



**WE AND OUR HISTORY!**

**MY  
A NAŠA  
HISTÓ-  
RIA!**



People  
in Need,  
NPO



DROM,  
Romany  
centre



Co-funded by the  
Europe for Citizens Programme  
of the European Union





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HISTORY!**



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*People in Need, NPO*



*DROM, Romany centre*



*THE PROJECT HAS BEEN REALIZED WITH SUPPORT OF THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION WITHIN  
THE EUROPE FOR CITIZENS PROGRAMME*

## \* INTRODUCTION

The project *We and our history!* brought to our community centres a huge opportunity to approach youth in a different way. We escaped from current topics and headed to the past. We went to the core. The way we chose was not simple. The youth had to meet regularly, attend trainings about research methodology, video making and obtain knowledge about the milestones of the 20th century, as well as searching for contemporary witnesses. The youth from segregated Roma settlements and urban districts started to do research. They asked questions of relatives, the Roma, the majority and listened to their real stories and memories instead of reading definitions from textbooks or listening to the teacher. History lessons are about memories and so the history of a territory where children live was slowly revealed. It is about the stories that would probably be forgotten. And what makes it more important is that it is about the Roma—memories the majority is less interested in.

The project was organized by community centres of the association *People in Peril*, NPO, specifically in *Spišské Podhradie/Roškovce* and *Plavecký Štvrtok* and associations like *DROM*, *Romany centre* and *BRÁNA* community centre in *Brno*. The youth collected 24 interviews that were recorded either on the video or voice recorder. The two countries have issued a report with interview transcripts. We compared both transcripts and selected those that might answer our questions.

In this comparative study we compared statements of the Czech and Slovak witnesses of 20th century events. To simplify, we divided the century into two parts, covering the period before and during World War II and the period of communism. In both periods we studied:

- how the witnesses remember those periods,
- how the Roma lived in those times and
- what were the relations between the Roma and the majority in those periods.

Many statements of the witnesses are similar. They differ only in some cases and that is the subject of our study. Each finding is illustrated by specific statement of the Czech and Slovak witnesses. What you are reading right now is not a scientific study but rather a set of interviews collected by the youth from the people living in the same country. We introduce to you the lives of people in *The Czech Republic* and *Slovakia* in 1939–1989.

This comparative study also contains a DVD where is a short video provided—an edited version of statements, all video interviews and both reports of *Slovakia* and the *Czech Re-*

public. For those who are more deeply interested in this topic, we are preparing a web page with photos, reports, articles and some contributions from the youth.

Our great and sincere thanks belong to all contemporary witnesses who contributed with their memories.

# 1. THE ROMANI IN THE FIRST HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY

In the first half of the last century the racist theories considered Romani people as an inferior and parasitic population. Nuremberg Laws, especially Reich Citizenship Law and Law for the Protection of German Blood and German Honour from 1935 and subsequent regulation regarding the classification of “Gypsies” was declared the approach of the state. The Romani people were stripped of their civil rights and citizenship, they were prohibited to be married and sexual intercourse between Gypsies and German “Aryans” was forbidden. In 1940, Reich leader SS Heinrich Himmler ordered the first Roma transports to concentration camps. There they were used for the German arms industry needs and after that sterilized by violence.

**From 1942 deportations were increased, especially into “the Gypsy concentration camp” in Osvienčim–Auschwitz II.–Birkenau.**

Clothes of prisoners were marked with a black triangle and their forearms were tattooed with the number and the letter Z (German: Zigeuner). In the camp, more than 22,000 European Roma were incarcerated, while more than 19,000 died there. It is estimated that about 300,000 European Roma died during World War II.

## 1.1. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THE SLOVAK REPUBLIC [1939–1945]

### **ADAPTED BY:**

PEOPLE IN PERIL, NPO

COMMUNITY CENTRES SPIŠSKÉ PODHRADIE/ROŠKOVCE, PLAVECKÝ  
ŠTVŮRTOK

Although there were no mass transportations to the concentration camps from the territory of the Slovak state, the Romani people were persecuted, terrorized and eliminated. Based on the Defence Act from 1940 were Gypsies and Jews were deprived the opportunity to become part of the army forces because considered, “unreliable” they were not allowed to handle weapons. In place of that they did active military service in a special

battalion—the Sixth Battalion of the Work Division of the Ministry of National Defence. They performed earthwork and ancillary operation work.

The situation became worse after political changes in 1944. Deportation of Roma to concentration camps began, mainly from the east and south part of Slovakia. It is estimated that from the territory of then Hungary, including the Slovak territory occupied by the Vienna arbitration, there was about 25,000–30,000 Gypsy men and women deported. From the occupied territory of Eastern Slovakia Gypsies were transported to Košice and then deported to Komárno. In Komárno were prepared trains to dispatch Gypsies to concentration camp in Dachau and from there to other concentration camps.

**During the Slovak State period in 1939–1945 two groups of people from our territory were persecuted, the Jews and the Roma. Ghettos and concentration camps were established for the Jewish population and work units for the Romani population.**

The Ministry of Interior issued a regulation on “treatment of some conditions of Gypsies” in April 1941. It significantly affected the life of all the Gypsy population. Vlach Roma were taken from their horses and carriages and forbidden to live a nomadic life. On the other hand, Romani people with a settled way of life had to remove their homes from the state or local roads and place them away from villages, often a several kilometres away, even in forests. The Roma were forbidden to travel by public transport, to enter into public places (cinemas, parks). They could visit towns and village centres only on specified days and hours and they could not own dogs. Repeatedly, people have been subjected to the degrading physical examinations, settlements, and to midnight inspections.

## **WORK UNITS**

The fundamental law for regulation establishing work units on our territory is the regulation of the Ministry of Interior no. 137/1941 of Úradné noviny from April 2, 1941, and adapted in collaboration with the Ministry of National Defence.

The aim of labour camps was to centralize, retain, re-educate and use economically so called antisocial elements and Gypsies. These camps were about the mass concentration of prisoners, mainly men who were used for physically strenuous works associated with construction of railways, reservoirs, river realignments, etc.

Establishment of units were common in the whole territory that time. The first units were established in Očová, Most na Ostrove and the gamekeeper’s lodge in Trnava in 1941. After several of months they were dissolved.

In Hanušovce nad Topľou in the east of Slovakia, a complex of work units was created. Under the economic authority of Hanušovce nad Topľou also belonged a work unit in Jarabá where workers had built the Čertovica - Mýto pod Ďumbierom state road. Other labour camps were situated in Bystrá, under the Petič peak and in Nižný Hrabovec.

The Roma built a railway line Prešov–Strážske in Eastern Slovakia.

The greatest work unit the workers participated in was the construction of a reservoir camp in Dubnica nad Váhom with operation between 1942–1944. In 1943 a temporary work unit in Ilava was established.

The work unit in Central Slovakia was established in Revúca. The latest major work unit was in Ústie nad Oravou where Roma workers participated in construction of the reservoir called Oravská priehrada.

**Labour camp in Dubnica nad Váhom was converted to “detention camp” in 1944 and had also gathered Roma women and children.**

The living situation in camps was extremely cruel. In February 1945 typhus epidemics broke out in the camps affecting mostly children and elderly people and resulted in deaths. On February 23, 1945, under the pretence of transporting sick people to a hospital, they put them on trucks, took them to a local weapons factory, and murdered them. 26 murdered bodies were left in a mass grave.

**The relationship of the Slovak population towards the Roma has not been the same everywhere: in some places with good relationships, Slovaks protected Roma and did not allow their deportation. Residents had to ensure that Roma were working for them, etc. grazing, working in the fields.** Similarly, it was when observing the regulation about the removal of Roma settlements: in many areas the settlements were kept because there was no money for removal. The mass murders of Romani took place between the autumn 1944 and the spring 1945 by special SS forces under the pretext of suspicion of cooperation with guerrillas. There are couple of well-known cases from following towns and villages with the number of the population: Valaská Bela (13), Žiar nad Hronom (23), Jastraba (4), Lutila (46), Čierny Balog (60), Krupina (34), Tisovec (48), Ilija pri Banskej Štiavnici (111), Detva (4), Dúbravy (15), Hriňová (2), Slatina (59), Trhové Mýto Topoľníky (60). Gypsies have been executed in Svätý Kríž nad Hronom, Motyčky - settlement Štubňa in Kremnička, Nemecká, Kováčová and in the Jewish cemetery in Zvolen.

In honour of World War II victims have been built monuments in Ilija, Tisovec and Dúbrava. There was no information the victims were Romani people. In 1995, the local self-government unveiled a monument commemorating the murdered Gypsy victims in Čierny Balog.<sup>1</sup>

## 1.2. HISTORICAL OVERVIEW IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC [1939-1945]

### ADAPTED BY:

DROM, ROMANY CENTRE

BRÁNA COMMUNITY CENTRE

The status of Roma in the territory of the present-day Czech Republic was difficult at the time of the first Czechoslovak Republic. The Roma were settled but also lived a nomadic life. The Law on Nomadic Gypsies was established in 1927 aiming for the civilization of the Roma. Importance was given to the proper identification of Roma, to the list of all nomads where half-settled Roma were also counted (those who stayed through the winter in one place and travelled for work seasonally).

Due to the Law on Nomadic Gypsies, the first census of Gypsies took a place between June 1928 and August 1929. Almost forty thousands Roma, older then fourteen and already registered received a so called **Gypsy identity card**. It was in place of an ID card.

From 1939, the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia was declared on the territory of the Czech Republic. Reinhard Heydrich was appointed as the Protector from August 1941. He was known for his extraordinary interest in the ethnic makeup of the occupied territories.

At the end of 1939, the Protectorate of the Ministry of Interior ordered all subordinate authorities to call for immediate settlement of Gypsies with a validity of two months. Gypsies who denied it were placed in labour camps—Bohemian Romani were sent to the camp in Lety u Písku, and Romani from Moravia to Hodonín u Kunštátu.

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<sup>1</sup> ŠUVADA, M. 2015. Rómovia v slovenských mestách. Bratislava: POMS, 2015.

