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MA Thesis

Witness of Czechoslovakia

Case Study of Czech Communist of Jewish Origin.

By

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Preface

In this MA thesis I deal with a life story and the way I do it should not be understood as a personal adoration of the interviewed person but rather as sympathy for his particularity. I aimed a description of a unique life of a person witnessing almost all the important events of Czechoslovak and Czech political history. The interviewee was not a passive member of the society but he was actively involved in the events and he could refer to them in detail, which, unfortunately, is not automatic for all his coevals. The interviewee died in 2005 in the age of 92 years.

My work was inspired by the lectures of PhDr. Blanka Soukupová at Faculty of Humanities, Charles University in Prague, that shaped my research focus and encouraged me in completing the records of the interviewee's life story. I would like to thank Mgr. Margot Trojánková and Peter MacDonagh who patiently read my interview transcripts translated in English and helped to transform them in a comprehensive language.

Finally, I shall use this opportunity to thank my supervisors Judith Narowe PhD. and doc. PhDr. Ladislav Cabada, PhD. for much of helpful advice and quick responses on my work, as well as Miroslav Vaněk PhD. from the Center of Oral History at the Institute of Contemporary History in Prague and my good friends and student colleagues who contributed with their suggestions, feedbacks and support. Without these persons this MA thesis would never be born.

Tomáš Bouška

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"Although everyone cannot be a Gargantua-Napoleon-Bismarck and walk off with the great bells of Notre Dame, everyone must bear his own universe, and most persons are moderately interested in learning how their neighbours have managed to carry theirs"

--Henry Adams. The Education of Henry Adams (1918)

Chapter 1

Introduction

When I was a child I happened to meet a friend of my grandparents. The person was a man, slightly older than my grandfather and he was the kind of person that invited attention and people automatically paid respect to him. Being a child, I was especially impressed by one specific sign on his forearm because that was one of the things that made him different from other people. He was wearing a tattoo on his forearm. But it was not a usual tattoo that people normally wear. His tattoo consisted from only one thing. A number. On his forearm there were several digits tattooed, no pictures, no names or symbols, just digits. What is more, the digits were not nicely written; they looked quite ugly and had to be tattooed in a great hurry, it seemed. When I asked my parents and grandparents what did the number mean, they always made me be quiet. Simply none of the adults wanted to speak about it and explain this little mystery. It was much later when I found out the digits were tattooed in a Nazi concentration camp. It was the moment I started to be interested in a life story of this person.

The purpose of this paper is to deliver an unwritten lived history of former Czechoslovakia and today's Czech Republic based on an interview conducted with a Czech political prisoner of Jewish origin. My aim is to preserve personal perceptions of the Czech/Slovak past in order to provide the reader with a human reflection of history. The empirical data for doing so is provided by a life story interview that I conducted with the interviewee at his home in Prague. I will use the collected data and stressed experiences and I will give a brief introduction to history of former Czechoslovakia and today's Czech Republic from a unique, lived perspective. The interview will make the reader familiar with reflections the most important events and changes that took place in Central Europe during last one hundred years as seen from the memories of the interviewed narrator, now 92 years of age.

Clearly, this thesis does not aspire to give an objective description of 20th century history of Czech/Slovakia. On the contrary, it provides readers with a personal point of view of a Czech/Slovak atheist, an old timer of Jewish origin who experienced the history. I will argue that the combination of long age, minority origin and political orientation of the

interviewed person ensures a wide amount of unwritten historical memories of unique type. The value of this MA thesis does not lay only in the self-selected information about a representative of a particular minority group among Czechoslovak society; it helps to explain the historical context of today's Czech Republic from a human perspective. It describes the person as feelings, hopes and perceptions of the past, which brings another, and perhaps needed aspect of studying history. "Learning about others' perceptions, we can see both how our own are not universal and how they could be enriched."¹ That means this MA Thesis intends to provide the reader with a self-selected description of lived history by a person witnessing key events of the former Czechoslovakia and today's Czech Republic. It shows how a life story constructs lives, provides them with meaning and goals and ties them to a culture. I believe such an act is relevant not only for those interested in former Czechoslovakia, but also those interested in key issues of the 20th century in general. This MA thesis is therefore intended for all to whom personal perception of 20th century history matters.

