

8th International Conference of the Czech Oral History Association

The Divided, Yet Together: Borders in Oral History Perspective

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

JIŘÍ HLAVÁČEK – MONIKA VRZGULOVÁ (eds.)

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8th International Conference of the Czech Oral History Association

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FOREWORD

Jiří Hlaváček – Monika Vrzgulová

This book contains extended abstracts of papers presented at the 8th International Conference of the Czech Oral History Association with the title “The Divided, Yet Together: Borders in Oral History Perspective”. The Czech Oral History Association and the Institute for Contemporary History of the CAS organized it with Slovak colleagues from the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University in Bratislava and the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the Slovak Academy of Sciences. The conference venue was Comenius University in Bratislava on 9-10 February 2023.

The conference symbolically took place in Bratislava at a time when 30 years had passed since such an important event as the division of Czechoslovakia. For this reason as well, the issue of borders we choose as the overarching theme of the oral-historical conference.

We are not only commemorating the already mentioned historical anniversary, which represents an important symbolic landmark for researchers in the context of Czech and Slovak contemporary history research but the concept of the border can, in the literal sense of the word, be related to a wide range of methodological, ethical and practical aspects of oral history.

Since the beginning of this decade, the oral history community around the world has been facing many challenges within which it moves at the limit of its existing possibilities and standards. The covid-19 pandemic has prompted a re-evaluation of previously established methodological practices and ethical principles. The rhetorical metaphor of “crossing borders” has acquired a completely new, tangible, and terrifying dimension in light of the current war conflict in Ukraine. The main purpose of the conference was to share and discuss these new findings and experiences, methodological procedures, and research topics.

We would like to thank the Dean of the Faculty of Arts of Comenius University Bratislava, Professor Marián Zouhar, who took over the patronage of the entire conference, and Dr. Tatiana Zachar Podolinská, director of the Institute of Ethnology and Social Anthropology of the SAS. We also thank the Council of Scientific Societies of the Czech Republic, without whose financial support the conference could not take place.

We remind the reader that this collection of extended abstracts represents those papers that we received from the authors by the deadline. A list of all conference speakers, including the title of their paper and contact details, can be found at the end of this publication.

HOME IN THE FOREIGN COUNTRY – FOREIGNER AT HOME? THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE (RE)EMIGRANTS RETURNING TO CZECHOSLOVAKIA AFTER 1989

Martina Babinčáková

The presentation reflects research conducted for the purposes of a master's thesis, the goal of which was to examine the reality of emigration from Czechoslovakia in the wave after August 1968 and the following return of the émigrés after the fall of communism in 1989 through oral history interviews, focusing on the meaning of “home” both abroad, and after the return. This presentation focuses on the “return” part, concentrating on individual experiences of “returning home” from emigration after a regime change, feeling of acceptance or lack thereof and a possible reverse culture shock.

The research aims to fill in a blank space in examining the return of the “everyday”, mostly politically inactive émigrés, that have left Czechoslovakia during communism and came back to democracy and capitalism, a space that has remained blank mostly on the Slovak side, since it has so far not been academically documented. As there are no studies regarding the émigré return to Slovakia (formerly a part of Czechoslovakia, from 1993 a separate country), this research takes a lot of information from studies done on Czech lands.¹

The research has been conducted using the oral history method, interviewing 9 narrators in total, all of them Slovak. The eldest narrator was born in 1933, the youngest in 1963. The narrator pool was made up of 5 men and 4 women, the earliest of them emigrating right after August 1968 and the latest one leaving only a while before the Velvet Revolution in 1989. The destination countries included USA, Canada, Switzerland, West Germany and Italy. With the exception of one narrator, a woman who married a foreigner and therefore was legally allowed to emigrate with the purpose of family merging, every narrator has emigrated illegally – either through illegally remaining abroad after their permit to travel had expired, or by illegally crossing the Czechoslovak borders. The returns to their home country began happening right after November 1989 with the latest definite return to Slovakia happening in 2019.²

The political situation and its development differed greatly between Slovakia and Czech lands in the 90's. Its impact on the return of the émigrés has, as previously mentioned, been so far academically documented only in Czech lands; however we do have sociological studies documenting the opinions and moods of the whole society

1 E. g. Nešpor, Z. R.: Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty. Praha 2002; Hron, M.: The Czech Émigré Experience of Return after 1989. The Slavonic and East European Review 85(1), 2007, p. 47–78.

2 One of the narrators unexpectedly left Slovakia during the COVID-19 pandemic to live with her daughter in the US and has declined health-wise since to such extent, that she will not be able to return to Slovakia anymore, but she does wish to be buried there.

in Slovakia during that time.³ The narrators expressed sadness and disappointment from the state of the country after the revolution, rising influence of mafia, wild privatization, “jungle capitalism” and the fast moving development they were not able to participate in. Despite the disgruntlement, some narrators mentioned joy over democracy and freedom and positive change slowly but surely happening in the country. While disappointment and disillusion were in alignment with the overall results of the sociological and historical studies, no sentiment over communist regime was present within the narrator pool, unlike in the results of sociological surveys from said time.

Some narrators described fear of being arrested after the return, despite knowing the communist regime is no longer in place. All narrators visited the country for the first time with the intention of seeing the family. Reasons for final re-emigration were, naturally, more diverse – mostly due to family, work, or simply “the need to return home”. Narrators describing the last reason were the ones who firmly returned the latest. Narrators from religious communities were the exception, their returns were always connected with the decision of the higher-ups in their religious order, although they also described reuniting with family as a strong point. Third of narrators described what we could call a reverse culture shock. They returned to a country where life went on while they were gone, and they were no longer a part of it. While in emigration they expected the status of a foreigner, they did not expect to feel like one after “returning home”. Despite this, 8 out of 9 narrators do feel like they “returned home”, although the feeling might have been delayed. Home was mostly described in connection to family, in some cases the country. The one narrator that describes loss of home ties it to a loss of husband, whose sudden death after returning to Slovakia meant the narrator never felt like home again, but was also unable to emigrate again, leaving his grave behind. And while a small number of narrators stated that “there is only one home, and that is in Slovakia”, most described feeling at home both in emigration, and after the return, although their definition of “home” changed meanings.

Czech studies on émigré return state that the public narrative towards re-emigrants in the 90’s was often negative because people felt like they “took the easy way out”, while the rest of the country was left to suffer the regime, and now they are coming back, wanting their confiscated property back, and inserting themselves into the public life. Most narrators did not describe such experience, quite the contrary, apart from one narrator. There are few reasons as to why, strongest of which is that such re-emigrants will not make it into the narrator pool, because they simply chose to emigrate again, same as the narrator, that described the least pleasant response after the return and said, that had she have not buried her husband here, she would have immediately returned back to the US. Which raises the question: to what extent are we able to document experiences of émigrés returning “home” through oral history, when the most negative ones would be excluded from the narrative?

3 Cited from: Kmeť, R.: Politická história a spoločnosť po roku 1989. *Studia politica Slovaca* 8(2), 2015, p. 9.

Martina Babinčáková is a PhD student at the Department of History at Masaryk University in Brno, researching emigration from Czechoslovakia during the communist regime, and re-emigration after the velvet revolution, focusing on Slovak emigrants to Austria. She completed both her master's (2022) and bachelor's degree (2019) in History at Masaryk University. Her previous research focused on the lives of nuns in communist Czechoslovakia. Since 2019 she has been working for Post Bellum SK, a branch of Memory of Nations.
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RELATIVE MILESTONES? CINEMAS BEFORE AND AFTER 1989

Marie Barešová

During the 1980s in Czechoslovakia, the decreasing number of cinemagoers caused a crisis in the cinema sector. The situation became even more complicated during the 1990s transformation, when widespread cinema closures occurred due to unprofitability as a consequence of overall socio-political changes, shifts in audiovisual content and other factors. Interviews with former cinema employees show that running a cinema prior to 1989 was made easier by the inefficiencies of the planned economy during the era of state socialism. I will demonstrate how the consequences of societal and cinematographic milestones complement each other in one field. However, not all of these factors were reflected by my interviewees. This proves not only the specific interpretation characteristic of members of one professional community, but also the relativity of the importance of “historical” milestones for certain socio-economic groups. This paper is based on an ongoing research focusing on the history of cinemas in Czechoslovakia after 1945 and concentrates on small town and rural cinemas that operated once or twice a week and did not have full time employees.

Film distribution and cinema programming under state socialism represented one of the tools of ideological indoctrination of the population. However, there was a big discrepancy between the large number of preferred films being chosen for distribution and their actual low attendance. Cinema managers frequently manipulated the number of tickets sold in order to increase attendance of preferred films. They also relied heavily on compiling programs for children from short (especially Soviet) films to help overall statistics in favour of socialistic cinemas. Programs for children were well attended until the 1980s and significantly increased the overall attendance, especially in the countryside. Statistics were however relentless: The number of cinemagoers had been gradually decreasing for decades.

Majority of cinemas were managed by municipalities and town representatives were typically motivated to keep them running, since it was very often the only cultural institution in their village. New cinemas or cultural centres were even occasionally built until the 1980s in various places. However, the situation changed immediately after the Velvet revolution: many cinema buildings changed owners due to restitutions, mayors were no longer willing to support cinemas financially and most importantly, both audiovisual culture and the concept of free time changed drastically. Going to the movies no longer had the exceptional status of a unique leisure and community activity.

The turn towards market economy following the fall of state socialism and the planned economy changed the position of cinemas, which were previously perceived as non-profit organisations. The distribution composition shifted towards commercial programming, which was in theory supposed to help to increase the number of cinemagoers. But new options for home entertainment appeared as well. First there was a boom of video rental shops during the early 1990s and, more importantly, the majority of people were caught by the charms of the first commercial television channel TV Nova that began

broadcasting in February 1994.

Former cinema employees' view on the history of cinemas in Czechoslovakia offers a different perspective. Narrators did not reflect on societal changes and development of the audiovisual culture with the exception of the emergence of video rental shops. Those were repeatedly mentioned as a crucial culprit responsible for the decline of cinemas. Former cinema employees talked about the gradual decrease of cinemagoers in the 1980s. Given the fact that they were heavily underpaid, seeing members of their community coming to their cinema was their biggest satisfaction. Their frustration is even more noticeable when they talk about moments when their cinemas were being closed. The focus of their frustration is very often aimed at local administration that was, in their view, not motivated enough to financially support and save cinemas and would finance sports activities rather than culture.

Former cinema employees fail to see how their own personal investments helped maintain cinemas in the long term. They were committed to their positions, sometimes without being trained for it. They sacrificed at least part of their weekends to do these jobs, they organised other family members to help them succeed and often managed to combine their work in the cinema with their full time jobs. Sometimes they even used opportunities to construct or build something that their cinema would benefit from. All of the above was made possible thanks to the dysfunctioning economy of state socialism.

Czech part of Czechoslovakia was a country with perhaps the highest number of cinemas per capita in the world. There were approximately 3,000 cinema halls at work in the 1945–1990 period. Since thematic reduction in cinemas that began in the 1990s, many of those buildings turned into warehouses, casinos, shops or were left empty. Fortunately, at least dozens of cinemas in towns or bigger cities are still serving their original purpose.

Conducting a research on history of cinemas in Czechoslovakia shows discrepancy between milestones that are typically present in film historiography (technological, socio-cultural, economical and politically-ideological) and their absence in narrator's recollections of past events. Former cinema employees' perspectives are narrowed down to their perspective as employees and community members and they lack the ability to place cinemas development within broader circumstances. Their own socio-economical status also does not lead them to interpret changes in Czechoslovakia / Czech Republic in the 1990s through the connections to the fall of state socialism and turn towards the market economy.

Marie Barešová graduated from art history and film studies at Masaryk University in Brno and has worked at National Film Archive Prague as a curator of oral history since 2013. While managing the collection of interviews and conducting new interviews with representatives of Czech film culture, she participates in the development of an oral history database and coordinates with the archive's cinema as a programmer and an educator. She co-authored *Generace normalizace. Ztracená naděje českého filmu?* (2017) and co-edited *Animace 70* (2023) and publishes mostly in relation to the topic of her dissertation, which focused on Czechoslovak-Yugoslav relations in film culture between 1945–1991. She is a member of Society for Queer Memory and committee member of Czech Oral History Association.

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SOCIAL CURATORS IN THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF TIME

Petra Botková

The purpose of the presentation was to present ongoing research about social curators, their work and personal lives. The research focuses on the time before 1989 and in the 1990s in Czechoslovakia. The author uses the oral history method in comparison with other primary documents.

The profession of social curators was created in the early 1970s. They were employees of the National Committees, and part of the social division. They worked primarily with people who left prisons. They helped them with basic needs. Then the social curators participated in their re-socialisation. Social curators also worked with socially maladjusted people, working with alcoholism issues, drug addiction, prostitution and other forms of antisocial behavior. The everyday experience of interaction between the majority of the society and the clients of social curators can also show and bring up the issues of social work and the attitude closer towards people unheeded in history before 1989. How did social curators start working with clients? What could the cooperation look like? How did they provide clients with basic resources? The author chose to introduce memories of three narrators, who worked before 1989 in the cities of Prague, Ostrava and Brno. Even though the social curators had the same methodological instructions, the reality of each workplace differed.

