, and she would have been extremely gifted. But at the time it was impossible for a daughter from a good family to go and take up a profession. At the time there were also other difficulties. She had two sisters and a brother; the brother was the youngest. Then he came from the war, he was drafted [World War 1]; and it must have been a very traumatic experience for him. He studied at the chemical faculty, and he came back and somehow didn’t adjust again. He couldn’t recover, and in the end he committed suicide. After that, my mother decided that she couldn’t leave her parents.

My mother's parents came from a very religious background; and my grandfather has never been told that his son committed suicide because that would have been a terrible blow to him. They were the Lederers; my mother's mother was a Fleishman. Paula was Zuzana's paternal grandmother; Paula's family was Steinschuss. Leopolda Lederer was Zuzana Ruzickova's mother after her grandfather, Leopold Lederer; Zuzana's maternal grandmother was Zdenka Fleishman.

My mother stayed in Dobříš and started her own porcelain shop. Then she wanted to go to Prague, so she became an accountant for a lacquer company. So she had a lot of business experience.

To complete the family tree, there were three daughters and one son. Of the three daughters, one ended up in the concentration camp. One is still alive, Elsa; she is 102 years old. She emigrated before the war. She was Elsa Lederer and is now Elsa Moravec. She emigrated in 1937, because of the Nazis. They were living in Vienna, so they felt it more. They had an umbrella business; they still have one.

Otto, their son, kept coming and having long conferences with my parents insisting that they should emigrate as well. Even the Ginsburgs, your relatives from Chicago, sent affidavits to my family. [To be accepted into the U.S. you had to have an affidavit.]

So we had these affidavits; we had them in our pockets. But because of this intense patriotism of my father, because of his being in the Sokol, our flat was always full of his 'brothers' from the Sokol saying, now, you cannot desert us, you will become an honorary Aryan because you are a Czech and not a Jew. So my father said: ***I can't desert my country.*** So he volunteered for the army before Munich. Of course after Munich the army was demobilized, and he came home.

Even at that point he could have gone; leave his country. But he felt he couldn't.

So, ask me something...

[There is a pause. She goes back to looking at Photos].

So this was my father and my mother. And this is me — [a lovely child].

So, my mother's upbringing was elegant, cultured. There were governesses and all that. She spent quite a lot of time with her sister in Vienna; going to museums, theater, concerts.

Question: Why is your mother looking so sad in this photo?

Somehow she always looked sad. She was always very worried.

So I was brought up very liberally. My mother, before she married my father, was an ardent Zionist; my father was very assimilated. They didn't try to influence me, but I loved my Jewish religion teacher. I loved any ceremony, so I went to the synagogue and also went to the Catholic churches, even processions; anything with ceremony and music. It was a family joke.

We always went to Dobříš where the whole family assembled for Jewish holidays, Passover and Yom Kippur. There was a huge table; all the cousins, everybody. I loved it. I still can celebrate the Passover service; I know all the tunes, all the words.

There is no more Jewish community in Dobříš. Dobříš had the most terrible fate. The castle used to belong to Colloredo-Mansfeld. He married a mannequin from Paris, a very cultured

lady. So she built a French garden, a little bit like Versailles and tried to encourage the villagers to eat more vegetables.

Our family was very well connected with the castle because Palivec, a poet and close friend of Capek, was the overseer of the castle, and he was friendly with the Fleishman family.

Dobříš was like home because everywhere there were aunts, uncles and cousins. Everybody was an uncle or cousin or friend; the Jewish community was very large and influential.

We as children were allowed to go to the castle park [because of family connection]. We had a special key to a back gate. We roamed the park; it was ours! It was not opened to the public. We went up into the 'English' part of it, the woods. So we were very privileged. We went there for Pesach and for part of summers.

That was the only lucky time of my life. I was perfectly happy. This was until I was ten. I had all the privileges of having a Jewish family and a Czech family and a liberal education.

Of course there were always clouds on the horizon of a small child. I was ill most of the time; that was the greatest cloud on my youth. Both of my parents were in the shop most of the time, so I had a Nanny, Karla; she was a village girl, very musical. At one point she turned out to have tuberculosis. Then I was x-rayed, and I proved to have it too.

I was a child they were always worrying about. When I was seven or eight, I went to Austria, to the Alps, to a sanatorium with my mother; to a Zauberberg. That was at the time Dollfuss was murdered.

Most of my childhood I didn't go to school, because I had bronchitis and flus. I was a very diligent little girl; I had

governesses who taught me and private tutors. But I was very lonely; I couldn't join any children's groups. So that was the cloud; that was, of course, why I started very late with my music.

I already wanted to study music; I sang all the arias from operas, folk music. I spent lots of time reading. I had a large library; it was completely catalogued, arranged in order, a whole wall of books. Educational books were in blue; fiction was green. I did lots of reading. And then, of course, Dagmar was with me when she was not in school; she had a more normal life.

The terrible tragedy, there was a rivalry between her mother and mine; and she was a beautiful, healthy child, while I was a sickly child. But she had a cough too, and her mother refused to have her treated. And she died in the concentration camp of TB.

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The Nuremberg Laws went into effect immediately after the occupation. That meant we weren't allowed to visit any public events — no theater, cinema, concerts, nothing. Then gradually we were moved from our homes into combined flats with two or three families living in one flat. We had a curfew; we weren't allowed out after eight in the evening. We had to wear stars. Only certain periods we could go swim. There was one lake, called the Jewish lake; one area around the lake where we could play. Of course the shop was immediately taken over by the Treuhander. Very soon, my father was sought by the Gestapo, even before the Jews were being molested, because he was a Sokol. I remember once, when we still had a cook, she waited for us before we came back from swimming at the lake and told us that the Gestapo had been there looking for my father; and we shouldn't go home. He was hiding in the woods for a week. The

Gestapo came regularly then and searched our home. They took anything they could find — chocolate. My mother talked back to them. She'd say: ***Why are you taking this?*** They would say: ***This is for the poor German children.*** My mother would say: ***My child is also poor.*** They never mistreated her.

It was very terrifying. Something terrible was happening. I didn't disintegrate; I grew stronger. I felt that somehow we would get out of this; that there would be a Jewish state. It was the first time that I became a part of a group of youngsters my age — the Zionist group, Maccabi Hatzair. I joined the group, and we had common activities; learned Hebrew. Being part of a group of young people who sustained each other helped a lot. The boys had to go work somewhere every day, and we went to get them at four o'clock.

My father, first they kept him on in the shop, then he had to go work in a Kaolin factory, a sort of a white plaster; you have to mine it. Then one of his colleagues from Sokol took him into his factory. This went on from 1939 to 1941.

There was this Czech fascist organization called Vlajka. They were always on the lookout for Jewish children. We stayed out in the evening, of course before curfew, and they would beat us up. This was my first experience with violence. They'd ambush our group and beat us. We'd try to run away. I got really hurt just once. The boys were hurt more often.

My father was terribly depressed. But there was also this terrible optimism. This won't take long, Hitler will lose the war; the allies will win soon.

Then the transports started in the autumn of ‘41, in October. Then the greatest shock of my childhood happened. The Plzeň transports went early, in Jan. '42. Already in December, ’41 they started sending the ‘invitation’ cards [she laughs bitterly]. The terrible thing was they sent children to distribute the cards to people, Jewish children. We too were called up. There was a bureau at the Jewish Community, and

there they were working on the administrative side of it. There were Gestapo overseers who directed the whole thing. But the work had to be done by the Jews themselves.

It was very, very terrible, because we children went in 'couples', and had to bring the notices to people that they were to appear with 50 kg luggage. We had to hand the notice to the people. And the scenes were terrible. Some people screamed and some cried and some went mad. And some — we came to a home where the gas was on. [There is long pause - she is very affected by this memory.]

Then I remember, they had to sign that they had received the notice. And we had to put in all the names and addresses. And I remember very vividly one scene; they had kept us there until quite late in the evening, after the curfew. It must have been about ten o'clock, and I remember suddenly my father, with his star, was standing there in the door and saying: ***What are you doing with those children? They mustn't be out after curfew. They are in danger and they must go home!*** And all the Gestapo looking at him in amazement. And he said: ***I'm taking you home!*** And he took me and Dagmar and led us away. And nobody said anything.

Dagmar did not join the Maccabis. She stayed in the opposite camp, the assimilated camp. She believed simply that she was Czech; that this was happening to all the Czechs, and a little bit more to the Jews.

It was terrible, the delivery of the notices. We saw life at its very worst. It was a nightmare.

But in the meantime life went on. We even had dancing lessons. I so wanted to have dancing lessons, and in the end, one lady who had a big room arranged for us to dance to the gramophone and even to have a dancing teacher. And of course we had our little love affairs. And we celebrated all the Jewish festivities. Chanukah we gave little presents to each other. And we were a very close-knit group. We had a young couple

leading us. They were lovers; I will come back to them later. He was Karel Schleisner, and she was Tilla Fischl.

The idea was that we would all go to Palestine together, and form a group there, a kibbutz, and work together there. It was a great help. And then of course, there was music. I was still studying with Milostpani and practicing and playing for all the festivities. I was the musician of the group.

Next to Milostpani, there was also the former director of our Gymnasium [he was expelled by the Germans]; he also gave us history lessons. We went to his house with our stars hidden. Oddly enough, we made terrible fun of him because he looked to us so old fashioned. He felt that Masaryk shouldn't have broken up the Austrian-Hungarian Empire. We thought what he was saying was such nonsense.

By this time there was no chance to leave; everything was closed.

Maybe you could illegally cross the borders, but not whole families.

I'm afraid at this point my mother made life rather hard for my father with recriminations [that they didn't leave]. My father was terribly depressed. The psychological pressure afterwards of having the responsibility of all this happening to us must have been terrible.

Question: When did your father die?

In 1943. In Theresienstadt (Terezin). So now we're up to January. Let's end now for the day.

Question: Do you want to go on with these interviews?

Yes. I have to go on!

Continuing transcription (March 30, 1991); going through more photos.

This is my mother before she was married. The marriage was arranged by a shadchan (shadchun). The marriage was too good; too good for life.

These are all my aunts. This is Aunt Elsa who is 102 and living in the States. This is Aunt Herma and her son. She had two sons; they all perished in Madjanek.

This is my mother and her best friend. Look at those hats. Aren't they lovely?

This is my mother as a very young wife. My grandmother, as was usual, trained a maid and a cook for her.

This is her very, very new house.

[Me: Your mother was beautiful!]

Zuzana: She was always afraid she was ugly, and she was terribly afraid I would look like her. This is my mother away somewhere in finishing school; a very early photo.

Here is Aunt Ruzena, the one who had the big house in Dobříš with all the intellectuals coming in.

Here's my mother as a schoolgirl, here she is; looks so much like me when I was young. This was a postcard, Poldi Legerova.

Pribram, a mining town near Dobříš; that's where the photographer was located.

Here's my mother with my father and myself. A bathing suit; she hated to swim.

Here, she tried to learn to ride a bicycle. She was no good at sports.

This is her cousin. Here again is the whole family in Dobříš; grandfather, grandmother, my mother, Aunt Herma, myself, Uncle Emil [the husband of Aunt Herma] and their two boys.

This is the whole family, Aunt Herma, Uncle Pepa, Aunt Ella from the USA, and my mother.

My mother was the youngest one in her family and the unwanted one because they wanted a son so badly. Here she is again at school, 1910. Doesn't she look sweet?

Here, company in Dobříš [a picture of little boys in sailor suits].

Here is Aunt Ruzena and Uncle Charles.

And this was a very remarkable person, Dr. Prusik, a secret love of my mother's. When I talked to him after many years, Dr Prusik's son told me: ***Your mother was the secret love of my father's.*** He was a personal friend of Eduard (Edvard) Beneš [second president of Czechoslovakia] — a medical doctor.

Here's Uncle Charles, one of my grandmother's brothers.

I'll explain your [MW's, Marie Winn's] relationship to me: Your father's [Joseph Winn's] grandmother lived in Dobříš. Your father's mother, Albina Wienerova, her marriage to Wiener was arranged by the shadchan. My father was a relation of your grandmother's family; your great grandfather. Her father's father, was my grandmother's brother, Roubicek.

Here's another shot of my mother and father in Dobříš; and my mother's best friend who was also my so-called Aunt, Zdena.

Again here's Dobříš, a little restaurant. Here's Dr. Prusik [the admirer of her mother] and his wife.

Here's another picture of my mother with the Prusiks, before she was married; and the Schwartzes.

Here is a photo of the family, the last meeting, after my grandfather died. It must have been before Hitler came, but already during times that were worrisome. I see it from the expressions on the faces and also from the age of my grandmother. It must have been 1938 already.

This man, the brother of Leo Moravec, husband of Elsa; much older than my mother and lame. But when my mother stayed in Vienna with the Moraveces, he fell very much in love with her. And, she sort of really adored him, but didn't love him.

He asked her to marry him; and she was on the brink of marrying him, but the family was against it because he was so much older, and he was lame.

So that was when the family went to the shadchan to find another husband for my mother; and found my father.

He [Moravec] lived in the States for a long time - a very close friend of Piatigorsky.

This must have been taken shortly before my grandfather's death. He died when he was 81.

Here again, the whole family in Dobříš; my mother and Jiri, Herma's son and Elsa and my father and my mother's close friend, Zdena [everybody is dressed extremely fashionably for a trip to the woods — gloves and scarves and cloche hats].

Here again, this is in Carlsbad (Karlovy Vary, Karlsbad, Karlzbad) — a spa.

Here are picture of my mother during my childhood.

Here are pictures of her after the war [a great transformation].

[Comment: A huge change is visible from pictures of Zuzana's mother taken in 1939 and those taken in 1947 or 1948. Only eight or so years have passed but she looks twenty years older. This is the first moment in the interview that the subject of the Holocaust is absolutely tangible; although by spending an hour going through the photographs we have actually been putting it off.]

My mother got her shop back again, and was trying to make a go of it in Plzeň before the Communist takeover. That was between 1945 and 1948.

[Note: Zuzana's mother died in 1983, in December.]

About her death; she had some brain trouble, a slight stroke, then she recovered. But she always fell; she had those dizzy spells. I was always so terribly afraid she'd fall down while I was on tour. I used to teach one day a week from 8 to 8. Then when I'd come home I'd be absolutely finished. I always prepared one meal for my mother, and for lunch she'd go out. I came home and prepared some dumplings with strawberries; that was her favorite. But she said: ***Oh, I had this for lunch; I want to eat something different.*** I didn't know what to do. But

since we were having fish with our dinner, I gave her my fish and ate the dumplings.

Once a year I get a terrible migraine — that was the day; so I went to sleep very hard.

This was her room. I had trained myself to wake up as soon as she turned on the light, so I saw she had gone to the kitchen to make some tea and cookies. And she said: ***I should have had the dumplings; I felt something sweet would be nice.*** And because I had this headache I didn't sit down to the table with her. Instead I said: ***You have your tea and cookies and I'm going to sleep.*** But on her way from the kitchen back into bed she fell and broke an arm. And then she had to stay in the hospital where they discovered she had diabetes. And then she refused to walk because she was afraid of falling.

Here's a photo of my mother with one of our cooks, Rezi. She's the one who taught me a lot of those racy songs.