To distinguish the described époques the interview is structured around four chronological intervals of the Czechoslovak past: 1) the era of so-called Czechoslovak First Republic (1918 – 1938); 2) the era of military occupation of the country by Nazi Germany (1938-1945); 3) the era of political take over and control by Czechoslovak Communists (1948-1989) and, finally; 4) the era of establishment of democratic Czechoslovakia and birth of the Czech Republic (1989 and 1993/1999). This separation is not done according to official historical events but according to the informant's perception of his life story; it is him who divides the story into four chronological chapters.

The focus of my MA thesis is three issues the interviewee mentions in all four historical intervals of his narrative and which can be therefore considered three keywords of his story. They are Czech/oslovak, Jewish and Communist identities. These three attributes appear as the most frequent terms used in the interview as definitions of the different time periods of the story. In the first interview, the informant describes himself as a true Czech (soldier of Czechoslovak Army) opposing the German influence in Czechoslovak Republic. In the second interview, he speaks of the war period, when he was sent to the concentration camps because of his Jewish origin. This clearly opens a new topic in his life story. Then, when the interviewee had survived jailing in concentration camps, he returned to civil life and became a Communist. Again, he claims that, based on his Jewish origin, he was sentenced to

¹ Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts. The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 118

fifteen years in Communist prisons in the 1950's, which had another striking influence on his life. After his survival and return from Communist jails, the informant remains a staunch Communist until nowadays. Finally, as a senior inhabitant of the Czech Republic the interviewee defines himself as a Liberal Jew associated with the Prague Jewish Community since early 1990's. My intention is to clarify the keywords and to explain their meaning in context with the different political situations in the Czech past.

The research questions to be answered in this paper are: What identity does the interviewed person reflect? How does the interviewee identify himself in the four above-mentioned historical periods of his narrative? An interview analysis will show whether the self-identifications differ according to the political consequences and perhaps why? That means I will concentrate on researching how the informant perceives himself in the different periods of his life and why. The data analysis should explain what the interviewed person mean by using the (possibly different) self-identification? The three keywords should facilitate looking for the self-definitions in the different situations of the life story. The idea of the research question is to answer how does the informant understand the definition(s) of his life roles according to his narrative, again with respect to the background of Czech historical events.

My hope is to give the aforementioned person's story a complete form and preserve his narrative. I believe we must always remember it, or at least never forget it as "our own".²

1. 1 Chapter Overview

The text is organized in the following way: after the introductory chapter 1, chapter 2 deals with the methodology of this MA thesis. I examine key methodological terms, their history and common usage. Here I also consider the technical background and practical circumstances of my empirical data gathering. In Chapter 3 I present my theoretic perspective of the research question and deliver a review of recent academic debate concerning this issue. In chapter 4, 5, 6 and 7, I focus on the empirical material. I first provide the reader with a brief historical context dealt with in the chapter, I then transcribe the interviewed data and finally I analyse the way the transcribed part was narrated with a regard to the historical events. The four empirical chapters are summed up in chapter 8 where I introduce main conclusion of my work and the answer(s) on my research question.

² Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London-New York: Verso, 1991), p. 206

Chapter 2

Oral History Interview and Historical Biography

"The more concrete and diverse images of past continuously melting into presence will be, the more integrated mosaic of history we will be able to put together."³

In this chapter I introduce the basic methodology I used for conducting and analysing the gathered empirical data. I will use oral history approach that as a main methodological tool for analysing life story interviews⁴. This chapter shall further introduce the method of *oral history*, *life-story narrative* and *historical biography* as key definitions for collecting the interviewed material.

History, especially modern history, suffered during the communist regime not only by lack of chance to study some of the important topics, but it fell behind the western historical science even in terms of methodology. The specificity of modern history is the possibility of using written sources as well as testimonies and memories of people, who experienced the happening on their own. Historiography developed tools how to work with memories and life stories of these people, how to conduct interviews, analyse and interpret them and use them as historical sources. This is what is oral history used for. (...)