Mann, A. B.: Rómsky dejepis, Kalligram, 2001.

KUMANOVÁ, Z. Základné fakty o holokauste Rómov na Slovensku. [online] Available on <[www.rusyn.sk](http://www.rusyn.sk)>

In March 1942 the **Decree on the Preventive Fight against Criminality** was issued by which antisocial individuals and people whose deviant behaviour threatened society, could be imprisoned without any criminal offense being committed. The reason arrests could be that they had been caught outside their officially recognized place of residence. Gypsies belonged to antisocial individuals as well. Under this regulation, the camps in Lety u Písku and Hodonín u Kunštátu were changed to detention camps.

**In summer 1942, the protectorate police have issued the Decree on Combating the Gypsy Nuisance, measures mainly aimed at Gypsies. The census of all the Gypsies and mixed-race Gypsies was carried out. Their way of life, either settled or nomadic was not taken into account since they were integrated into the majority. What was crucial was ethnic origin. Together there have been about six and a half thousand Gypsies and mixed-race Gypsies.**

Camps in Lety u Písku and Hodonín u Kunštátu were changed to gypsy camps and used as family assembly. Accommodation capacity was exceeded and sanitary conditions were neglected in both camps. Families were separated. Everyone had to work in quarries, forests or roads construction. A Typhus epidemic broke out in the camp. There were 14 deportations to Auschwitz between April 1942 and February 1944, mainly directed into the concentration and **gypsy camps** in Auschwitz II–Birkenau.

The amount of Gypsy survivors after the war was between 600 and 1000<sup>2</sup> in the territory of the present-day Czech Republic.

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2 This chapter was prepared on the basis of article of prof. PhDr. Ctibor Nečas and Mgr. Marta Miklušáková „Historie Romů na území České republiky“, that is available on <http://romove.radio.cz/cz/clanek/18785>

## 2. COMPARISON OF WITNESSES' STATEMENTS IN SLOVAKIA AND THE CZECH REPUBLIC, 1939-1945

Events of the first half of the 20th century differ in the statements of Slovak and Czech witnesses at these points:

- the number of deported Roma to labour camps and the number of victims
- the way of Roma life in Slovakia and the Czech Republic

Similarities are found in relationships between the majority and Gypsies. Fear and hiding from soldiers are found in all the statements from both countries. The influence of the Slovak town and village representatives<sup>3</sup> was very interesting. It seems they were crucial on the subject of Gypsy deportation into the labour camps or to the front. Many Slovak witnesses found their salvation rather in district officials, mayors and commissioners. During the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia the situation was different. Despite the fact that proposals of sending people to "concentration camps" were prepared also by village representatives, the number of deported people was higher than in Eastern Slovakia. This happened despite the statements of witnesses about the effort of local people to help them.

We assume the pressure on the Czech representatives was stronger. That situation is explained by one of the witnesses from Plavecký Štvrtok: Tiso as a priest refused to send the Gypsies to concentration camps because they were Catholics. The book called *Rómovia a druhá svetová vojna* (The Roma and World War II) published by Nadácia Milana Šimečku (2006) offers an explanation for reasons why Roma in Slovakia were not affected by the same genocide as the Czech Roma. The reasons are mainly economic.

**The Roma in Slovakia lived two or three centuries in settled way of life. Statistics from 1927 show there were 60,315 Roma and 1,877 lived a settled way of life.**

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<sup>3</sup> Horváthova, J. 2002. Kapitoly z dejín Romú. Človek v tísní. Lidové noviny. 2002.

Gypsies worked for their peasants—Gadjo and were paid in kind. At the beginning of the Slovak state, some regulations against Gypsies had already been issued, and caused differences between Gypsies and people living the standard life.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the main measure was lifestyle. Slovak Gypsies lived a settled way of life and were willing to help the majority. In the Czech Republic, Gypsies used to transfer due to work opportunities, therefore they lived nomadically. We can conclude that “acclimatisation”, the village or town had a great influence on the destiny of the Roma at that time. The number of persecutions against Roma grew even after suppression of the Slovak National Uprising. Settlements were destroyed and inhabitants had to move several kilometres away from the village to the forests. The Slovak population had increasing fear. The Roma were accused of guerrilla activities and so some measures against them became more violent. Nevertheless, persecutions did not reach the point of genocide in the Czech Republic. Although, it can be assumed it was only a matter of time.

Another interesting finding refers to the relationship between the majority and the Roma population. Witnesses from the Czech Republic and Slovakia spoke about positive relationships before and during the war. They helped each other and no one remembered conflicts between inhabitants of towns or villages and Roma populations. Statements do not differ among non-Romani witnesses who participated in the questionnaire.

## 2.1. STATEMENTS OF WITNESSES- LABOUR CAMPS AND THEIR VICTIMS

BRNO CZ

**Karel Landori:**

“My mum’s dad and her older brother died as guerrillas in the war. Grandma was left alone so she went to live with her mum—to a village in Slovakia called Vondřišky (author’s note: Vondřišel—former German village, today’s Nálepkovo) that is situated somewhere near Spišská Nová Ves. Gypsies didn’t want to belong to the guerrillas; they lived in seclusion.”

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4 Rómovia a druhá svetová vojna. Čítanka.2006. Nadácia Milana Šimečku, Bratislava. 2006

(...) “My grandpa died in the war. He became a guerrilla. They went there in the evening and someone had reported them. I don’t know who. And then they were all shot. After, my mum told me that in the settlement where my grandpa lived, I don’t remember the name now, so Gypsies didn’t live there, only those Tolvajů 5 brothers. They all became guerrillas and died there.”

**Anton Lagryn:**

“Dad’s parents died in the Lety concentration camp. My dad went to Osvienčim and returned back as the only one from the whole family.” (...) “Dad and mum returned from concentration camps. Mum was in Ravensbrück at the Baltic Sea, liberated by the Russians. And dad was liberated by the Americans somewhere in Bavaria. It happened only few months before the war ended. From that point they were put together. They escaped from a death march. Then they were told: those who want can go to America, those who want to stay here, have to fight against the Germans. After, they both became foreign soldiers. They came into Sušice with the military. The uniform he used to have stayed with him for couple of years.”

“Our family line was mixed—the Jews, Comedians, Sinti. These are the best family lines, always something comes of it. But dad was revealed when he was deported to the camp. They discovered his grandma was a Jew.” (...) “my 4 siblings also died in concentration camps—the youngest was 4.”

**Boženka Horváthová:** “The family members from my dad’s side were guerrillas. My dad was in a Polish concentration camp. An unidentified male relative of my dad blew up a German train up in one settlement and then the Gestapo and the Germans persecuted the whole family. My dad was a musician and played mostly at the station in Krompachy. People recognized him easily and he was reported. He spent about 2 years there.” (...) “When dad was drinking, he sang Russian songs like Katyusha and so on. And he used to say we had to stay only with Russians.”

**Karel Holomek:** “I remember a period when the army passed. A part of the German army was in our village. I was about a 7-year-old boy. Sometimes I went to school and sometimes not because a transport of me and my sister to a concentration camp was announced. But my mummy didn’t take us there and then she had to hide us.” (...) “In 1939, my dad had to disappear because he finished at Charles University and had become a lawyer. He would be sent to a concentration camp first because German theories said that Gypsies were an inferior race so they refused to admit scholars among them. Dad ran away to Slovakia

moving across the various Romani settlements and places. We stayed with our mum.” (...) “At a time when the police came and started to deport Romani people my grandma was in bed with smallpox. The police said—leave her there, she will die anyway—and they left her there. Grandma stayed at home and the rest of family had to go to a concentration camp.”

**“Around 600 members from the Holomek family died in the concentration camps. There was grandpa, aunties, uncles ... In 1944, my two uncles escaped from Osvienčim but they were caught and killed. So my whole family ended up in the concentration camp. My dad and grandma were the only ones who were saved. Dad left Slovakia and grandma got well.”**

(...) “It is said that Czechoslovakia was the most democratic country in Europe during the interwar period. Even though, in 1928 there was issued a decree against “Gypsy Nuisance”. This decree brought identification cards to Gypsies although the process was very discriminatory. Holders of those cards were treated very badly. Also my dad as a Charles University student had a Gypsy identity card. My grandpa and another relative who was a teacher and student at university had that card. In 1939 it was helpful to the Germans. Based on statistics they knew who had to go to concentration camps. In this way laws contributed so that Roma holocaust could take place. It was genocide—after the war from about 7,000 people only 500 people returned. This was total destruction.” (...) “In the Union of Gypsies—Roma we had person called Schubert who escaped from the concentration camp and told us many stories including one how my two uncles escaped. Schubert worked in detention camps in Lety in Písek District and in Hodonín u Kunštátu—prisoners were working in road construction and factories that the Germans used for military purposes. A certain number of people were sent from both camps to Osvienčim. During the night from 1st to 2nd August a selection process in Osvienčim was done—young guys capable of work on one side and elderly people, women and children at the other side. The second group consisted of about 3,000 people who were transported to the Osvienčim Jewish concentration camp. Furnaces where people were burnt were prepared. They were Roma from Czech Republic, Germany, Moravia, Belgium, and Netherland. Slovak Roma were not deported. It would have happened only if the Germans had won.”

**Gejza Horváth:**

**“In our village Kolínovce, Roma were guerrillas. They fought against guardsmen, Germans and some of them were on alert and executed. People who survived were mostly marred by—for example, loss of legs or arms, they had health problems for their entire lives. The amount of those people was high.”**

They were limited on medical grounds but considered as great personalities in the village and Roma settlement. I remember one Gypsy was named Cicák; he was my Grandma's nephew. He blew up a bridge and train and he lost his leg there. But he survived and returned back to the Roma people. Riding on a horse he entered the room and warned the Roma to hide etc." (...)