Here is my grandmother and grandfather. Every year for the summer holidays I went to Krkonose. We went with everything; lots of luggage and the nanny and the cook and myself. My mother and father stayed with us for three weeks, and then my father went back to Plzeň because he had to look after the shop. But he came every weekend.

Here is my Nanny and me and some children from the village. This was in South Bohemia. Sometimes we went to Carlsbad or Marienbad (Marianske Lazne), or to some village. We went somewhere every summer.

Here is a picture of me congratulating my mother for her birthday. Here she is with the roses.

And this is already after the war, when she was in Plzeň, again as a shopkeeper. This was Dr. Prusik's cousin, a famous

professor of medicine. After the war they got friendly with my mother.

My mother had many men in love with her. Look at her here in her evening dress, with this wonderful smile.

{END OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.03.12}

{START OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.04.12}

[I change tapes on the recorder and we continue to look at photographs. Here a picture of Zuzana at 10 years of age; a flapper era, flapper hat, a corsage.]

Here are my parents; they were very much in love.

And here is Dobříš. Here is our little group who roamed the park.

This was my first and greatest love, my cousin Hanus. I might be five years old; Hanus might have been nine. Here is my grandmother; she was a beautiful woman, a beauty, my mother loved her so; Zdena Fleishman. And here is my grandfather, Leopold Lederer; how handsome!

Here is myself in school, the Cvičná Škola, the model school. And here is my beloved first class teacher, Milada Tomaskova. After the war she came to my concerts. About ten years ago - she was very old, almost 100 - she came to a concert in Plzeň and said: Zuzinko, will you give me an autograph? She handed me the program, and of course I wrote something in it. And she said: *You still have the same terrible handwriting!*

Here again - this is our little group in Dobříš; here is Hanus and

Jiri. All boys; I was the only girl.

I will tell you about it later on — later on - how it all went badly.

[Except for the shocking picture of her mother after the war, this is the first intimation that the last hours have been anything but a nice get-together with a photo album. I feel both Zuzana and I are fearfully putting off beginning the actual story. We go on looking at photographs.]

Here is Hanus and Jiri. They loved to play battles with little soldiers [they are playing with a beautiful castle, lining up tin soldiers, many accessories, palm trees].

And this was our shop, Jindrich Ružička. It was a toy shop at first, but then they started to sell all sorts of things — umbrellas, housewares. The shop still exists, but they sell foodstuffs now.

So - Now you've seen everything.

[There is a pause. But there are still some more pictures]

Here's my grandmother; she was terribly religious. On the high holidays she'd put out everything new and everything white, and when she came to the synagogue, even her shoes were new and white; even for Dobříš that was a little too much.

Now we've gone through the happy times and we've reached December '41.

[We won't be able to postpone it much longer; the photos are almost at an end. There is just one more.]

[We look at a photo of Zuzana in a schoolgirl outfit. She says:]

Here is the last photo taken before we went to the camp. We had to have an official photo; this is mine. You can see how I have been crying; my eyes are puffy. This is January, 1942.

The story begins:

There were three transports from Plzeň.

The transports started in October. The first transports were made up of volunteers who went into the ghetto Theresienstadt to prepare everything for the future transports. They were young men. These were called the AK transports, AKl and AK2. From then on every transport was labeled with a letter. Our transport was T. My number was T345. From then on when we were called or accosted by SS men, we were supposed never to say our name, only our number, T345.

It was about three weeks between the time we got our numbers and the actual transport. And then of course it was a nightmare. Just imagine — we were allowed 50 kilos for everybody. What to leave? What to pack? What to take with you? Not many books of course; warm clothes of course. Some of the things we thought the Gestapo didn't know about we tried to hide with our friends — some Persian rugs; some gold and porcelain.

So, in the end, sometime towards the end of January, we all had to go to a certain place, a Sokolovna [a gymnastic center] in Plzeň, where we assembled very early in the morning so that people in the town wouldn't see us going. I think it was five o'clock in the morning. We walked with our luggage; and there we were given our numbers and registered.

I remember my father when the SS man came to count us. My father just looked at him. But he looked in such a terrible way that immediately he was beaten, just because of the look in his eyes. It was terrible [she speaks very quickly]. "Dostal facku" [translation: he got a smack in the face]; he never even considered being afraid.

We had this Treuhand [see *Mendelssohn is on the Roof*] in our shop. He was not a bad man really. He tried to give half the money he earned to my father, but my father would have none of it. He said: *It's my shop and my money.* He was proud; so he had a hard time of it.

Then we went by train to Terezin.

I think it must have been 5000 people; so we were taken by train to Terezin. Terezin was a garrison town formed at the end of the Austro-Hungarian empire, with lots of barracks; really a fortress. It had walls and gates; a closed town. At the end of the First Republic it became a normal town and normal people lived there.

At that time [when they began the transports to Terezin] there must have been some [international] protests about taking Jews to concentration camps. So somebody must have had the idea to found a modern ghetto; to show how the Jewish problem was being solved. This was going to kill two birds with one stone. First the artists and scientists and prominent people under observation by the West would be put there. And then it would be a camp for the Czech Jews who would stay for a while, and then go on to the East to the other camps. So this was very well planned by the Germans as they always planned very well. It was their way of getting rid of all the Jews. We had the same experience with the Communists. That's how I survived the Communist era; because once you were internationally known, as I was after 1968, it was not possible to mistreat us. There were people trying to prevent Suk and myself from going outside of the Republic, but they couldn't do it because there were too many questions being asked.

That's why Terezin was an extremely intellectual town, because you had all the professors and teachers and prominent artists from all the countries Hitler occupied. It was mainly for Czechs and the prominents from all the countries Hitler had seized.

To prepare this model ghetto, first of all they had these AK transports. It was arranged that this ghetto was to have its own government. In fact everything was governed by the SS, but there was the Council of Elders. At first there was still normal life going on in the town, and the first transports were put in the barracks, huge buildings built around a courtyard. One barrack, Magdeburg, was for the administration. They prepared the others for us to go to. They separated the men from the women and children. There were Men's barracks, and Women & children's barracks.

I will tell you my personal experiences.

Immediately after we came, sitting there on our luggage and waiting for what would happen next [I had been terribly ill on the train]. That was when I first met a person who was very crucial not only to me but to every child in Theresienstadt and in Auschwitz — Freddy Hirsch.

He was a figure like Raul Wallenberg, a German Jew, an extraordinarily beautiful person; he was 25 at that time. He immediately devoted himself to the service of children and old people. [She gives me a pamphlet about Freddy Hirsch.]

He came there because he saw that a new transport had come in. He saw that I was ill, so he immediately began to take care of me; gave me some medicine. He was a very crucial person for my whole life.

Then we came into the barracks. We were about 12 women and children in one room. It was a terrible atmosphere. There was nothing but bunk beds and one little stove over which the women were fighting incessantly, because everybody wanted to cook something. And the women were hysterical and depressed; it was terrible.

So Freddy came in that very first day and organized the children. He arranged for the older children to take care of a group of younger children. He took all the children at eight in the morning to a courtyard to play. He taught us games to play; play with the younger children. Then he discovered an old attic that was full of cobwebs and made us clean it up. And because it was winter, and we couldn't be outside all the time, so we had this attic to go to. He also found some teachers that had been in the transport, and he arranged for them to sing with us and paint with us; somehow to occupy our time so we didn't have to be in those little rooms.

He did this in all the barracks; I had a group of 12 small children. Freddy was a genius. He was studying medicine, but he was also an athlete. So he kept us somehow occupied, teaching little songs and little poems and making us draw; and that was fine.

A very terrible thing was that my mother started to get terrible heart attacks. There was not a day that I was not called up from the children's group to come to my mother because she was dying. The doctor diagnosed wrongly angina pectoris. When we came back after the war, I discovered that it was because we were eating all the wrong food. So her trouble was the stomach. It was putting pressure on the diaphragm and this created symptoms like a heart attack, like a heavy heart attack. [MW: Heart burn?]

This looked very serious, so I was terrified. Meanwhile, we were allowed to visit with my father every week; to go to the men's barracks. The atmosphere was terrible when we came there, because just before we came there, some of the AK boys had been caught trying to smuggle out letters to their families. For

that they were publically hanged; there was to be a Jewish henchman. I mention this because we will meet this person again in Auschwitz. It was a terrible thing; nobody thought that the Nazis would go to the length of killing people. Everybody was terribly depressed. This happened before we came. [MW: See *Mendelssohn is on the Roof*]

And my mother, this elegant lady you saw in these photos; all the women had to work. And she, to get me some more food because I was terribly hungry all the time, she volunteered to go and peel potatoes. It was a cellar, a damp cellar, and she'd be up to her knees in potato peels. It was dark and damp, but then she could take some potatoes and bring them for me. So it was a great change for all of us.

It went on like that. My father went into the so-called Ordnungsdienst, which was a sort of police. They took care that there was no crime or disorder and that the older people were taken of. It was quite a privilege, the OD.

His brother was a fireman – Karel.

Religion was allowed. I continued my Zionist activities. Freddy, of course, was an ardent Zionist then. He especially took care of the

Maccabi Hatzair group to which I belonged.

Later he was accused by the Communists of collaborating with the Germans. He did not collaborate. But being a German, and speaking German perfectly, and being an extraordinary personality, his whole mentality was so dignified that somehow he could really handle the Germans, and they respected him; somehow, in Auschwitz too. But in the end, he ...

[She breaks off in mid sentence].

In Terezin Freddy got what he wanted for the children. First of all, when spring came, Freddy got permission from the SS to take

the children out every Sunday on the ramparts. There he would stand and do gymnastic exercises, and we would all do it with him. We got fresh air and got to move about.

It was our first chance to get some fresh air in three months. There must have been hundreds of children there.

Dagmar [the beloved cousin who was almost like a twin] went with another transport, and she was in a different barracks. So we hardly saw each other.

In June the whole town of Terezin was evacuated. All the Czechs [the former residents of the town] were forced to leave the town; and the whole town became a ghetto. All the buildings were taken over for the ghetto. By now there were transports coming in every day. By now people were not only living in the barracks but in the normal houses, but every room was crowded. In this room [Zuzana's living room in Prague, not a large room, about 18' by 24'?] there would have been 10-12 people.

Everywhere bunks were being built and by that time Freddy reserved two buildings for Children's Homes - one for girls and one for boys.

Lustig writes a lot about it; these were the legendary Children's

Homes L410 for the girls and Q710 for the boys. [Arnošt Lustig wrote many books about his camp experiences — fiction]

So by then I was separated from my mother and went in to the Children's Home. The council of elders decided this. Children up to 10 years old stayed with their mothers; the older children went into the Homes.

I think it was better for my mother that way. She became more calm. She didn't see me going hungry; that was a torment. So I think this was a wise decision.

Also, children over 12 had to go to work, usually in agriculture, because Theresienstadt was in a fruit-growing part of Czechoslovakia. The SS had a lot of gardens around Terezin. Their own farms were being worked by the Jews. So the children were sent to work on the farms and gardens.

We, all of us, were Maccabi. We were supposed to form a kvutza, which was a group which prepared for a kibbutz. All property was in common, nothing was private; all dresses, food. You had nothing that belonged just to you. The Maccabis organized this.

In Plzeň there had been 10 of us, five girls and five boys. And so part of our group, the five girls stayed together [in Terezin] and stayed with seven others. And when we went out on Sundays, we reunited and formed a little group called Kadima, which meant Forward; which had been our name in Plzeň.

In each room there was an older girl, a teacher, who took care of the whole group; who organized the cleaning.

[The end of the tape-- we conclude the interview for the day]

{END OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.04.12}

[The interview continues about Terezin]

{Tapes do not seem to be in the correct order; this is the beginning of RG-50.615.0001.08.12}

At this point I'm 13 years old.

So on Sundays in the morning we went out to the ramparts. And in the afternoons we were allowed to visit with our parents. My father was allowed to visit with my mother or she with him, and I was allowed to see my grandfather and grandmother. My grandfather was 83 by then, and he organized a Sokol group and took all these old men outside every day to exercise; he was vigorous. They both died in Terezin. I still remember their funerals, their so-called funerals, because they weren't buried; their ashes were thrown into the river. But there was a sort of ceremony. My grandmother died of pneumonia; my grandfather of prostate trouble. I think it was in '42 or early '43.

Dagmar was in the same Children's Home, but not in the same room. But I was very much involved with my group. And then I got a series of pneumonias again, and I was not allowed to go to work outside. Freddy found me a place to work. In one barracks there was a little office, the youth-care office, a very dingy little room, dark. And there I was, sitting and sorting out some sort of administrative papers about the new transports, filing new children's names. I was miserable. I had nobody to talk to, nothing to do. I was pining away for my mother and my home, and I had too much time to think about everything, with not enough to do. I was also the official messenger. There were no phones of course, and so the only good moments during the day were when there was something to take to Freddy or some other barracks. Then I'd go and hang around and help. That was a bright spot.

Then, of course, there were the evenings. There was enormous activity — cultural activity. Almost every house had an attic where something was going on - lectures or lessons in Hebrew. There was a piano, a string quartet, a former first violinist of the Czech Philharmonic, wonderful pianists.

And Freddy organized activities for the Maccabi group. There were lectures of all kinds, on Marxist-Leninism, for instance. There was always something happening.

My mother got work with a dentist. That was a much better position; she became his secretary. So sometimes I could peep in on her.

But the big cloud hanging over Theresienstadt at all times were the transports, the transports to the East. Almost every month two or three transports went, and others came. And you got this draft ticket, and you had to go. Everybody was very afraid.

Then there were transports that went straight through Theresienstadt and went directly to the East. They registered only for two or three days. These were transports from Dobříš that never stopped in Theresienstadt, only passed through. We were able to see them and talk to them. I talked to my cousin. I tried to have Freddy do something to keep him in Terezin. That transport had my whole family in it.

Of course we didn't know they were going to their death. We were told that they were working transports, going to Poland, to another ghetto. But there was always a very sinister feeling about these transports; there were rumors. Also the Council of Elders must have suspected.

One of the most sadistic things the Germans did was to leave the choice of who would go to the Council. So they tried not to send families where all the members were still alive. Only where somebody had already died.

That's why my mother and I only went after my father's death.

It was the crudest form of natural selection; this was always hanging over us.

The first of our Maccabi group to go was Margaret Winternitz. What could we do? We helped her pack. There was a barracks called [Sauna?] where they were supposed to be prepared for the

transports. So we saw her to the barracks and wept; and what could we do?

So there was an empty place which was very soon taken over by another girl.

So this is a summary up to the end of 1942.

In 1943 I got better; I felt better. Also this little office of the youth care was somehow abandoned, so I had to go into agriculture work. This was a relatively happy period for me. We went out every day at five in the morning. But we went outside the ghetto, outside the gates and worked in the fields.

Actually it was terrible work. We were putting dung on the fields; it came in big cars and it was heavy. We smelled awful, but somehow I was happy because again it was the world. I saw nature for the first time after one year. I saw the heavens and trees and flowers; you could never see that in Theresienstadt. And somehow I felt more free. When we came back home, we were terribly tired, and we just slept. Finally I slept. I had never slept before, but I was so tired that I could sleep.

Then we were transferred into the vegetable gardens, and that was even better because we could sneak a little food. There were beds with little seedlings covered with glass. And we put those frames gradually up, and at noon we took them away and watered the plants. Then around three, when the sun started to get lower, we put the glass windows back on. It was very hard. The frames were heavy.