Oral history has its characteristic importance for researches of posttotalitarian societies where no plurality of sources exist and where party and state documents prevail. These record only those moments and society moves that their authors consider significant only from their point of view. In the times of political changes both fragmenting and newly establishing institutions care about preserving and archiving of documents referring to their activities in a limited way only. Written documents do not record a number of key historical moments at all. Narratives and memories of the witnesses fill this gap and help to broaden our factual background.⁵

I begin with a question. What is oral history? Oral history is "a special method for identifying the reality of a society, that is used in several of the human sciences. It is putting down life stories of people in the way they tell them."⁶ The word *oral* clearly points at the fact that in this approach we deal with spoken, unwritten information. Its "special nature derives from the fact that they are *unwritten* sources couched in a form suitable for oral transmission, and that their preservation depends on the powers of memory of successive generations of

³ Miroslav Vaněk, *Orální historie ve výzkumu soudobých dějin*, (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2004), p. 92

⁴ Tomáš Bouška, *Oral History in Theory and Practice*, (Falun: Höskolan Dalarna, 2004)

⁵ "Usage of the Method of Oral History", Center for Oral History at the Institute of Contemporary History of the Czech Academy of Sciences, <http://www.coh.usd.cas.cz/>

⁶ Zuzana Fialová, "Orálna história – s tvárou a menom" in *Malé dejiny česko-slovenských vzťahov VI.*, (Bratislava: Milan Šimečka Foundation, 1996), p. 32

human beings.”⁷ This gives us two important aspects: firstly oral history undertakes life experiences of human beings where the depth of the experience and the number of detailed facts are influenced by the memory of researched person(s). Secondly, the quality of the memory strongly depends on the way researcher asks for the data and on the way he/she preserves it. Oral history is therefore an interpretative method because the researcher comments on the recorded material and analyzes it. Equally important, the informant himself or herself provides the researcher with his or her own interpretation of historical data.

To be more precise: when defining oral history, the definition by Paul Thompson is useful. He identifies three aspects of oral history: 1) it provides material on individuals from whom or for whom very little written documentary evidence is available, 2) it provides with account of everyday life and work through oral history and 3) it provides people with an opportunity to interpret their own lives.⁸ Oral history is a method that deals with professionals as well as average people, where interviewees can be but usually are not historians. The fruitful result is not based on an exact historical description of past. In oral history we seek the subjective value of it, for the informant’s own reflection. It is a special method of dealing with history without using history books as primary sources of information. The aim of oral history is then to record the memories and experiences according to narrators who do not have to be professional in narrating. This is the most important characteristic that makes oral history data so different from other historical materials. “Oral history deals less with facts and cares more about historical consequences expressed by the lips of those who once experienced them.”⁹ According to this interpretative technique the interviewer is not an expert in interpreting but it is the narrator who interprets. His or her memories of action, thinking or meaning become facts. The researcher focuses on asking such questions that provoke the informant to share his own interpretation of historical events, usually influenced by feelings and personal impressions of the discussed period of time. The aim of such a field research is “to *get close* to the data in order that one can see how people interpreted their social relationships in the past.”¹⁰ Together with Burgess, I want to add “there is self selectivity involved in the sample of material available; they (informants) do not provide a complete historical record. Nevertheless, such material does provide a subjective account of the situation it records; it is a

⁷ Jan Vansina, “Oral tradition and historical methodology“ in David K Dunaway, Willa K. Baum, *Oral History. An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, (Aalnut Creek: Altamira Press, 1996), p. 122

⁸ Paul Thompson, “The Voice of the Past: Oral History” in R. G. Burgess, *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, p. 132-133

⁹ *ibidem*, p. 32

¹⁰ *ibidem*, p. 133

reconstruction of part of life.”¹¹ That means interviewed people are given the chance to speak about those parts of their lives they consider important. “(...)we see oral history as an instrument using which we can learn more about the whole society in monitored period *through* an individual (...)”.¹²

These are the reasons why oral history is the most fruitful approach for my paper. My aim is to present the discussed topic in the personal and subjective way of the interviewee. I return to narrative and interviews and their relation to oral history in the following chapters. Now I want to introduce the evolution of oral history, its usage and common criticism. Theory of interviewing as a technique of oral history research will follow. Finally I will introduce my interviewee and then the interview itself.