**"My wife's dad was sent to a camp. From my mother's side was her cousin who was in a concentration camp. At that time they were still quite young people. They called him Ginzer. He was a great guerrilla. They caught him and deported him to a camp. I cannot remember exactly where, I was a little boy."**

**Čeněk Růžička:**

**"I was born to Romani parents. Both were in the Nazi concentration camps; father for 4.5 years and my mother for 4 years."**

"They were sent to concentration camps. It started when mum was sent to Lety in Písek District. Dad didn't go—he had been arrested directly on the road in a carriage in the Sudetenland where the Reich Law had become effective. So my dad with his wife, two children and most of the family were arrested in Sudetenland and then in 4–5 months sent directly to Osvienčim. (...) They had some tricks. A doctor performed a medical check on my mum. Then she went back to that messy place; it was a wooden hut 3x3 meters. Here she asked the guard where the child was. And he answered her and she slapped him. After he beat her she stayed lying at the floor. Finally, her family took her away from that place."

**(...) "I lost my half-sibling and grandpa in Lety in Písek District and the entire family from mum's side. My mum was the only one who survived. Feeling alone was her huge trauma. From dad's side only his three brothers survived."**

**Ignác Zíma:**

**"Deportation to camps had already started in Moravia before the war so we were just waiting. It was expected that the deportation would take place in Slovakia as well. But Tiso cooperated with Hitler and said he created discipline among Gypsies. That was the reason why deportation was low in Slovakia. My wife's aunt Danielová has been deported and she survived because she was pretty, she sang and danced. But she lost her husband and 6 children there."**

After, she worked in a kitchen. She used to tell us some stories from that time. She could take some food but when she wanted to give a bit to her children she was not allowed. It caused her to suffer a lot. We always cried when we heard that story. After the war, our aunt visited us many times and helped us. We always remembered what it was like in those times.”

(...) “Especially in Slovakia, Tiso arranged deportation of Roma to labour camps where those refusing to work were flogged. In Moravia and Bohemia there were also labour camps but practically they were preliminary concentration camps.” (...)

“Thanks to my parents I got all the information together. One lady told me she had a sick child with her in the concentration camp. She wanted to save him but a member of SS (Schutzstaffel) threw the child into a fire.” (...) “We were in Osvienčim in Poland and I saw the gas chamber, furnace and so much hair and teeth at the floor. Roma had violins and musical instruments for sure, but it was not there, probably they had been confiscated. What makes me angry is when someone says that there was no holocaust.”

## S L O V A K I A

### **Mária Holubová (Spišské Podhradie):**

**Denis:** What did your parents tell you about the war?

**Maria:** “It was terrible; they were shooting at people, Roma, and Jews as well. What do you think it was like? They put them into wagons and transferred them really far, my father was as well, but he escaped from the concentration camp near Strečno. So my father was there, he escaped and came back home. My mum told us about that but I do not remember. He came home and was hiding in cellar. Germans persecuted him.”

### **Karol Jaslo (Spišské Podhradie, Krompachy)**

(...) “It was, I explain, my father told me he was in concentration camp. He was there for 12 months, for a year. He was subjected to torture, he had to work for bread and a small bowl of soup, literally for dried bread and water and such things.”

(...) “Mother was not deported; she stayed at home and was taking care of us. My father told me everything which he had experienced, those terrible experiences. If he hadn’t escaped he would have been shot.”

**Kristián:** “How did you feel when your dad told you about it?”

**Karol:** “I felt very badly. It is different when your dad is telling you what he experienced. We wanted to cry. The Germans guarded them with rifles and pistols and tortured them, all Roma and non-Romani. (...) My father was 43 or 42 years old when he was taken to a forced labour camp.”

**Margita Maľarová (Doľany – Rošovce)**

(...) “Germans, Russians and guerrillas were here. Father worked in labour camp and mum went to visit him. Otherwise, when the war ended father came home.”

**Denis:** “Was the father in a concentration camp?”

**Margita:** “Father was participating in the war.”

**Denis:** “When he returned what did he say?”

**Margita:** “Well, that it was difficult because they were shooting and so.”

**Denis:** “Did father shoot as well?”

**Margita:** “Yes. Once, the Germans placed them in a house with the aim to shoot them. If the chairman hadn't shows up, my father would be death. The chairman lived in that house (now the community centre). Otherwise I don't remember well, it is so many years.”

**Martina Tulejová (Doľany – Rošovce)**

**Denis:** “Did someone mention he was in the camp? Were some men taken to the camp?”

**Martina:** “Not really. Maybe my father-in-law may know, but I personally don't remember.”

**Emília Sláviková (Smižany)**

(...) “During the war, Gypsies were hiding, they had a fear. They made bunkers in the forest. When the army passed they were afraid. But nobody hurt them. Even the commissioner defended them when something occurred. It was not seen that somebody was persecuted. (...) They were not taken from Smižany to any camp. But they took Gypsies from somewhere. It seems to me it was from Gelnica.

But how it was here, I don't know exactly. Gypsies haven't been in Iliašovce and Odorín, but they lived in Smižany. (...) Two of the Kokyovci family were guerrillas participating in the war. They become guerrillas immediately after arrival from the barracks. But they were laughing from their hiding. And Gypsies were not awarded but they were soldiers. Some of them were taken to Russia after the war."

### **Antón Hockicko (Spišské Podhradie)**

"I don't know if Roma were deported from here. And I don't know even if they were deported from the surroundings. They deported only the Jews."

"The Germans demolished synagogues in Levoča and from synagogue in Poprad was turned into a printing company. From our synagogue, ammunition storage was made during the war. It was full of ammunition and if one of them had collapsed the whole Podhradie would explode. After the war, there was a textile warehouse, therefore it remains in existence."

### **p. Horváth (Levočské Lúky)**

"I was 6 years old. And I remember well that I attended a primary school and our dad was taken to the camp by guardsmen. It was camp near Michalovce, Velké Maltice. He was there the entire time. When he came home his legs were scraped off. For 6 months we lived without money and him. As I said, our deceased mum had to ask for alms for us."

"This period was really difficult. I don't know if someone can speak well about that period, but I remember it well. From the age of 6 I have lived with it. Our neighbours were Germans and as I said I have cooked potatoes for pigs. When he asked I filled the canal and then he took with his tied hands. It was horrible."

### **Man born in 1948 (Plavecký Štvrtok)**

"I spoke about the Germans with my parents. I know that when they were passing our village they often visited households requiring the care and service and many times they raped girls and women."

### **Papún (Plavecký Štvrtok)**

"I will tell you how we lived. My father was all that time in concentration camps. That time it was the German government. Nothing was left after him, no money. We didn't see him two years. After the war ended and Russians came we saw him. He suffered a lot."

“He was captured as a soldier in Germany. That time there were Germans. I don't know where Svidník is, somewhere in the east. There should be a bridge two kilometres long, our dad said. Guerrillas wanted to blow the bridge up but they didn't do it because of Slovak soldiers, our dad said. Otherwise, they would have shot them all. The commander said to keep the guns loaded and only after ten o'clock start to shoot because that time guerrillas would appear. Meanwhile they had to guard the bridge. Somewhere in the east, in Svidník. After ten o'clock Germans stopped coming. They were afraid of guerrillas. So then guerrillas knew Germans would not appear they laid down their arms. Otherwise, they would shoot them all.”

## 2.2. LIVING CONDITIONS OF ROMA DURING THE WORLD WAR II

BRNO, CZ

**Karel Landori:** “Mum said there at place as Germans retreated and Russians followed them were dead horses in the forest. In the valley lived clean Gypsies and in the forest lived fools—Gypsies who eat cats, dogs, horses. So they went to forests and ate those horses. But clean Gypsies went down the hill where the snow and potatoes were left over. They picked them and ate. And those fools ate meat in the forest...”

**Boženka Horváthová:** “Roma were guerrillas. Girls were preparing the food for not only Roma guerrillas but also for Slovak guerrillas. But when the Gestapo appeared girls had to hide in the forests avoiding being raped by soldiers. Yes, it was happening. Those girls were hiding in pits or in rivers. There were left a lot of orphans of such rapes after the war.”

**Karel Holomek:** “I remember that Germans had a cannon only 20 meters from the house we used to live in. Many times we heard a cannon shot targeted on a plane and then we saw how the plane went from the smoke and fell down and exploded on the ground.” (...) “Then Russians and Romanians came. They still rode in carriages pulled by horses and peasant women gave them food. After the army passed in 1944, the whole village and surrounding villages gathered in one place called “Pod Šidlenama”, between Milotice and Dubňany. There were wine cellars with wine production. So we were hiding there. At night we heard roaring, grenades, and artillery somewhere in the fields. When I got out of the cellar the next morning I saw a soldier wearing a gun and riding a bicycle but backward. He rode this way a long time. I was out of the trance and he spoke to me in Russian. I understood

him because I had learned Russian at school. He was a Russian soldier." (...) "My grandpa was at home that night the army passed and he got his legs shot. But he somehow crawled there; it was about 4–5 km. Fortunately, they saved him and his legs." (...) "Once we walked the field with my mum and sister we suddenly saw a plane above us. But from somewhere it was shot by the Germans. The plane was hit, smoke followed it and then it fell down." (...) "In April 1945, our village was liberated. Our biggest fun was in collection of cartridges in the field. Fortunately, we never found a grenade. We made a small fire at the edge of forest and then threw those cartridges into it. We had a fun from explosions. Or we had a pipe to which we inserted cartridges and then we knocked by nail or hammer on it and waited for the moment it flipped up. Those were really dangerous games but fortunately nothing happened." (...) "After the war ended, the entire Moravian countryside and industrial cities were without Roma people. Germans were deported and the death march was moved from Brno and Pohořelice to Vienna. Brno had a half German population. The all had to leave, they were deported. Many border towns in Sudetenland stayed empty."