We were supervised by a Czech gardener and a Jewish boy, not by the Nazis. But the work was outside. I loved nature; I loved to watch the seedlings grow - the potatoes, the cucumbers.

That was from January '43, my best months in Terezin. I was seeing my mother and father, and I could sneak some food to them.

Then on May 10 somebody came from Theresienstadt to fetch me. My father was dying.

[She begins to cry.]

I was sitting there, so happy in the sunshine, then I came, and he was... suffering terribly. Sorry... It was ileitis. They couldn't operate, so it went on for three days...no painkillers.

[She weeps]

Then it all ended. My mother was desperate. She wanted to take her life too. I was desperate too. I felt deserted even by her because I thought she wanted to leave me too. I was too childish to understand it.

I went through it somehow. I didn't even weep. I never wept for my father's death — not until now. I somehow buried it very deep. Karel took care of my mother; he was my father's brother.

[She is still weeping.]

My father was born 1896; he was 49.

[Note: something is incorrect since she has stated previously that her father died in 1943. If the birth year is correct, he was more likely 46 or 47.]

Karel somehow persuaded my mother that she had to live for my sake.

Then I stayed on in my agriculture job, and I was given a foster father. Somebody had to take over as my father, to take care of the family. This was something the council of Elders organized. He was someone also in the Maccabi. He tried to keep us in Theresienstadt so that we wouldn't have to go on the transport. But we knew; we knew that we would have to go.

Somehow life went on. You see, there were always rumors that the war was ending soon. One time, though, we were very despondent; that was when Paris fell, and it looked like Hitler would win the war. There was always someone with a radio who found out the news. Also the Czech Chetniks came and gave us the news. And there were also parcels in which someone smuggled in some news in the bread.

So, somehow, at that time, the one good thing that happened to me — I got myself a boyfriend. It was a very childish thing. We just held hands and kissed. We had met at the Hebrew class; he came in with the transport from Brno. He was a very coveted boy. Everybody said: ***He is coming, he is coming, Hanus Austerlitz.*** It was a very advanced class; we were taught by a Professor of Oriental Studies from the University of Vienna, Professor Kestenbaum. Then we decided that we would also take Latin. That had always been my dream when I was in Gymnasium. I couldn't wait for my Latin and Greek lesson. So we gave this professor half of our bread ration every time in exchange for the lessons, and he gave us Latin lessons. He was a very strict scholar. He told us it was all wrong to say Caesar [tsezar]; it was pronounced Kaisar. We learned omnia Gallia divisa est in partes tres...etc. We learned to say be1gae, not bel-gay. [She laughs.]

And we went on with our Hebrew lessons too. We even read some Bible. And we fell in love.

At the same time Dagmar fell in love too. Her boyfriend survived. My boyfriend survived too. He was a correspondent in Israel. Dagmar's boyfriend, Arci Yigal, his Hebrew name, he wrote me after the war. So we had this experience together.

Then a very severe epidemic of encephalitis broke out. At first it was very, very severe; a lot of people died. Then it became less deadly. Quite a lot of people got it, and I got it too in a fairly mild way. I didn't want to go to the hospital because I had this boyfriend. So when I went to the neurological test, I prepared myself because I knew I was going slightly to the left. But I had bad luck. When I had my test, he dropped his pencil, and I reached the wrong way. So I had to go to quarantine for six weeks. I couldn't see my mother or my boyfriend. He used to come to the window and I'd look out.

That was summer already - 1943. I may be mixing up my dates; you must sort this out.

Also, in late spring 1943 there came a big change into Theresienstadt because the Swiss Red Cross got interested.

They [the Nazis] cleaned everything up. They had Theresienstadt money printed. They set up little shops where you could buy nothing — mustard, things like that. They had a little pavilion cleaned up in the middle of the park where Ančerl was allowed to form a chamber orchestra and give concerts. People were encouraged to play football, and we were given more freedom to go walking and see each other.

But the terrible thing that happened in connection with this was that they also - because there were evidently some rumors about Auschwitz — they brought in a group of children from Auschwitz; brought them back to Theresienstadt, told them that they would be exchanged, taken care of by the Red Cross. And of course here we come again to Freddy. Freddy was there because these were children. What happened was that the children were taken to the showers, and at the sight of the showers they started to scream, and they mentioned gas. This was a terrible thing for the Germans. The children were immediately sent back. Freddy was jailed so as not to be able to communicate this with anybody. But somehow it came out.

At that point the idea that people were being exterminated became real; I half believed it and half didn't.

I remember hearing it because I was involved with Freddy, and I heard that he was in jail because of these children. They went back to

Auschwitz and were gassed immediately.

So the atmosphere was already very tense. That must have been July-

August '43. In September '43 another transport went to Auschwitz.

Freddy went with them, directly from jail. One of my aunts went, Aunt Jirina, my father's sister.

Gradually, in '43 - I grew away from my Maccabi group. Knowing advanced Hebrew, I was sort of already considered a leader of the youth group. Everything was meant like that we were going to Israel. Everyone who would be useful there was being trained and treated as part of the leading group. But I didn't like the politics of these groups. There was political infighting, fights for might and political influence, and even for keeping people out of transports.

As with all political groups, the mass is told something and the leadership is told more. I was so idealistic; I thought everything should be told to everyone. I was a great disputer, fighter for the right. I got rather disgusted, so I went into this Communist group. Another relative, Mirek Karni, belonged to this; an ardent Communist. Today he is the leader of the Terezin Initiative Group. I have been to several meetings of it.

He took me with him, and I went to lectures on Marx-Leninism, but I liked them even less. So I got out of politics and started to think for myself.

Of course I continued with my agricultural work and my Hebrew classes.

In December, on the 20th, another transport went. I know it was around Christmas we got a draft ticket, my mother and myself. I was immediately offered by the Maccabi group that they would exempt me from the transport, because they tried to keep the Maccabis together. I refused, first of all because I wanted to stay with my mother.

So we went. [Long pause] That's the end of the Terezin era.

Now you ask me questions.

Tell me about the transport.

It was terrible. Of course we had been afraid for so long, seeing people leave, seeing the packing up; in a way it was routine. But it was terrible because you were again leaving some part of your life that you had built up even under those terrible conditions. And I was leaving my boyfriend. And it was terrible not to know where you are going.

And Hell started immediately.

[Pause in interview]

Hell started immediately because we were packed up into cattle wagons so that we could only stand; nobody could sit. There was only one window, very high; you couldn't even see. It was cold; it was dark. We had one bucket there. The ride took three days. We didn't get any food. We didn't get anything to drink, and the thirst was terrible. You will read about that in those notes. [She has given me some handwritten notes, in German, written just after the war, about the Auschwitz experience.] The notes start with our arriving in Auschwitz.

Those lights — white reflectors everywhere. We were thrown out of the wagons in this terrible state; everywhere hard light. Everyone thrown out of those wagons in a terrible state. Immediately there was shouting, dogs barking; it was late at night. We were put into a sort of a wooden barrack; there we stayed the night. The night was terrible.

And there I start with what I wrote. The thirst was awful. We smashed the windows. Again, the men smashed the windows and tried to get some snow at least for the children. This was in the barracks. They still gave us no food or water. Then one of the men went out to get some snow and was immediately shot.

So, in the morning — [the best thing would be to read what I wrote because it's very detailed, and it goes up to the first night in the camp itself in Auschwitz...because on the whole...]

Then we went from the barracks to another barracks where we had to... where we were stripped naked. We had our numbers tattooed; all our belongings were taken from us. We had to sign a document that we had been arrested in the ghetto Theresienstadt because of anti-German activity; and that we accept our sentence. Everything was done very clearly so it would seem legal.

The thing that happened to me that influenced my life and my bias at least until now — that when we went from this wooden barracks to this sauna, we met a group of men prisoners. It was terrible; it was an absolutely empty plain of snow. And I recognized Freddy Hirsch, and he recognized me. And he said: Oh, you are here. I don't know — somehow he pretended to drop a glove or something — and as he picked up the glove he said to me: *You are sixteen.* So when my data were taken for the signing of this document I said I was sixteen.

Tapes do not seem to be in the correct order.

{END OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.08.12}

[Pause for tape change]

{START OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.07.12}

They founded this so-called Family Camp (B2B). There the families were allowed to stay together, though the barracks were of course separate. And the children were kept alive. The whole idea of the family camp was a charade - for appearances. Three weeks before they were gassed, people had to write postcards to their families in Theresienstadt or Prague or Plzeň telling them they were well, and they had to predate them by several months. Then if anyone were to accuse them of exterminating people they would say: *Look, they wrote these cards weeks later.* That was the whole idea of the family camp. Then we were given clothes, ridiculous clothes, and we went into the camp. And since I described the camp here [in the notes] I don't have to dwell on it.

At first we were held for a week in quarantine. I don't know why; probably Dr. Mengele's idea.

But when I came there — I remember it was around Christmas because my aunt, my father's sister Jirina — she was working. There were women carrying the barrels of soup. Each day we got a piece of bread and soup; and she was one of the soup carriers, which was quite a good post because sometimes you get some soup. And so she came into our block, though it was forbidden, and brought us Christmas presents, a plate of soup and a needle and thread, which was wealth. Recently I was talking with Dr. Pilka, Jirka Pilka, who is the head of the television music department, and who was in prison under the Communists, and he told me what wealth a needle and thread was in Communist prison, just the same.

Freddy was helpful from the first moment. I asked her [my aunt?] to lend me her coat with the old number. We all had numbers, these numbers, [she points to the tattooed number on her forearm] not the Terezin numbers. You see I was lucky, [pointing again to the tattooed numbers] it was done by Polish girls who were very fastidious. Some people's numbers are very ugly. So every transport had their numbers, and the transport that was already there in the camp had a five at the beginning. So I asked her to lend me her coat and went in search of Freddy; and I found him. And I found again that he took care of the children.

Again, the whole camp was a former military camp. The barracks were not for soldiers but for horses. Again, these stalls were full of bunk beds. So you went through this Lagerstrasse, and there were barracks on each side of it. It started with Barrack 1 where the barrack Alteste was; I will tell you about him later. He was described here [in the notes] also. You went through this Lagerstrasse starting with no. 1 and there were 36 barracks. When the normal barracks stopped, there were latrines and shower rooms. And after that there was the so-called health and children's Barracks; on the right side the health barracks, on the left the children's barracks. And that was the doing of Freddy Hirsch, that immediately he made the Germans separate the children, give them their own barracks. Again, it was the German discipline. The lower part of the camp up to the latrines belonged to the Lagerführer who was Mr. Schwartzhuber, to the Gestapo, the SS; and the upper part belonged to Dr. Mengele. And there in those health barracks were those fatal twins. So I asked about Freddy and went in.

You know, after what we went through and what the barracks were like, dirty and cold, I suddenly came into a world quite apart. This man managed to whitewash all the walls of the barracks, to paint little scenes from fairy tales, Snow White; Freddy did it. He manufactured little tables; he was extremely dexterous — little tables and little chairs for the children; and all these paintings. And there the children were; sitting and having lessons, and he himself. In front of each barracks was the room of the groom of the horses, of the old days. And there was the so-called blockalteste, the block supervisor. He got the groom's room. Those were the people who — this was a career

post — to be a block supervisor — these were Jews too — they had better clothes, food. They were responsible directly to the SS; and Freddy made this little groom's room for him as a gingerbread house, the witch's house. I will never forget this scene; it didn't happen very often. I came into this room, and he said: *What shall we do with you?* And I said: *Well, couldn't you somehow make me work with you again?* And he said*: Now you will have to go into the quarantine barracks, and after that come and see me again; you can work with the children as you did in Terezin.* At that moment the SS doctor came in who was working with Mengele. Apparently they used to drop into the children's home because it was the only breathable atmosphere. Again, Freddy got some privileges from them; packages that came for people who had already died came to the children, and they had some more coal.

So at the moment I was standing there the SS came in, and I remember Freddy standing up and saying: *Well, where did you plunder and murder today?* He said that to the SS men. Well, I stood there and thought they would shoot him immediately. But somehow this man had such magic that the SS man just laughed, and said: *I came in to see how you are doing.*

I remember one time a group of German doctors came in to the children's home and they started to measure the children's heads, because of that racial theory that the Jews had different head measurements. And I remember Freddy came in and told them: *Aren't you ashamed of yourselves to believe such nonsense?*

Anyway, he sent me back to my mother. And after my quarantine was over, I came in, and he made me — I couldn't be a teacher — but I was

a helping hand, a hilfs betrauung(?), a teacher's aide. So that again saved my life, as it did for all those children who survived in that home

So our day began at five o'clock when we were woken up; and at six

O'clock we had to go to the appel, where we were counted. You see, that was always an ordeal; because first of all it was cold. It was a bog, pure mud, in winter; we were almost up to our knees in mud. Again, what Freddy did for the children was that the children didn't have to join the appel. They were counted at the barracks. But I was, of course, not a child; so I went to these appels every day.

One thing that I tell you here [in the diary] was that immediately after we came the first day, in the evening, we were sorted out and the lagerälteste took all the pretty young girls into number one. There he had a music band, and there he had all his colleagues for the evenings to amuse themselves with the girls. I managed to pull my mother in with me, and I went through this first night there hiding under my bunk, not to be chosen.

We had this terrible band. It started playing each morning for the

appel; and there we have different remembrances. The lagerälteste's favorite tune was Fučik's *Marinarella*. And Viktor in his youth used to go to a park in Jindřichův Hradec where they played this, and it was his favorite. I can't hear this piece; when I hear it I immediately feel the atmosphere of this terrible fear, of despair, of waking up to another day.

Of course these appels were sometimes terrible. Some of the men were chosen to do the so-called sport — show me how fit you are — and they were forced to do gymnastics in this bog until they died there. And we had to watch it and wonder how long it would take until they died. And of course we were all extremely exhausted and ill and emaciated. And there was also this kind of Auschwitz illness, which were mostly men; women survived better. It was a psychological thing, a certain look in their eyes; and you know they were doomed. So this was an ordeal every day; and every day waking up to this *Marinarella* and this feeling of despair.

And of course it was such a wonderful thing that after this appel, you could go through this lagerstrasse and go into this children's home. And there were many other teachers, intellectuals, whom Freddy chose; not only Zionists, because at that time he was not a Zionist. They were preparing for the children. We had plays, fairy tales. And we put on Nezval's *Manon Lescaut* because someone smuggled it in. And everybody had some favorite poem which he knew by heart. So when we got a pencil and some paper, we put down these poems and recited those poems; we kept up some sort of intellectual life.

Freddy himself usually came in around four o'clock, and he had a recorder, and he played the recorder for us. And every day he taught the children another song — German, Czech, Hebrew; canons and things like that — with the recorder.

So we tried to keep up some sort of life.

Question: What kind of mental shape were the children in?

In good mental shape; they had their regular life. They were fed much better than we were. But of course very precocious. In one way very uneducated; in another way very precocious. I remember one story which I'll never forget. Having a small boy in my group, he must have been around nine, and our teacher was trying to explain to them about evolution of life on earth - about dinosaurs. And he said: *Oh yes, I know what a dinosaur was. It was a machine for making roads.* So we were flabbergasted. And then we remembered there was this Voskovec and Werich Song, "Dinosaurus Valcoval Jim Silnice." And he knew the song.