2. 1 History of Oral History

Some of the early researches based on oral history was done in United States during 1930's. President Roosevelt's administration financed a scientific project focusing on the influence of economic crisis on society. “A number of interviews with workers, former slaves, farmers and common Americans were done together with photos and other documentation.”¹³ Researchers asked about personal experiences of ordinary people to understand contemporary problems of society better.

However, rational and “objective” methods of traditional historiography outweighed until 1980's. At that time oral history became an alternative historical approach that was equally able to interpret past and the usage of this method became popular. Today oral history is used mainly for gaining and archiving data for further analysis. “In Europe oral history is often used for researches of the victims of WW II. and Communist persecution.”¹⁴ Therefore a variety of scientific fields use oral history as a key data resource. Ethnography, sociology, psychotherapy or gerontology are some of the disciplines to be mentioned.

2. 2 Criticism and Drawbacks

As I have noted, oral history is based on subjective materials and its benefit inheres in contextual understanding but not proving facts. Data approval can be done only by

¹¹ Robert G. Burgess, *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 132

¹² Miroslav Vaněk, *Orální historie ve výzkumu soudobých dějin*, (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2004), p. 103.

¹³ Zuzana Fialová, “Orálna história – s tvárou a menom” in *Malé dejiny česko-slovenských vzťahov VI.*, (Bratislava: Milan Šimečka Foundation, 1996), p. 33

¹⁴ *ibidem*, p. 34

comparing several narratives with each other or by controlling available archival materials. We cannot rely on historical accuracy when doing oral history research. What we can do is look for explaining schemes and interpretative patterns in the stories we attempt to analyse. Also we cannot gain any majority or minority opinion; “oral history does not tell us how many people share the same notion”¹⁵ because we always deal with personal experience of an individual in each narrative.

“(…) From this point of view the meritory problem of oral history is a fact that an interview (respectively narrative) is not a transcript of then experience of the narrator, but it constitutes a certain construct based on how the narrator understands him/herself, his/hers past and presence and the course of communication with the interviewer.”¹⁶

What is more, there exist a risk of influencing the researcher by the informant’s story so that he is unable to distinguish between facts and interpretation. “Sometimes it is hard to find a balance between personal interest of the researcher, understanding and following the story on one hand and independent scientific approach on the other.”¹⁷ In this case the outcome of the research, the data analysis, is biased.

This problematic of irresponsibility R. J. Grele classifies as three categories of oral history criticism¹⁸ in which he discusses the quality of latest oral history research and criticizes its outcomes. Grele claims that oral history became an average archiving method used by great numbers of untrained scientists. This first category of criticism includes questioning techniques and interviewing, which he sees as very poor and unprepared instruments for gathering data sources. With regard to the training of researchers, he questions the level of research standards. According to the author “sources should be checked, documentation should be provided, evidence must be weighed carefully”¹⁹ when doing oral research. Again this criticism deals “only” with the process of gathering material. But his last point is most important. Grele warns us about two false foci in oral history; statistical issues and subjective bias. He concludes with similar suggestions as I noted above in case of Fialová’s text. Thus the character of issues oral history deals with should be historiographical and not statistical. “Interviewees are selected, not because they present some abstract

¹⁵ Zuzana Fialová, “Orálna história – s tvárou a menom” in *Malé dejiny česko-slovenských vzťahov VI.*, (Bratislava: Milan Šimečka Foundation, 1996), p. 36

¹⁶ Miroslav Vaněk, *Orální historie ve výzkumu soudobých dějin*, (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2004), p. 77