**Gejza Horváth:** "Our parents told us about the war. But our grandparents experienced it. My parents were at that time teenagers around 17 and 21 years old. When there was a family event and we all sat around, the elderly told us about their experiences. I remember they always cried. It had to be an enormous experience for them and were especially persecuted as Romani. I will start with this memory. Mum said that the Germans needed musicians, specifically Roma because they often entertained. So every time they needed musicians they asked Roma to come. And when they were entertaining they often needed dancers—women for entertainment. In my grandfather's family we had five beautiful women. When my grandfather heard the Germans were coming for musicians he hid women into the pit where they kept potatoes. This pit was under the table, covered and blocked by the table. Then when the Germans came and saw only men they were disappointed. My grandparents told us that women who did not manage to escape were forcibly taken by the Germans. When they came home and talked about it, they had problems to live with that memory. I know one woman she experienced the same. She returned home after 3 days but was still closed in her room. She was afraid to go out and also she was scared of her reputation. She had a boyfriend and wanted to commit suicide. She jumped into the river and tried to drown but there were Roma who pulled her out. They dealt with it somehow but finally they did not get married. He refused to marry her. Then she went to live in America with her brothers. At that time a lot of Slovaks migrated to America due to work opportunities. My parents experienced the war in Slovakia and grandparents in the mountains of Torysky near Levoča."

**Čeněk Růžička:** "The life in the camp, it is difficult to describe. We as original Czech Romani have 600 years of roots in the Czech Republic. We have a close relation to our country. To

know that they tortured their own citizens was intolerable. Maybe you will not believe me but behind the gate was a torture stake. On the top was pulley and at the bottom the rope. There was Mr. Janovský, the Czech camp commander. If Romani did not greet and shout Seig Heil or did something wrong, soldiers could torture them. If soldiers didn't sympathize with someone they tied Roma hands behind their backs and pulled up so only the toes were touching the ground. After losing consciousness they let him go down where a bucket of water was prepared. Then the other prisoners dragged him into the hut and treated him. If someone tried to escape and was caught, he received an iron ball on his feet. He had to move and work with it for maybe 14 days or a month. There were 10 to 15 prisoners on 12 square meters. My mum said it was finally good they could warm up one another. Regarding kids nobody cared, they were separated. Food intended for prisoners was not given to them and instead they sold it in the village. After some time, one baby died of hunger in the camp and his father died as the result of torture, etc. After 4 months typhus broke out in the camp. There were no so many diseases up to that point but around 150–160 children had died of hunger. When typhus appeared, an important microbiologist František Patočka was sent there to give medical treatment. We saw his work. He declared that he saw those children under the tarpaulin lying next to one another, either alive or dead. He likened it to Dante's Inferno. A Gypsy woman brought a meal but was nothing like feeding babies but rather animals. Interior Ministry officials were corrupted. They were able to falsify the identity card of the Roma for 20,000,-. Those Romani had a lot of gold because it meant the success of the family passed down through generations. The police knew it and were stealing it from them. By the time typhus appeared, children were buried together with adults in Milovice. They dug pits, threw in the remains and sprinkled them with lime. 150 children and 21 adults were buried there. In the camp in Lety, 327 people officially died during the period of 9 months, but the Chronicle says there were about 600 victims. Roma who survived have reported larger numbers but it has not been substantiated by evidence. What is important is that from all of those who went through the hell of Nazi and Czech hatred, only 10% survived. Professor Ctibor Nečas stated 583 Romani. Some of them were able to redeem themselves, but not everyone. Those who knew about that possibility were protecting their own family and they didn't share the information. My dad had trauma after he returned back. He reproached them that they could save more people..." (...) "Dad told me why he survived. He was transferred with his brother from one camp to another where Americans set them free. They were lucky. Those who survived were lucky at first and also were in their productive age of 20–25. That I heard from my mum a lot of times. But she didn't tell me she was arrested in Lety. Up to 1998, I didn't know it as far as historians told me. They took me to a pig farm in Lety where they showed me the evidence in a document. It was the worst moment of my life. That helped me to realize what it means to be a Roma in society. A pig farm situated at the place where the Czechs murdered an unknown number of people. Then I decided the pig farm had to go away. Since 1998 I have still been trying to

do it. I asked my mum—why didn't you tell me? She went to the stove, gave me some soup and then suddenly started to cry. She said: "I was worried they would put you to prison", because she knew I would not safe, even in communism. And so in 1998 we founded a civil association, members of which are all Roma survivors and also those who experienced the war. There remain three of them but they are already not doing well. One lives in Prague, but he was in age of two months in the period of Lety."

**Ignác Zíma:** "This settlement where I lived was called Cikánský tábor Kopčany (Kopčany Gypsy camp) and till 1950s it was even written in identity cards. It was a settlement near that village. Those Roma were closely watched by those citizens of the village before and also after the war. For example, when a child picked up any toy the reaction of village people was difficult. There was great hatred. At present there are no shacks and huts but arranged and fenced houses." (...) "That Roma settlement was badly situated. When German soldiers went from the South that settlement was the first they entered. They built an anti-aircraft gun. And our house was then used as ammunition storage. In our settlement were around 30 houses. My dad thought (before he was a soldier in World War I) how to save us, therefore, he bought thick oak beams from our peasant neighbours in order to build shelters. Those two friends Staněk and Imra (my dad) discussed how to build a shelter. My dad suggested building a shelter of 4x4 meters and doors to be situated from the road. Later we found out that missiles flew from that side. And his friend made the entrance from the east side. The shelter was solid, 1.5 meters under ground and covered and camouflaged from the bottom. When the war started it went from the side we had an entrance to the shelter. Because missiles flew through the door we had to hide behind those corners. Well, we were safe. I had a dog named Valda hiding with me. We wanted to run away from that shelter after explosions stopped. Unfortunately, in the shelter 10 meters away from us was a 15-year-old boy. He was curious and looked out and in that moment shrapnel hit his eye. We saw how he died. We collected blankets and ran into the village. But another problem arose—where to hide. We walked from the back of barracks. Even on the church tower sat a German soldier with machine gun so we had to enter from the back. As we walked, we threw the barbed-wire fences down and one girl stepped on a nail. So we helped her and ran further until we arrived to a barrack with loud music turned on. We knocked to let us in. They didn't let us enter. Again we ran and came up to the farm where a peasant lived. The shed was occupied by cows so we went there. We were hidden behind concrete on the ground where the cows were. It was a crappy and smelly place but the only salvation how to hide from the missiles. There was a baby with us who started to cry. Probably he was hungry but his mum was out of the milk since she was scared. And someone said: "quiet the baby down because the Germans will find us", so his dad got idea to take liquid manure for the baby. The baby quieted down and was stunned. Fortunately, when everything ended the Russians came there to the well and seeing all the children around they offered

them water. One Russian found some milk so he gave it to that baby and thus saved him. Roma decided that after it ended we could go to Šaštín. There we stayed in the forest waiting for the main attack to end. We returned back to the settlement and I remembered my dog Volga was hidden all the time in shelter. I screamed: "Valdo!" When Valda heard my voice she ran to me and knocked me to the ground. The Germans had ammunition storage with long and strong cartridges in our house. My dad decided to put them away and bury them. He dug a pit, carried the ammunition and buried it around 20m behind the house. I think it was found there also after some years." (...) "The hunger, poverty and diseases were terrible. Of course, even Russians were problematic. They searched for women after a shooting in the afternoon. We usually made a fire to scare mosquitoes in the evening in our settlement. And we sat around it. One Russian went there to visit a girl. But the girl's relatives destroyed the bicycle he came with. A Russian pulled out a gun but fortunately his commander came and calmed him down. Women put on coal make up to be ugly for Russians. Gypsies knew the commanders well so mentioning their names the Russians went away." (...) "When we were children we used to visit Russians. They always cooked a soup from sorrel. Sometimes they gave us a little and so we brought it home." (...) "My oldest brother was a soldier. Once he was captured by the Germans. He told me how they let them starve and they had to steal beets in the night. We didn't have a lot of sugar during World War II. So we cleaned and put it into the melt so it got sweeten. It was delicious. They were caught and shot by Germans. Also my older brother was there in the period when they searched for Benderovce (Germans who were hiding in Slovakia many years after the war ended). There were a lot of Roma involved against Germans during the war. Even when they returned they were awarded and appointed to the function as vajda (leader). The Vajda had to keep public order among Roma."

## SLOVAKIA

**Mária Holubová (Spišské Podhradie):** "Well, they were hiding because of war, the Germans. They shot Roma, poor people, Jews. They came to houses and searched for children. Children were hidden in the oven. There were four kids in the oven. They insisted on shooting the children. My mum told them she didn't have children. So they asked for food. My mum gave them meat, bacon, bread, milk and eggs and they went away."

**Martina Tulejová (Roškovce):** (...) "they were hidden in the forest during the war and cooked marikla (Romany pizza) from rotten potatoes. So they found rotten potatoes and cooked them. Because they had nothing to eat. And they went to Gadjo earn some money for one or two hours. He gave them either a little money or bread, bacon and other food. They lived from that and so as to not have hungry children."

**D:** “And after they earned some money did they go to forest or settlement? How was it?”

**M:** “My mother-in-law said that in forest were some pits they were hiding in. And they cooked also dumplings or something else from potatoes.”

**Margita Maľarová (Rošovce):** (...) “but mum said that was difficult. Yes, it was difficult. They need to live but there was nothing from what they could. So they worked where they can and so they lived. Dad pastured cows.”

**Mária Hamburgová (Rošovce):** “That I don’t know. But my mum said she used to visit dad in the camp.”

**D:** “And where?”

**M:** “I don’t know, but she went on foot. She left the children at home and went in the morning and returned in the night. Her legs hurt. She was exhausted.”

**D:** “And why was your father in the concentration camp?”

**M:** “I don’t know, but he was also a resistance fighter. He was in a revolt. When we went to school we had to walk through mud to Hrhov. And they said they went by carriages to school. And elderly people said it was better before.”

