(ZŠ bobrova 2)

He wanted to become a priest and, instead, ended up in Jáchymov

THE STORY OF JIŘÍ ŠOUSTAR

Youth

Jiří Šoustar was born on April 21, 1925, in the village of Bobrová. His father Cyril Šoustar was a baker. His mother Jindřiška also worked in the bakery. Jiří also trained to become a baker and after his father's death in 1947 he took charge of the bakery. For more than a year, he worked as a baker together with his mother. There was also his sister, Františka, in the family who was one year older.

The way to priesthood

A year after his father's death, Jiří decided to become a priest. He moved to Bruntál, where there was a school, and he stayed there for about two years. Then he enrolled in a catholic high school in Brno which has moved to Barvičova street since.

Later, he continued his studies at the Papal high school in Velehrad but the school was soon shut down. The transfer of the students to Uherské Hradiště was dramatic. “Cars arrived, at night, that was from the thirteenth to fourteenth of April, 1950 (this was an instance of the state-wide crackdown on religious institutions, known as *Akce K*), and they woke them up [i.e. the monks] in the dark of the night, and they had it all planned out in advance, and fast they had to tell them something. Where they were going, they weren't told, and us, when we got up in the morning, well, they told us:*.*  'Either you go back to your parents or you finish your studies in Uherské Hradiště.' Some of us went home and some of us went to the high school in Uherské Hradiště, so we did our fourth year there and stayed until the baccalaureate.”

Escapes to Austria

One of Jiří's classmates escaped across the border to Austria and returned from there, with the intent to convince others to elope with him.

“When he came back, they caught him, well and that got us into troubles. Well, it was in our final year, we were supposed to do our final exams. When we met this classmate of ours he wanted to win us for Austria, but the police caught them all somewhere around Znojmo or in Southern Moravia, and at once there was an investigation and they went after us. And in the end, they told us that we would not be allowed to take our final exams.” Jiří had nothing to do with the escape, nevertheless, he does not have a baccalaureate to this day.

Arrest and trial

Jiří and his classmates decided to stay in Uherské Hradiště and take a summer job helping at local sheepfolds. It was in Uherské Hradiště that he was arrested. “It was the night, my eyes were wide open. Suddenly, the police came, I was to go with them. Then we were interrogated for about a week, and then there was a trial. We were a group of ten all in all.” Jiří was interrogated directly in Uherské Hradiště. The trial took place a week after his arrest. “Well and the one who organized the escape got ten years, I got two and a half.” They were accused of high treason.

Imprisonment

Until August 14, 1952, Jiří worked on the construction site of the airport in Kunovice. Then, he was transferred to the central camp in Ostrov near Karlovy Vary and then to Jáchymov, a town with nearby uranium mines. “First, we came to Mariánská, a former monastery. Then they separated us and told us we were going to mine ore.”

He worked in a uranium mine called Adam and Eve. “At first they asked if we'd like to go down below. Nobody had any intereste in that whatsoever, we didn't want to hear any of it, naturally. But then they told us that those who were sick or weak could remain on the surface. Every morning, we had to line up; that took about twenty minutes, and then they marched us to the mine where they divided us. My job was to push the mine carts, full of ore.”

Even though they work hard, they received little food and drink. They had a kilogram of bread for three days. “Well, we got that when we went into the mine; we got black coffee and bread, but all that was so little.” Throughout the whole time, Jiří was very hungry.

Life in the labor camp

There were a many wooden barracks there. They would sleep on bunk beds, all who were in one barrack would sleep in one room. Watchtowers were erected in every corner of the camp where the State Security guards were keeping watch. “When we came back from the mines, that was in the winter, there was a fence around the entire camp; and a sort of walkway, separated by barbed wire, and we had to tread down the snow.”

Or, the prisoners had to clean up where the State Security lived, near the monastery. “Sometimes, when we went to work, someone would try to escape. Well, then there were always searches and investigations afterwards. For example, during roll calls, the guards checked our number, and oftentimes it happened that they couldn't make the appropriate sum, so we had to stand there for a very long time, and we stood there until they would come to the conclusion that somebody was missing. . Sometimes we would come back from work, line up, and they'd tell us there would be a “filcunk”, and that was like they searched us, we had to undress and what not.”

Christmas and other holidays were not observed in the camp. “Christmas Day was a normal day. We went to work us usual.” Contact with the family at home was very scarce. Occasionally, he was permitted to write and send a letter, and only once during his entire imprisonment was his family permitted for a visit.

The return home

Jiří's sentence was shortened by one year. “So I was suddenly released in January 1954. It was around the 8th of January, I think. There was a general pardon.” He had to register with the local authorities within three days and was assigned a job in a flax processing factory in Bobrová. Later, he worked as a warehouseman.

Jiří had no further troubles with the police. For decades, he was librarian in Bobrová. In 1958, he got married. He had four children and was rehabilitated after the fall of Communism in 1989. He lives happily with his wife in Horní Bobrová.

School years

With friends in Bobrová

The wedding of Mr. Šoustar's sister

With friends in Bobrová

Mr. Šoustar in Spring 2011

Bobrová Elementary School

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