The social curator, who worked in Brno, cooperated with the prisoners primarily through letters. In these letters the prisoners had described their problems or fears about their future after release. The letters helped prepare future cooperation. For example, the social curator could have visited the prisoner's family in advance to find out if they would accept him at home after his release. A social curator who worked in Ostrava remembered that they did not use correspondence but visited prisons instead. Each social curator was taking care of two or three prisons, where together with the social worker, they arranged pre-release meetings. Before the release, prisoners learned how the curator could help them and he could also answer their questions directly. In Prague, the cooperation started not only with the aforementioned examples, but also with the fact that the released prisoners were obliged to come for a report from a social curator. Only then were they issued with an ID card. Narrators also remembered that often the first and the last contact from released prisoners was only to get access to social security benefits.

What could cooperation with a released prisoner look like? The social curators in Ostrava had a great advantage thanks to the political support of the city, it was possible to organize a network of volunteer collaborators across workplaces. Every person released from prison, when they started a job somewhere, was helped by a patron (new colleague at work). First of all, they helped them to solve their personal problems, and secondly, it was a huge help in breaking down the barrier, to reducing labeling and being accepted by the majority of society. There was a professional journal for this cooperation: the "Informer for work activities related to penitentiary education". It was a duty to

include persons released from prison in worker collectives. However, social curators across Czechoslovakia were also front-line professionals. For example, they accompanied the clients to the authorities and also accompanied them when they entered alcohol addiction treatment, etc.

How was material assistance provided? In Brno, for example, social curators were able to provide clothing for clients via the city's laundry and dry cleaning service. In the client files from the 1970s, it is possible to find a "clothing card", which was used to get clothes from the hospital. The social curators also helped the clients to get the necessary equipment for their flat. A social curator from Prague was able to use things left over from people who died and had no relatives. The property of the deceased was inherited by the state, and after the sale of valuable items, the social curators could use the remaining items such as furniture, kitchen equipment, etc. for their clients.

It is evident that each social curator had its practice arranged differently, not only based on the possibilities of the city in which they worked, but also because of the social curators themselves. For example, the regional methodologist for Prague required social curators to participate in practical training in prisons and then share their knowledge at regular meetings with other colleagues. The visits to the prisons were not only meetings with clients, but also as an educational activity for the social curators.

The author's research is in the beginning, and the contribution at the conference was intended to show the diversity of social curators' practice. Social curators are an integral part of the history of social work with people on the margins of society both in the Czech Republic and Slovakia.

Petra Botková graduated from the bachelor's degree program in Social Work at the Evangelical Theological Faculty of Charles University in 2013. She worked with people with mental and physical disabilities, then with homeless people, and in the last three years as a social curator. In 2020, she completed her Master's degree in Oral History and Contemporary History at the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University.

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INTRODUCING THE CENTER FOR ORAL HISTORY (SOHI) AND MEMO – ORAL HISTORY JOURNAL

Marie Fritzová – Taťána Součková

The Center for Oral History (SOHI) was founded by Naděžda Morávková in 2009 at the Department of History of the Faculty of Education of the University of West Bohemia (FPE ZČU). It serves as a methodological base for oral history research of joint projects of the University of West Bohemia, the Pilsen City Archives and the State Regional Archives in Pilsen. The Center cooperates with the Oral History Center COH at the Institute of Contemporary History of the CAS, the Department of Oral History and Contemporary History of the Faculty of Humanities of the Charles University in Prague and the Czech Oral History Association.

One of the important tasks of the SOHI, besides collecting materials, is also the public presentation of contemporary history in the memories of witnesses, awareness-raising activities, publication of interviews, organization of professional meetings, research and publication of methodological and theoretical texts in the field of oral history, providing consultations and services to researchers and those interested in oral history. Currently, the Center is mainly engaged in publishing activities – the MEMO journal and didactic activities. Within the framework of teaching the subject of oral history in practice, students are involved in small projects carried out using the oral history method.

For several years, SOHI has organized a competition in history and Czech language, which is intended for the second stage of elementary schools in the Pilsen region. The aim of the competition is to promote pupils' and students' interest in the recent past of the region through the method of narrative/oral history, as well as to deepen positive intergenerational relations. The aim of the competition is also to promote creativity and independence of the pupil/student. Six editions have been successfully held so far and more are being planned. Hundreds of pupils from primary schools in the Pilsen region have already joined the competition. In 2019, a trio of authors Marie Fritzová, Michaela Pešková and Miroslav Breitfelder published a monograph entitled Interculturality and National Minorities in Theory and Practice: themes, history, biography, the Holocaust. The publication was positively evaluated in Module 1 of the national R&D evaluation (final grade 2).

The student scientific conference entitled Contemporaneity and History – Education in the Age of Pandemia was held on 21 October 2022 at the Department of History of FPE ZČU and SOHI in Veleslavín Street.

The symposium, which was opened by Gabriela Fatková and Taťána Součková, was divided into four panels. Each of the panels contained approximately four papers and ended with a diverse and fruitful discussion, in which the presenters had to respond to questions from their fellow students from other universities and educators. For most of the participants, making a speech at the conference was their first experience with this form of academic presentation of their research. The students thus gained valuable

experience that they can further develop and the conference in this way fulfilled not only its informative potential, but also included a didactic level in the sense of practicing key skills in presenting the results of students' oral history analyses. Extended abstracts of the conference papers were published in the electronic proceedings, which are available on the SOHI website.

The journal MEMO was founded on 1st January 2011 by the SOHI Center at the Department of History of FPE ZČU. Since then the journal has been published regularly twice a year. MEMO is a peer-reviewed journal. It focuses mainly on the research of history using the oral history method and the application of this method to the teaching of history in elementary and secondary schools, but also on research of contemporary history using other historical, anthropological or sociological methods. The topics in demand are the history of totalitarian regimes, the history of World War II in people's memory, the history of everyday life in the 20th century, minority problems, regional history, the history of historiography, biography, as well as modern oral tradition and modern folklore in history research. MEMO is a very welcoming and open journal, which accepts also other topics, research and applications related to contemporary history, archival research, etc. Since 2017 MEMO has been included in the internationally recognised European database of scientific journals ERIH PLUS and in the CEEOL database.

MEMO, which is a unique journal in the Czech and Slovak space, is gradually setting higher and higher goals for itself. It is planned to significantly expand the space for English-language papers or to publish special issues solely in English language. The journal will prospectively strive for inclusion in the SCOPUS database. In order to improve the content and form of the journal, the editorial board welcomes the expansion of international cooperation and the involvement of new colleagues who would actively contribute either as authors or as reviewers within double-blind peer review procedure. Since 2015, SOHI, represented by dr. Marie Fritzová, has been developing an active „Czech-Slovak“ cooperation with the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, where dr. Taťána Součková is employed as an assistant professor. The quotation marks are appropriate in the phrase „Czech-Slovak cooperation“, because dr. Taťána Součková comes from the Czech Republic, where she also completed her master's degree, and although she has been working in the Slovak Republic for almost ten years, the mutual cooperation cannot be called international in the pure sense of the word.

Dr. Součková is actively involved mainly as an expert consultant for the MEMO journal, member of the editorial board, reviewer and author of several editorials. She was also intensively involved in the preparation of the Student Scientific Conference in the fall of 2022.

The example of both historians and ethnologists wants to be an appeal to other colleagues, because establishing new professional and friendly relationships, and maintaining existing ones across all borders, is the way to cultivate a common language – for example, in the creation of the MEMO journal, or in the participation in the next year's student scientific conference, which would warmly welcome young participants from Slovakia and other countries.

Tatána Součková studied Ukrainian language and literature and history at the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University in Brno. Afterwards she completed her doctoral studies in ethnology at the Faculty of Arts of the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius in Trnava, where she has been working as an assistant professor at the Department of Historical Sciences and Central European Studies since 2017. Research and teaching of Tatána Součková focuses on the history of Eastern Europe in the early modern period, with an emphasis on the political history of Russia. Thanks to her studies in ethnology, the range of her research and teaching activities includes also topics in ethnic history and historical anthropology.

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Marie Fritzová is a research assistant lecturer in the Department of History, Faculty of Education at University of West Bohemia in Czech Republic. Her research field focuses on the using of oral history and anthropology methods in teaching. For several years, she has been the executive editor of MEMO – Oral History Journal and co-director of the Oral History Centre (SOHI). Recently, she has been dealing with the issue of covid-19 and its effects on Czech society, especially on education area.

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UNIVERSITY LIFE DURING THE PANDEMIC: AN ISRAELI-CZECH COMPARISON

Marie Fritzová

When the covid pandemic started in 2020 as university lecturer, I first and foremost had to determine how to rapidly and efficiently transition to distance learning after the COVID19 pandemic broke out in the spring of 2020. As the crisis dragged on, I interest in the student itself grew. My mind was filled with questions, such as: Should I study at this time? Is distance learning something I would be able to handle? What remains of student life for students? What is their experience of loneliness and isolation like?

The submitted contribution present a part of small co-project implemented in cooperation with Israel side. In total, we interviewed 20 students and 6 teachers. We focused on topics related to the course of the pandemic at the university in the Czech Republic and in Israel. We focused on topics - distance education from the point of view of teachers and students. Social life and personal life of a student at university, but this contribution was devoted to the description of life at the university only in general terms.

Teaching during pandemic at the University of West Bohemia and at the Ariel University according interviews with students and teachers.

During this first wave of covid 19, a lot of teachers at the University of West Bohemia (and at Faculty of Education) very prompt reacted. In the same time when the closure has been announced the teachers started the distance learning organized. University of West Bohemia, Faculty of Education cooperated in this time with ministry of Education Czech Republic for created the support for distance and online teaching and support for distance teaching (Press Release UWB 16. 3. 2020; Press Release UWB 26.3., Web MSMT, 2020). Dean of Faculty of education communicated regularly with students and teachers by email, youtube etc. (See for example: Druhé vystoupení děkana FPE ke studentům; 2. 4. 2020 Internal journal Fakutník, No 5. 2020).

Regular distance learning began on 26th March 2020. In general, reaction Faculty of Education in this time (first wave of covid19) was fast and suitable. However, themanagement of individual courses, of course, was left to individual teachers. Most attendance courses did not have a full-fledged distance form. Maybe that is why most of interviewed students described that the start with distance learning was a bit chaotic and slow. Also they told that they experienced great uncertainty about assessments and evaluation. In contrast, the winter semester 2020 and summer semester 2021 (both semesters were conducted in full distance form) are rated as better organized. Almost all courses were taught through online lectures and the use of various e-learning platforms.

According to the interviews conducted, most of the steps were controlled from above. The transition to online teaching took several days/weeks. The unified ZOOM platform has been introduced, fairly strict rules have been set for recording lectures and exams. Despite the strict lockdowns, the university tried face-to-face. After the relaxation

of strict lockdowns in the spring of 2022, hybrid teaching was introduced. The lectures were still being recorded and stored on the common cloud. Students thus had constant access to online teaching as well.

The fundamental difference in the course of managing the pandemic can be observed in the organization of teaching. While at the University of West Bohemia was the reaction of combination of initiative from below and the gradual setting of management rules, which led to the permission to use multiple platforms for teaching and sharing, in the contrary at Ariel University, as well as at other universities in Israel, the ZOOM platform was uniformly used.

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“BUT IN MY SOUL, I’LL BE SORRY FOR THIS HOUSE.” ORAL HISTORY OF CHISINAU OLD TOWN

Kateřina Fuksová

Chisinau is the capital of the Republic of Moldova, a small country located between Ukraine and Romania. Moldova is often described as a “disputed land” that lies somewhere “in-between” with “belated nation-building”, “conflicting identities”, and “contested memories”. Throughout the centuries, Moldova enjoyed limited sovereignty and suppressed agency in deciding its cultural, political and social trajectories. Moldova has a long history of subjugation to stronger regional players; it has been under the domination of the Ottoman Empire, Tsarist Russia, the Kingdom of Romania and the Soviet Union, making Moldovans an object of colonial endeavours. Each of those mentioned above imposed its own identity project on Moldovans, be it Russification, Romanisation, Sovietisation or, recently, Westernisation.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 led, among other things, to the disintegration of shared values and identities. The value order collapsed, and the resulting ideological vacuum had to be filled with new content. A distinct form of Eastern European neoliberalism soon filled the vacated place and opened Moldova to influences from the West. The employment of neoliberalism as a development doctrine characterised the transformation period and is still in place even nowadays. As noted above, it is not only Russification, Romanization, and Sovietization that have affected Moldovan identity and as pirations. Neoliberal capitalism and the desire for Westernisation and Europeanization, the so-called “return to Europe” after the abandonment of Socialism, also played a crucial role.

The various imperial claims and projects imposed on Moldova have been manifested in the cityscapes of Moldovan cities, particularly in the capital of Chisinau. During its history, Chisinau developed from a small village to the country’s capital, from mostly wooden-made rural-type architecture with crooked streets to a city with layers of Tsarist Russian imperial architecture, inter-war period Romanian Modernism, and Soviet urbanism closely connected with industrialisation and development of new housing estates on Chisinau outskirts. The after-1991 era has been characterised by a move from central planning to a haphazard and chaotic urban development following a permissive “laissez-faire”, progressing gentrification, commercialisation, land speculation, urban enclosure and other processes typical for a capitalist city.