**Emília Sláviková (Smižany):** “Pechovci, Kokyovci, Bagarovci a Šariskí. Those 4 families lived here in Smižany. Pechovci were musicians and Bagarovci were farriers. They made horseshoes and cooperated with peasants. I remember that I was a child attending primary school and Gypsies normally walked among the other people. They carried the wood and sold the wood. They were accustomed to the village. Gypsies also cooked and women helped peasants with the potato harvest. They were not, how to say, they were only not educated. They were not obliged to attend the school and no one forced them to do it. When the Slovak state was created, Gypsies had to adapt new mores. There was a new priest Pajdušák who gathered up all the Gypsies. They had to be baptized, get married in church. But until that time it was different. (...) When the Slovak state was created, the priest gave an order to attend school, church, baptism, marriage and put them in order. He built a crucifix up there on the way to Košiarny briežok. It was such a tall crucifix. There worships were conducted, which were also available for Gypsies He taught Romany language and the Lord’s Prayer in Romany as well. But Gypsies from Smižany didn’t steal or rob. They were accustomed to the village. The youth started to be disobedient and they stole after the war. But the older population till 80 years old were decent Gypsies. If you let the Gypsy woman into your house she never robbed you, she even helped with laundering or the potato harvest. Or Gypsy man came to the house and helped or sawed wood. But the youth did nothing. But Gypsies were scared during the war. They were very afraid. Because that time guardsmen held them. During the Slovak state. I remember they went to school with a fear.

They were scared. They didn't have such beautiful brick houses as they have now. They lived in wooden huts. They went to the forest for wood and they brought a wood from forest. The forests belonged to the Church, nobody punished them. Usually they took brushwood and waste. They lived in this way. But they worked, everyone worked. They worked on construction. Or they were taken to railway construction during the Slovak state. By the way, Gypsies from Smižany were really like this. Maybe because of they lived near a town. There were no problems with them. I have nice memories with my Gypsy classmates. They went with us to school and we got on well."

**Anton Hockicko (Spišské Podhradie):** "More Roma lived in Bystrany and Dobrá vôľa. They mostly worked on railway line construction. They were Roma and worked. During the first republic, Gypsies were allowed to build a house two kilometres away from the town. They could visit a town for shopping from 8 till 9 o'clock. They couldn't stay in town. If they wanted to visit a doctor they had to choose only the one. They had their own doctor who spoke Romani language. So they could visit only him. And during the Slovak state they could travel only in the last train carriage. And here we had only a "motorka" (diesel train), so they couldn't travel. Buses did not exist. And the same was valid for the Jews. Jewish woman went to a doctor with child in foot muff in the winter. And guardsmen came, took the foot muff from her and she had to go with the naked child to the doctor. That was happening. But our guardsmen were not like them. They didn't take our Jews but those from Levoča did. They also took my classmate, peer and neighbour. They took the Jews. I saw the lists; they are stored in the town hall. I saw them."

**Zoltán Horváth (Levočské Lúky):** "And when Russians came, I remember that. They were compassionate, but they had been abroad for 5 years; young boys following our girls. It was usually like that. Mummy, mummy and... so it was. So our women were hiding. We had such a pit used for potatoes where women could be hidden. And we were musicians so we played for the Russians. And we drank alcohol till the next morning. It seriously happened, hats off, I remember that. I was 6 years old."

(...) "They were building a tunnel on the railway towards Michalovce. I remember that village very well. They really laid stones on the road. Those in front were stronger and weaker ones were also beaten. They asked why the other had earlier loaded. My brother escaped from there. And he ran about 14 days with another man. My dad and uncle had gruel for him. It could hardly be possible. There was a pond and lice floated on the water. They had to take a bath. It was miserable. They received food, but I remember that were really poor meals. But enough to survive. My dad was in that camp for the whole summer."

**Papún (Plavecký Štvrtok):** (...) “Guardsmen. I would not remember? Swines, swines. They all were from Plavecký Štvrtok. We had to line up naked. And barefoot. Guardsmen drove us out. The Germans were here that time. The war hadn't ended. I remember all from the time of German government. Tiso avoided throwing Gypsies into lime and burning them. Yes, he stopped it. Tiso was not only the president but also a priest. He stopped it. He said: Gypsies are Catholics so I would not give you them to burn or throw into lime. So Tiso really prevented them. He was a head of that republic, during the German government, but under the rule of the Germans. He said they do not go around the world. They are not like nomadic Gypsies. Those were eliminated. They drove them out from each village. (...) When they released my father from captivity my mum was selling splinters in the market. She had to make a living for us. Only when the Russians liberated us. Mum was selling at the market in Bratislava and then he came to her. He was dirty and shabby. The Germans were not there. One came to say us the Russians are in Jablonové. We were hiding in cellars. Otherwise, Germans would have shot us. But people here were nice. They hid us. And the Russians liberated us and the Germans ran away from here, even naked. They ran away when the Russians appeared. (...) Otherwise, we were under German governance. And how many guardsmen were here; ten guardsmen. We had to line up in the night. All guardsmen were there. Almost 9 years, the Slovak Republic was under German rule. Not in the one, but in the First Slovak Republic. I was not a baby; I was an 11-year-old boy. After the Germans left there was a lot of work because everything was destroyed from that bomb attacks. Also the Apolka refinery was bombarded in order to stop refuelling. That period of the Republic was terrible and German. If you didn't greet him... Our teacher and his wife were fired and replaced by German teachers. Hitler wanted to teach us German language. To control the whole world. But he didn't control. Then it started to be bombarded by Americans and the English. Germany started to be bombarded. That was a war. Then it was destroyed by America and England. England wanted to join Germany, but they quickly realized that Hitler would like to control them as well. But he couldn't.”

**Man born in 1948 (Plavecký Štvrtok):** “I spoke about the Germans with my parents. I know that when they were passing our village they often visited households requiring the care and service and many times they raped girls and women.”

**Grétka born in 1968 (Plavecký Štvrtok):** “My grandpa František Bihári told me. He used to say he no one wishes to be born in a period of war. People fought between themselves also due to potato peeling only to survive in concentration camps. I remember him as thrifty. And he had to have excess in case someone would come hungry.”

## 2.3. THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE ROMA AND THE MAJORITY DURING WORLD WAR II

BRNO, CZ

**Anton Lagryn:** “Non-Romani people were nice to us after the war. They brought us clothes, we went to school for free, we had snacks, lunch.” (...) “Dad and mum never said there was any problem with non-Romani people. But also our people behaved differently. They were assimilated. We didn’t have Romani music, our musicians played swing and modern music. They played at weddings, in coffeeshouses. Without any problem. Problems started after the war when they came. (Slovak Roma).”

**Boženka Horváthová:** “The Jews helped us the most. My mum worked for them and she got milk and things in return.” (...) “The Roma and non-Romani people got on well. They went to church together. Mum went there for milk. While there was a war, there was no difference, except we lived outside the village.”

**Karel Holomek:** “My dad was born in a Roma settlement in Morava in 1911. There were around 40 Gypsy settlements in south eastern Moravia before the war. One settlement was between Kyjov and Svatobořice. Its name was Hraničky. They didn’t want to be connected with them (the Roma) neither Kyjov, nor Svatobořice, therefore it was named as Hraničky. In 1944, the settlement was scattered. It was the settlement full of scamps—around 100 people. In 1920, my grandpa managed to buy a house in Svatobořice. He was a horse-trader. My relatives lived in a village during the war. Dad began studying at the gymnasium in Kyjov. He was exceptionally talented and the teacher convinced him to study. My grandparents had 10 children but they agreed and decided to support him. They thought that he would graduate and become a master and then he could support them. I remember my grandpa, he as a horse-trader used to take me along. They spoke with me in Romani language, but my mum was not a Roma. The Roma used to visit village dance events. So my dad met my mother there and afterwards I and my sister were born. But they didn’t get married. But I used to be half a year in my Roma family and the other half a year in my Czech family. It was not bad. My Czech grandpa was a peasant; he had a farm and vineyard. And the Roma grandpa didn’t have a bad position as a horse-trader.” (...) “Between 1942 and 1943 when there were deportations, peasants and Roma had good relations. Roma helped them with harvesting. My two uncles were farriers repairing tools and doing horseshoes in Kyjov.

Of course, representatives of the town hall in Svatobořice could say: “No, we stand by our Roma, we won’t let them go to concentration camps” It saved them. But representatives of town hall didn’t do it, so my family had to go to concentration camps.” (...) “Grandma told me she took the grain dipped in rum and walked through the village searching for chickens when she was hungry. She shouted at chickens “Na pipipi”. She got them drunk, rolled their neck and put two–three chickens under her wide skirt and went home. And happiness came to the house. Or I don’t know if I can believe it, but my dad told me – peasants buried a pig that had a swine borne bacterial disease and the Roma dug the pig up and ate it. Today’s it sounds unbelievable, but at that time in winter people were starving.” (...) “My dad was an expert at the shell game as a kid. Three nutshells and under one is a small ball. For that he was whizz. They knew how to win money from peasants. Those kinds of scams–were done by my father who later became a public prosecutor.” (...) “The coexistence of non-Romani and the Roma was good. When my grandma walked during Easter or Christmas time they told her–“Madam, let me”, and she got eggs and milk. And they called her Mrs. Holomková. And they already knew what was happening there. But peasants were not worried if they lost one or two chickens from 30. Roma, at least those from the same Moravian area, never caused criminal cases. I remember there were arguments only during football. They had fights there and finally ended in the tavern. It sounds as idyllic rural life and probably it was idyllic because now when I go to the tavern I see Roma sitting completely separated from the others. Before the Roma were part of that life.”

**Gejza Horváth:** “Yes, the Roma and non-Romani helped each other. They helped each other because guerrilla activity completely united them. Non-Romani had that information earlier than we. So they always sent someone to warn us– “go hide, run away”... And it worked, they helped each other.”

**Ignác Zíma:** “We found out about the Laws against Gypsies. Many villages had a notice “Gypsies not allowed.” There were restrictions. Roma went only to the Jews for shopping. Roma were separated from the others and sat in the back at school after the war. And it lasted a long time after the war ended. And then it changed. If they saw a child becoming excellent in the school they started to support him. I remember I tried to learn a lot. For example, my friend invited me to come for lunch to their home and I watched those people having a lunch. Then I diluted the soup with water and potatoes to have such a two course meal at home.” (...) “There were cases that Roma had some relations with non-Romani families. So they tried to give them some work and protect them. There were a lot of such cases. I remember that also children of my aunt Danielová lived with those non-Romani children.”

