

**Marie Mrvova**  
**(MA, University of Huddersfield)**

**Research Report**

Due to the bursary awarded to me by the Society for the Study of Labour History, I was able to travel to the Czech Republic and successfully conduct oral history interviews for my research on women political prisoners and prison culture in Czechoslovakia 1948–1968. I will retell the stories of seven women (including my great-grandmother) using various materials, such as memoirs, biographies, archival materials, personal letters and oral testimonies. This work also seeks to answer the question of how prison culture helped women to cope, unite and resist. Besides the thesis itself, I will produce an online exhibition focused on prison culture. In December 2017 and January 2018, I travelled to different cities throughout the Czech Republic (Prague, Rudna, Brno-Modrice, Ostrava, Horice, Lomnice nad Popelkou) in order to conduct oral history interviews with four former women political prisoners.

My time in the Czech Republic was spent interviewing the witnesses and documenting photographs, archival materials, personal letters and objects made by women in prisons and miraculously smuggled out. Documentation of all of these materials will form part of an online exhibition, as a part of my Masters degree at the University of Huddersfield. Oral history interviews will be analysed as a part of my research dissertation. Such personal memories provide better understanding what the lives of individuals living under a repressive regime were like and how culture helped women to cope and resist.

The two images included in this report are drawn from my fieldwork. The first comes from my visit to one of the former political prisoners, Hana Truncova, who was born in 1924. Hana had a fantastic memory, and was able to tell me about her childhood and the time of her imprisonment in a great detail. The second image is a bookmark made secretly from a toothpaste case in Pardubice prison from the personal archive of Eva Chaloupska, granddaughter of political prisoner Marie Kovalova who died in 1999.

I would like to thank the SSLH for their generous financial support which allowed me to travel and conduct interviews with people whose memories are extremely important in order to understand the women's experience of repression and culture in prison.