These processes are particularly visible in Chisinau’s Old Town, the oldest part of the city. The area, built up of small houses, tiny cottages – often without proper sewerage, central heating and water systems – winding streets and cosy courtyards, has been threatened by the growing and rapidly developing Chisinau.

In September 2022, a group of artists, researchers and activists launched a project in the centre of Chisinau and interviewed local residents about their memories of the Old Town, their sense of home, their fears and the threat of alienation due to the expansion

of new developments. This resulted in 18 interviews with various local residents. The themes revolved mainly around political apathy stemming from material deprivation and the failure to meet people's basic needs, the desire for better living conditions, fear of new development, the increasing number of cars and the virtual disappearance of public transport from the area, disinterest on the part of the municipality leading to forced self-help, rising rents, but also optimism towards the positive development of a neglected area.

The results of the project were summed up in an exhibition called Chisinau: The Fragility of Belonging, which was displayed in Cas a Zemstvei, an alternative art space in Chisinau. In the form of life stories, photos and objects of their everyday life, the inhabitants of the Old Town spoke to the visitors about their daily struggles and joys in the semi-forgotten part of the city. The exhibition was an example of a multidisciplinary collaboration between artists, activists and researchers who together strived to bring the reality of Chisinau Old Town to a broader public through artistic expression. The idea behind this was to remind Chisinau inhabitants about the existence of the Old Town and its historical value and advocate for fair treatment of the historical sites as well as its inhabitants. It also put under scrutiny the current trends connected with the neoliberalisation of the city, such as gentrification, commercialisation and privatisation of the public space, increased individual car mobility, and withdrawal of the municipality from many spheres of urban planning in favour of free market rules.

The project demonstrated that addressing these important yet difficult topics to the public can be effectively done through art and activism backed by research data. Oral history approaches, and biographical research, using life stories of real people, brings more human dimension to the message it tries to convey. Therefore, the collaboration between researchers, artists and activists is proliferating and could be used more often, as it has the potential to reach out to more diverse groups of people.

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FRIEND, HURRY UP S.O.S... EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICE IN THE REFLECTION OF THE WITNESSES (1952–2003)

Jiří Hlaváček

The paper focused on the introduction of a new grant project dedicated to analysis and identification of processes in Emergency medical service (EMS) development and the way the professional identity of its employees was (re)established in the Czech lands in 1952–2003. EMS, providing professional pre-hospital emergency care, represents one of the pillars of the health systems in modern European states. The beginnings of organized efforts to provide emergency medical service in Europe go back to the latter half of the 18th century and gradually developed mainly as part of the activity of newly founded voluntary societies.

In most European countries, EMS developed in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and despite individual factors and conditions, international influences, mainly from the USA, can be clearly traced in its development. A similar trend can also be observed in Czechoslovakia. A national emergency line was introduced, and the quality of the ambulance fleet as well as its equipment, including communication means, was improved. In conjunction with this, clinical knowledge from abroad (especially cardio-pulmonary resuscitation method) was introduced into the emergency care service. Crucial in this respect was a set of methodological measures issued by the Ministry of Health in 1974, which regulated the rules for the provision of differentiated care, organization and the provision of first aid and emergency medical service provided by paramedics team (RZP), as well as the concept of the field of anaesthetics and resuscitation. After 1974, new RZP stations were established in the anaesthetics-resuscitation departments (ARO) in hospitals, and also as part of the existing EMS at district and regional national health institutes. In the 1980s, a RZP committee was established at the Ministry of Health, focusing exclusively on the problems of establishing a modern EMS system, including the issue of improving the medical qualifications of its employees.

Social changes after 1989 also reflected in the organization of the health system. Pivotal in this was a decree issued by the Ministry of Health in 1992, which enabled the creation of an independent EMS at regional and district levels. The year 1993 therefore saw the launch of 10 regional EMS centres with emergency medical service (RLP) and medical first aid service (LSPP) teams. Their network was built to ensure the accessibility of pre-hospital emergency care to be provided within 15 minutes after receiving an emergency call. In the same year, EMS was integrated into the newly created Integrated Rescue System (IZS).

By the end of 2002, EMS was organized into district and regional centres. Whereas district EMS centres were established by district offices, the regional EMS centres, including LZS, were established by the Ministry of Health. With the changes in state administration in 2003, the existing regional EMS centres were taken over by regional councils, with individual district EMS centres, hitherto established by towns and hospitals, gradually being incorporated. Subsequently, only one EMS was created at regional level as a

contributory organization. Since 2011, EMS activity has been regulated by a separate act.

The aim of the new grant project is to describe the processes of institutionalization, professionalization and modernization using a cultural model, that is, through an analysis of the changing relation between the official discourse (legislation and other ministerial of ficial documents) and lived experience (actors' perspective). Potential conflicting interaction and feedback between the of ficial model and the "realistic" (experience) model created by actors based on thereal practice of EMS operation may have various consequences, such as the predominance of the official model and consistent implementation of legislation and standards, or, on the contrary, the infiltration of practice-based standards from the "experience" model "upwards" to the official model and subsequent modification, relativization and "modernization" of its concepts, or even the creation of alternative, competing versions of official discourse on the provision of professional pre-hospital emergency care, especially at regional (or district) level.

The interdisciplinary research combines the history of medicine, public health sociology, contemporary history, memory and identity studies and social anthropology. Data will be analysed and interpreted using various qualitative methods. Main methodological principles are based on contemporary anthropological approaches to social and cultural history within the paradigm of cultural turn. Within the project, EMS is understood as an internally structured organization, which, in the context of public health, can be clearly defined as a specific subject of research, subsequently viewed from different perspectives and in structural-functional relations (tensions between the ideal-typical model of professional pre-hospital emergency care provision and the actors' everyday experience). The research will focus on two thematic areas, which are closely interconnected and influencing one another. The first thematic area maps official as sumptions, aims and procedures of the governing power in relation to the provision of professional pre-hospital emergency care in the studied period, whereas the second area reflects its implementation in practice through the experience of former employees serving at district or regional EMS levels.

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ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA AFTER 1989 AS A “TURNING POINT” – STORIES OF NEW ENTREPRENEURS

Lenka Krátká

In addition to the democratization of political and social life and new freedom in all spheres of life, the economic transformation was also one of the critical moments of the Czech (Czechoslovak) society's transformation after the Velvet Revolution of 1989. We can divide this transformation into two essential areas or processes with a degree of simplification. First, it was the overall structural transformation of the economy, which ended the emphasis on heavy and engineering, or weapons industries, for which there were not enough raw materials in the country since the collapse of Austria-Hungary; in addition, the market for this production was decreasing, until it collapsed entirely with the breakdown of the former so-called Soviet bloc. The second fundamental change and axis of economic transformation were privatizing the previously almost totally nationalized sector and developing private business.

This expansion of private business took many different forms, from privatized organizations and factories now fully responsible for the performance to various small firms, crafts, or trades. In this context, Czechoslovak society experienced a boom in establishing new businesses. The abolition of former political-bureaucratic obstacles started it, introducing simple rules for setting up businesses and the considerable demand for goods and services that were in short supply or completely unavailable before November 1989. Soon a new class of businessmen and women entrepreneurs was created. However, they did not represent an imaginary “homogeneous mass” but a diverse group of men and women, with various professional trajectories, motivations for business, and experience, just as there were different forms of private businesses. Therefore, the life stories of these “new” entrepreneurs can be one of the exciting and important ways to view and understand economic transformation. This short overview describes some basic features of building a business environment in post-1989 Czechoslovakia by analyzing roughly a hundred oral history interviews. Based on this data we can distinguish three basic categories of entrepreneurs.

The first group of new entrepreneurs consists of managers of former socialist enterprises or factories, especially managers in upper-middle and top positions (we call this category “directors”). They had to react quickly to ongoing changes because people in higher positions could lose a lot. However, they could also gain a lot just because they had access to information or resources. These were (predominantly) men appointed to higher positions in the 1970s and 1980s due to a generational or politically motivated change in this management layer. After November 1989, it was important for their further “destiny” to what extent they were tied to the pre-November authoritarian regime and to what extent they were linked to the policies of the ruling Communist Party. If this “political burden” was not wholly unacceptable in the new transformation

and democratic environment and at the same time they were professionally capable people, they could assert themselves even in new conditions – primarily due to the lack of experts in individual spheres of the economy. They frequently experienced upward professional mobility within a given industry, moving from a high position in one enterprise or factory to a high or the highest post in another, now privatized company. Thus, the communist past seemed to “dilute,” and they continued to operate successfully in the given industry. The elites of the past, i.e., the managers of former state and national enterprises, demonstrated a high degree of adaptability to new conditions and became an important, at some point almost indispensable, part of the business elites of the post-November 1989 era.

An even higher degree of this adaptability and the ability to use new conditions, and a new environment, is represented by the second category, which we call “academician,” a private entrepreneur who came from an academic sphere (to a greater extent than in the previous case, these career reversals also concerned women). These men and women, who before November 1989 held more or less important positions in research and development, along with the economic transformation, were given the chance to apply their skills in the private sector. Due to the lack of professionals in various, mainly new, disciplines, they suddenly got into top positions (typically in marketing, business, or human resources). People who came from the research sphere had a great advantage, as they were used to and willing to learn new things, work hard, had a better knowledge of foreign languages, and can solve problems, and apply the knowledge gained in practice. They then applied these important general skills in a specific discipline and succeeded. After applying all these abilities in a business environment, they achieved considerable success in various branches.

Both these groups – “director” and “academic” – form an essential part of business circles or elites of the post-1989 era, whether at the head of transformed enterprises or new private companies, often founded by foreign investors. However, the imaginary “face” of the economic transformation became entrepreneurs who decided to build their own business, their own company, with their abilities and means. They were perceived (and presented in the media) as bearers of new values, personifications of new individualism and responsibility, and above all, responsibility for their fate, which they “took into their own hands.”

The already mentioned shortage, or “hunger” for previously unavailable goods and services, played its role here. Let us think of new exchange offices, privately rented and operated parking lots, video rental shops, and various trades. In a certain naivety, when reflecting on a substantial part of the collected interviews, people set up businesses based on the activity they were good at, which they previously performed within one of the state or national enterprises. A typical example in our group is a reproduction graphic artist working in a printing factory and then self-employed as a graphician. Alternatively, these new entrepreneurs continued the family tradition of a particular trade or craft violently interrupted by the communist coup d’état. However, these people soon encountered the fact that they were more or less unprepared for what it really means to run their own business in a fully market environment.

On the one hand, it was possible to become an entrepreneur in any branch; building a company was easy. However, keeping it running and profitable was a much more difficult task. For many new entrepreneurs thus, the turning point in their lives that the title refers to came with this realization, only after the initial euphoria had worn off and they had to deal with the weight of their own business and a new freedom which also meant a new responsibility.

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WOMEN'S COURAGE IN THE FACE OF AUTHORITARIANISM: VOICE AGAINST INJUSTICE AND OPPRESSION.

Zuzana Krizalkovicova

The communist ideology which applied in Czechoslovakia (and beyond) at the time of the Third Resistance referred, among others, to the exclusionary principle - "if you are not with us, you are against us." This thinking underlined the conceptual dichotomy of good vs bad, right vs wrong, and friend vs (the ever present) enemy which were the operating tools and power element of the only "acceptable" political subject and which became rooted in the everyday life of ordinary people. The prevalent atmosphere of fear coerced individuals to join the masses, conform to ideological norms, acquiesce to contrived rules and fulfil their "civic duty" as prescribed by the ruling party. The subjects of this contribution were the three generations of women who repeatedly crossed the Czechoslovak-Austrian border in connection with the spread of intelligence running and other intelligence activities between 1948 and 1960. The aim was to point out the complexity, intricacy and multifaceted aspects of resistance activities from the female perspective.

The stories of the women who stood up against the communist regime, either as direct participants in the Third Resistance or as victims of persecution, remain largely neglected within modern historical discourse, and the contributions which they made to the eventual overthrow of the regime are often overshadowed by those of their male counterparts. Although they were relatively few in number, women dissidents did exist, and their courageous decision to stand up against state terror stemmed from various reasons - from solidarity, often from naivety, also from self-defence, the sense of a need to act and not merely bend the knee, the dream of a free Czechoslovakia, or the desire to escape political repression.

Most of these women were active in humanitarian resistance, helping fugitives and organizing escapes across borders. Many of them became active sleeper agents or couriers for foreign secret services. They developed intelligence networks, obtained political-economic information, sought out other collaborators, established dead letter drops and used secret codes. They served as a vital link between opponents of the regime, but were often at risk of arrest and subsequent brutal interrogations, beatings or even executions. Although these women all chose their paths of resistance with different motivations and goals, the common denominator for them all was the rejection of the communist regime. Their activities were conducted in secret and in full awareness of the consequences of their actions - if arrested, twenty-year or life sentences of imprisonment were not uncommon.

By looking back at the communist era through a new perspective, the importance of integrating women in the fight for freedom becomes apparent. It is therefore important to critically and productively deconstruct the political-historical and social structures that led to their activities in the effort to prevent a repetition of the past.

