



ZSUZSANNA HORVÁTH

(Ondód [today Torony], Hungary, November 7, 1928 – unknown)



© Photos taken by Rona Jutka and published in Rona, Jutka. 2011. Hungarian Gypsies, Survivors' Stories. Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó. A photo exhibition¹ displayed her photos in Budapest in 2012. Rona died in 2016.

Zsuzsanna Horváth's family has been living in Ondód for generations. Her father was a "Gypsy" musician who played in Szombathely. She attended a local, mixed elementary school.

In the 1940s a separate "Gypsy" school was established, "because the "Gypsy" children constantly endangered the moral development, hygiene and health of the Hungarian farm children", wrote the village magistrate in a letter to the ministry. **Horváth recalls that it was the magistrate and the judge who signed the order for her family to be deported.**

When unexpectedly collected from their home, Horváth was told they were to be taken to a sugar factory to work. Instead, they were locked in the school building of a nearby town (Torony). There, they had an opportunity to escape, but **only one of them could be rescued by their Uncle Pista.** Horváth recalls her response to her rescuer, "Well, I said,

then take my father because I have four young siblings at home."

That seemingly small gesture, of respect for her father and sacrifice for her siblings, defined the rest of her life. The selfless act to let her father be freed was a deed motivated by love, empathy and compassion. Right before she made this decision, Horváth heard from the guards, in disbelief, that they were to be taken to the gas chamber. Horváth was then **put in a wagon and taken to the infamous Komárom camp.**

It took three days to get there, she recalled, and on the way "we shouted for water, for food", to no avail. Horváth's story about the Fortress of Komárom speaks to the experience of most Roma survivors: lice, hunger, thirst, filth, piles of dead bodies, crying children and inhumane treatment. **Horváth remembered painful encounters with other Roma there, to whom she extended her kindness.** She recalled an Olah "Gypsy" woman with two babies, who made diapers for her infants from pieces of clothes that Horváth and the others gave her. The babies died in the fortress.

Horváth was then taken to Dachau and then to Ravensbrück, where she remembered the humiliation of being undressed and shaven. **She was another victim of pseudo-medical**

experimentation at the camp. In Ravensbrück, she met with Aunt Bözsi, a fellow villager who was sick before she was deported. She was outside, dying, but Horváth and three others braved the guards, who wanted to leave the dying woman where she was, and carried her inside, so she could at least die surrounded by people who loved and cared for her.

Eventually, Horváth was liberated by American soldiers, taken back to Budapest, and travelled to Szombathely on the roof of a train because it was full. To this day, Horváth questions why this had to have happened. “We were innocent,” she said. With past horrors that until this day define her life, she bravely states: **“We suffered a lot and had to go through many humiliations, but I survived. Here I am, still alive!”**

Sources and further information:

1. More on the photo exhibition: <https://www.fotoklikk.eu/esemeny/jutka-rona-magyar-ciganyok-tulelok-vallanak>
2. Porrajmos, Cigány Holokauszt [Porrajmos, “Gypsy” Holocaust], 2000. Film directed by Ágota Varga. Full film available (in Hungarian): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7jgsb48lwIU>
3. Rona, Jutka. 2011. Hungarian Gypsies, Survivors’ Stories. Budapest: Napvilág Kiadó.
4. Roma Media Group also interviewed Zsuzsanna Horvath (in Hungarian), available at: <http://romasajtokozyont.hu/azt-mondtak-hogy-nem-kell-megijedni/>

This biography has been written by Katya Dunajeva