## SLOVAKIA

**Martina Tulejová (Roškovce):** “And how were non-Romani? Did they protect the Roma or did they send the Germans to the settlement?”

**M:** “They protected them. And my mother-in-law said that some of non-Romani were bad because when Gypsies went to hide to their gardens they drove them out. They shouted get away. But some of them were nice. They gave them food and hid them in their cellars. Some had small children; they went to hide.”

**Margita Maľarová (Roškovce):** (...) “Once, the German placed them in a house with the aim to shoot them. If the chairman hadn’t shown up, my father would have been dead. The chairman lived in that house (now the community centre). Otherwise I don’t remember well, it is so many years. (...) it was a small village, but rich. When they asked to work, they also paid for it and gave a meal, bacon and so on. And you know you had to work for 5 euro for the whole day.”

### **Mária Hamburgová (Roškovce)**

**D:** “Were there any differences between non-Romani and the Roma?”

**M:** “No, they were together in class. Gypsy or Gadjo, they never argued. They were together. It was so good. Now it is totally different.”

“We grew up here and non-Romani lived with us whether you believe us or not. You bet! They were nice to us. They came to visit us for small talks. And during the Easter traditions like pouring water over girls I couldn’t believe that they came, poured water on Gypsy women and ate with us. They never hurt us. There were not many people; we were only 3 or 4 families. When there was Kristína’s wedding at our house, a Gadjo was a best man at the wedding. His daughters came as well. And it was perfect. Non-Romani with Gypsies together.”

**D:** “And what happened so that it is different now?”

**M:** “The oldest left and the youth didn’t want it. Because they grew up, found partners and wanted to move into the town. The oldest are sorry for them.”

**D:** “Do you think it will be possible to get non-Romani and the Roma back to living together?”

**M:** “No, because it is now a Roma settlement. Nobody wants to live here. And I can tell you, I am glad that we can walk along the way and not get muddy. Only one fair thing that mayor did for us. Because otherwise you come out clean and then you walk in the mud because of tractors, rain and finally you become dirty. So we are lucky it is clean here.”

**Emília Sláviková (Smižany):** “People helped Gypsies in our village. Peasants helped as well. When they worked for them, they got potatoes in return. They were paid in kind. Gypsy women helped in other families. And when there was the army passing they had no reason to report them. They were not involved politically. We had a teacher, his name was Babik. He was a teacher and commissioner during the Slovak state. And he was also a guardsman but a really kind human. He didn’t report anyone but on the contrary he protected everyone. He protected Gypsies as well.”

**Zoltán Horváth (Levočské Lúky):** “Between the Roma and non-Romani it was like we were poor, our parents were poor. They went working to non-Romani families in Harichovce to get some bread or flour or something else. Necessitous circumstances. Mum used to work in a mill. We didn’t know what meat was. But non-Romani gave us food or helped us sometimes. We didn’t have problems. We were 3 brothers and 2 sisters. Only one sister and one brother in Michalovce are still alive.”

**Papún (Plavecký Štvrtok):** “We had armed guardsmen and had to line up barefoot in the winter. Those guardsmen didn’t have even their own home. Even the rich didn’t behave in that way to us, they helped us many times. We worked, we did potato harvesting and so on. They gave us a meal. Not money, but a meal.”

(...) “My mother went to help to peasants to harvest potatoes. She came home in the evening, cooked for us and the same for each morning. We lived that way. We didn’t have fields, we had nothing. We had to work hard. There was a private property for a long time. Later, when the communists came, they took everything.”

**Man born in 1948 (Plavecký Štvrtok):** “Relations? People said relations were quite good, mainly because there were fewer Gypsies. Only some families. They went together to school; they didn’t steal, but it sometimes happened that chickens disappeared from the yard or something else from the garden. People were happy when Gypsies sold their products like brooms, basins, or they offered locksmith business. They were awaiting them. And some Gypsies were buying tripe from non-Romani. And they cooked something from it. I don’t know what. My grandma told me Gypsies gathered, dried and sold herbs and also mushrooms.”

**Grétka (Plavecký Štvrtok):** “At that time there were very good relationships. Gypsies had their own football team and non-Romani always picked up the Roma saying: okay, when there is already a tournament. They had no conflicts. There were only a few houses. Those who founded the settlement were educated and clean Gypsies.”

### 3. COMMUNISM

There was a significant **resettlement of Roma from Slovakia to the Czech Republic** after World War II. On the basis of the decree “Roma were to any useful work“ and presidential decree 88/1945 Coll. “General work duty” was the transfer of labour allowed mainly to the Czech borderlands that were depopulated after expulsion of the German population. Whereas the Czech Roma mostly had not returned from Nazi concentration camps, most of the Roma living in the Czech Republic come from Slovakia.

Roma have been mainly employed in mountain pasture cooperatives, and later in state property and forestry. A job could be found also in the reconstruction of war-damaged economy—the construction of roads, reconstruction of factories. **The second phase of Roma migration to Bohemia, Moravia and Silesia** can be considered during the 1950s when people—often due to organized enlistments—to industrial centres in north-western Bohemia (Most, Sokolov, Teplice, Ústí nad Labem, Chomútov, Cheb, Děčín), to Kladno, Tachov, Český Krumlov and Ostrava. The most capable and persistent Roma left from underdeveloped Slovak settlements.

In consequence, migration of Slovak Roma increased the number of Roma living in the Czech lands by 16,000 people in two years. Roma were desirable as a labour force for works within reconstruction as well as the alternative labour force in new state properties, but they were not desirable for permanent settlement. They returned back to Slovakia after their work shifts. This trend continues today.

**State authorities didn't treat Roma as an individual nationality. Roma or Gypsies were not terms which were used but “citizens of Gypsy origin”.**

There was an opinion that Roma retardation could be overcome by changing their lifestyle and thus adapting to the majority.

The state focused on improving the **housing, employment and school attendance**. However, those plans were promoted unprofessionally, insensitively, and sometimes violently. Such was the **deposition** of previously nomadic–Vlach Roma: the then politicians came to believe that **living in houses is better than a nomadic way of life**. In 1958 a law was issued on which basis they took their horses and carriage wheels. Roma written on the list were not allowed to move without permission from the National Committee. And those who remained in as nomads could be punished by imprisonment of up to three years.

A similar method was used to solve **Roma housing**. They moved Roma families who were unable to live under new conditions into new blocks of flats. Many families against their will were transported to the Czech districts where they had to permanently settle. Since those Roma felt alone, isolated from their relatives, they began returning to their original settlements.

After the XI. Congress of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia issued the resolution of the Central Committee of Communist Party of Czechoslovakia “On the work of the Gypsy population” which marked the beginning of open assimilation of Roma in Czechoslovakia.

Roma were collectively included in mandatory work in companies and thus 11,000 Roma were employed in two years. This directive resolution of Roma employment meant an increased number of Roma in cities. Thousands of Roma acquired work in large factories in urban areas. The liquidation of Roma settlements, especially in areas of tourism, had started. Hundreds of Roma families who lived there were given flats or loans for their individual construction. Older, abandoned houses were also found that they could live in.

A similar procedure was also used in the **education of Roma children**: different measures that forced Roma parents to send their children to school were issued which caused the opinion that school is suffering, not necessity. To change the lives of the Roma population the government made considerable financial investments; however, they were applied without any real knowledge of the needs of the Roma. Due to this fact, these measures were not very successful and thus the Roma were blamed. However, many Roma managed to break out from their way of life, gain professional qualifications and solve their own housing.

In 1965, the government of Czechoslovak Socialist Republic issued a resolution setting out a concept of dispersion and the systematic expulsion of the Roma population to other parts of the country. In the context of the “Principles for organizing dispersion and transfer” have been identified as “twin regions” that should accept Roma from Slovakia. In 1967, there were 3,178 people evicted from Slovakia, while 1,034 Roma returned back in the same year. Between 1965–1968, the Roma issue was a subject of “**The Government Committee for Gypsy citizens**”. In 1969, the “Government Commission for Gypsy citizens” was established at the Ministry of labour, Social Affairs and Family of the Slovak Republic. It focused on the problem solving of employment, especially the inclusion of all Roma capable of work into employment, education of Roma youths, re-education of adults, solving the housing standard, and the elimination of criminal activity. This new concept brought the policy of social benefits to the Roma population. Those allowances and social benefits discriminated the rest of population in the same way.

Government Commission, District Commissions and the entire network of fieldworkers were cancelled in 1991. Important means of mutual communication between state authorities and Roma population ceased to operate.<sup>5</sup>

## 3.1. THE CZECH REPUBLIC-COMMUNISM

**In October 1958** Socialist Parliament approved the law **on the permanent settlement of nomads**. Generally it is said that the law affected mainly Vlach Roma who migrated across Czechoslovakia at that time.

Under the strong influence of assimilation, Roma tried to deny their identity as much as possible, approach to the majority of population, and consciously distanced themselves from their ethnic groups. Dispersion of citizens and their resettlement was a common tool of assimilation. The amount of Roma could not have exceeded five per cent in any village. An essential prerequisite for “successful resettlement” was dispersal of families resulting in rapid destruction of the traditional family hierarchy and subsequently to disintegration of large families.

1968 brought the Prague Spring. Open demonstrations of emancipation movements among the Roma took place. The national Union of Gypsies–Roma was created. Its activities were aimed at recognizing the Roma as a national minority and by extension recognizing of all the rights to this statute which were bound. It contributed to the beginning of open discussions on Roma issues. Not only Roma but also the non-Romani population got involved in the discussions. During the seventies and eighties the government had policies to attempt a socio-cultural integration of Gypsies. The Roma continued to be treated as a socially backward group of people which should be assimilated with the majority. Despite the declared effort of adaptation and integration Roma were often segregated and relocated to certain places. Many Romani children were reassigned to special school pursuant to questionable tests. Graduates could not study further.