Of course, all the children did hear or had an inkling of the gas chambers because they were burning all the time. And there was a terrible stench; you saw the fires. Of course we never talked about it.

We did talk about it; we did talk about it. We did talk about it incessantly. People my age, sitting there and wondering; and there were terrible things I can't even tell you about. There were days when the gas didn't arrive, and that was the most terrible thing we were afraid of, because then they burned. Then there were pits and people were thrown into the pits and ... and ... There was gasoline poured over them and they were actually burned. It was a perverse hope that at least the gas would arrive.

And there were these people, Jewish people, who were chosen for the so-called Sonderkommando; which meant that they had to take care of the dead bodies afterwards. I will tell you everything, everything. I told you about this young pair who took care of our group in Plzeň; you wrote down their names [Karel Schleisner and Tilla Fischlova]. And he was put in the Soderkommando, and she went completely mad. For a young girl to see a transformation in somebody she loved and trusted, and she became a blockalteste in our block. And she beat people almost to death with a whip and shouted at them. And the only person she needed was myself because I had known him. So every day in the evening I had to come to her room and read to her and recite poems. And everybody else was so afraid of her. And in the morning she would be a different person, full of hate; and she hated us. Somehow she couldn't get rid of it.

So, I don't know how much the children knew; we tried not to talk to them about such things. But they must have known many things. There were things that I'll never understand again in my life. For instance, there was a man who worked with Mengele who was called Dr. Klein. I keep telling Viktor that if he would meet Mengele, he would certainly enjoy an evening with him. He was a very good-looking German doctor; very educated and so was Dr. Klein. He had a wonderful head of white hair and looked like a real German intellectual; a man who would listen to Bach and who'd discuss Goethe with you. This man used to come to the children's home with chocolates; what that meant to the children! They had never tasted chocolates in their life. But we had to tell them that they shouldn't accept the chocolates, because the child who accepted the chocolates was doomed; was not there the next day.

So of course we had to tell the children, when Dr. Klein comes, don't take his chocolates. And sometimes it was very hard, and some of the children did take them. And so we had to tell the other children: *You see, he took the chocolates, and he is now in prison.*

So of course the children knew. But on the whole, they were not in bad shape.

[She lights another of the endless row of cigarettes. I ask if she wants to go on. She answers, 'Yes, yes.']

Another person who was in a very weird way involved with the children, and I told you I would come back to him, was this Theresienstadt henchman, the hangman. When I tell you this it all sounds very melodramatic, but that's what life was like. He was a real Quasimodo; he had a misshapen back; a very primitive man, a butcher somewhere. He came with Freddy's transport before we came. And immediately after he came, he became the Kat. There was the lagerälteste, the kapo, then the blockalteste. The kapo and blockalteste were Jews; the lagerälteste was German. And then there was the whole structure of the SS men above us. And he used to beat people cruelly, but he loved children. So he used to come and sit with the children and talk to them. And we didn't like that at all, but what could we do? [See *Mendelssohn is on the Roof*].

Our lagerälteste, this lady mentions him, Arno Böhm (Boehm); he was a German, a pimp in Hamburg in the St. Pauli district. And he murdered one of his girls and was put in Auschwitz as a murderer. He was a German. We had yellow stars; the murderers, who were there before as simply prisoners, had black triangles. Then there were the saboteurs, who had green triangles. And there were the Jehovah's witnesses; they had white triangles. Adventist, gypsies had red triangles. And then there were the homosexuals; they had pink triangles. Freddy was a homosexual.

So you could see who was what.

The most favorite ones who were made lagerältestes were the murderers. So our Arno Böhm was a murderer. He had a terrible face, all scars. Then there was another story to which I will come now. My mother was given a terrible job; she was an entvsiri [spelling?]. Because the Germans were terribly afraid of lice, because of typhus or plague which then took over in Belsen.

There was a group of women in each block who every day had to see whether there were any lice. And if there were, they had to treat it with petroleum and shave the head; and that's what my mother did. We saw each other every evening when I came back; we slept next to each other in the same bunk. I'm afraid I gave her a terrible time because [her voice sinks to a whisper] I was so scared of the gas chambers. I came home and had nightmares and cried; and said: *I don't want to die, I want to live.* I can't imagine what it must have been for her. She stayed strong for me. She was an amazing character, always there for me to weep in her arms. I did not have the intelligence to know I shouldn't have done it. But I was so scared!

As soon as evening came and you could see those fires, I was terrified. I was not at all a courageous girl. So, this went on up to February. In February [she clears her throat] the first transport starting with a *'5'* were given the cards, but we didn't know then.

I had dysentery and typhus and all sorts of illnesses which I survived. When I go now to a doctor, and he asks me my anamnéza [medical history?], I say I won't tell you because you won't believe me. You'll think I'm crazy, starting with the encephalitis. ...Anyway ...

Then the transport with number *'5'* got their cards, but we didn't know what it meant. They got those cards to write home. We thought it was a good sign, really.

Then, they started talking about this transport going to another camp, Heydebreck (Heidebreck). They were very, very thorough, the Germans; they even found a place called Heydebreck where the transport was supposed to go. I only saw that Freddy was getting more and more worried. And once he was terribly beaten by the Germans. He came all bloody; it was on his birthday, we had prepared a birthday party for him. Anyway, we thought it was because of this Heydebreck transport. And he knew what to do with the children. And the night came, from the 6th to the 7th March. I wonder whether this wasn't diabolical; that somebody realized that this was a Czech camp, and the 7th of March was Masaryk's birthday. Anyway, they came in the night and called for everybody with the numbers beginning with *'5'* to go out of the barracks; that they are being taken out to Heydebreck. I was somehow so exhausted that I went to sleep again. And I had a very close friend; already in Theresienstadt we lived in the same room in the youth-heim. And she went with this transport. And her father was one of the doctors who worked on the health block. And she went; and the first I knew she was shaking me on my cot and telling me she was back again. And I said: *How come?* And she said: *Yes, the Germans sent all the doctors and their families back into the camp; and all the others went to the gas chambers.*

So, you will read the whole story in the document. There is a book written by a man called Rudolf Vrba, who was not a Jew, but he was in Auschwitz in the men's camp as a Communist. The Communists somehow discovered that the Germans were planning to send this whole transport to the gas chamber -- so they were looking for an opportunity to let the world know what's happening. So they planned an uprising. They said that the people going to the gas chambers, some of them should be armed and some of them should fight; they were doomed anyway. They thought that somehow having an uprising; somehow it would reach the ears of the world. And funnily enough, this Vrba, though he was a Communist...

They were looking for a leader to head this uprising; and nobody else would do it. They couldn't find anybody else but Freddy Hirsch. He was revered by everybody. So they tried to contact him and persuade him to lead this uprising. He couldn't be persuaded; because he still had hopes. First of all he had a

promise from the SS men from the health block that the children would be saved; and then he still didn't quite believe that this transport would be gassed. So he said: I can't do this because it would jeopardize the children.

So this man Vrba says that Freddy said to him: ***Give me an hour to think about it.*** They were already waiting for the SS. After an hour Freddy had poisoned himself; he took a dose of luminal.

He couldn't make up his mind; he was at the end of his tether. Otherwise I think he would have survived. The Germans would certainly have sent him back with the doctors.

So, that was that.

Freddy apparently had been counting on not coming back so he appointed another man in his place to lead the children's house. He came back; in '68 he was the director of the Pragokonzert Agency. He changed his name, he had been Hugo Lengster [Lengsfeid?]; he changed it to Pavel Lenek. In '68 he emigrated to Vienna; tried to get us to emigrate too — sent us a false telegram saying: ***Aunt Lisa has died; it is necessary for you to come.*** He died two years later in Vienna.

So he took over, and we continued to work with him.

To get back to myself and the Freddy Hirsch period, one thing that will interest you very much. Freddy Hirsch was a very interesting figure in many ways. First of all, one of his very great, his crucial, problems was his homosexuality; because he was, otherwise, a man with almost ridiculously rigid ethics. For him the best thing to say about a person that he is anschtetlich (?), that is, that he is an orderly man, slu**š**ný (decent). Once we got one more bread for dinner for our children. I took the bread and went to Freddy and said: ***What shall I do with it?*** And he said: ***You keep it, because you are so [anschtetlich (?)] protoze ses tak slusna.*** And that was the greatest praise.

Of course he was not only persecuted in Germany for that; and that was why he came to Prague. But he was always, and is up till now. His family, who is living in London, doesn't want to hear about him; because they abandoned him completely. They were a religious, very orthodox family.

But he had a steady boyfriend, who was with him until his death. He always kept us. Under the terrible conditions of a completely demoralized world around you, he kept a world where still ...

{Tapes don't seem to be in correct order}

{END OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.07.12}

{START OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.09.12}

One of the very few books which was in B2B [Note: Family Camp] was a very tattered old Freud, *Introduction to Psychoanalysis*. Of course I read everything, and of course I got that book. I sat there one morning on the chimney; there was always a big chimney going through these barracks. I was sitting on the chimney reading Freud. Suddenly a hand comes from behind, says: *What are you reading here?* This is no literature for a young girl like you. That was Freddy Hirsch, and I was out of favor for a very long time. But I of course got hold of Freud and devoured it, all of it.

Somebody smuggled it in. No books were there legally; no paper, no pencil. Maybe some of the SS men brought it in; I don't know.

Another thing which influenced me very much for my whole life was that this ardent Zionist, he was such a speaker! He could move masses. Suddenly when he had talks with the teachers, he

said: *This is no solution; I'm moving completely away from Zionism and all sorts of politics.* He took us children and said: *Look here. Look at the people with their heads shaved and in their prison clothes. Can you tell a rich man from a poor man, a Zionist from a Communist? Can you tell any political views? Those are all just men and women. And the only philosophy which was real and true was Masaryk's humanism. And when I ever come back again, I'm going to live in Prague and I'm going to study Masaryk.*

This of course was a thing which one treasured somehow. Also I was adult enough to wonder about this change in a man, from an ardent politician. What influenced my life was that whatever happened, I never joined a political party; though when I came back I had very leftist tendencies.

But it was always in my mind; look we are just men and women. You can't tell which race, which party, which class.

So this had a great influence on my life.

After that we knew, of course, that we are the next ones to go.

When the next transport came in May from Terezin, we knew it will not be long. Then we were given the postcards; so then everything was very clear, or seemed to be.

Funny enough, I did the same thing he did, and I don't think that I had it from Freddy. I think it was my own idea, knowing he approved, that I signed a postcard to my boyfriend in Terezin. And I signed myself with the Hebrew word for dead, mavet. And it arrived; and that was a source of a lot of misunderstanding because a long time after I came back, my friend didn't try to find me.

The message got through. We were of course getting frantic. The man who took over from Freddy was a Communist, a member of

this group who wanted to do this uprising. So he thought this would be the moment to do it. So I know that some of the older teachers were armed with pistols, and they were preparing for this uprising. I remember when the time came near, we once went to Hugo [Freddy's successor] and asked him to let us stay after hours in the block; we just wanted to dance once more in our lives. And he was a very good man, and he said: *Oh you will dance yourself to death. I won't let you. Anyway, the SS would take you, and you will have many more chances to dance in your life; something will happen!*

And something really happened; because the date of our gassing should have been on the 6th of June [1944]. It was D-Day.

So there was a great panic in the morning. Some orders came to the

SS; and Mengele came and the lagerälteste, and conferred together for a very long time. And we were told that the next day there will be a selection. And they apparently got the orders to mobilize every man possible to the front, and to get as many healthy men and women from the camps to do their work in Germany.

So there were selected out of the 5000 people in the camp who should have been gassed. And a thousand men and a thousand women were selected for going to work in Germany — slave labor.

The selection was partly a terrible and partly a grotesque thing. The whole night we were discussing with my mother what we should do, because we were told by somebody, I don’t know who, that at the selection you are asked your profession. And we thought that if we gave the right profession we might be selected. So in the end we decided my mother would say she was a glove-maker, and I said I would say I was a gymnastics teacher to prove that I was fit. So we were waiting there before, I think it was the children's block, where the selections were being made. And when we came, the lagerälteste Schwartzhuber was already surrounded by bottles of alcohol and completely drunk. And everybody had to strip and to go up on the chimney.

It was about as high as this [she points], and as I said it was running through the whole block. Built of bricks, we had to go up the chimney naked, stand there, tell our age and profession.

And I went there, and I said: I'm *a gymnastics teacher; I'm 18 years old.* And he said [in German]: *So make some gymnastics.* So I turned a somersault. Left was gas chambers, right was workers; so he said: Go to the right.

And then came my mother, and she was a mess; looking terrible. So she said: *I'm 46, and I'm a glove sewer.* And he said: *Left.* And I went frantic. And I sprang over the chimney and joined my mother. And he said: *What are you doing? You are crazy. You are going to your death.* And I said: *You killed my father. You are going to kill my mother, and I don't want to live.* So he said: *You old goat, go with her.* So we went to the right.

But...in the afternoon there was a competence quarrel, because in the afternoon Dr. Mengele came and made an awful row and said: *How come you made the selections? It's my job. I'm the doctor here;* and called another selection. So we went there again. But I somehow lost my mother. She had gone to another block, and I had gone to which of my friends had been selected. We were given papers that were going to Germany. So I stood there terribly worried, because I knew this couldn't happen a second time. We were standing there, and it was a hot June day and suddenly a terrible thunderstorm started with the rain pouring. And somehow everybody rushed for shelter, and we hid in the bathroom, under the showers with some friends of mine. And somehow after this thunderstorm, Mengele gave it up; too much trouble. I think he just wanted to make a gesture, and he said: *All right, it's done.* And I was so happy about that. The sun was shining, and I was looking for my mother. And she came down the lagerstrasse, and I said: *How lucky this happened.* And she said: *But I went to the selection!* She went; she was very disciplined and stood in the queue...and passed.

Those were the things; it was just fate.

So then we went through another nightmare. We had to spend three days in quarantine in the women's camp, which was much worse than the family camp. They didn't even have barracks. We were put into cellars, where there were rats. But we were already looking forward to getting out of Auschwitz and getting away from the gas-chambers.

And then the military took over from the SS. And they came with some trains and put us onto these trains. And I must tell you, Marjanka, I have never seen people so appalled as those German soldiers when they saw us. I think they really had no idea [her voice falls to a whisper]; they must have had a glimpse of the camp.

They tried to treat us very considerately.

And we had the feeling that we were in another world, even though we were still prisoners.

And we got prisoners' clothes, not the old clothes. We got striped dresses and wooden shoes.

There remains one more tale that may exist elsewhere in the literature; I can only tell you my point of view.

I was present at part of that story because there was one SS man in our group who took care of us; a terrible man, very much hated. We called him Mickey Mouse. He was a Croatian; the Croatians collaborated heavily with Hitler. The grapevine said the brother of Mickey Mouse is coming to camp, and a very young man, must have been 19 or 20. From the very start he came to Freddy. It was evident that he was appalled. His brother tried to save him from going into the army. So he made him join the SS and come to the camp.