In the current socio-political climate, the necessity of rising up against undemocratic regimes and the violation of basic human rights and freedoms remains more relevant than ever. Countless people around the world are still subject to authoritarian regimes that suppress and restrict their fundamental rights. In this context, it is important to acknowledge and pay respect to the courage of the women who stood up against these regimes and their brave willingness to confront injustice and oppression. The mutual interaction between historical and socio-critical practices could enable the emergence of a more comprehensive understanding of their actions and ensure that history does not repeat itself by preventing the repetition of the events that led to the emergence of the authoritarian regime.

Oral history can be a valuable tool for connecting the past and the present. Women who were persecuted and oppressed in the past can share their often overlooked experiences, thereby preserving their stories for future generations and granting us a better understanding of history, preventing the regression into new systems of oppression, and overcoming the boundaries of national and cultural identities, building bridges in the fight against injustice and oppression in the present.

Zuzana Krizalkovicova completed her doctoral studies at the Academy of Fine Arts in Vienna. In her practice, she acts in interdisciplinary spaces of action between the humanities and natural sciences (performances: *Corona Borealis*, *Northern Lights*, *Ferofluid*) and in transdisciplinary spaces between theory and practice: Exhibitions: *Convimetry*, Ely Center of Contemporary Art, New Haven; *Distant Nature*, Knoll Galerie Vienna; *Northern Lights 8th Beijing International Art Biennale*, awarded; *Blueprints*, Roman Susan Gallery, Chicago). Publications: *Plan B: Intra-Active Becoming in Art and Beyond*, essay published on academia.edu; *Material-performative Mo(ve)ments in the humanities and contemporary Art. Czech and Czechoslovak based female approaches*, published in *divebuki.sk* in cooperation with the Charles University, Prague and *Visegrad Fund*; *Protištátny prípad Eliška*, published in: *Politický exil zo Slovenska po februári 1948 v československom a východoeurópskom kontexte*. Post-doctoral research: Charles University, Prague; Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw; Hungarian University of Fine Arts), exploring the tensions between science, (art/history criticism and the creative sector (works: *The Magnificent Seven*; *The Barge Haulers on the Volga*) and tracing the relationship between the visible and the invisible (*Freedom*) and questions supposedly incontrovertible "truths" with wit and gravity (*Applause*). She regularly works in transdisciplinary settings (such as her collaborations with the Finnish Cultural Foundation, Oskar Kokoschka Centre, the Papanek Foundation, the Slovak Arts Council). Her research interests include the themes of contemporary art/history, Central and Eastern European art/history, postfeminism and posthumanism.
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DIFFERENT DEPICTIONS OF THE HOLOCAUST IN CZECH AND SLOVAK LITERATURE PUBLISHED AFTER 1993

Milan Mašát, Monika Šindelková

The paper entitled *Different Depictions of the Holocaust in Czech and Slovak Literature published after 1993* is devoted to the reflection of the Holocaust in Czech and Slovak literature. This lineage of the Second World War is depicted somewhat differently in the literature of the two countries published after 1993, with an emphasis on contemporary and modern appeals to the Holocaust in both countries. The Czech provenance of literary representations of the Shoah focuses mainly on the depiction of the events in question from the perspective of the story of a particular individual, with an appeal to their possible moral overlaps with contemporary society. A significant part of the literary production in question is occupied by translated titles, which to a certain extent guarantee commercial success for publishing houses, which is based mainly on two aspects: 1) the author's name; 2) the use of the name Shoah or Holocaust in the title of the publication. We are of the opinion that the situation in question to some extent induces commercial dehumanisation of the victims of the Nazi extermination machine. If we look at the issue through the prism of implicit readers, then a relatively significant line of literary production consists of artistic narratives with the theme of the Shoah aimed at children and youth. We believe that this situation is to a certain extent due to the number of publications that have entered the Czech context through translations. Slovak literature on the Shoah is oriented towards memoir literature. Most often, it is the narratives or memories of the surviving Jews from Slovakia about the horrors of the war, including the memories of non-Jewish inhabitants who "only" observed the Holocaust. It is necessary to mention the trivial but essential fact that the mortality rate of those who had direct experience of the Holocaust increased. We will try to demonstrate these findings, which are related to Slovak literature, with two specific examples: the publication of Denisa Fulmeková's *Doctor Frost* (2020) and Heather Morris's novel *Three Sisters* (2021). It is not our aim to comment in detail on the plot of these narratives, but to demonstrate the above-mentioned lines of representation of the events of the Holocaust in Slovak literature. The story told in *Three Sisters* begins in Slovakia. The three sisters (Cibi, Magda and Livia) promise their father that they will stay together forever. This promise is fulfilled when Livia is deported to Auschwitz and Cibi volunteers to join her. Magda remains in Slovakia and hides from deportation but is found some time later and deported to her sisters. We can say that the main idea of the work is the power of mutual (family) help, in the different situations the siblings are exposed to. Although this is an artistic narrative, the author drew on many testimonies, especially those of the surviving sisters who were living in Israel at the time of writing. The story is a kind of composition of eyewitness accounts, their assumptions, feelings and, last but not least, their perception of the Slovak fascist regime from the position of the most endangered people, the Jews. It is at this point that we see the crucial difference between this Slovak Holocaust narrative and the Czech literary accounts that fall under that heading: the author's aim is to present not only the daily routine behind the walls of a concentration camp, but also in Slovakia during the Second World War. The second publication on which we will try to substantiate the above-mentioned claims

is Doctor Frost. At the heart of this narrative is a Slovak lawyer, a Jew, who changes his name in 1939 to protect himself and his family. According to a pro-regime newspaper, his desire for wealth led him to take this step. Various narrative lines develop in the story, centred on the lawyer's efforts to defend himself against the accusations. We consider it important to mention that, unlike the previous publication, this is a fictional story, nevertheless inspired by many specific stories of people living in Slovakia. The points of contact between Czech (world) literature on the Holocaust and this Slovak work can be found especially in the portrayal of the story of a particular individual during the historical phase. What is different is the explicit and specific focus on the Slovak lawyer's efforts to protect his family; the core of the story is in Slovakia, not in a concentration or extermination camp.

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URBAN FOLKLORE ON THE EDGE OF THE LAW: LOOKING BACK AT ONE OF THE ETHICAL ASPECTS OF ORAL HISTORICAL RESEARCH ON THE GRAFFITI SUBCULTURE

Dorotea Mejstříková

They walk around Prague with a hood on their head and plastic bags full of colorful spray cans, move in the shadows of the city when everyone is asleep. You probably wouldn't notice them at all. In the company of their gang, they flirt with petty crime, many of them under the influence of drugs. In the morning, they enjoy watching the horrified expressions of those who pass by their new signings. For several years, my narrators were and have been writers, girls and boys, women and men who consider themselves members of the graffiti subculture.

I am currently dealing with the life stories of the narrators and, using the method of oral history, with the question of how this Prague subculture developed from the beginning of the 90s to the present day. Although the graffiti subculture has its supporters and detractors among city dwellers, it is certain that since the end of the last century, it has appeared in the criminal code as vandalism and damage to public or private property. Since that moment, writers have been on the edge of the law. Moreover, the subculture is typical for other illegal activities than just spraying someone else's wall. Its members are close to various crime situations such as theft, armed robbery, violence, or drug crime, which entails certain research specifics.

Because of that, I have unsurprisingly witnessed situations on the edge of the law and encountered its descriptions. During interviews, I came upon methodological or rather ethical dilemmas, for which oral history is more susceptible than other methods. Where the interviews will go is uncertain and various unpredictable situations may arise while conducting them. We may come across our limits and personal possibilities, new challenges and stepping out of our comfort zone. Or a legal obligation.

The interest of members of the subculture is not to be officially detected (and recorded) but a recording device is an integral part of the researcher's work, as is an informed consent. Signing the informed consent is a necessary act. Not only administrative but also ethical, legal, and psychological. But - writers want to be invisible. They often have an aversion to any form of institutionalized formalities. Several times I encountered with a complete refusal to sign this consent, even though I suggested that the narrator could come up with a nickname and sign the consent with an invented name.⁴

After being asked to sign an informed consent, one of my narrators refused to be interviewed completely, even though she had enthusiastically agreed to the interview beforehand and knew what it would cover. Even repeated attempts to explain the reasons for written (or recorded oral) consent failed to influence her attitude. After that, I often

⁴ I often did not even know the real name of the narrator. For the purposes of the research, I was satisfied with a nickname, which I also changed after agreeing with the informant and thus anonymized the interview.

asked myself when the most suitable moment is to sign the consent. Perhaps it would be better to ask for a signature after the interview is recorded but I believe that the narrator should be informed in advance of his rights and the purpose for which the interview will be used in order to decide what to include in the narrative and what is already too risky.

However, the term “risky” is not the same for everyone. I even turned off the recording device myself at one point because I didn’t think it was ethical to continue recording. It was at the moment when the respondent was telling me the details of a drug crime. I realized it was important to protect the narrator and myself from him giving me this information, even if he wanted to. Moreover, my research does not deal with drugs.

This bit inherently disrupted the conversation significantly, and the narrator could get the impression that I was dismissive of him. But it is necessary to realize that there is a criminal law on the non-obstructing of a crime,⁵ which lists information that must be reported if it relates to the preparation or commission of the mentioned crimes, e.g. illegal production and possession of narcotics and psychotropic substances and poisons or, for example, rape, theft or fraudulent behavior. In addition, there is also a notification obligation regarding serious crimes.⁶ This duty does not apply to clergymen and lawyers, and as I am neither of those, I have the obligation to notify.

On the other hand, the protection of privacy and personal and sensitive data of research participants must be guaranteed so they cannot be harmed as a result of a non-compliance with ethical principles. If such data were about to get outside the research team, it could directly endanger narrators by putting them at risk of criminal prosecution. And such research would hardly be ethically defensible.

The issue is annoying because phenomena, such as illegal behavior, should be investigated.⁷ The Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic⁸ has dealt with a similar case several times, mostly in connection with the right of journalists not to disclose their source of information to law enforcement authorities, where it emphasizes the importance of preserving the anonymity of informants. Not only journalists but also researchers feel bound by ethical codes that impose not to reveal the source. The anonymity of the source is an absolute condition based on which the information can be provided.

Therefore, research that concerns activities on the edge or beyond the edge of the law is specific. Due to the often unpredictable situations and topics in the oral-historical conversation, when we encounter a thin line of comfort with obtaining certain information as well as the line of a legal obligation, it is absolutely necessary to constantly

5 § 367 act no. 40/2009 Sb., Trestní zákoník. In: Sbíрка zákonů. 9. 2. 2009. ISSN 1211-1244.

6 § 368 act no. 40/2009 Sb., Trestní zákoník. In: Sbíрка zákonů. 9. 2. 2009. ISSN 1211-1244.

7 Of course, there are also institutions that, by nature, deal with criminal acts, such as the Institute for Criminology and Social Prevention, which is protected by the fact it belongs to the department of the Ministry of Justice.

8 Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic ruling from 27. 9. 2005. ÚS 394/04 published under no 184/2005 [cit. 5.3.2023]. Available on-line from URL: <<https://www.aspi.cz/products/lawText/4/33451/1/2>>

open a methodological debate regarding the practical use of narrative interview in the research of illegal activities. It is essential to deal with these difficult areas and offer workable solutions that can be verified in future research.

Narrators are circumspect. Their trust in a researcher who represents anyone who would like to deal with their issues in the future is essential. The researcher's interest is to conduct research in a way that does not endanger its participants, their environment, or cultural values⁹ so they can continue to walk unnoticed through the streets of Prague with a hood on their head and plastic bags full of colorful spray cans.

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9 Etický kodex České asociace pro sociální antropologii [cit. 13.3.2023]. Available on-line from URL: <http://www.casaonline.cz/?page_id=7>

THE CHANCE OR STEP BACK? POST-SOCIALIST TRANSFORMATION AND INTRODUCING OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES TO THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

Jiří Zounek, Oto Polouček

The fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia in November 1989 started, among other things, fundamental changes in the field of education. In our research project entitled Post-socialist transformation of primary schools: processes, stories, dilemmas, supported by the Grant Agency of the Czech Republic (20-11275S), we monitor the impact of these changes on local practice and changes in everyday life of primary schools. Undoubtedly, one of the essential topics is introducing information (digital) technologies, especially personal computers, into schools. In this area, we can somewhat surprisingly observe several continuities since, for example, the program of the so-called electronicization of education for the years 1986 – 1990 represented one of the domains of the educational policy of the communist government. Although the program was created in the strongly ideological environment of the communist regime at the time, it nevertheless contained some fundamentally similar topics and goals to the documents of the Czech educational policy adopted by the government around 2000. Many Czechoslovak schools already owned computers in 1989 and offered their pupils, among other things, programming classes. The turning point occurred after the Velvet Revolution when the state and schools had to solve much more fundamental problems of transformation.

In June 1990, the Ministry of education created a new concept called “IT in Education.” Many schools already owned computers in 1989 (mainly Czechoslovakian production), and courses in programming, among others, were offered to the students. However, in the early 90s of the last century, the modernization of education ran into many difficulties (chaotic changes in education, government austerity measures, etc.), so for a specific time, electronicization remained somewhat as idle due to the need to solve more fundamental problems (changes in school management, economic issues, etc.). On the other hand, the free market opened up, and schools were able to enter, for example, computers manufactured in Western countries. This was helped, for instance, by international cooperation and programs co-financed by Western countries (e.g., the Comenius project).