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5 Contribution was done on the basis of articles:  
ŠUVADA, Martin. 2015. Rómovia v slovenských mestách. Bratislava: POMS, 2015.  
Arne B. Mann: Rómsky dejepis, Kalligram, 2001.  
KUMANOVÁ, Z: Základné fakty o holokauste Rómov na Slovensku, [www.rusyn.sk](http://www.rusyn.sk)

**After 1989 the situation has changed.** Emancipation movements suppressed in the early seventies were again awoken. The Roma Civil Initiative was founded and its members joined parliament.

With the transition to a market economy often unqualified Roma and again they entered the margins of society. The level of Roma unemployment was reached due to their lack of education but also due to racism, it is 75% and in some areas of the Czech Republic it is 95%. This situation was analysed by many Roma and non-Romani, governmental and non-governmental organizations. Their priority is often a question of education. After the division of the Czech and Slovak Republics, the Roma were the largest ethnic minority in the Czech Republic. However, textbooks discuss them only occasionally and the gap between Roma and the majority population still remains large.<sup>6</sup>

## 3.1. COMPARISON-SOCIALISM

In both countries, the period after World War II and the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia was perceived similarly. The Roma population was mainly affected by changes like resettlement, compulsory labour and prohibition of a nomadic way of life.

From a lot of information we decided to choose for comparison two areas which are repeated:

- Roma lives during communism
- relations between the Roma and the majority population

Roma consider this period according to their statements as "better". They perceived job availability, low prices and better relations with the majority as positive. There are many statements about school where they used to go together and they greet each other to this day. On the other hand, the impossibility of travel, lack of goods and freedom is perceived as negative for them. The negative attitude towards the former regime is stronger among the Czech witnesses. The following chapter offers selected statements on two topics. Stories of people in this period have a similar nature although statements can be found which

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<sup>6</sup> This chapter was prepared on the basis of an article by prof. PhDr. Ctibor Nečas and Mgr. Marta Miklušáková „Historie Romů na území České republiky“, which is available on <http://romove.radio.cz/cz/clanek/18785>.

approach communism as clearly negative. For example, there is an interesting opinion of Boženka Horváthová who thinks that democracy is more complicated for the Roma.

## 3.3. STATEMENTS OF WITNESSES

### ROMA LIFE

**Daniela (Spišské Podhradie):** “It was better during communism. Especially, we had jobs and more factories, more factories in cities, we had to work. If you didn’t work immediately cops were here asking why you were not at work. Then you had to show a vacation request or sick leave. Otherwise, you would child allowances and such things would be revoked.”

**Margita Malarová (Roškovce):** “And then when cooperative farms were here, they worked there. My mum as well. I milked cows. I worked here and also near Novejši.”

**D:** “And how was it during communism?”

**T:** “Better than it is now.”

**D:** “And what was better.”

**T:** “Well, we had jobs. Even everything was cheaper, not like now when you go to the shop. Wood is expensive too.”

**Mária Hamburgová (Roškovce):** “No, they were together in class. Gypsy or Gadjo, they never argued. They were together. It was so good. Now it is totally different. We grew up here and non-Romani lived with us whether you believe us or not. You bet! They were nice to us. They came to visit us for small talks. And during the Easter traditions like pouring water on girls I couldn’t believe that they came, poured water on Gypsy women and ate with us. They never hurt us. There were not many people; we were only 3 or 4 families. When there was Kristína’s wedding at our house, a Gadjo was the best man at the wedding. His daughters came as well. And it was perfect. Non-Romani with Gypsies together.”

**Anton Hockicko (Spišské Podhradie):** “They worked in quarries and on railways during communism. They all had a job. The foreman didn’t ask if they were qualified or not. If he knew how to work then he had to work. They had good times. They earned money. And now? Before they had also meal vouchers. And they always somehow were inventive.”

**Zoltán Horváth (Levočské Lúky):** “Communists. It was diverse. A man who had a little knowledge, yes, he found a job. Although he didn’t have education, but if he was clever he could find a job. A man, who did not, also did not get anywhere.”

“I remember my wife and I worked in a school. I was already at school at 3:30. And he was a communist—his wife as well, and he got into the Committee. He was happy when we used to give him something from a pig slaughter. I was a boilerman and my wife washed the floors from as early as 5:30. My son was a communist too. He was selected in the school. He had also the Little Red Book for a year and then died. A tragedy. Either he jumped from a train or someone helped him. He went to school in Košice, he was a qualified locksmith and welder and he worked in Slovan. He welded in Slovan in Košice, no fault could appear. It was so miserable.”

**Jozef (Spišské Podhradie):** “The better life was during socialism. Because now you cannot find a job. Where do you find a job?”

**K:** “You are right. And is it true that they were arresting people when there was no work?”

**J:** “No, it is not like I didn’t have job. There was still something to do. If you didn’t go to work, then they arrested you.”

**K:** “For how long?”

**J:** “Depending on how much you did that.”

**K:** “Was it valid for school, too? When children didn’t attend school?”

**J:** “No.”

**Aneta Biháriová (Plavecký Štvrtok):** “We were not well; it was a hard life was during communism. Yes, there were jobs, but no earnings. The factory where I worked. The business owner was unable to access his own earnings. And communism ended, then democracy came and we all were fired. We were not well. I had no assets. I worked for 16 hours and took the little Darina with me in order to earn a living wage. That life was hard. I am good in the democratic regime. What we want, we have. Thank God. We are not hungry and not naked. During communism we had nothing to eat.” (...)

“When the police came, they pulled you out, and then beat and you couldn’t help yourself.”

**Boženka Horváthová (Brno):** “Relations between the Roma and non-Romani were good because we worked together and children went to school together. I joined the school when communism started. In school and at work we used to be together. My sisters got married with Czechs so we had mixed families. I was not experiencing racism in that period.” (...) “Generally, the Roma had better lives during communism—they had jobs, housing

and better relationships. Democracy seems to be very difficult for them. They don't understand the regime and those allowances only cause a situation where they are doing nothing in their lives. They are put outside of the system and are not willing to do something with themselves. At least for their children they should do, but there is a great segregation anyway and they do not care. "When my brother-in-law's children attend special school, why cannot ours do the same?" They live for today, not the future."

**Gejza Horváth (Brno):** "During the communist era there was not even a shortage of work. All people worked and had a regular monthly income which was actually split into two. There was a deposit and pay check, so for 14 days they had money and lived without any problems. At that time it was even so that in terms of employment everyone had to work. Those who didn't work for 14 days or a month were prosecuted under the law as a social parasite. And that time all Roma worked."

**Anton Lagryn (Brno):** "In 1968 I went to Germany, I was there for 11 years but I escaped from there. I didn't enjoy it there, still selling cars. I had my life in Brno. So I was a returnee during the standardization period. I was imprisoned for 2 years. I had 4000 Marks, two rings, two chains. So I got 2 years for economic disruption and unauthorized exit from the country. The public prosecutor appealed against me, so it was 2.5 years. Meanwhile, my wife found another man. I returned back in November wearing a leather jacket and 100 CZK in my pocket. Life goes on."

**Karel Landori (Brno):** "Gypsies were poor and how they lived was something terrible. Then in the sixties—fairs in Brno began and communists wanted to evict Gypsies to the villages to create damage. Then it stopped and Gypsies started to receive beautiful flats in Brno. Many of them worked hard in foundries earned a lot of money and so it began to get better. At that time they lived reasonably." (...) "In the sixties it got even better, mainly financially. They earned around 3000. That was good, also Gypsies lived better. Then Slovak Roma started to move here. Bačarovci, Čonkovci—those are good Gypsies, decent and hardworking till today. But worse ones also came—those who began to visit taverns. They drank too much, fought with everyone so then regular customers started to disappear. So it was on the Francouzská and Mostecká part in Husovice. Non-Romani and Roma together used to go there together till the time Slovak Roma came here who drank and fought. (...) But on the other hand, I sometimes defended them because I know when someone asked "and what will happen to Gypsies?" someone, maybe it was Gottwald who said: "Gypsies get identification cards and will be like the Czechs, they also died in the war." (...) "My dad used to sympathize with communism—he said "Gypsies got a huge privileges in the Czech Republic after the war—homes, jobs, schools were for free ... nobody could call anyone "Gypsy"—it didn't exist. When someone said "He called me a Gypsy" they were punished"

**Věra Khaoui Ivicová (Brno):** “There were not so many goods in the stores. We had to queue and when we got Bon Pari candies we were so happy. But prices were lower on the other hand.” (...) “It bothered me that it was hard to travel. I was only in Poland, Russia and here around. When we wanted to go somewhere else—to Austria, Germany, it was a big problem.” (...) “We all had to do everything in the same manner. It bothered me. We couldn’t say our opinions freely.”

**Simona Wachsbergerová (Brno):** “On one hand that period brought some good things. People were closer because they were reliant on themselves and had confidence. But on the other hand, we had a lot of limitations that I would not want to return. But I was not a person who said either everything was perfect or totally bad during communism. This is nonsense of course; it was really a fake game. But I think it was a friendlier period. Now it seems to me the area we live in is aggressive and bad.”

**Ignác Zíma (Brno):** “There was no communism but socialism that didn’t come up to expectations. Roma had a law that they could work. Some even went to work abroad and earn a lot of money. Or they had an opportunity to build a house. Roma could participate in the Revolutionary Trade Union Movement. And if they were participants and it happened that they were fired, the union protected them. Those are the pros the Roma had.”