First of all, this young man fell violently in love with one of our teachers. Secondly, apparently they hatched out a plan with

Freddy that he would, as an SS man, he could leave the camp. That he would smuggle some materials to the Vatican about what was going on in the camps. They prepared this material, and when he got his leave, it happened. He took the material with him, and nobody asked him any questions. The terrible thing, romantic thing, it could have been another Romeo and Juliet; was that he decided to come back and rescue his love.

Of course when he came back, the whole story was out, and he was hanged publicly. We had to be there. His name was, I think, Mestek[?]. So this is a story that I witnessed which is necessary for me to tell because it might be another angle from the other eyewitnesses of this; so this is necessary for me to tell.

Another of those tragic love stories was our lagerälteste, Arno Böhm, who also fell in love with one of our girls. And she was from that September transport, number *'5'*; so she was supposed to go to the gas chamber. This girl was really very beautiful, and he adored her. She had gold jewels and dressed beautifully. And he asked his SS friends to send her back like they did the doctors; and he was promised they would do it. In the morning he found they didn't keep the promise.

In the evening it was another Shakespearean scene; I only heard about it, I was not an eye-witness to it. He invited all his SS friends to their normal orgy in his block with all the musicians there and the young girls. And when they were at the height of the feast, he took a knife and killed, I think, three of them. And then before he was taken, he killed himself, shot himself. These were things like Shakespearean tragedies, which were happening around you.

So then we got another lagerälteste, a sweet man; he was a sailor, a German sailor, captain of a ship. He had this green triangle as a saboteur. I don't know if he was really a saboteur. I think he simply got drunk and neglected his ship. I don't remember his name — Willi something. He really tried to make our life as good as possible. He gave us seedlings to plant. Of course, in that soil, no flower would ever bloom.

And he used to sing us old sailor songs. What was that song he loved so much? [She sings a melody in German.] A sailor must always be gay and no matter what happens, life will go on. Funnily enough we met him again because he was released when his sentence was over.

We went from Auschwitz to Hamburg. And when we worked in the Hamburg docks, in the shipping part, he was there again. He had been released; and he used to bring us old clothes and a little bread.

So then we had it a little better than under Böhm, because he tried to make life a little easier for us.

In Hamburg, when we came to Hamburg, Hamburg was burning. It was bombed regularly; you could set your watches by it. At 12 o'clock the English came; at midnight the Americans. There were these phosphor bombs, fire bombs; so the whole town was burning. The main worry of the Germans was to save the oil line, so we had to repair the damage that was done to the pipelines. It was actually repaired by experts, but we had to free the pipelines – to dig up the soil because they were buried. And then after they were repaired, to bury them again.

We were housed in some silos, grain storage, which are still standing on the Elbe, where the grain was shipped. In the night we had to go to the cellar during the air raid. And sometimes the bombs would fall into the river, and the river would get high, and we were standing in water. But we were better fed; we even got some fish sometime. And when we were working for a certain company, because we were hired by oil companies, it now all belongs to Shell. I've put this all down now because maybe we will get some money. There were all sorts of oil companies, and we were hired; the military paid for the hire of the slave workers. So sometimes when we were with some better companies, we got some soup; quite nice soup, really, not this kind of water we got in Auschwitz. I was terribly hungry all the time. At that time I think I was really almost going mad with hunger and cold — when the winter came.

And then sometimes we went to help with the building of barracks for people whose houses were bombed. Construction — we were always divided into little groups — always with my mother. We always tried to keep together, which was our downfall. By that time the SS took over again, and either we had an SS who loved young girls, or we had one who liked the o1der women. So either me or her was on the wrong side of the SS. Either he said: *You old witch* or *You young ne'er do well* — so that was rather bad, but we tried to keep together.

Because sometimes, also, the details never came back if they were in an air-raid area. So we said we'd stay together.

Of course there were terrible things to do there. There were these himmelfahrt kommandos; himmelfahrt means ascension in a religious sense. There were these big gas tanks, very high, very big. And when some pieces of bombs fell on these gas tanks, we had to go up those terribly narrow and short ladders and put those remains of bombs on a crane so that it could be picked up by the crane. Meanwhile I have terrible nausea; I can't even get on a normal ladder. So it was really like going — I don't know how I did it — but we were terribly afraid of falling off these ladders.

Did anybody fall?

Yes. [long pause]

Also a terrible thing happened to me personally. Because at one time, it was in summer 1944, we went to repair some broken oil pipes. And we always got our tools in a tool shed, and I got a tool which was covered with benzene. And I didn't realize, or I didn't care, or I don't know what; and I was perspiring terribly, and I wiped my eyes and burned my eyes terribly. It wouldn't have been so terrible except the SS didn't give me any leave to go wash my eyes. So I was standing there under the sun

all day, and when I came home, I was covered with blisters; my eyes were terrible.

I must say this was a terrible Jewish doctor. I was terribly underweight, and she said: *Oh, she'll die anyway*, when I came to see her to give me a free day. So she sent me again into the sun, and I almost lost my sight.

And then again, another disaster, because I was not seeing too well. So I was standing at an appel once, in the first row, and I wasn't in line perfectly. And there was a terrible man who was the Lagerführer at that time; what was his name — Spiess. And he was so furious that I was not in line that he took a tool, rýč in Czech, with which you dig the earth. Yes, a spade, and he hit me with it. My life was saved by my glasses. But my glasses went, and I was almost blind and that was awful. Because everybody tried to better their lot somehow, some of the girls went begging to the Germans. We weren't supposed to do that, but sometimes they left something for us — some vegetable that was not good any more or potato peels, which were wonderful things. So I was no good at begging or at anything. My mother sometimes was very courageous and tried to get something, but she was also not very good at it. So we were really both of us deteriorating.

I remember one other terrible thing which I must say because I want to say everything for people to know. There were certain POW camps next to ours in Hamburg, and there were French. And some of the girls used to go with the prisoners and they would get a loaf of bread for it or something. And when the girls saw that I was really almost frantic with hunger, they said: *Why don't you go? I will arrange a rendezvous for you.* It took me lots of time before I decided, but then the hunger was really too much, and I decided to go. But when I saw the man, I just couldn't do it, and I ran away.

So there was no way of getting something else. It was a terrible thing. You got this little loaf of bread, 30 grams, and sometimes it was 50, sometimes 30. You got it in the morning, and you were so hungry; and either you ate it whole,

and there was nothing else until the next morning. And so my mother and all the other girls tried to persuade me to slice the bread carefully and to have part in the morning and then another slice before lunch, and so on. But then you never got anything out of it, zero, no satisfaction; so sometimes I sliced it, and sometimes I just devoured it and ate everything.

We never got any packages; I don't know why. Nobody sent us anything. Partly, in Auschwitz, it was because of my name. That was really bad luck in a funny way, because people told me that they sent us packages to Auschwitz after my mother sent them this card. But Ružička is a gypsy name; it's a very well known gypsy royal family. Ružička, in Slovakia; and so automatically any package labeled Ružička went into the gypsy camp. They told me this, so the only way I could earn something more to eat was that I could sing. And that I had a wealth of songs; and the most popular were the Voskovec and Werich songs. So when the day for packages came, and people had some food, they would ask me to come and sing for them the Voskovec and Werich songs; and they would give me some of their bread because they had better things in their packages. So the days the packages came I always say that was the school of my life, because I learned politics. I learned something that many people don't know even now — that no matter how poor you are, if the society is wealthier, and there are some rich people, you are better off because they will do without some things they don't care about, and you will get them! It's primitive social politics, that you always have to be sure that the community is rich. Because if the community is poor, no matter what Communism you've created, everybody is poor and the poorest are poorer.

I got very humble and very wise that way.

Voskovec and Werich songs got me into another trouble; I remember that was another part of the German perversity. They would beat us, starve us, make us work like mad; but when Christmas Eve came, they would make a Christmas tree for us.

We went with two SS women. At the time we were very badly off because we had women, they were worse; women SS from Ravensbrück. And we had two SS girls in charge who made a Christmas tree, and they went with us into a hut; and on our way there ... **[END OF TAPE]**

{END OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.09.12}

{START OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.10.12}

I started singing this famous song about how chains don't matter to us. [Na nas neplaty---something about řetězy] [Note by MW: same song as in *Mendelssohn is on the Roof*?], but she turned out to be Polish. And I was bloody well beaten for it; so that was my Christmas Eve; '43 was in Auschwitz, '44 was in Hamburg.

[Tape RG-50.615.0001.10.12 is interrupted at this point.}

[That day's session ends here -- a new session begins with question about whether her father would have survived at Auschwitz. It's not clear at which session the following is told]

[Towards the beginning of tape RG-50.615.0001.10.12; around 1:35]

Certainly not, certainly not. This ultimate loss of all human dignity you had to experience in coming to Auschwitz; having the number tattooed and being bereft of everything human — your clothes, your books, everything. Many people went insane at this place; this happened straight away. And there was this Auschwitz sickness. And I'm quite sure he wouldn't have survived, not even more than a month; and he didn't have to experience this. So he was saved from this.

The other thing I was saying was that the men were much weaker that way. It was the main principle of their life was hurt, the pride of their essence. A woman is more a practical person; she survives better because she's thinking from minute to minute, hour to hour, isn't so much involved in principles.

Also, the woman is a mother. My mother certainly survived because of me. And I survived because I still had so much biological vitality. I wanted to live so badly; until, maybe, in Hamburg where I attempted suicide. I couldn't bear it any longer. But up till then — when you are 16, you have so much love of life; this helps.

Did more women survive than men?

Yes. Yes.

There is one more thing that I want to mention — that was my music. Of course I couldn't actively make any music in Theresienstadt because there was only one piano and so many professional pianists. At the beginning I took some harmony lessons with Gideon Klein, whom you might know the name; he was a composer and pianist. But in a way I started another activity. Of course I sang a lot; I had a group of children singing. And then one thing that I should have mentioned with my childhood, my father used to read to us when I was a child, and what he read to us was wondrous. He read us ***Odyssey*** and ***Iliad*** of Homer, and I think that is part of my makeup, this feeling of rhythm and meter. And so I also started in Theresienstadt a group for recitation. That was a very common thing then, these voice bands. And we studied poems, and I divided the group into chorus and soloists — choral readings. I was quite successful at that. Of course I still had some music which I smuggled in with my 50 kgs. I had Bach's ***French Suites***, and I had Dvořák's ***Serenade in A Major*** which was the last piece I played with Mrs. Provaznikov**á** — four hands with Milostpani.

Another story about this was when we went to Auschwitz I couldn't take my music with me. And the funny thing about my

musical talent, or childhood, was that the one thing that my mother was so terribly worried about, funnily enough, Mrs. Provaznikov**á** never was. I didn't have any memory; I couldn't memorize things at all. When I played, I always played from notes. And my mother said: ***How do you think she's going to be a concert artist when she can't memorize?*** And she said, very quietly: ***Well, this will develop.*** And now, you know, my memory is really very, very good. I have all the Bach works; and I'm perhaps the only harpsichordist who plays her recitals only from memory. So she was right.

But then I had no memory, so I transcribed a little sarabande by Bach from the ***E Minor Suite*** which I loved onto a piece of notepaper. And I always had it with me. And when we arrived in Auschwitz and were put on these cars which transported us to the camp, I had this with me; and read it, because it was somehow essential to me to get this back. And a wind came and took it away from me, and my mother sprang from the car, retrieved the paper, and returned again to the car. We were almost separated that way, but she knew what it meant to me, this piece of music.

But then, of course, there was no music, no music at all. That was

a blank in my memory. Many of my fellow prisoners, children who now are grown up, say I have a blank. I don't remember anything about the whole experience. So I blacked out music. I had many poems which I knew by heart and used to recite. Because also one of the parts of our work, and the most terrible which very much damaged my hands, was that we were put into a row, and there came a ship with bricks, and we had to put the bricks on the ship. This was in Hamburg, and the bricks were heavy and very rough, and we had no gloves. I'll tell you afterwards, when I came home, my hands were in a terrible state. And I always used to take a group of young people, and we would recite poems to each other; not to think about the situation, to get out of it. This was necessary for me, for my health, otherwise I would have gone mad; but no music.

There was one terrible experience where we were working in a shipyard, and we were taken to a dining room where the workers

got their soup. And the radio was on, and somebody was playing Chopin; I fainted. I couldn't bear the thought that somewhere in this world there was somebody making music; I couldn't bear it, it was too much. The funny thing about it was that there was one of the SS who took me when I fainted and took me into a room. My mother was with me, and he was trying to get me some water. And he said: ***It's strange; she looks just like my daughter. She even looks like a Madonna; she really is a human being.***

You know the doctrine was such that they really didn't realize we were anything but cattle; we were something out of the human community.

My mother told me this story because I had fainted. The psychology of the masses; it's a kind of a hypnotic state where you do anything you are told by the hypnotizer. Here was a normal man with a normal family, and a normal home, who goes every day to work with some cattle.

They used to take bets on us when one SS men came with groups to another, and we had to get the ship loaded. Which group will get their ship loaded earlier? And the group who won got extra soup.

And I will never cease to wonder, when I play in Germany, how many of those people are sitting in the audience [long pause] and enjoying my playing; their Bach.

Once I was playing in a famous Bach festival in Anspach, and one day I read the newspapers, and I read that Speer was present at the concert.

That was a hard decision to make, whether to play in Germany after the war. But in the end I decided to go; because first of all I thought I couldn't go anywhere because people like that aren't only in Germany. And then I said, 'I'm not an entertainer; I'm not going there to entertain. I'm going there

to bring them Bach.’ And maybe some of them, because of the experience, might become more human.

I also had a revelation just now. Once I was invited to play at a castle in Germany, in Franken (Franconia), Langenburg, that belongs to the family Hohenlohe. They had a series of concerts. I went there, and the count was very, a very pleasant person; quite a young man. And the countess was a librarian; she was not of the gentry, a cultured woman. I arrived earlier; I wanted to see the instrument. And they took me into the family; we had jokes about what I was to call him (by noble address or what). He asked: ***What would you call me at home?*** And I said, ***Comrade***. And we all laughed about it. He of course saw the number [tattoo] and asked about it, and didn't try to hide that he knew about it; because quite a lot of Germans are appalled and don't know about it.

So then, after I had played the concert, a man came to me and said to me: ***I have something to give to you. It will bring you luck. Think of it as the gift of a German who feels very ashamed of what happened.*** There were many people around, and I was giving autographs. And afterwards I looked into the package, and I found it was a heavy gold signet ring, with a noble emblem, three lions one above each other. I thought it was an English sign. And actually, also present at that concert was Prince Phillip's mother, who was also a Hohenlohe; a woman almost blind and deaf, she showed me Prince Phillip's doll house. I tried to find the man again, because I thought, I can't accept this, a heavy gold ring. But nobody could tell me who he was, where to find him. It remained a mystery; I gave it to Viktor. Until now there was an article about

Himmler and Hitler and all those people, and in that article it said that old Count Hohenlohe was the next in line to Himmler with the final solution to the Jewish question. So the young count himself must have sent me the ring.

I only discovered that a week ago when I read this article.

{End of tape RG-50.615.0001.10.12}

{START OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.11.12}

Yesterday I remembered something which I wanted to add or to make clear. There was one thing I forgot in Terezin, just before we left. There will now be a memorial day for this event, and I'm not sure it was ever explained what happened.

On the 11 of November 1943 we were notified a few days before by the authorities in Terezin that we were to be counted; that we were all to be ready in the morning to go to a vale outside of Terezin to be counted.