¹⁷ Zuzana Fialová, “Orálna história – s tvárou a menom” in *Malé dejiny česko-slovenských vzťahov VI.*, (Bratislava: Milan Šimečka Foundation, 1996), p. 36

¹⁸ Ronald J. Grele, “Movement without aim. Methodological and theoretical problems in oral history.” in Robert Perks, Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 40

¹⁹ *ibidem*, p. 41

statistical norm, but because they typify historical process.”²⁰ This tells us again, that oral history can only help to describe certain view of a historical period but never provide a wide understanding of the past in the whole society. However, “(...) even though the interviewer checks the facticity of the gathered information it is not the verity of narrators message what is the main criteria for a quality interview in oral history.”²¹

Grele claims oral history researchers should avoid personal bias and he should stick to historical focus in his research. Then Grele comes to the crucial part:

“(...) It is at this level that the lack of serious analysis of oral history interviews has had its most deleterious effects. The sad condition of our theoretical knowledge about oral history, and the lack of serious efforts to think through exactly what an oral interview is or should be, how it is to be analysed, or for what purposes, has resulted in a situation of endless activity without goal or meaning.”²²

Together with Grele I agree that most of the theoretical texts on oral history I read do not deal with the interview purposes and data analysis at all. If I take in consideration that interview analysis is the crucial work of oral historians, it is alarming that there are so few instruction and guides on this aspect. Perhaps this is the reason as Grele points out there was such a poor level of theoretical knowledge among oral historians for a long time and in the Czech environment it probably still remains.

To conclude, apart from possible bias of the researcher, non-statistical and insecure historical data, oral history approach still lacks a clear instruction of data analysis that would ensure the original nature of a narrative but would not fail to describe all its characteristic aspects. Therefore I focus more on finding a more satisfactory description of the interview and its analysis in the next chapter so that I avoid the imperfections Grele pointed out.

2. 3 Interview and Narrative

I will now turn to the question of interviewing and questioning techniques in connotation with oral history; I shall firstly clarify what is meant by these terms to explain what is their actual relation to oral history. They focus on data analysis as a following process after conducting an interview.

I use the definition by Stewart and Cash that says: “Interviewing is a process of dyadic, relational communication, with a predetermined and serious purpose designed to

²⁰ Ronald J. Grele, “Movement without aim...”, p. 41

²¹ Miroslav Vaněk, *Orální historie ve výzkumu soudobých dějin*, (Praha: Ústav pro soudobé dějiny AV ČR, 2004), p. 79

²² Ronald J. Grele, “Movement without ...”, p. 42

interchange behaviour, and involving the asking and answering questions”²³. An interview is at base interaction and a planned, purposeful communication. It ranges from formal to informal level and it is used in a variety of fields.

Why use an interview in oral history? The most common way of data gathering in oral history approach is an interview. There are also other alternatives but interview is by its nature the most fruitful instrument. “The focus of oral history is to record as complete an interview as possible”²⁴ because it is the natural aim of every researcher to get as complete a story as possible in oral approach. The interview that provides us with such complete information “can only be described as a conversational narrative: conversational because of the relationship of interviewer and interviewee, and narrative because of the form of exposition – the telling of a tale.”²⁵

As I noted in the previous chapter, narrative research includes the method of oral history. Using the method of oral history and the technique of interview my narrative research in this MA thesis is accomplished. When conducting an interview I therefore do narrative research. Furthermore, narrative research “refers to any study that uses or analyses narrative material ... based on conversations, or oral life stories obtained in interviews.”²⁶ Narrative research is therefore used in a variety of fields and disciplines.