## RELATIONS BETWEEN ROMA AND THE MAJORITY IN COMMUNISM

**Karel Landori:**

“We lived very well, even financially. We lived with non-Romani family. We lived in the same flat and used to meet at the street and so. I had a friend Inka and we ate together, once at their home, once in our home. We were really good friends.” (...) “Relations between the Roma and non-Romani people were excellent. The older guys led us. We used to go to the cinema together, eight boys. Then we heard a voice of someone shouting at us, we turned and saw a lady offering us bread with butter and tomatoes. She said, “come here boys, take some!” It was an unknown woman. In winter we used to go ice skating and there was an unknown Gadji who gave us clothes.” (...) “When I was 16 or 17 years old I was not dating with Roma girls but rather non-Romani girls. They loved us. I dated with one Czech girl. She was not so beautiful but clever. Once her parents saw me, they stopped me. “Excuse me young man, are you Karči? Are you dating with our Alenka?” I was worried what they wanted. And listen to this: “Would you come for lunch on Saturday?” Well, I was surprised! I said, “I am sorry, but I don’t have a lot of time on Saturday, I am playing football. “Okay, so if you have time any Saturday or Sunday, please come for lunch.” Then I found out her dad was a den-

tist and mum is was a forewoman. But do you know what that meant to me? Me, a Gypsy, worker and such people invited me for lunch?" (...) "I started work when I was 16 years old in Mosilana—I was the one only Gypsy among non-Romani people. And our boss was like a father for me. You can't believe how ashamed I was. Why? Because that shame we had in us when non-Romani people watched us. Today it is not so." (...) "We used to go to village dance events. We were around 10–15 Gypsies, but there was 300 people. But they all loved us. We went to Pavilón where many people queued. We showed to doorkeeper how many of us there were and he allowed us to go in saying that we had a reservation there. But it is true Gypsies were different that time—more polite than nowadays." (...) "When we went for shopping the shop assistants were always polite to us. She took out clothes saying, "Try it, please" She showed us 10 shirts and was not angry. It lasted till the Dubček government. But then came worse Gypsies and everything got worse."

**Čeněk Růžička (Brno):** "I think the majority was hiding their hatred. It was strict. When a Roma child complained about a classmate, the director immediately asked for remedial action. Those morals are now easy due to democracy and capitalism. But I don't think it is good. There are some things that you just have to follow."

**Gejza Horváth (Brno):** "Between the seventies and eighties during the time of communism relations were not bad. They met in work or public events where Gypsies were in demand as musicians. And within the public holidays like the 1st of May, Roma were there as a common working nation. They played football, were firemen, had part-time jobs and were harvesting fields in the summer. The village announced the harvest. Then the Roma deputy came and collected those who went harvesting. When they went they received some crops. It was not the same as nowadays. Those groups are now distant. For me it is strange because I have many more friends in the majority than among Roma."

**Aneta Buhářiová (Plavecký Štvrtok):** "We were poor. But we got on well with them. The new generation is different. These non-Romani boys are ruined by the new generation. We used to go to school together. My classmates still greet me. I didn't do anything bad to any classmate. (...) Not like nowadays. Children have everything now. If they didn't have these things they would be different. From what does dirt come from? From those things parents bought them. If they don't have things, there will be no dirt. From where are the bottles? Juices are bought in plastic bottles. You didn't find any bottle during communism. Whenever, someone would give me one, they were sold in glass bottles." (...)

**Mária Holubová (Spišské Podhradie):** "No, they came to eat with us. Only clean non-Romani came to visit us. Roma didn't come to visit us. We went to non-Romani for a visit. We

also exchanged lunches when someone had prepared one. We had really nice neighbours but unfortunately, they died.”

**Emília Sláviková (Smižany):** “There were good relations with the Roma in Smižany. Worse people were those who came from far away. Gypsies from Spišský Štvrtok were clever. They separated themselves from others. They had beautiful houses and attended the school. But our Gypsies from Smižany did the same. They were adapting.”

## \* EPILOGUE

The publication, you are holding in your hands has only one ambition, to speak out about consequences of human actions. The process, while it was created, was a challenge for the youth from community centres, which often opened also eyes of us, social workers. It was surprising, how few we knew about lives of our ancestors. How few we knew about lives of our neighbours and how much we are loosing because of it. The memory is needed. The memory warns us not to repeat the actions which could be hurtful. The memory is not like education, which we want to put into the tests. It is a warning; it is an ancient protection of humans against the danger.

This project was a long journey—listening to stories, memories both happy and sad, various opinions, and comparisons of past and present. It was a new experience for us. We found out how people lived in the past, what changed and what remained the same and most importantly why. We gained skills in reporting, making interviews, asking the right questions, listening to the answers and we asked ourselves again and again—why is it that there are always some people excluded, degraded or even destroyed in our society? And we ask this again watching current situation in our society. Many of the stories we heard pointed out the importance of personal contact among people, communication and explaining misunderstandings, effort to understand the opposite site, and overcoming the fear of “the other”. We want this report and the outcomes of our project to be an incentive for discussion about how we can all live together, prevent the atrocities of the past and create better future.

Hopefully, thanks to the project We and our history!, which was supported by European commission, the memories of our ancestors will not be lost and will speak to people, as you, who are thinking about consequences of their statements, action and attitudes.

\*

## OUR THANKS BELONGS TO WITNESSES



### **Karel Holomek**

One of the respondents who experienced World War II. He was born in 1937 in Moravia and spent his childhood in Milotice near Kyjov. Most members of his family died in concentration camps during the war. He remembers hiding, bombing and difficult conditions very well. He was actively participating in the rights of Roma during communism and after its disorganization. He is the chairman of the Society of Roma in Moravia

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### **Gejza Horváth**

He was born in 1948 in Morava in Písečné (Šumperk district) where he lived until the age of five and then moved to Eastern Slovakia with parents. He has been a successful musician all his life. Thanks to his profession he has had the opportunity to learn about various social classes and life abroad as well during the communist period. He states that democracy is a perfect idea, but it did not bring much good to Roma. He sees a decline in relations with the majority, the social status of the Roma for which he blames mainly the work of the media and incorrectly established laws. He believes, to improve the situation of the Roma we need to make people not want to just exist, but to want to live and to be included in the labour market and society.

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### **Věra Khaoui Ivicová**

Our youngest respondent was born in 1963. Her childhood and youth was spent during the communist period. Although she was actively involved in the revolutionary events and she would not change the present, she considered the past as a period where relations between people were good and life was simpler in some ways.



### **Boženka Horváthová**

She was born in 1947 in the Slovak village Kolinovce. She remembers her childhood in Slovakia and moving to the Czech Republic really well. Especially, she loved school and everything connected with it. This love stayed even later, when she became a kindergarten teacher. Although communism has not brought her bad memories, she thinks that today the situation is better especially for young people who now have more options.

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### **Anton Lagryn**

He was born in 1947 in Cheb. As one of the few in the Czech Republic he comes from a group of Sinti. He travelled the entire country by carriage as a child with his family. His parents went through the concentration camps and their life then was largely influenced by restrictions introduced by the communist regime. Mr. Lagryn told us a lot about the life of nomadic Roma and about Roma values and traditions.

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### **Karel Landori**

He was born in 1950 in Brno. He grew up in a currently excluded locality in which people used to live „very well“. He remembers the past and describes himself as an observer of things and events around him. There have been between Roma and non-Romani people much better relations and now he misses the adoption of Gadjo and greater togetherness among the Roma.

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### **Mária Holubová (born 1948)**

She lives in Spišské Podhradie. She is a widow and has 8 children, 16 grandchildren of whom is she proud.



### **Čeněk Růžička**

He was born in 1946 in Rochlice (Liberect district). He comes from the original Czech community of nomadic Roma. During communism, he worked as a stonemason and helped Roma to gain compensation. After the revolution, he traded in antiques. His change in life came in 1998 when he found out that his mother was held in a labour camp in Lety during the war. Since then he has actively been trying to spread awareness about the Roma Holocaust, he attends lectures in schools and educates teachers. He is also a member of the government council for Romany affairs. According to him, it is important to not let people down into madness, but to try to live purely.

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### **Ignác Zíma**

He was born in 1938 in the Slovak village Kopčany (Sedica district). He worked for the railroad and he graduated from technical school. In 1970 he moved with his family to Brno to become the new Secretary of the Central Committee of the Union of Gypsies-Roma. Upon completion of this activity he returned and became an inspector for the region of southern Moravia, where he worked for thirteen years. After the revolution, thanks to his knowledge of Romani he became the first Roma employee of the newly formed Labour Office. He is dedicated to the research of Roma language; he cooperated with Milena Hübschmannová for many years in this area. He studied Roma language at Masaryk University. He likes to communicate on the social networking site Facebook.

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### **Karol Jaslo (born 1947)**

He was born in Krompachy in Eastern Slovakia where he spent his childhood. He immigrated to Spišské Podhradie after his wedding. He has 5 children.



**Margita Malarová (born 1945)**

She was born and lives in Rokšovce. She has 8 children and 17 grandchildren.

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**Ján Zeman (Papún)**

He is the oldest inhabitant of the village Plavecký Štvrtok. He is a mason. He is 82 years old and has 11 children. He has buried more of their offspring.

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**Aneta Biháriová (born 1965)**

She is 51 years old and lives in Plavecký Štvrtok since she was born. She works in a kindergarten.

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**Zoltán Horváth**

He is 78 years old. He was born in Levočské Lúky. With his wife they have five children. His wife died two years ago. All his life he was employed in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

**AND WITNESSES WHO SHARED WITH US THEIR MEMORIES THROUGH  
A VOICE RECORDER:**

- Daniela (Spišské Podhradie)
- Jozef (Spišské Podhradie)
- Miro (Spišské Podhradie)
- Mária Hamburgová (Roškovce)
- Martina Tulejová (Roškovce)
- Emília Sláviková (Smižany)
- Anton Hockicko (Spišské Podhradie)
- Man born in 1948 (Plavecký Štvrtok)
- Grétka (Plavecký Štvrtok)
- Simona (Brno)

**IN THE RESEARCH PARTICIPATED:**

- Community centre in Spišské Podhradie and Roškovce: Denis Pišta, Kristián Girga, Maroš Girga, Paulína Škopová, Dávid Tulej
- Community centre in Plavecký Štvrtok: Rút Biháriová, Karin Polakovičová
- Community centre DROM, Romany centre: Emily a Klárka and others...

**ILLUSTRATIONS:** Denisa Pilatová