Everybody was wondering what was going to happen. Nobody believed it was because of counting, because they could easily count us in Terezin; or they could have done it by paperwork.

So we didn't really believe it, and we went there very much afraid of what might happen. What actually happened was that we stood there for a whole day, and nothing happened. It was a real mass of people. We got there by walking. It was very difficult, especially for the old people. We young people from the Maccabi each had an old person to take care of.

So I think — they were thinking then and now, and it hasn't been proved — that there was a plan to gas the whole mass of people; because it was in this valley where it wouldn't have done any damage. And it aborted because it was a windy day, and somebody thinks there came contradictory orders from Berlin authorities; that somebody got afraid that it might leak out and what to do with the dead.

But there was some plan like that mentioned. And I'm curious because the Terezin initiative announced that 11 November would be commemorated this year.

As far as I know there were indications [among the Nazi papers,] but no proof that this had been the plan.

It was a crazy plan. Anyway, we stayed there the whole day. It was very cold; we were standing outside. Then I took the old lady I was helping back to Theresienstadt, and then I managed to twist my ankle. It was a very disagreeable experience, mainly however, because we were all afraid; we felt we were going to our death.

About Auschwitz, I wanted to add one thing. One terrible experience was that every month we were led to saunas, showers, to get clean. But nobody was really sure what was going to come out of the showers, water or gas. Every time we were wondering. And there were the attendants sitting there, and we used to ask them are we really going to have a shower. And they used to make jokes, *Oh you will see!* We were given soap and towels, and as you see, it was really a shower, but the suspense was terrible. It was a block that went for a shower, but you were never quite sure.

About Zionism, I wanted to explain one thing — that Zionism didn't necessarily mean Palestine. Of course we did training for a kibbutz in Palestine, but the main thing was the establishment of a Jewish state. And as you know, Herzl himself was considering different parts of the world - Uganda - or different parts of the Soviet Union. Canada was considered. Of course Palestine was the obvious historical choice, but the whole idea was building a Jewish state for a Jew to be a citizen of and not the Diaspora.

So, where did we stop? I think we stopped at the end of the year ’44 in Hamburg; now in January 1945.

In Hamburg we changed the locality. We were under the auspices of a concentration camp called Neuengamme. But we changed localities because of our work details, so we were in different localities.

I remember the exact day when we last changed our locality which was my birthday. And for your birthday you always got a double portion of bread. I was 17 in '45, so I lost my extra portion. We moved to a place called Tiefstack which was a cement factory, and this was rather awful for me because I started to get a cough; and always being surrounded by the dust of the cement was bad for me. So I tried to get work with groups which were detailed elsewhere.

And one day I went to this group which was detailed outside, and my mother went with me; it seemed very lucky. There was an SS man who was rather kind to the older people, and he said: *You should stay home.* It was a very rainy day. *Stay at home and do some cleaning,* which was really very lucky. My mother was very happy that she got this permission to stay at home; and when I came back, she was not there. Apparently there was a camp nearby which was short of workers. So a truck came and took all the women which were in the camp to the other camp. And it was terrible because I thought I would never see her again. I panicked. I wept the whole night, and I was really desperate. And the next day I again went working outside. And when I came back, she was back. Apparently there came another detail of women from another camp, and they were all sent back.

I clearly remember that moment. We embraced; we wept again and were very happy. When I say we survived by a series of miracles, this was one of those miracles again.

By that time, in February, not only did spring come early, but already there were very definite rumors that the allies were getting nearer and nearer. February '45 — we could sometimes hear guns. Then we were detailed to dig traps for tanks. You dug a big hole, and you had to take pieces of grass and soil and cover the hole; booby traps. So we knew they were expecting the allies; that was some hope.

I remember this wonderful day when the sun came up and suddenly it was spring in the air. And we heard those guns, and we

thought, maybe. But this hope didn't last long, because about a week afterwards — about the third week of February — we were again transported; this time to Bergen-Belsen.

So...[pause] again the whole story. We went into those cattle trains. The journey this time was short because Bergen-Belsen is not far from Hamburg.

If ever there was Hell, this was the lowest part of hell. This was an extermination camp; it was really meant for us to die in.

So there was not even any organization. We were not working. We went from the station to the camp. We were not fed at all on the train, not given any food at all; so we were terribly hungry. We went through fields, turnip fields, where there were frozen turnips. So we got some of those turnips, which really saved our lives. Because when we came to the camp, nobody took care of feeding us regularly, not even this soup or bread. Sometimes there was soup, and who got there first got it. It was absolutely not organized; it was meant for us to die.

The barracks were military barracks. We were crowded 700 people into one barrack. It was not possible to lie down. If you wanted to sleep you had to lie down like sardines; one had the head in the others lap.

Otherwise we couldn't have all got there; and there were already masses of dead bodies lying around.

And the camp was infected by bubonic plague. [ME: typhus?] So there were people dying all around you. And sometimes those people who were healthy enough to take the dead bodies and make pyres out of them to be burned got an extra soup. So as long as I was able to do that, I did that.

And my mother, very soon, was feeling ill; still able to walk and move but having fever. These turnips lasted for a certain

time, but then they were gone, and we were really starving. At one point I decided this couldn't go on.

There was a wire fence, but the fence was not electrified like in Auschwitz. There were only towers with watchmen watching. And outside the camp were those turnip fields. So I decided, at the point when we were nearly dying of hunger, that I have to get some of the turnips.

So very early in the morning, it was still dark — maybe it was four, we went, and I started to dig a hole under the wire fence. But it took me too long, and it started to be light. So when I had this hole big enough, it was already light. So I crept through the hole, and the guard saw me and started shooting; but I still got two turnips. But unfortunately, again there was a group of gypsy women who already saw what I was doing. So the moment we came out they crowded me and took one of the turnips from me, but one I rescued. And from this turnip – it was quite big — we lived. We had it under our mat in the block and guarded it.

Then — this was already March — and we heard from both sides, guns; from Hamburg and from Hanover. So we did hope.

There was a little story that I keep wondering about. There was a girl whom we called Klara, she was already with us in Auschwitz, and she kept carrying and smuggling with her a package of tarot cards. Already in Auschwitz she tried prophesying with those tarot cards; first for fun. But her prophecies always came true, so in the end she got afraid and refused to do it.

In the middle of March we were already very down. Some of us went to Klara and said: ***Do you still have your tarot cards? Tell us when the end will come.*** Sof, we said the Hebrew word, ***the end.*** And she needed to be persuaded, but in the end she took the cards and laid them out and said: ***On the 15th of April.*** Of course we didn't quite believe it, but we did a little. On the evening of the 14th of April those of us who were still able

to walk were made to carry big packages, but not heavy, which had some of the military uniforms. We had to carry them to the railway station which was about two miles from camp. We were going in rows of five, and it was already almost night when we came back. And at the time we got so used that we had to keep in line and only look at the legs of the one going in front of you. As a matter of fact — I will come to that later — when we were liberated, I had for a long time difficulties walking alone and looking where I was going.

And I was on the outer side of the line, and there was a car passing us. And as I didn't really look, it strafed my leg; I didn't quite realize it. And when we came back late at night, I found my place in the block. And in the morning when I awoke there was a puddle. I thought something had happened to me, and I couldn't hold my urine. And all the women around me were cussing me. And then I saw it was blood. Apparently it was quite a wound, and I couldn't get up. I was afraid I couldn't get to the appel. Some of the girls helped me up and half carried me to the appel.

And it took endless time. The appel was at 6 o'clock; and it was 7 o'clock, and 8 o'clock, and it was 8:30. And somebody said: ***It's the 15th of April, and would somebody go out and look what was happening.*** So some of the girls went and came back with the news that the Germans had left the camp.

So we were, in a way, free; and, of course, besides ourselves with joy. And some of the Buchenwald Czechs, who had a barracks to themselves and who were in very good shape because they came rather late; and Buchenwald was not one of the worst camps — they were rather well fed; so they started to take an over-all view of the situation and to organize the camp a little bit.

But very soon the bad news came that the Germans had gone away but they left no food, and they disconnected the water. So we were there without food and water. There was some meal in a barrack, so they tried to make some bread or something with the rest of the water, but it was not enough.

Of course we were hoping, because the guns were so near, that we would be taken over by the allies.

What happened the next day was that there came a detail of Hungarian soldiers with white bands on their arms; and said they were the neutral army, and that they were taking over. But what they actually did was that they kept going and blindly shooting into the blocks so that we knew that this was not the neutral army, but a Hungarian detail of the German army — of the Nazis.

So everybody kept avoiding them and hiding in the blocks. Again the situation was desperate, because this took three days. And the guns were not coming nearer, but further.

On the end of the third day, in the evening, we heard trucks coming. I remember by then my mother was very, very ill, having bubonic plague, having those ulcers. I went to her and said: *Now they are coming.* And my mother said: *No it's the Germans returning; I'm quite sure.* And I remember getting quite angry with her. *Why do you have to be such a pessimist? I am sure these are either the English or the Americans.* And really, the English came.

It was until sometime later that I learned the whole story. The story was really very interesting. It must be somewhere. The Germans, as it was still war, and the English army, which was nearest, was a fighting army - tried to negotiate with the headquarters of this army, saying that this is a camp infected with bubonic plague. They should avoid it; go around it. And they would leave it, put in a neutral army, and take care of the prisoners. Of course what they did I already told you.

But the lucky thing was that one of the low-flying airplanes — one of those pilots — privately took pictures. And when he came back and the pictures were developed, he saw those pyres of dead bodies. I saw the pictures. I happened to meet him. He immediately went to the headquarters with those pictures and

said: *Look, this is what the camp looks like. I think we shouldn't pass this camp, but we should enter it and look after those people.* And the headquarters had enough sense to see that he was right. That was why the guns didn't come nearer, but further; and then why they then returned to the camp.

Of course we all crowded those cars and soldiers, begging for food. The terrible thing that happened, that was quite understandable, was that they gave us everything. They gave us all their rations. So I, for instance, got a little tin of very fat pork. And many people died that way. Because after having nothing, their system absolutely couldn't take it. I was terribly sick. But the first thing that I did, and the wonderful thing for me, was that I knew English. So they took me immediately into one of the cars of the headquarters and had me tell them what was happening — where were the people? So I told them everything, the whole thing. The only thing I begged them to do was to immediately send a doctor to see my mother. So the doctor came in the morning and gave me some medications and told me where the dispensary was and told me to get those medications for my mother.

They were wonderful — the English, the organization! How they handled this camp with 30,000 dead bodies and 40,000 infected prisoners was incredible. They immediately took over all the military barracks, schools, everything in the nearby town of Bergen-Belsen. They took away all the ill people and made the buildings into British general hospital, Lazarette. I will come to that later. Now I want to keep my thread.

So I went in the morning to fetch those medications, but I was already ill as well. I had an ulcer, and the fever, and couldn't walk properly. So it was about 1/2 kilometer, but it took me the whole day. I remember sitting under a birch tree. It was a lovely sunny day, and the birch tree was beginning to be green; and I sat down to rest and I fell asleep. And when I awakened, it was already late in the afternoon. So I managed to get to the dispensary and get the medications and to get back. But when I got back, my mother had already been taken away to the hospital. And it was an enormous weight off my mind that I knew she was being taken care of.

So I lost consciousness, and woke the next day myself already in a hospital bed.

The way they really managed the situation I will never forget it; I will always admire it because they were a fighting army having only a certain number of doctors and nurses. But everybody helped. A lot of soldiers volunteered as male nurses, and there were of course professional nurses. But it was taken care of so quickly and so efficiently.

This was really a problem because the army had to go on; the war was still on and they had to fight.

In the end they solved this problem by asking medical students from all countries - France and Belgium, medical students in their last semester -- to volunteer. They were promised they wouldn't have to take their exams. And they became the medics. It was a very courageous thing to do because we were infected, although it wasn't so dangerous anymore because we had all been cleaned carefully. And, as you know, it's lice that carry the bubonic plague. There were no lice any more. They probably burned the dead bodies in Belsen.

It happened that I was already past the worst stage of this bubonic plague, and it was not so bad a case. So after 10 days when I stopped having a high fever and the ulcers disappeared, and the doctors knew that I knew English and German, the worst problem was communication. Because there were a lot of Russians and Czechs and Poles, patients with whom they couldn't communicate, who couldn't tell them what was wrong, where the pain was; so they asked me whether I would volunteer, get up and translate. So of course I said yes.

This was another unforgettable evening, because they were terribly nice. Those were soldiers, the male nurses, so first of all, they plundered the home of some German woman and brought me some clothes which they thought were very nice. But those

were evening clothes, with big décolleté, and I was, by that time, 27 kilos [less than 60 pounds]; so everything was hanging on me. But of course I loved them and put them on.

They wanted me to have a good time, so they took me to the dining room and gave me a proper meal. I think it was some mutton and vegetables and, of course, something to drink; which to me tasted like denatured a1cohol; and my first cigarette and my first meal since the war with proper cutlery on a proper plate — after how many years — two or three.

Of course it was a crazy thing to do, because it made me terribly ill. I thought I would die; but I was so happy. I didn't mind at all being ill; because it was such a thing, to be able to eat properly.

And then they took me to a cinema. They had a tent where they had a cinema. It was the first time I saw color film. At first there was the anthem, "God save the King." Then, I'll never forget it, it was a film with Edward G. Robinson, some crime story. It was life for the first time. And then I came back to the barracks, and I was sick! All night; I thought I would die. But I was so happy I thought I don't mind if I die.

By the way — excuse me for going back and forth — but that was another thing I wanted to explain about Hamburg because though we were in constant danger of dying through the air raids, I was never afraid any more. And I think it was the same with many of the other girls. Because somehow dying in a war as a casualty with other normal people was quite a different thing than being gassed. You might say Death is death. But it's not so. And then of course we were welcoming the allied air raids, because they were beating the Germans. There were some bad moments, when we saw those little — we called them trees, rockets that looked like a tree — first there was a green one and then a red one, and the red one pointed out the target. And when we saw it nearby, that was scary. But there was no real fear of death like there was at Auschwitz. You were not selected to be executed, murdered. I've often thought about that — about

someone in war, compared to someone condemned to death and going to an execution. It's a very big difference.

{END OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.11.12}

{START OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.12.12}

So my thoughts then were, I have had a proper meal; and I have proper

Clothes; and I will die as a human being. And I was really very happy. The next day I started working for the British General Hospital; and of course the first thing, the head of the detail was Major Spizer [sp?] I kept looking for him in England; I knew he was from Newcastle. But I never found him. And he was very nice to me. The first thing I asked was to look for my mother, because I didn't know where she was, and there were so many buildings. That took some time before he found her.

So I first went with the doctors and translated when they went to visit patients. Then I did some office work; then I even had night watches in some wards. So I really worked as a sort of assistant nurse. They were mostly Russian and Polish people, possibly because most of the Czechs knew some other language, English or German, and didn't need a translator.

So I more or less had a place in the daily run. That's when I started to smoke; I was offered cigarettes all the time. The people were very nice.

Then the Belgians came, and I became very friendly with them, especially Dr. Andre von Low, with whom I kept contact until quite recently when he died. When I played in Belgium, he came to my concerts. He came with his whole family to Jindřichův Hradec to visit us.