“The data can be collected as a story (a life story provided in an interview or a literary work) or in a different manner (field notes of an anthropologist who writes up his or her observations as a narrative or in personal letters). It can be the object of the research or a means for the study of another question. It may be used for comparison among groups, to learn about a social phenomenon or historical period, or to explore a personality.”²⁷

To do a proper interview it is usual to schedule more than one meeting with the interviewee and then a questionnaire is administered for the story completion.²⁸ Also the place of the interview is important. In most cases life story interviews are conducted in the homes of the interviewees so that they feel more comfortable and they have more privacy. But this brings me to the obstacles of narrative research. “Oral materials also raise ethical questions, concerning the rights of the individual, the relationships between the researcher and the

²³ Charles J. Stewart, William B. Cash Jr., *Interviewing. Principles and Practise*, (Brown & Benchmark Publications, 1994), p. 1

²⁴ Ronald J. Grele, “Movement without aim. Methodological and theoretical problems in oral history.” in Robert Perks, Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 43

²⁵ *ibidem*, p. 44

²⁶ Amia Lieblich, Rivka Tuval-Maskiach, Tamar Zilber, *Narrative Research. Reading, Analysis and Interpretation*, (Thousand Oaks (CA): SAGE Publications, 1998), p. 3

²⁷ *ibidem*, p. 2, 3

²⁸ *ibidem*, p. 25

researched and the conflicts and obligations involved in data collection.”²⁹ It is always necessary to find the balance between politeness and curiosity, sensation for details and respect for privacy, in order to record detailed data full of examples and unique stories without bringing bitter or painful situations to the informant. At the same time “the field researcher needs to consider: is the material trustworthy? Is the material atypical? ... Does the autobiographical material only contain highlights of life that are considered interesting?”³⁰ These and many other questions shape the interview, respectively make the interviewer to ask new questions.

During the interview itself, there are certain rules and techniques to stick to. The basic advice for interviewers is to listen more and talk less so that the interviewee has enough time to speak about things he or she feels free to speak about. Letting the informant tell the story without interrupting him is one of the basic keys to a complete interview. It is better to write notes and when the informant finishes one part a new one, the researcher can pose short open-ended questions from the notes. If we ask detailed questions about say smells, tastes or sounds³¹ we get a broader answer connected with more memories. The same happens when we try to ask questions about the time of the events. We may ask if the events happened before or after some special occasion. For example marriages, graduations, deaths or births are events that informants might strongly remember and further stories are connected with such occasions. But most importantly we should avoid using complicated sentences with many explanations and yes/no questions, because we lose time without gaining any helpful data.

With regard to the techniques of interviewing, the way of recording the dialog is extremely important. Tape-recording offers many benefits and is used in most cases. A tape recorder preserves the interview directly in the way in which it was conducted, which means there is always the chance to get back to what was said and how. “By preserving the words of the participants, researchers have their original data. If something is not clear in a transcript, the researchers can return to the source and check for accuracy.”³² On the other hand a tape recorder may interrupt the interview by making the informant nervous and aware of speaking. To avoid this it is advised not to concentrate on the device and when recording once started,

²⁹ Robert G. Burgess, *Field Research: A Sourcebook and Field Manual*, (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 133

³⁰ *ibidem*, p. 132

³¹ Barry P. Michrina, Cheryl Richards, *Person to Person. Fieldwork, Dialogue, and the Hermeneutic Method*, (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1996), p. 147

³² Irving Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, (New York London: Teachers College Press, 1998), p.

leave it on without paying any further attention to it. Like this the interviewee usually forgets the tape recorder and speaks freely.

After recording the interview and transcribing the tape the most important part of narrative research, the interview analysis follows.

2. 4 Interview Analysis

In an interview analysis I seek to interpret what was said during the interview. I do not watch just for facts and comments but

“for insight and oversights, for the combination of vision and no vision, and especially for answers to questions which were never asked, we should be able to isolate and describe the problematic which informs the particular interview.”³³

Interview analyses should give us more information about the informant’s vision of history and about the informant him/herself. “The very purpose of the interview analyses and interpretation is to find and bring the explanation of narrator’s message, understand its content and meaning, translate factors that shaped and formed narrator’s personality.”³⁴ Therefore let us have a look how to do it, how to manage the gathered material.