In the contribution, we present the general (school-political) context of the electronicization of elementary schools in Czechoslovakia. But we also show how the technologies of the time penetrated the life of schools in the late 1980s and during the transformation of schools after 1989. We start from the study of archival documents and from oral history interviews with teachers and principals of elementary schools, as well as state administration officials or representatives of the school founders. As part of the contribution, we, therefore, also point out the disproportion between the view of the teachers and the image of contemporary practice in archival sources based on the essence of the selectivity of memories. Teachers often do not remember exactly

when they met the first computer at school. In the 1990s, most of them encountered the first computer, but they started to use it in education to a large extent only after the year 2000. The first computers were used more for administration: „In the 90s, tape recorders and more, of course. The contemporary time has been giving some videos that did not work yet in the 1990s and that ... after the year 2000 ... interactive board and computer labs started and ... I did not perceive that much positively because I said that kids sit at home in front of the computers, so even in school they would sit in front of computers.“ (teacher from a big city, 60 years old)

At the same time, however, teachers participated in various computer courses, which did not provide enough space for them to master working with computers fully „The training looked this way, we came were moved into this one large classroom, and there we were; I think it was the headmaster of the economics school, who was the primary instructor, and he had each of us sit in front of a computer, and we were told explicitly what a keyboard is, I know that we could not keep the mouse on the right letter.“ (teacher from a small town, 65 years old)

Even those teachers who now use computers enthusiastically recall the first encounter with them as an encounter with something new, unknown, and to some extent feared: „I remember that, how giant of a box it was , where it was one box in the whole school, and we all walked around it afraid. And I personally was afraid to touch it, so it wouldn't do me any harm. Even though it is funny, but for me it was quite a shock at that time. That I will be learning and working on a computer. It was a taboo for me at that time you know.“ (teacher from the village, 60 years old)

Especially in the area of information technology, the view of some teachers is also strongly influenced by the current situation (Covid-19 pandemic) thanks to their experience with online teaching. Interviews with teachers are, therefore, to a large extent marked by the current situation to which teachers relate - especially those still working in schools.

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BORDERS OF MEMORY: CZECH-RUSSIAN COLLECTIVE MEMORY TRANSFORMATION

Petra Prokšánová

On February 24th 2022, the Russian Federation started a so-called Special operation on the territory of the sovereign state of Ukraine. The circumstances, reasons and course of this event itself can be left as is for the moment, although they have already become an interesting subject of historical-sociological research. But it is interesting to observe how this situation was and is reflected in Czech society in connection with the borders of our common memory and how it affects the blurring of this border, which has been going on for a long time and whose boundary stones are the so-called places of memory as we know them from the sociologist Pierre Nora.

With Russia, formerly the Soviet Union, Czech society shares a common history and memory, most strongly from the Second World War period. Several factors influence this. First of all, it was the largest and most destructive conflict in modern history, in which Czechs themselves participated. Many families lost their loved ones during this war, or those families experienced various traumas, which are passed on from generation to generation, and quite a few survivors are still alive. A very strong pressure to maintain this common memory persists from the period of the previous regime. There is a great legacy here in the form of hundreds of places of memory related to those events. These places of memory are, among other things, important socialization tools, because through their story and the meanings represented by them, we receive information about events that we did not have the chance to be direct participants of. Even with their contribution, the collective memory of society is created, they form a material depository of our memory and are more or less an oscillating point in the process of remembering and forgetting.

Just to remind, the years after the end of the Second World War were marked by spontaneous celebrations of liberation covering Eastern as well as Western resistance and allies. The takeover of the government by the Communist Party (KSČ) in February 1948 shuffled the cards in favor of the Soviet Union, which was necessarily reflected in the public space. Monuments to the Red Army - the liberators - were built widely. The guerrilla movement experienced uncritical glorification. In many villages we would find monuments to unknown soldiers of the Red Army. Celebratory books were published. Pompous commemorative acts were held with the participation of the general public, business and school delegations. Many streets were named after heroes of the Soviet Union. This led to the strengthening of the boundaries of the common historical memory of Czechoslovaks and Soviets, which, however, were gradually eroded by other historical events during the entire era of the Communist Party's rule. Here we can include the so-called fall of the cult of personality after the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1956 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia by Warsaw Pact troops in 1968.

The Velvet revolution in 1989 then turned the official heroic narrative of the Red Army - liberator almost upside down. In the last thirty years, we have been watching an increasingly intense relativization of the Soviet Union's contribution to the defeat of German fascism. However, it is not only a gradual decline of interest by the public, a certain pressure is exerted by the governing structures, for example through the European resolution "The importance of European memory for the future of Europe" from 2019.

Even in Czech society, after the fall of the previous regime, a conflicting interpretation of the liberation by the Red Army was increasingly asserted. The borders of common memory began to blur even more and new borders of memory appeared, this time more national and/or related more to the Western allies and the Western resistance, as if there was a need to make up for the years during which they were unjustly neglected in Czechoslovakia. In a kind of revolutionary enthusiasm of the early nineties, however, many sites of memory were not only built, but also demolished. Many of them would not be probably even today rated as conflicting. Even more these would be recognized worthy of preservation not only for their meaning, but also for their artistic value.

After the end of the 1990s, these efforts to cut off from the past rather receded and gained intensity only in recent years. An important milestone is the aforementioned 24th February 2022, when the conflict in eastern Ukraine escalated. With this step, the Russian Federation placed not only itself in the role of the enemy, but indirectly also the legacy of the Red Army - the liberators and the role of the Soviet Union as the victor over fascism.

The events of the end of the Second World War in which the Red Army, at least on our territory, played a decisive role experienced and actually still experience frequent earthquakes in terms of their interpretation. The role of the Soviet Union is constantly being reassessed, updated, and some groups of scientists and even part of the public have recently been talking about rewriting or even erasing history. However, this process is nothing new. We know it from the work of the Bulgarian historian and sociologist Tzvetan Todorov. But he mainly related it to totalitarian regimes. However, there is a question so far insufficiently researched, whether therewriting and erasure of history does not really take place even in democratic regimes, and possibly why.

Considering the current geopolitical events the scientific investigation of the border of the memory of the current Czech Republic and the Russian Federation is considered to be important for the further development of our international relations. Also the complete rewriting or erasure of some chapters of our common history could lead to changes in the value orientation of our society and the question is whether in a direction that is desirable for the development of our society.

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STRANGELY FAMILIAR: CZECH TRANSFORMATION OF THE 1990S THROUGH THE EYES OF WESTERN EXPATRIATES

Tomáš Razím

This paper draws on the sociological concepts of “the stranger” as postulated in different periods of 20th century by Georg Simmel, Alfred Schütz and Zygmunt Bauman,¹⁰ and applies them to foreigners from Western Europe and North America living in the Czech Republic during the period of so-called transformation (i.e., after 1989). The stranger, portrayed as somebody physically present but culturally distant, holds a unique position for observing social processes. Strangers question everyday practices that are otherwise taken for granted. Their vantage point is free of the cultural and historical baggage born by the natives, which should enable them (at least in theory) to form a more “objective” opinion on the matters surrounding them. That becomes especially valuable during tumultuous social changes – wars, revolutions, or indeed the transformation of the post-socialist countries in 1990s.

Building on oral-history interviews with expatriates from “the West” who settled in the Czech Republic in the early 1990s, this paper examines their views on the transformation of the country, including the breakup of Czechoslovakia. The peculiar position of these “strangers” was enhanced by the ambition of Czechs to belong to the Western world, to “catch up” and adopt liberal democracy and capitalism without really knowing – unlike the narrators – what that entails. The narrators could observe a somewhat familiar development (albeit much accelerated) in an unfamiliar setting, and they can provide new and distinct reflections on this recent historical period. What were the narrators’ views on the development of the transformation? How do they evaluate it today? And to what extent do they fulfill the archetypal social role of a stranger?

All 17 narrators were asked about their perception of the 1990s transformation period. With hindsight, they see the Czech turn towards liberal democracy and market economy as inevitable. Having already experienced the (both intended and unintended) consequences of these political and economic processes, they found themselves in the position of seers. However, their unsolicited advice and warnings were rarely appreciated: “So our situation was strange. That we sort of know, anticipate where it’s going but there’s no point in saying it because nobody’s listening.”¹¹ Despite listing numerous disappointing features of the transformation period (e.g., corruption and fraudulent schemes, racism, theft, prostitution, materialism, etc.), the narrators almost unanimously praised the results it has brought. In fact, some of them pointed out that as foreigners, they can appreciate this progress more than the Czech people themselves: “I think this society has made immense strides in the last 30 years, far more than most

10 Bauman, Z.: Making and unmaking of strangers. *Thesis eleven* (43)1, 1995, p. 1–16; Bauman, Z.: *Modernity and ambivalence*. Oxford 1993, pp. 53–101; Schütz, A.: *The Stranger: An Essay in Social Psychology*. *American Journal of Sociology* (49)6, 1944, pp. 499–507; Simmel, G – Wolff, K. H.: *The sociology of Georg Simmel*. New York – London 1950, pp. 402–408.

11 Interview with A. A., 3. 3. 2021 in Prague. Author’s archive.

Czechs realize. And I think the relative position of the majority of Czechs is far better than they realize. But they're making unrealistic comparisons."¹² And yet, most narrators agree that there is still work to be done, especially when it comes to political culture and social responsibility, while also acknowledging that this does not make the Czech Republic a unique case: "I think that politically speaking, this country has a long way to go to find some kind of balance between capitalistic notions and democratic ideals. But so does my country."¹³

Since Czechoslovakia was literally a foreign country to them, most narrators did not form an opinion about its breakup, even though they were interested in its process and the discussions surrounding it. Only three narrators expressed regret about the demise of Czechoslovakia. A narrator from Canada equated federalism with positive societal values such as openness and tolerance, and perceived a greater loss than just the one of a common state: "I think it has significantly damaged Czechs' ability to deal with difference. [...] Look at the Czechs in 1800 and the Czechs in 1900. Totally fully developed modern nation except it didn't have independence. And then you look at them in the 20th century: they lose their Jews, they lose their Germans, then they lose their Slovaks and their Hungarians and it's just a little Czech nation."¹⁴

While at times the narrators adopted the vantage point of a stranger voluntarily and explicitly (e.g., when claiming to notice what their Czech surroundings reportedly could not see), at other times they were condemned to such role by the native majority – as outsiders who could not understand what the society was going through – and their opinions were disregarded. Their supposed objectiveness should not be understood "[...] as being devoid of what the philosopher Gadamer calls 'prejudice' or fore-meanings in their interpretation of the social world,"¹⁵ because their original cultural background is clearly still present. It is rather the possession of multiple sets of interpretive lenses that makes them capable of producing valuable (if not outright "objective") observations. While in heterogenous cosmopolitan societies almost everyone can be deemed a stranger, applying this concept to 1990s Eastern Central Europe can bring fruitful results.

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12 Interview with D. S., 29. 6. 2021 in Brno. Author's archive.

13 Interview with V. H., 16. 3. 2021 in Prague. Author's archive.

14 Interview with D. S., 29. 6. 2021 in Brno. Author's archive.

15 Marotta, V. The idea of the in-between subject in social and cultural thought. In: Lobo, M. – Marotta, V. – Oke, N. (eds.): Intercultural relations in a global world. Champaign – Illinois, 2011, p. 191.

ORAL HISTORY AND DEALING WITH THE PAST

Felicitas Söhner

Based on a growing interest in questions of memory, trauma and justice in Europe, this article addresses the issue of coming to terms with the past and eyewitness interviews. In the German language, this is often also described with the term “Aufarbeitung/ zpracování / spracovanie”. Dealing with the past - in the sense of successful coping processes for those affected - requires a sensitive, appreciative and respectful attitude towards traumatic experiences in all activities of the memory-cultural process. At the same time, the question arises as to what tasks oral history here can perform, if one assumes that the therapeutic tasks are to be sought in other disciplines. This contribution asks to what extent past events, processes and responsibilities can be reviewed and what contribution oral history can make here. On the basis of relevant projects and ethical debates, this contribution offers a new perspective on existing debates about dealing with the past by analysing the limits of this historical discourse and exploring the potential of oral history in memory culture.

Historical memory work aims to elicit aspects of subjective experiential history standing alongside the narratives handed down in the respective professional cultures (collective memory). A central feature of biographical accounts is their authenticity, since they emerge directly from the situation as experienced at the time of the interview. Through the subjective perceptual perspective of the interview partners, research is given the opportunity to gain insight in a differentiated way into subjective narratives shaped by many factors that emerge in a specific setting.

A further yield is the possibility of gaining insights into the experience and management of crises. The assessment of biographical crises shows learning potential and the possibility of a change of perspective in two respects: on the one hand for the person who experienced and overcame them, and on the other hand for the recipient of the historical report. The discussion and linguistic processing of memories requires a considerable amount of context formation from both the reporter and the researcher. Thus, the autobiographical account can be used, on the one hand, as a means of self-knowledge and, on the other, as a way of reconstructing the narrator's image of and coping with life.¹⁶

Another potential lies in the possibility of historical categorisation. If eyewitness testimonies are understood as historical sources, they can be used, for example, to reconstruct socialisation and biographical processes.¹⁷ However, since autobiographical sources can be understood less as accounts of historically past experiences and more as the enacted experience of an individual, autobiographical documents rather provide

16 Heinritz, C. Das Kind in der autobiographischen Kindheitserinnerung. BIOS – Zeitschrift für Biographieforschung und Oral History 7/1994, S. 180.