In about a week Major Spizer found my mother. He came back very sad. He said there was very little hope of her recovery; that she had a very severe case of the plague and immediately said: *If she dies, I shall adopt you and take you with me to England.* He was childless and took to me very much and was very kind to me.

So I was allowed to go and see my mother. They had put her in a special place for very severe cases, which was on a hill. It was called the rotunda; it must have been a Roman building, I don't know really. She was unconscious and really in a very bad state, having lots of ulcers and emaciated. The problem was with all the patients; some of them were dying of starvation, not of the bubonic plague. For the starvation they would have needed food. But for the plague they were only supposed to get sugared milk, which was not enough to keep the organism going. Also, there were not enough medicaments; I don't think there was even talk about penicillin at that time. So, a lot of people died. Josef Čapek died there.

Of course healthy people were free to go, and some of the girls of the Buchenwald men [?] who were in good physical condition started on their journey home — on foot. But this was out of the question here.

So I got my work in the hospital. And they even cleaned an attic and made a room for me with planks. And this was nearly fatal for me because apparently I was not really cured. So one morning I woke up with a horrible fever and was not able to get up; and just lay there in a delirium, hoping that somebody would find me. But downstairs they probably thought I had taken a few days leave or had stayed with my mother. So nobody came looking for me until the fourth day when I was already lying there in a terrible state when they found me; and of course immediately put me downstairs and put me in a ward. But I was really in a desperate state.

I was extremely ill. Only afterwards they told me that this Major Spizer went on leave; came to take leave of me, thinking that I was going to die. But I must have had an enormous will

to live because the moment I woke up, and I knew about this problem of starvation and the proper diet for a plague victim, I knew how the diets were labeled; diet one was only sugared milk, and diet two was maybe a piece of cake, and diet four was normal food. So I changed the label on my bed and put on the label for diet four and devoured the normal food, and then I threw it up. But something must have stayed with me, and I recovered, really quickly. I don't think they ever knew whether it was the bubonic plague coming

Back; but I had no ulcers, it was a bout of fever

I got well quickly. When my fever was down to almost normal, a terrible thing happened. [long pause]

One of the male nurses who knew me well - I'll tell you about him. I met him again under curious circumstances some years ago in England. He came and told me [another long pause - she struggles to go on], came and told me that in a ward in the same hospital there was a girl called Ruzickova [now Zuzana weeps] who kept calling my name [she speaks, while crying]. I got up and got there, and it was Dagmar — she was dying of tuberculosis.

She was able to tell me what happened. They went to Auschwitz with one of the late transports from Terezin. And when they came to the ramp, because she had a little brother, her mother and the little brother went straight to the gas chambers. She survived and went to another camp. And her father survived, Karel, and went to another camp. In the end she ended in Bergen-Belsen. There were two ways the Nazis tried to end this final solution when they saw the war was coming to an end. One of them was the death marches; you have heard about them. And one of them was the extermination camps like Bergen-Belsen. So she came to Bergen-Belsen. She was, as I told you, from her childhood in danger of TB. I was able to be there with her; she died in my arms. I was able to tell her that we would get back, and that she would meet her father again, and we would go again to Plzeň, and go to our favorite places.

[Long, long pause]

So then, life went on. I'll tell you the story of what happened to her father. He survived in quite a good condition. Then they were transported to another extermination camp. And he was in such a good condition that when they were transported through Czechoslovakia, he sprang from the train and hid and managed to reach a village called Sadská, east of Prague, not very far. There the Czechs managed to hide him. That was already May 1, 1945. They hid him in the local prison. Somehow the Germans found out and shot him; on May 2, 1945, three days before liberation.

I think my whole life might have been different if he had returned, because there would have been a man in the family, and he would have helped me and my mother.

Later my mother tried to find out whether there was somebody culpable [who betrayed him to the Nazis]. But my father, before he died in Theresienstadt, whenever my mother would say I will do this and this to the Germans, my father used to say: ***Don't think about revenge; that belongs to God.*** And so my mother said: ***All right, I will not seek revenge.***

So, my mother got no better in Belsen. It was a great problem. I went there every day. The bubonic plague got more or less better. but she was quite listless — didn't want to recover, or didn't have the strength to recover. It looked pretty hopeless. We had to stay in quarantine for three months. By that time already, on the radio, quite a lot of people from Czechoslovakia were sending out messages searching for family and friends. And there was a message from Milostpani searching for me; so I let her know that we were alive. And when one of those male nurses went to London, I gave him the address of the Vogels in London and told him to try to find them. So he found them and told them that we are alive. So by that time some of the family knew that we are living.

Of course there were discussions at that time of what we should do. Many of the prisoners thought that they would go to the displaced persons camps and seek to get a visa for somewhere because already the Russians were saying that Eastern Europe would be Communist. But to me it was quite clear that I wanted to return. The whole Zionist thing, I discovered, was theoretical. I wanted to go back to my country. There was no place else I wanted to live. So we were really waiting for the quarantine to expire. It did in July; but there was no way for us to get back.

My mother was no longer suffering from bubonic plague, but unable to walk; very weak, maybe unwilling to walk or communicate, lying there listlessly. I think it was the thought of coming back to our home without my father; she couldn't face it. She kept saying: ***I will never get back, I will never get better; I will stay here.*** When I realized that, I kept frantically looking for some sort of transport because I felt very strongly that unless she gets out of this hospital and home, she will never recover.

There were cars from Czechoslovakia coming for people, but they were always full. I remember a rather funny story about a car that came and didn't find those people they wanted to take home, and I asked them if they would take us. And he said: ***But you must get the petrol.*** So I went to one of the doctors, and he said we would have to go to the headquarters; so I went. By that time I had a sort of an apron and looked like a nurse. And I went into this gorgeous building up on a hill where the British HQ was. I remember all the officers were huge. And I got into the inner sanctum, and they said they would call a general to talk to me. And I had some papers with me and this huge Englishman came, and I said I want some petrol, some gasoline. And he didn't even let me tell him for what, but he disappeared and came back with a flask of petrol [she laughs]. And I said: ***That's no use to me; I'm going back to Prague.*** And he said: ***That's out of the question.***

So I went back again. They were really trying to get a train for us; and they didn't get it until the middle of August. So then there was this question, because the doctors in the

hospital said it was out of the question for my mother to travel; she wouldn't survive. But when you are young, you have such courage, such intuition; and I had this feeling, I just have to get her home.

So I conspired with my friend Dr. van Low, and had him make out a paper that she's allowed to leave the hospital. And some of my friends got me a dress for her to wear. And very early in the morning when there was no proper watch, because the paper was, of course, fake, I gave the paper to the night nurse; and said I have to bring my mother to my hospital to be x-rayed.

I dressed her, and we went. My mother said: ***What are you doing to me? I won't survive this. You know the doctors said I won't survive this.*** And I was even very cruel because I thought that was the only way. I said, 'I want to go back to Plzeň, and I'm not going back without you. And I don't want to stay here anymore. You must go with me.' So that was probably the very thing that made her try. She felt she has to make this last sacrifice for me.

On top of it, we got a place in wagon #13, and my mother was superstitious and said: ***You see – this is 13; this is my death bed.*** And that journey was bad, because the rails were bad; and also other trains were going through, and we had to wait because we were not an ordinary train, not on the ordinary schedule. So again, it took three days. We didn't have enough food. They gave us some parcels, but it was not enough. But it was summer, and there was fruit in the gardens so we went out when we stopped and got some fruit.

It's funny, this thing about being decent was still with me and handicapping me, because, of course, the other girls went pillaging into private gardens, and I could never bring myself to go even into a German private garden.

Most of the time my mother was lying there, quite listless, saying: ***This is my last journey; I'll never reach home.*** And then we came into Bohemia. The transport was going to Prague,

and Plzeň is on the way. And we went to some of the villages near Plzeň, and there were the people standing around; we were actually quite late. We were not a sensation any more. Most of the prisoners and the concentration camp people came back during May; this was already late August.

Still there were some people standing around and gaping. I was still only 27 kilo; I was still ill, not in good health. I kept telling my mother: ***Look out of the window. Here is this village; this is this town.*** In the end, when we were nearing Plzeň, we were in a village where we used to go for our holidays. And I said, 'Look. This is Nova Hut, won't you look out of the window.' She came. And there were some people standing there, and they recognized her. And they said: ***Oh, Mrs. Ruzickova, Mrs. Ruzickova, you are here! You have survived.*** And I think that was the crucial moment when she realized she was home. There were people there greeting us. So she started to take interest, looking out of the window.

So when we arrived in Plzeň at the station, most of the people didn't get out. We were the only one going to Plzeň from the transport; so we got out. It was a very nice warm day. So I said to my mother, 'You sit here on this bench. I'll go to town and look to see if there is a repatriation office.' We knew already from the people in the villages who said, you must go immediately to a repatriation office in Plzeň. I think they even told me where it was. So I said, 'I'll go to the office and see where we should stay the night and bring back some food.' And so I went. It was not far from the station. And they immediately got me my repatriation papers and my mother's. And there was a dining room, and they gave me food. And the food was svíčková and knedliky! [sauerbraten and dumplings]. And I thought, my first dumplings! Prvny knedliky! So

I only ate two, and I put two in a napkin for my mother; her first knedliky.

Then, of course, Milostpani Provazniková lived very near. And so I couldn't withstand the temptation, and I went to see her and tell her that we are home. So we wept and embraced. And she looked at my hands and wept and wept. And I said, 'I have

to go and see about my mother; she is sitting there at the railway station.'

And I am going to the railway station, and who should I meet on the way but my mother, who already felt well enough that she also went to this repatriation office. She also had the svíčková and also had two dumplings to take to me. [Laughs]

So we got these repatriation papers which entitled us to spend the night in the municipal dormitory. They said next day we should come, and they would look for a flat for us. It was unfortunate that we came so late because all the flats were taken.

Our house was already taken by some Czechs, and they gave to the repatriants German flats. After all it was not our house any more. As I told you, before the war we were living in this combined flat with several Jewish families. So we had no proper flat even before we left for the camp.

Nobody was really thinking that we would come back any more. It was too late. So, we were given those papers for the public dormitory. But we didn't really think we would have to go there. We first went to see my cousin Sonya, and she was behaving in a rather curious way.

She said: ***I'm terribly sorry, but I have to leave. I have an appointment in the afternoon. Would you come back at 6 o'clock in the evening?*** We thought, why didn't she offer us the key to her home? But she didn't. So we said: ***All right, we'll go and see Slecna Marka.*** Slecna Marka was head of this shop, head saleswoman, and she was almost a member of the family. We had given her quite a lot of our things to keep.

So we went there, and rang the bell. We expected, of course, the burst of joy. But she also was rather embarrassed, and said: ***I can't really invite you inside; my cleaning's not done; if you would care to sit in the kitchen.*** Apparently all those

people were already so sure that we wouldn't come back, so maybe she sold some of the things; or maybe she just wanted to keep them. But we weren't looking for our things. We were looking for some food and some shelter and a kind word.

But when we saw that this was embarrassing her, so we left; and didn't dare to visit anybody else.

By the way, another thing; we met on the street one of the servants we had had. And she was wearing one of my mother's dresses. And we thought that's how it is. We are dead and buried. We are ghosts which are not supposed to haunt people from the grave.

So we sat down on a bench in a park and looked at each other rather sadly. And there was still at that time always a guardian in the park to look after it. So this guardian saw who we were. We were still wearing those terrible clothes. So he started to talk to us and asked us where we came from. He didn't know us; and then suddenly he went away. And then his wife came with a big plate of kolache (kolace, kolach, kolacky) [pastries] and a big jug of tea; so we at least had something to eat.

Then we went back to Sonya and sat on the stairs and waited and waited and she didn't come.

Q: She was not a Jew?

She was from a mixed marriage. She survived in Plzeň. The children from the mixed marriages weren't harmed. We waited, and she didn't come. And in the end we went to the public dormitory. And I spent my first night in Plzeň crying.

But the crucial thing was that moment my mother was in Plzeň. Suddenly she was well and in charge of things.

When we left Belsen I was the mother, and she was the child. When we came to Plzeň, I was the child again. She took over. And we finally got the shop back; and we got a flat. And I started practicing again. But that's another chapter.

{END OF TAPE RG-50.615.0001.12.12}

[This seems to be mis-numbered and is actually the last interview]

January 5, 1992--(date of transcribing]

{Start of tape RG-50.615.0001.05.12}

ME: So many years later, does it have a reality for you anymore?

Absolutely; yesterday I was shaking all over. I didn't sleep. I was there, there; I'm still there.

The crucial question; why it happened?

Yes, you can't understand it. That was the question I asked myself in Plzeň. Anybody in Plzeň could have been an SS man; could have succumbed to fear, superstition, mass psychology.

ME: Even you?

No, I could not; I mean theoretically anybody. That was the question I kept asking myself. Could this man or that man have behaved like that? Often the answer was negative. There are people who are immune. I can't imagine V**á**clav Havel; but there

people who in ordinary circumstances are leading a very decent life, but because of being afraid or succumbing to the hypnosis of mass psychology. You see it with the Communists.

I learned about being decent from Freddy. Requiring of someone that they be decent is almost the top that you can require.

The conditions are crucial. If some of these people, the SS men, had lived under good conditions in the states, say, they would have lived a reasonably decent life.

Me: Do you believe then, that with a few exceptions like Havel, that almost everyone is potentially "this" [that is, able to become an SS man in a concentration camp]?

She answers: Yes, almost everyone is potentially this. Because I've seen so many people who yielded to the pressure, yielded to the hypnosis, the mass psychology; because they wanted to believe they were doing right. I'm talking about people like Pavel Kohout, who signed the petition for Horáková to be executed. And then in '68 they saw they were wrong. But how is that possible? For a woman to be executed is wrong at any time!

It's a matter of yielding to mass psychosis. It's what Freud says. Every individual acts differently when he's in a crowd.

It's those people in Iraq who a few months ago were ready to kill any American and stand behind Saddam and now are crossing the borders and asking the Americans to help them. How can one be so blind?

Talking with my friends here so many say: ***I didn't see what went on the fifties.*** How could people not see it? There were so many documents of what Stalin did. Almost all the Czech intelligentsia — how didn't they see?

Does this color your life in any way?

How do you mean?

[She continues without asking for an answer]: No, I'm an eternal optimist. You, look here, you can look at it from two sides. You can say everybody is potentially a criminal, and you can say everybody is potentially a decent person. If he or she had lived under different conditions, under less pressure, maybe he would have been a decent person.

Maybe one of those guards had lived a hundred years ago in the Weimar Republic, he would have been a decent father of the family; keeping up his moral standard towards his family and society.

But of course it's scary. When I'm talking to a German, I think, what did he do during the war? It's the eternal question. Now he is so kind.

The main fault of people who weren't in the camps, they think the Nazis had horns and the Communists were devils.

But they are not devils with horns. You could spend an evening with Mengele or Dr. Klein and think, what a cultured man. You would never suspect; that's the point! How can this happen to people?

I started reading books about the camp, and I always was disgusted.

I always thought that is not what it was. Until I read ***One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*** by Solzhenitsyn, which is the only book about the camps that gets this aspect of the thing — that if you get through the guards without being beaten; if you maybe smuggle a piece of bread; if you get a better portion of soup, with a piece of potato — it's the same feeling of satisfaction a normal person feels when, I don't know, he has a successful love affair, or is lucky, or wins a lottery.

The feeling of libido, to use the Freudian term, is very relative. And you can't survive without getting a certain amount of satisfaction from even the most abnormal situation.

So the little satisfactions make the life almost normal. You fall in love; you have a boyfriend, though you know you may leave any time, or he may leave anytime in a transport. You recite poems and ... you live. Otherwise you fall into despair and get the Auschwitz illness; get those dead eyes. That is when you cease to get any satisfaction. And that's the aspect which nobody is able to grasp who was not there. Solzhenitsyn was the only one able to put it on paper. And no Archipelago Gulag will ever be as persuasive and as typical and as horrible as *One Day … of Ivan Denisovich.* There it is, in essence ordinary daily life; you are alive. You have maybe passed some danger. You have maybe had a piece of food more than usual; and that's that. It's also life. As soon as you lose that, you are dead.

Most people couldn't understand that; because what you went through was so outrageous. How could you survive and how could you live, as I tell it, a normal life? Yes, it was a life! I had four years of life, a terrible life.

Survivor's guilt? Yes. The main part of my not being able to put it all on paper, and my being so excited about telling you, is this — why am I here? All those other people are dead. There were so many geniuses, so many scientists, artists; and that's not being an elitist. There were so many decent people. It was this which, after the war, made me attempt suicide. That's another chapter again. First of all, I felt I was ill, contaminated. I was unable to think like a normal human person, to react like a normal person. I also felt this terrible burden of being alive, and the others not being alive. My only salvation was music, and I was so afraid I wouldn't be able to bridge over this terrible gap; four years and my hands in such bad condition. And I felt nobody really understood how I felt; and I felt it was my fault, not theirs.

One day when I came from my lesson — I was already at the Academy — I didn't have much luck with my professor, who was an absolutely wonderful teacher; but who once I told him he was a sadist, but he was not. He was a man who was very unsure of himself — very severe with himself. And so he was very severe with his students and always told them what he thought. And he kept telling me that it won't be possible. You are a nice young woman; you should marry. You are intelligent, and if you want to take up a career, you should study languages. Find another career because you are too old to start; technical deficiencies are too great. But he didn't tell me this way; he kept ridiculing me. So when I came back from one lesson, I had to go to a dispensary to get my mother barbiturates because she had difficulties sleeping. The apothecary was a friend, and I didn't need a receipt [prescription?]. And so I came to Plzeň with one train earlier than I was supposed to come and went into this dispensary and got those barbiturates. Then, by another good chance, my mother had a terrible headache and sent somebody from the shop to get the barbiturates. And they told her: ***but Suzi was here a half an hour ago and got those.*** And my mother knew she hadn't told me to get them and knew I shouldn't be home at all, that I should still be in Prague. So she came running home and got the doctor, and they pumped my stomach.

And then she sent me to a psychiatrist, and again this was very lucky; because he was a very wise man. He asked me why I had attempted suicide, and I told him all those things I'm telling you — that I felt life was not worth living; that I thought I was not able to live it. And his reaction was: ***Well, I'm not at all surprised.*** And I think that was the only reaction that could have helped, because he didn't tell me to take any medicine. He didn't even tell me to get analyzed. He just told me that what I had done was a normal reaction to those circumstances. So I went away from him thinking, all right, so I'm a normal person. I just have to cope. He was a very wise person. I never saw him again. I don't even remember his name. He just sat there looking very sad and said: ***I'm not surprised. It's quite normal, what you feel. You are not a psychiatric case.***

There was no definite point where I felt I had recovered. When you talk to Viktor, he will tell you that when he married me, I

was still far from recovery [1952]. I was still toying with the idea of suicide, although not too seriously. And he's told me since, that he was quite afraid in the first years of our marriage that I will never recover. Music was essential, but I think Viktor was very, very essential. He kept, all the time, trying to persuade me that this was something normal which I have been through; and that life is good, and that people are good; though this is far from what he really believes [laughs]. And that there is no anti-Semitism and that the Jews are in no way special peop1e; that any Czech is ready to hate any Moravian; that any Slovak is ready to hate any Czech. It's just a normal way of living; that people who hate Jews are just unintelligent, stupid, backwards peop1e. And then of course, I being absolutely sure that he was a super musician, him telling me that I was a super musician was also terribly important. I knew that in music he cannot lie, that it was not a merciful lie, that he probably would have told me not to try so hard to make a professional career if he hadn't been quite sure that what I was doing was really good.

Viktor is an extremely sane person. I've never met a person so sane. He has no [(?)] complex. He doesn't know what it is; and he is absolutely frank with himself and he would have been frank with me.

So at that point, I was sure. I knew that him telling me all's well with the world was a merciful lie. But the important thing, he always told me my feelings were normal.

He once broke up with his family when a cousin made an anti-Semitic comment. He's even more sensitive, perhaps, about this than I.

It was really living with Viktor that made me normal.

Also, having a person on whom I could absolutely rely; not feeling betrayed. I'm talking about human betrayal — lying, infidelity, false behavior.

It didn't happen at a definite point. It went on well into the marriage. I still couldn't believe that I could be loved, that the person the other one loved was really myself. I had many boys who were courting me, but I always felt they were in love with somebody else. I don't think I'm bitter; yes, some feelings are still bitter [she sighs].

About Sonya, it's very understandable, she must have thought why did they survive and not my mother.

We did get back some of our family things — albums, some jewelry.

I don't really remember that much about it. At the time I was so involved with music, fighting for my life; I didn't take any notice of politics. I was closed up with my music, fighting for my life so that I would pass the examinations. Nothing else was important to me.

I left everything to my mother; she took care of everything. She got the shop back; started it again. In the end, when I said I would try to play again, she said: ***After all, it was your father's wish.*** She tried to make it possible for me.

[Victor comes in with coffee]

Zuzana tells him to come in; we've finished with the camps.

My mother tried to make it possible for me. The whole family came and said: ***You're crazy. She'll never be able to earn her living.*** Of course she was very unsure it was right. The professors were not encouraging. She worried about my future; she was an amazing woman.

She recovered very quickly when she got the shop again. Of course she never looked at another man. After we came home, most of the widows remarried. Numbers of people wanted to marry her; men who came back from the camp without their wives. But she never looked at another man. But there was the work in the shop which she was very good at — immediately got the hang of it; got money from the bank; immediately went looking for merchandise to sell. She was a very elegant lady.

What broke her, definitely, not only when they took her shop from her [Communists], even then she got another job as a sort of buyer; what broke her was the Plzeň story, the uprising in '53. They blamed the capitalists and all the former capitalists. There were trucks coming, and again it was just like the camps. They were notified that in 12 hours they must pack up their belongings; a truck is coming which will bring you to the borderlands which were absolutely deserted, evacuated in the Sudetenland. At that time we were living in rooms, no flat of our own; very small rooms, sub-letting. So we tried desperately to find a flat, and we were lucky. We found these two rooms; we met a former student of Viktor's who helped us find these two rooms. We hired a truck to take all our things from Plzeň to Prague.

The moment we were leaving a policeman came and said: ***What are you doing? You are supposed to leave in 12 hours to the Sudetenland.*** And

I said: ***We just got married, and we found a flat in Prague, and I'm taking my mother with me to Prague.***

It was terrible because at the same time Viktor's parents were moved from their lovely and large flat in Jindřichův Hradec into a small place. So we had all the furniture from two flats and crammed it into the two rooms. We of course had to sell a lot and leave a lot. And my mother didn't work anymore; she got a little pension. She had to live here with us; we were newly married. We had a kitchen in this next room; she had to sleep with her head next to the icebox. We were in the next room, actually sleeping under the piano; this went on for nine years! A mother-in-law and a young married couple, and her being used

to meeting a lot of people, and being a good business woman; it must have been hell for her. It was hell for us. Viktor lost his place at the academy because of political reasons. I was working at the academy, with a ridiculous salary, supporting all of us. It was the same thing! Being thrown out of Plzeň, being evacuated; it was exactly the same! I hated Plzeň for it.

{End of tape RG-50.615.0001.05.12}

{Start of tape RG-50.615.0001.06.12}

Most of this tape is a conversation with Viktor and Zuzana and is in Czech; what follows is the edited translation that was given in the original transcription. It seems that quite a bit has been omitted in the translation.

My mother was a very courageous woman. She immediately started to remake this apartment for us. Viktor and my mother did all the work. She never lost her wonderful sense of humor until she was 80.

Talking with Viktor:

Your role in Zuzana's recovery:

That's not because of me.

Zuz: Yes it is.

Viktor: It was her own accomplishment. She had a music as a motivation, and she was enormously courageous. My, who life's goal was to bring her back to the normal, to give her the feeling that she is a normal human being; because the greatest misfortune of those people who suffered this fate that they somehow felt excluded from the human race.

I'd tell her there are no devils; you're here, you survived it. Now you have to devote yourself to music. I really don't think there's anything else but simply love to cure people.

Zuzana told me everything, everything; and I told her everything too.

The main thing is a mutual feeling of trust, mutual goals. We came from similar backgrounds; we see the world in similar ways.

Viktor during the war: In '42 I received orders that I should go to a work bureau. There was some SS man, and I said I wanted to go to the conservatory. And he looked at me and said: *Yes, that's a typical musician's face. I also have a daughter at home who also plays the piano. So, well, I'll let you stay there. How long will it take?* I said a half a year. During that half year I found a job at Mělník, and there I went to teach German. I was 19; I also said I'd teach singing. Two years later they kicked me out. I became a riveter for aircraft. That's where I almost lost my hearing; it was frightful. I organized a chorus there.

During the war did you know what was happening to the Jews?

No, we truly didn't know. We knew there were concentration camps but what went on there, we had no idea about.

Jiri Lederer was my good friend. Your mother would know him.

When I first met Zuzana, I didn't even know she was Jewish. We met at the academy. I always liked her enormously. As soon as she came into a group, she brought in the soul.

Zuz: We were a group, two Jewish boys and I and Viktor. We never talked about the war.

I was always interested in contemporary music, and I liked Viktor's pieces. I went to his concerts whenever he wrote something.

Then we used to go for lunch to a restaurant together. Viktor always tells me that he was trying to make a date with me, to go to the movies. But actually at that time I was going with a different boy for four years, so I turned him down. But I liked him a lot as a musician.

Then I broke up with my boyfriend. Well, Viktor used to come and take lessons from me. That was a lot of fun because I got a dispensation from having conservatory. Meanwhile Viktor had to finish conservatory; so I finished a year earlier than he. I immediately got a job at the academy teaching piano to composers; so Viktor came into my class, but we had already known each other. I knew he was an excellent pianist, so I told him don't you want to take the exam and get out of these classes. And he didn't want to; he said he'd prefer to have lessons [laughs].

Well, we didn't really take the lessons too seriously. It all began when we were once in a larger group somewhere. It was before the first of May, and we all had to learn some sort of patriotic songs for the first of May. Viktor was sitting in the seat behind me, and he was making fun of the whole thing. [They sing one of the songs and laugh] And then all of us went to some hospoda [pub/bar] together, and I too began making jokes about the whole thing. And we left the hospoda together, and Viktor said to me: ***Do you ever talk seriously, or do you always just make fun of everything?*** That was like opening the floodgates; nobody had ever asked me anything like that. And I said to him: ***You know this is all just a big clown act. Of course I have my own problems.*** And he said: ***What problems?*** And we began to talk. And Viktor walked me all the way to Vinohrady. We just talked and talked. Then he kissed me for the first time, and that's how it all began.

Viktor: I knew nothing about her experiences during the war. Ruzickova, that's not even a Jewish name. There are many, many Ružičkas here who are Aryans.

Viktor had two loves before me, and then he was alone for a long time. Then he thought he would mainly dedicate himself to music; he thought he wouldn't complicate his life with girls. Then when we started going together, I was once going through Prague on my way somewhere from Plzeň, and Viktor's best friend called me said he'd wait for me at the station; that he wanted to talk to me. He said to me: ***If you're not really serious about Viktor, then don't play around with him, because Viktor told me that if he starts going with anybody, it will only be for marriage.*** And I never really had thought about marriage. I was upset; I came home and cried to my mother — I don't want to get married, but I don't want to lose Viktor either because he's such a rare person. I'll never find such a person. And finally I decided; well, if it has to be, I'll marry him! Then we met somewhere, but Viktor had no idea that his friend had had this conversation with me.

Viktor: My friend had had all these quick relationships with unbelievable stupid girls. And once I walked one of them home, and then told him: ***Really, I don't want anything like that. I'm too old for that kind of thing.*** And that's where he got the idea.

Well, the next time I saw Viktor, I thought he had sent this friend to talk to me! So I said to him: ***Well when do you want to have the wedding?*** I proposed to him, without knowing it! I think he was rather frightened.

Viktor: Yes, it did scare me a bit. [They both laugh].

But he reacted courageously.

Yesterday I was thinking about something; that I actually never regained my proper human dignity in the political sense, in the sense Havel and the others did. Because somehow I was so used to indignities, so that for me being a second class citizen wasn't such a tragedy, I could bear it with equanimity. I just wanted three things from life — I was alive, not hungry; I could make music; and I had Viktor and my mother. And the other things were not that important for me. That was maybe why I never joined the party and why all the indignities — they vexed me of course — I was angry sometimes, but they didn't seem so unbearable. Maybe this was because I was well-conditioned.

And also after the war, I was so involved with music that I didn't think at all about politics.

I only began to suffer acutely after ’68. I lived ‘68 much more euphorically than Viktor did. He was skeptical from the first moment. Because I thought this was a natural evolution, I really believed in socialism with a human face.

In the ‘70s I became very interested in politics. I often played in Hungary in the late ‘80's and saw the development there; while we were still in a totalitarian state. And I saw what was happening in Poland, and I thought maybe we would stay the way we were, with Romania and Germany — a nexus Bucharest - Prague - Berlin.

{End of tape RG-50.615.0001.06.12}

The rest of the transcription does not seem to be on any tape. I don’t know where this comes from.

And this is a photo taken immediately after I returned; this is August 1945. [A shocking difference]

Me: What were the circumstances of the taking of these pictures?

We were in a sort of home for repatriates where we were treated for exhaustion, diseases.

Here I am 3 years after the war, going to my first ball. We had nothing to make a dress out of. This was material used for black-out raids.

Me: You look plump!

I was terribly fat; I just ate and ate. Everyone did that. I reached the weight of 65 kilos [143 lbs.]; a weight I had never had before or after. So was my mother, so was everybody. Because we somehow couldn't eat enough — there were no vegetables, no meat — so we ate dumplings and lots of potatoes.

[Me: you were quite a beautiful little fat girl.]

ZR: Yes, I was quite a beautiful little fat girl.

[I comment on difference of pictures just after camp, where ZR looks so terrible, and three years later, where she looks normal — a shining young girl].

Yes, she says.

December 30, 1991

[Resumed this project] Now listening to tapes again. Here is some more background while looking through photo albums.

[Note: this is almost the same as the introduction before the first tape]

This is Dobříš. My father was a great photographer. This, [her voice takes on a secretive sound] this is a former love of my mother.

No this wasn't our dog; just some dog when we were on holidays. I never had a pet.

Here is Dagmar and I, and here are our governesses.

A photo of Dagmar and Z. — same coats; same scarves.