17 Du Bois-Reymond, M.: Die Oral-History-Methode. Königsweg oder Schleichpfad der historischen Kindheitsforschung. In: Behnken I, Zinnecker J (eds.) Kinder, Kindheit, Lebensgeschichte. Ein Handbuch. Seelze-Velber 2001, S. 231..

insights into current discourses and self-designs.

The term “Aufarbeitung”, meaning the concept of dealing with the past continues to preoccupy scholars, politicians and society today, also with regard to dealing with experienced violence, injustice and human rights violations in other social and historical contexts. In this context, “dealing” with the past cannot be equated with the question of criminal prosecution or financial compensation. Rather, it describes a social process “through which something unjust and the resulting suffering are to be made visible.”¹⁸ Experienced injustice or violence not only affects the people directly affected by it throughout their lives, but also the society in which these people live. Like a “toxic package” that cannot be disposed of, one affected person has described the continuing effects of experienced injustice.¹⁹ The effects affect the individual person (individual level), the places and institutions in which injustice occurred (institutional level) and society, in which a group of people with their unprocessed traumatic experiences are not seen and supported. Therefore, reprocessing must also take place on these three levels.

Reappraisal is to uncover past injustice. Social reappraisal begins with the experiences of people who were affected by traumatising events and processes. Their accounts make it possible to openly name the extent and consequences of their experiences and to examine which structures made traumatising events and processes possible. Reappraisal aims to clarify why traumatising acts were covered up or concealed and to show ways out of this silence. Reappraisal cannot replace a legal clarification of crimes or the individual processing of trauma in the rapy. However, social reappraisal makes the injustice of the past a topic of the present. Reappraisal aims to improve society’s understanding of the dimensions of traumatising experiences.²⁰

Dealing with traumatic aspects of the past is about the belated acceptance of responsibility. Legal consequences and financial compensation are pragmatic forms of acknowledging past suffering. However, a sustainable understanding between representatives of the institution and victims requires more.²¹ According to Gahleitner et al. “Aufarbeitung” in the sense of serious engagement with the past must involve three levels: On the one hand, it has to be about remembering the past; on the other hand, it has to be about taking responsibility in the present; and finally, it has to be about looking into the future.

Dealing with the past - in the sense of successful coping processes for those affected - requires a trauma-sensitive, appreciative and respectful attitude towards to traumatizing

18 Andresen, S.: Was Aufarbeitung von Unrecht bedeutet. Ein Beitrag zur Klärung. In: Andresen, S. – Nittel, D. – Thompson, C. (eds.): Erziehung nach Auschwitz bis heute. Aufklärungsanspruch und Gesellschaftsanalyse. Norderstedt 2019.

19 Keupp, H.: Wie kann individuelle und gesellschaftliche Aufarbeitung gelingen? Verhaltenstherapie & psychosoziale Praxis 52(2), 2020, S. 307

20 Gahleitner, S. – Gabriel, M. – De Andrade, M. – Oommen-Halbach, A. – Hinz, U. – Söhner, F.: Aufarbeitung Learningtool Memorial Closed Jugendwerkhof. Torgau 2022.

21 Keupp, H.: Wie kann individuelle und gesellschaftliche Aufarbeitung gelingen? Verhaltenstherapie & psychosoziale Praxis 52(2), 2020, S. 308.

experiences in all activities of coming to terms with the past.²² Oral history can make here a valuable contribution.

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22 Gahleitner, S. – Gabriel M. – De Andrade, M. – Martensen, M. Erfahrungen mit dem Fonds. In: Glaesmer, H. et al. (Hg.) Kinder und Jugendliche in Heimen der DDR – Trauma und Bewältigung über die Lebensspanne. Weinheim, 2023.

CZECH RUSSIANS: TOGETHER YET DIVIDED. DIFFERENTIATING NARRATIVES ABOUT CZECHOSLOVAK LEGIONS IN ORAL-HISTORICAL INTERVIEWS

Irina Šulc, Igor Zavorotchenko,

At the end of 2022, the research project “Czech Russians and crossroads of modern and contemporary history: biographical interviews” was completed. The project was focused on research into the historical memory of people who claim Russian nationality, language, and culture and who have also lived in the Czech Republic for a long time or permanently. The research took place over the course of approximately three years: from April 2020 to December 2022. The project was financed by the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University within the framework of the Specific University Research grant (Project SVV 260 608 / 2020: Historical-anthropological research.) Our research team was interested in the relationship of Czech Russians to key issues of modern Czech-Russian history, among which the story of the Czechoslovak legions (1914–1918) was focused on.

Several dominant narratives emerged when discussing and interpreting this issue within the interviews conducted during the course of the research. At the same time, it was observed that the assessment of Czechoslovak legionnaires as historical actors is to some extent homogeneous and rather negative in nature. The authors will therefore consider whether this is mainly due to a specific post-Soviet perspective of the narrators and the resulting assessment of the Czechoslovak legionnaires' actions on the territory of the former Russian Empire during the civil war. These opinions, it is surmised, are partially corrected due to the influence of education obtained in the Czech Republic or because of a relatively long stay here.

The narrators initially evaluated and interpreted the role of the Czechoslovak legionnaires in Russia and gave only secondary consideration to the contribution of the legionnaires in the creation of the Czechoslovak state. However, the initial negative assessment of the role of Czechoslovak legionnaires in Russia also affected further interpretation. The topic of the Czechoslovak legionnaires was presented in the collective memory of the studied Russians with an unambiguously negative connotation. This was also observed in those narrators who tried to take a neutral position or even justify the actions of the legionnaires in Russia. Notably, each narrator presented only one interpretation of these events.

Eight narratives were identified during the study, two of which were most repeated. The first contained reflections on whether the legionnaires were heroes if they committed robberies and murders in Russian territory as well as their betrayal of admiral Kolchak (he was handed over to the Soviets, which predictably led to his death). The second is related to the discussion about the mythologized appropriation of part of the Russian gold treasure by the Czechoslovak legionnaires and the subsequent establishment of the Bank of the Czechoslovak Legions in Prague as well as the overall prosperity of the newly created country. The third narrative is referred to by the well-known French

expression à la guerre comme à la guerre”, or in other words ‘war is war, and no one is to blame’.

The results indicated that young people who studied at Czech schools and universities had the most negative perspective when evaluating the legionnaires in Russia and Czechoslovakia. These narrators had a very poor idea of the historical events of that time and therefore cannot evaluate them at all. Such responses could be explained by the fact that for this generation, this historical event has little meaning; the events took place more than 100 years ago and are outside their living memory. Another explanation may be related to the specific emerging position of a person who, after entering a new cultural environment, was unable to become sufficiently rooted in it, and therefore has difficulty evaluating some events from the past.

At the same time, it should be noted that some narrators talked about the fact that, after discovering gaps in their knowledge of Czech history, they decided to pay more attention to it by reading books, watching films etc. In connection with the Czechoslovak legions in Russia, the narrators often mention the Czech writer Jaroslav Hašek. Hašek fought on the side of the Bolsheviks during the Russian Civil War and his book, *The Fate of the Good Soldier Švejk*, is a widely popular satirical war novel.

The topic of Czechoslovak legions in Russia is also interesting because several of our narrators came from Siberia or the Urals. In these cases, they are often the bearers of living historical memory from their families or their close environs.

Other narratives included (although were rarely found) the following: the legionary rebellion as a trigger for civil war in Russia; the legionnaires as an important phenomenon for the Czech Republic and not for Russia; a lot of monuments to the legionnaires in Russia do not fit; the legionnaires fought on the side of the Bolsheviks, striving for the good of all; the legionnaires played no role in the history of Czechoslovakia at all.

Considering the examples of differentiating narratives, they not only divide Russians into several groups but – even more significantly – separate them from the Czechs, in whose neighbourhoods they live and with whom they have had constant contact for a long time.

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DIARY OF A WAR YEAR: ETHICS AND INTERVIEWS WITH UKRAINIAN WAR REFUGEES

Radmila Švaříčková Slabáková

The brutal invasion of Ukraine by Russia on 24 February 2022 has changed the lives of many Czechs. Hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian war refugees have crossed the Czech borders and sought shelter in this country. Czechs showed an unprecedented willingness to help, feed and house the war refugees. This contribution is a personal confession from one of those many Czechs and describes her encounters with Ukrainian war refugees. In a situation when the traditional line between an oral historian by profession and by occasion is blurred, it is still a privilege of the former to think about the ethical constraints and limits of doing oral history with war refugees.

This paper is an attempt to share, as immediately and frankly as possible, the thoughts, doubts and hesitations grown in the soul of an oral historian who considers a unique opportunity. The form of a written diary has been chosen as corresponding best to the author's ends and contributing in this way to the hidden sides of oral history that are not usually presented in front of an audience, a sort of oral history off the record.²³ The contribution depicts the inner struggles of the oral historian's soul starting on 3 March 2022 when she entered the Centre for Assisting Ukrainian Refugees carrying a few sandwiches and fruit for them until the eve of the conference on 8 February 2023 where her paper on the interviews with Ukrainian war refugees was to be presented.

The inner fight was triggered by the paradoxical situation where potential partners for interviews are present almost at every turn (and the author's knowledge of Russian and her enthusiasm for learning the Ukrainian language could have facilitated this), yet they cannot be approached and invited to provide an interview. There is a collision between, on the one hand, the oral historian's impetus to embark on a crisis oral history for which unique conditions have now arisen and may not be repeated, and on the other hand, ethical inhibitions due to the potentially traumatic experience of refugees who were forced to flee their home and cross the borders (and media have consolidated this tragic and traumatic experience).²⁴

The contribution openly presents questions and hesitations arising from this irresolvable contradiction. Is it morally ethical to profit from the tragedy of others? Is it morally ethical to profit from the war? If there had not been a war, an opportunity for oral history interviews would not have arisen. Is it fair to interview those who have just escaped death? And even if I could overcome these obstacles, could I accept being a vulnerable listener, in the words of Marta Norkunas, accepting stories about the blood, shooting and death?²⁵

23 Sheftel, A. – Zembrzycki, S. (eds.): *Oral History of f the Record: Toward an Ethnography of Practice*. New York 2013.

24 Cave, M. – Sloan, S. M. (eds.): *Listening on the Edge: Oral History in the Aftermath of Crisis*. Oxford 2014.

25 Norkunas, M.: *The Vulnerable Listener*. In: Sheftel, A. – Zembrzycki, S. (eds.): *Oral History Off the Record*. New York 2013, pp. 81–96.

A war-torn state of mind, fed by omnipresent media reporting on the atrocities taking place in Ukraine, is depicted as even more depressed by listening to the stories of friends who began to share their houses with Ukrainian refugees. This inevitably leads to the question of who has the moral right to interview Ukrainians. How can one or more oral history interviews be compared to the almost anthropological and ethnographical position of many Czechs who can better than me at reporting on the experience of Ukrainian refugees? The traditional form of oral history is put under question.

Several occasions are depicted when I failed as an oral historian whose profession dictates her to be aware of a unique moment of history that is to be preserved for the future. This also happened in a newly established Ukrainian house where clothes collected for Ukrainian refugees were sorted in the presence of a few Ukrainian women. What was my goal there? To help or to obtain an interview partner? Similarly, my ignorance of Ukrainian Romani people, who could have been approached quite easily, has attacked my professional honour and led to another series of questions: Do we have the right to choose our interview partners even in extreme situations?

The contribution questions the limits of conventional oral history and invites us to modify our traditional approach towards it. In extreme situations, do we have time to prepare a design for oral history interviews? Is there even an occasion to sit down calmly and let an interview be recorded? My invitation for the oral historians of extreme situations is to get closer to journalism without, however, losing sight of the ethical issues. In this way, can a chat with a neighbour in the next seat in the coach be considered an oral history interview, or a conversation in a café with two Ukrainian women and their two children? The line between the interviewee and interviewer can be blurred in these situations due to the spontaneity of both interview partners.²⁶ As Portelli has argued: "Our task is not merely to extract information, but to open up narrative spaces."²⁷

Finally, I proceed in my paper to three oral history interviews I was able to collect, though online. Extreme situations force us to become flexible and accept various forms of interviews. The three women that I interviewed portray three different strategies on how to cope with the war and refugee situations (two of them found refuge in France, one in Poland). However, my interviews with them also tested my ability to accept a previously unacceptable form of interview (one of the interviewees was cleaning the dishes during the first part of our interview) and reinforced my conviction of the knowledge of languages necessary for oral historians in the contemporary globalized world (one of my interviews was conducted in English, two in Russian).

26 Frisch, M.: *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History*. New York 1990.

27 Portelli, A.: *Living Voices: The Oral History Interview as Dialogue and Experience*. *The Oral History Review* 45(2), 2018, pp. 239–248.

The paper closes by reflecting upon the meaning of my personal diary. On the one hand, the war in Ukraine (and just before it, the COVID-19 pandemic) demonstrated that our traditional vision of oral history needs to be modified. On the other hand, extreme situations test our own positions of oral historians and make us examine ourselves.

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AVION DWELLERS – HOW TO DO RESEARCH AT HOME?

Lubica Voľanská

The life stories of ordinary people are intertwined with important events of the past in the most colourful ways. In my research, I tried to grasp the story(ies) of one particular apartment building in Bratislava, and so, through the stories of its inhabitants, get closer to the big history. Many of the aspects analysed through the statements of the inhabitants of the house Avion are universal for the history of our region. In different variations and shades, the actions and stories took place not only in other similar apartment buildings in Bratislava but also influenced the lives of residents in other cities in Slovakia. At the same time, new impulses are emerging for developing research into everyday life, especially in the politics of memory and forgetting, the history of cooperative housing policies in Slovakia in the 20th century, and community methods of care for housing today.

My contribution focuses on challenges related to doing anthropology at home and at home - in Slovakia, in Bratislava and in the house where I spent my childhood and youth. In 2020-2022, I collected over 40 in-depth interviews with several residents of the Avionhouse of different generations. I focused primarily on the generation born in the 1930s and 1940s. Considering the age of my respondents, I believe this research to be saving research to a large extent because it captured the memories of some of the dwellers at the last moment.

The biographical narrative interviews were supplemented by further interviews with questions related to the house itself, life in it, memories of its inhabitants and the changes that time brought. The conversations often covered topics that were difficult to process and convey. Different groups of house residents moved in and out, not always of their own free will. Their movement thus reflects the historical events of the 20th century, including turning points such as the Second World War; the coup in February 1948; Action B, which forced residents who were inconvenient for the communist regime to leave the cities; the Prague Spring followed by the invasion of the Warsaw Pact troops in Czechoslovakia in August 1968, the normalisation period in the 1970s and other events. The more the stories related to events that happened in the recent past, the more sensitive my research partners and I perceived them to be.

In the paper, I focus on finding a border and trying to separate myself from the cultural immersion after each interview while realising that the definition of the other needs to be constantly reviewed.²⁸ When conducting research at home, the same ethical and methodological aspects should be applied to any other type of research.

In this context, it may be worth pointing out how in the insidersness-outsidersness continuum, the action that the indigenous anthropologist in the field performs by hiding aspects of his identity in order to approach or, conversely, to gain distance from his informants, is in no way different from how a non-indigenous

28 Geertz, C.: The interpretation of cultures: Selected essays. New York 1973.

anthropologist moves on a scale of relative distance from the indigenous other under investigation.²⁹

The people of Avion decided to tell especially those stories that are nice. I chose to respect this decision, as we felt that with the book, we would like to pay tribute to for them an exceptional building of the 20th century. In addition, we consider their decision as one of the proofs that the relationship of the residents to the house and the place where it was created is positive mainly because they are aware of its importance, at least within the capital city. At the same time, the dwellers remember it as a pleasant and practical house for life during its existence, which, in short, worked well. They probably would not comment on a place where they grew up and lived poorly with nice stories. At the same time, the Avion building had probably maintained its exceptionality only because its dwellers worked together at crucial moments and made certain specific decisions when needed.

Thus, the discussion of the results of the research work brings additional challenges, as the final text or narrative should give a voice to each participant. It made me think about how we (ethnologists/anthropologists) analyse our sources and interviews and write about our findings. I had to consider whether my former neighbours would like what they could read in the book about Avion and their lives. Although the authors try to adhere to emic terms, i.e. those used by the residents, they were not always reflected in the same way by everyone in the interviews. Since the story of the Avion house is a mosaic based on the memories and stories of my former neighbours, often carrying conflicting messages, I decided to discuss the individual parts of the resulting text and my analysis with them. This participatory approach can lead to an even more significant blurring of the methodological distinction between the I and them.

29 Surra, C. A. – Ridley, C. A.: Multiple perspectives on interaction: Participants, peers, and observers. In: Montgomery, B. M. – Duck, S (eds.): Studying interpersonal interaction. New York – London 1991, pp. 35–55.

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She is interested in research and project design, including methodological tools and project management, where she enjoys working with people from various backgrounds. As the main editor of the Journal Slovenský národopis/Slovak Ethnology, she recognises the importance of presenting scholarly knowledge on any topic in an understandable way.

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30 Haberlandová, K. – Voľanská, L.: Avion. Bratislava 2021.

THE ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW AS A SPACE FOR EXPLORING THE LIMITS OF THE RESEARCHER'S PERSONAL CAPACITIES.

Monika Vrzgulová

Alessandro Portelli writes that interviews are 'transformative for the narrator as well as the listener'³¹. Anyone who has worked with the oral history method for a long time probably understands what Portelli meant and has had a similar experience.

During an oral history interview, we have to deal with many predictable and unpredictable tasks and challenges. It presents a space where two subjectivities, value systems and a range of attitudes come into confrontation. It tests not only our expertise and professionalism but also our human qualities and dispositions. What are our possibilities to process such encounters with our own vulnerability, emotions and feelings - with the limits of one's own capabilities?

I do not see oral history as just "doing an interview," as a way to "get something from the storyteller and record it." On the contrary, I see oral history as a complex process: from the preparatory meetings, to the conducting of the interview, to its processing, archiving, analysis and interpretation. It has been a long journey for me, one in which I am expanding my theoretical and methodological knowledge and working to hone my own skills necessary to tackle the research adventure. I am convinced that every researcher working with the oral history method, has experienced situations that have been a great challenge, a stepping out of their comfort zone and at the same time a lesson, a learning that has pushed them to a qualitatively higher professional level.

According to Martha Norkunas, what the interviewer experiences during the interview is a *between state or embodied presence*. This translates into the transformational process, whereby we allow ourselves to be changed by the respondents' stories. All future interviews are different because we, the researchers, are different. In each subsequent interview, we can see more, and we can explore the interviewee's past in a deeper and more meaningful way.³² My approach to interviewing influenced the work of Alessandro Portelli, who argues that oral history is about searching for meaning; Ronald Grele, who sees interviews as negotiating the dialectical tension of history and myth in people's minds; Geoffrey Hartman, who talked about the duty of researchers to listen to Holocaust survivors and give them the space to speak for themselves. Finally yet importantly, I was influenced by the work and ideas of Henry Greenspan, whose methodology brings academic interpretation into the interview space, as an important part of it, rather than, as a result of it.³³

31 Portelli A. 'Afterword', in *Oral History Off Record. Toward an Ethnography of Practice*, eds. Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki. Palgrave Macmillan 2013, pp. 273-286.

32 Martha Norkunas, 'Vulnerable listener', in *Oral History Off Record. Toward an Ethnography of Practice*, eds. Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembrzycki, Palgrave Macmillan, 2013, pp. 81-96. here 82.

33 Portelli A. *The Death of Luigi Trastulli*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1991; Grele, 'Movement Without Aim: Methodological and Theoretical Problems in Oral History', In: Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, eds. *The Oral*

Alessandro Portelli describes oral history as “a work in progress”, which is important to keep in mind. In order to improve our work, we need to see our narrators as complex personalities. It is always necessary to reflect before, during and after a research interview on the variety of determinants that may influence and co-create it. Alternatively, to return repeatedly to our narrators, interviews and research notes. In my work, I have adopted oral historian and psychologist Hank Greenspan’s approach, based on getting to know each other over a long period of time and multiple interviews with a particular narrator, what he calls ‘learning with the survivor/narrator’. This way of working allows us better understand what our research partners really want to tell us in conversation, and at the same time helps us to push the boundaries - the limits of our personal and professional capacities.

This never-ending process naturally led me to “discover” the method of autoethnography and reflective writing as a great help to myself. Autoethnography helps me to understand and process the multi-layered knowledge I gain through research. It is often a complex and fragile process as I try to balance what I need to process internally and what I am selecting for public presentation.³⁴ The autoethnographic method offers me insight into the whole process - the construction of the interview and the relationship between its actors. It also presents the outcome, the knowledge we gain through research.³⁵

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34 Behar, R. The Vulnerable Observer. Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart. Boston: Beacon Press 1996, p. 19.

35 Ellis, C., Adams, T. E., & Bochner, A. P. ‘Autoethnography: an overview’, Historical Social Research, 36(4), 2011, pp. 273-290, here 277.

“CZECH-ISH”: EXPLORING IDENTITY AND BELONGING IN EXILE AMONG CZECHS IN CALIFORNIA

Anna Caroline West

Identity involves a person's sense of self, with an individual's identity bound to social categories whereby the individual identifies with people in some categories and differentiates themselves from those in others.³⁶ As such, the formation of identity involves different aspects of self-definition, often involving an interplay between ethnic, national, and personal identities. In the case of a person in exile, their self-concept about their identity can undergo a profound transformation when they find themselves outside of their home country. How, then, do those in exile describe their experiences of identity and belonging?

This ongoing oral history research project studies the experiences of identity, integration, and community among Czechs who emigrated from Czechoslovakia to California between 1960 and 1970. Much of the current research on Czech immigrants in the United States focuses on ethnic identity, especially among Czechs that arrived in the late 19th and early 20th century and, over time, established Czech-American communities in New York, Illinois, Nebraska, and Texas. The purpose of this research is to fill in a gap in our knowledge about Czechs that settled in California, of which less is known. It is important to understand this community, as California became an increasingly popular destination for Czechs in the 1960s, with the population of Czechoslovak³⁷ immigrants increasing 18% percent between the start and end of the decade.³⁸

The study employs the oral history method to access the subjective memories of Czech narrators and to understand the narrators' experiences of identity, integration, and sense of community in California. Initial findings from oral history interviews with narrators, and their personal archives, point to the significance of community and cultural organizations like Sokol Los Angeles, as well as religious ones like the Czech Catholic Mission, in creating a sense of community for Czechs upon their arrival. For instance, to reach the local community, Sokol Los Angeles published a monthly publication, "Sokol Notes." One 1979 edition³⁹ of "Sokol Notes" provided by a narrator features a greeting to Sokol members; a short essay on old literary magazines; a review of Czech hockey games and scores; advertisements for businesses in the Los Angeles area; a notice about

36 Akerlof, G. – Kranton, R.: Economics and Identity. *Q J Econ*, (115)3, 2000, p. 715–753.

37 Census data on the arrival during this period refers to "Czechoslovak" arrival.

38 U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population: 1960, Vol 1*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1960), Table 99, respective state volumes. U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population: 1970, Vol 1*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1970), Table 141, respective state volumes. U.S. Department of Commerce. Bureau of the Census, *Census of the Population: 1980, Vol 1*, (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1980), Table 195, respective state volumes, as cited in Table 3.4 in Smith, P. D.: *The decline of Czechoslovak America: An examination of Czechoslovak immigration and adjustment to the United States since 1960*. The University of Tulsa ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 1992, p. 94.

39 Fuchsová, Jiřina (1979, May). [Sokol Notes, produced by Sokol Los Angeles]. Copy in possession of Jiřina Fuchsová, private collection.

an upcoming music performance in Los Angeles; and a notice about an upcoming Sokol LA “pic-nic” in North Hollywood. “Sokol Notes” demonstrates how Czechs in Los Angeles kept in contact through the dissemination of cultural products, such as Czech poetry, and event listings that brought the community together in person.

Archival materials also suggest that Czech immigrants in California integrated often by establishing relationships with other existing European-American groups and cultural organizations. For example, photographs⁴⁰ from 1973 show how Sokol Los Angeles hosted a cross-cultural dance showcase with other European émigré groups, suggesting a broader sense of community among Central Europeans in exile. Apart from cultural and community organizations, on an individual level, some narrators’ recollections demonstrate the importance of other Central Europeans in California in establishing local connections and cultivating a sense of community. In the absence of a Czech community, one narrator turned to other European émigrés in her city for a sense of belonging and solidarity. She integrated into what she calls a “European little group” – a small cohort of Central European families that aided one another.

In sum, interviews with narrators and materials from personal archives show that Czechs who emigrated to California in the 1960s often integrated by establishing connections with local Czech cultural and community organizations, such as Sokol Los Angeles and the Czech Catholic Mission. These organizations were instrumental in creating an environment whereby Czech émigrés could meet in person or participate in the dissemination or consumption of cultural products, like Czech poetry or songs. Czechs also connected with European-American community groups and individuals, suggesting they viewed their identity in a broader, Central European context. This is not to say that Czechs in California did not identify as Czech, but rather that the conditions of exile created the necessity for Czech arrivals in the 1960s to seek out other Central Europeans who could help them with information, advice, and local connections to integrate and establish a sense of community. Further research as part of this ongoing project will seek to identify additional characteristics relating to the narrators’ understanding of their identities.

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40 Fuchsová, Jiřina (1973, 15 April). [Sokol Los Angeles dance competition]. Copy in possession of Jiřina Fuchsová, private collection.

ORAL HISTORY AND HISTORICAL BIOGRAPHY: BETWEEN FRIENDS AND FOES

Jana Wohlmuth Markupová

This paper reflects on my more than a decade-long experience with biographical research, both fully or partly dependent on oral history. The research and the subsequent books were focused on the personalities of Václav Havel's family circles, at first on Ivan M. Havel, his brother, and the latter on Hugo Vavrečka, his grandfather,⁴¹ and have helped me realize how similar or different biographical approach to historical research and oral history may be.

First, it is important to say, that biography does have an ambiguous position in the historical sciences. Some would refer to it as one of the "hardest historical genres", others would call it an "academic suicide", implicitly or explicitly calling it too old school or simply outdated, as an approach, that cannot be justified in the 21st century. Whatever we think of biographies, it is safe to say that it still is one of the best-selling book genres, which – in my opinion – caused, that their authors subsequently moved outside of academia and wrote their books as freelancers, without having to discuss their methodology, etc. That began to change circa twenty years ago, in the age of the so-called biographical turn, when historians, who worked at universities, started to engage in biographical research again and knew they needed to reflect on the theory and methodology of their research in order to stay scholarly relevant. This turn led to the first serious attempts to find a new theoretical framework for biographical research.

One of the pioneers has been the Biography Institute at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, which was founded by Professor Hans Renders, who – along with his colleagues – published some of the first serious books on this topic: *Theoretical Discussions of Biography. Approaches from History, Microhistory, and Life Writing* and most recently *Fear of Theory. Towards a New Theoretical Justification of Biography*. In these books Renders defines historical biography as an output of historical research, which respects all standards of a scholarly work such as any other historical research, except it is not focused on a topic, but rather on an individual and his or her life story.

It is exactly concepts and notions like this, that do resemble oral history, in which we usually try to capture the life stories of our narrators, we aim to understand their perspective and how they make sense of their own life. Yet, historical biographies are very rare in the Czech oral history circles and historical biographers only occasionally use oral history in their research. So, is there a common ground, and why haven't these two met yet?

In oral history, most research projects are focused on the topic: a certain period,

41 Wohlmuth Markupová, J.: *Ivan M. Havel. Od Puzuka k Sakatekovi (1938–1989)*. Praha 2017; Wohlmuth Markupová, J.: *Soukromá válka Huga Vavrečky. Mikrohistorie z rozhraní soudobých dějin (1945–1952)*. Praha 2022.

event, community, location, problem, type of profession, etc., and the way we conduct interviews with our narrators is influenced by that. Although we usually start with a life story, it is the second semi-structured interview that brings the questions that we primarily want to answer in our research.

In historical biography, we often hear wishes, “if only we could talk to our main character”, yet it rarely happens. The above-mentioned book *Fear of Theory* can serve as a typical example. Its authors often mention interviews, that they use, but it is usually journalistic interviews, i.e., already existing interviews. We can sometimes see ambitions to record interviews with close friends or family members of the biographed person because the main actors of the biographical research have typically already passed away, but only sporadically can we see biographies of still living personalities while using oral history as one of the main methods. Why? For both, the explanation seems to be quite prosaic and practical.

What happens in oral history, in research focused on the topic, rather than on a personality, if our narrator declines and does not want to record an interview? Or if he or she wants to withdraw his or her informed consent? We may try to negotiate, but even if we are not successful, we can simply contact other potential narrators. The rhetorical question is inevitable: what happens, if the main narrator declines or withdraws informed consent in biographical research? We would have to restructure the whole project or even maybe terminate it.

The same applies to historical biography: the idea of talking to the main actor of our research is intriguing, but when I once presented my oral history-based biographical research about Ivan M. Havel, the reaction was almost universal: “but when you could talk to him, it means that... he could also have a say in your research?” This reaction is understandable: all scholars value their research freedom and the idea of being “censored” or simply influenced by the people, they write about – especially in such a “one on one” type of research as biography is – is simply triggering.

But whether we incline to biographical research or not, I think that – based on my experience – oral history-based biographical research seems to be rising as well as historical biographies as such, and I, therefore, find it important that we focus on the above-mentioned methodological aspects of both types of research, that, in my opinion, can only benefit from any form of collaboration.

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NARRATIVE PERSPECTIVE OF MEMBERS OF CIVIC FORUM ON THE COMMUNIST PERSECUTION RELATED TO 1968 IN THE FRONTIER TOWN OF ZNOJMO

Jan Zerbst

This article analysis the part of results of the research, which took place in the frontier town of Znojmo. It was participated by former members of the Civic Forum in this frontier town. The narrator's entry into the Civic Forum and subsequently his active participation in the events of the Velvet Revolution was a condition for the inclusion of the narrator in the research.

During the interview, the narrators presented their socialization. The socialization is a comprehensive process in which a person becomes a social and cultural being through social interaction. The space where socialization takes place is located in subjective and objective reality as Thomas Luckmann and Peter L. Berger write about it. The narrators present socializing factors using narrative. Narrative is understood as a semantic structure that organizes things into wholes thereby attributing the meaning of actions to individuals and events according to their influence on the whole. Socialization itself serves to form our future attitudes, which come to the fore in the narrative as the narrative identity of the narrator. This term was introduced by Paul Ricoeur. According to him, the individual and society build their identity by accepting narratives, which in both cases, become their true history. Individuals and society recognize themselves in the history they tell about themselves. Thanks to this, the narrator presents his value maxims during the interview in order to orient himself in the symbolic world of society. These attitudes are influenced by socialization, which affects our identity, and therefore ideological views are reflected in our attitudes.

The narrator's narrative analysis proceed through thoughts of Norman Fairclough. He monitors how parts of society form a discourse, an interpretation on certain topics. The discourse conceives in a three-layer form as a text, a discursive and social practice. My analyses proceed in three phases: explain the interpretation of the presented events (interpretation), study the formal aspect of the narrator's speech (description), and explain the socio-cultural background of thereproduced dialogue (explanation).

The socialization areas they described during interviews consisted of six areas: 1. the phenomenon of family as a whole; 2. the phenomen of the dominant parent; 3. the phenomenon of mentoring; 4. faith as a socializing determinant for the behaviour of narrators; 5. the communist persecution of family members of narrators related to 1948; 6. the communist persecution of family members and narrators related to 1968. This extended abstract deals with the last area, which is hidden under the number 6.

Data collection was carried out using the oral history method. A particular type of oral history interview was the narrative interview by Alfred Schütze. The narrative interviews are specific, because they give the narrators the freedom to construct memories.

However, the narrators were influenced during this research by: archival sources, a close person (husband/wife) and the interviewer. The interviewer entered the interview in four specific cases: 1. to assist the narrator in remembering the past; 2. to make sure he understood the narrator's train of thought; 3. if the narrator himself asked the interviewer a question; 4. using the question, the interviewer tried to talk introverts and sick people.

The persecution of family members and narrators after 1968 was exclusively connected with the events of 21 August 1968 and everyday life during normalization. In their narratives, the narrators remembered the expulsion of their parents from the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which complicated their future studies. Older generations could not find a qualified work because of their disagreement with the entry of Warsaw Pact troops in 1968. The narrators witnessed racial discrimination during the construction of the Dukovany Nuclear Power Plant. Some narrators mentioned confrontations with the National Security Corps, known in Czechoslovakia under the abbreviation SNB.

The example of a specific memory is presented by the narrator Pavel Babula, whose father was dismissed after 1968 and who subsequently had a complicated access to education: "It wasn't that I suffered for it, I just took it myself as an injustice, but in the end I got to grammar school and when I finished grammar school they directly told me that I couldn't go to *pajdák* [Faculty of Education], that I couldn't study law, I wanted to do history and [...] I wanted to do archaeology. They didn't open it, I would have had a little chance of getting there, because at that time it was completely marginal, and the only one who helped me was the class teacher here at the grammar school [in Znojmo] who advised me to try medicine, because politics wasn't so much discussed there."

The excerpt (explanation) showed that the narrator's father had been in the Communist Party until 1968 and opposed the entry of the Warsaw Pact troops. Thereafter, he was expelled from the party and his acquaintances were behind it. Interpretation: The plot of the story describes to the narrator the complications associated with his father's expulsion from the Communist Party. Figures who were not personified tried to complicate the narrator's study. Description: which also complicated the existence of the narrator P. B., whose life was marked by the expulsion of his father from the party and his strong religious feelings, which in retrospect he felt it was an "injustice". Using the negative verb "I cannot" he emphasized the impossibility of studying at schools. Although the narratives of events are not unified, the resulting narratives can be categorized as narratives of fear, injustice, unfulfilled expectations, contempt and morality.

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(UN)ORDINARY STORIES OF WOMEN'S MEMORY? BOUNDARIES OF GENDER AND EVERYDAY LIFE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA BETWEEN 1945 AND 1993

Marie Koval

The word boundary evokes countless possible meanings. In this paper, I was interested in the boundaries of everyday life, limit experiences in human life, and breakthrough periods in the lives of the women who shared their stories as part of our oral history project, Czechoslovakia in Women's Memory. I was also interested in what were the boundary topics or taboos they had to deal with. How they overcame the boundaries of gender norms, the boundaries of their own minds or the boundaries of relationships. In feminist research, then boundary can evoke breaking the silence of those who have not yet had the space to have their own voice and be heard.

I draw on stories from the project Czechoslovakia in Women's Memory, for which we have created an educational platform www.pametzen.cz which serves to enrich history teaching with the history of everyday life from the perspective of women. It uses stories of women of different generations, professions, experiences or backgrounds. Based on the interviews, we created 10 animated videos with exercises for schools as well as factual texts on the history of everyday life for the historical context. We focused on the topics of housing, leisure time, personal life, sexuality, women's employment, etc.

Boundaries of work, boundaries of emancipation

One of the entry themes in the narrative of childhood is certainly the poverty line. Many of the women I interviewed came from very poor backgrounds. It was their childhood in poverty that so predetermined their starting position. Marie C. was born in 1945 in a small village in Moravia. For financial reasons, only her brother could go to university, so at the age of 15 she went to work in a factory where she made parts for measuring instruments. She herself says that „I liked going to work so much that I was ashamed to say it. I felt so much like I didn't even need the money for the job in the beginning, how happy and glad I was going to work.“ Thanks to a regular income, Marie was able to become at least partially independent. She subsequently trained as an electrical-mechanic and later she was one of the few women at the time earning the same (or more) than some men in the same industry. She was very proud of her work throughout her life and saw it as satisfaction after her poor childhood.

Gender role boundaries: “I was the breadwinner”

During her lifetime, Věra L. (b. 1929) changed many jobs, working in a bank, in car repair shops or at the town hall. She gradually worked her way up to the position of production assistant in film studios, which was very unusual for a woman at that time. After the birth of her two sons, she stayed at home with the children and, since her husband was an protestant minister by profession and his salary would not support their family, she learned to knit gloves to earn extra money. Later she worked in film studios in Prague and as she says of herself, „I was always the breadwinner, even when I earned little“.

The boundaries of silence and taboo

Discussions about the history of sexuality and gender have now moved on a great deal, but thematising the everyday life and reflecting on specific stories and lived experiences of women still remain relatively marginal. In the interviews I draw on, women gradually opened up several taboo topics, such as divorce, contraception, menstruation and abortion. In some of the stories, it was necessary to read between the lines, as the line between silence and pain is very thin, and so, for example, the topic of suicide, hereditary trauma, or domestic violence and sexual abuse were opened up.

Separated, yet still together: What kept us together was sex

Hana Š. (*1922), originally from a small Moravian town, studied English and French and became a translator. After the arrest of her husband (in the Vyšehrad publishing house trial), she was for a long time unable to find a qualified job due to her poor cadre profile. After her husband was released, she faced a new challenge: after a long separation, when she had become completely independent and emancipated, she had to learn to function in a relationship again. „Our relationship, it was like starting over. The terrible contrast from my total dependence before. (...) And I have to say that what kept us together was sex. We had no other interests, no other points of contact. It's a lot of things that get in the way...“.

On the Edge of Life.

Věra K. (*1956) was born in Ostrava into a Jewish family of musicians originally from Romania and lived in Prague since the age of two. She graduated from the conservatory and became a violinist. At a young age she accidentally became pregnant and decided to have an abortion. Besides the abortion, she also talks about her mental health, her suicide attempt, her search for her own identity, her later divorce and what it was like to become a single mother.

By working towards emancipation, by overcoming stereotypes towards liberation

The above fragments of micro-history of the five stories show that women crossed boundaries in different ways. Whether due to the very poor circumstances of their own family or a change in the family situation (imprisonment, illness of a family member, divorce) or the need to earn extra income during maternity or parental leave. In spite of society's expectations, some of them worked in positions that were not very common for women at the time, thus becoming pioneers for others. They were quick to react to life changes, learn new skills, and overcome the boundaries of difficult or manipulative relationships or stereotypes in society. Women's ability to earn a living and make decisions about the direction of their lives and their bodies gave them confidence and a sense of control over their lives. Through self-education and work, women thus became self-realized, independent, and emancipated. Crossing multiple boundaries of taboo and silence is therefore still very meaningful and significant, and in order to understand the complexity of the human experience, history must also be written in terms of the everyday history, of gender and of sexuality.

Details of the lives of the women mentioned and other stories, including teaching materials for history classes, can be found at www.pametzen.cz.

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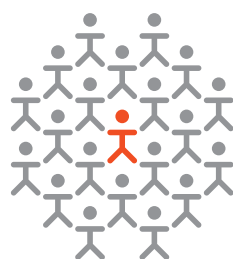
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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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