Analysing is a process and it starts already during transcribing the tapes. Looking for where the spoken sentences start and stop is the first step in analysis because it points to the verbal and nonverbal material of the interview. Once such a text is transcribed it is necessary to decide what is interesting in the text. The researcher must come to the transcripts with an open attitude, seeking what emerges as important and of interest from the text.³⁵ To find these places of interest in a text I shall avoid my personal judgements, anger, bias or prejudice too. As Seidman advises, what we do is reading the transcript and marking the parts of text that emerge structural. Through marking and collecting the important sections I gain the working text. In reducing the material, interviewers have begun to analyse, interpret and make meaning of it.³⁶

³³ Ronald J. Grele, “Movement without aim. Methodological and theoretical problems in oral history.” in Robert Perks, Alistair Thomson, *The Oral History Reader*, (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 45

³⁴ Milan Otáhal, Miroslav Vaněk, *Sto studentských revolucí: Studenti v období pádu komunismu. Životopisná interview*, (Praha: Nakladatelství Lidové noviny, 1999) p. 36

³⁵ Irving Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, (New York, London: Teachers College Press, 1998), p. 100

³⁶ *ibidem*

The raw reduced text is then prepared for the next step, which consists of finding thematic categories. When starting to read the transcripts there should not be any categories pre-determined. The categories arise from the text that was marked as interesting. „The process of noting what is interesting, labelling it, and putting it into appropriate files is called *classifying* or, in some sources *coding*.“³⁷ Classifying the excerpts into categories requires seeking connections between the categories. These connections then need to be explained. This is the most difficult step in interpreting. It is necessary to articulate the criteria according which we classify the text and we need to explain the meaning of what was said. During the analysis we always deal with the danger of too great personal involvement on the story. Wrong categories created by the researcher and not by the interviewee even before the interview started is the biggest threat. I have learnt we must not forget we ask for informant’s experiences and his or hers meaning of it and not ours.

The last step of the analytical work is interpreting the material. We are supposed to ask what do the categories say themselves and describe them. We should also comment on what we learned from the connections between the categories. Seidman suggests asking: „How do they (the researchers) understand and explain these connections? What do they understand now what they did not understand before they began the interviews? What surprises there have been? What confirmations of previous instincts?“³⁸ In this section he advises us to distinguish the meaning of the interview for us as interviewers from the meaning of the informant’s experiences that he tells when answering our questions. It is important not to mix these two point of views and not become the one who gives the story its meaning. My role here as a role of the researcher is to find the meaning, bring it to the reader and describe it.

If we classify the text according to its obvious themes, additional questions arise and new interviews can follow. Using this technique we gain an oral interview in which a complete life story emerges. Such a “complete” story is then the outcome of the life story interview research that I conducted.

2. 5 The Practical Aspects of My Research

Before turning to the recent theoretical debate concerning my research question I want to consider the practical inputs of my own fieldwork. As I claimed in the introduction, I was recording the interview in my informant’s apartment in Prague. I recorded the very first narrative with this person some four years ago before writing this MA thesis for private

³⁷ Irving Seidman, *Interviewing as Qualitative Research*, (New York, London: Teachers College Press, 1998), p. 107

³⁸ *ibidem*, p. 111

purposes only. Later on, when I realized the large variety of research questions to be posed to this man I came back to him and during the last four years, I conducted several interviews focusing on different parts of his life with the aim to record the whole story in the way he tells it to prepare it for further analysis. The last interview I recorded before analysing the material was held in January 2005. I asked for his permission to use the gathered material for academic purposes before starting the process of recording the story and on that occasion I asked him whether he wanted to remain anonymous. I think I gained more detailed memories thanks to this especially with regard to some of the intimate situations described in the story.

Concerning the transcription of the recorded material, I want to mention the text I deliver in the empirical section corresponds to a selected material touching only the focus of the Thesis and some parts dealing with events less important for the focus of my MA thesis were excluded. However, the material was transcribed exactly according to the instructions mentioned in the preceding chapters. That means I preserved the language my informant used, I categorized the information and used the parts that appear important according to the narrator and not me. To underline the unique way of narrating the story I decided to reproduce the interview in both the original Czech language and the English translation. Using this method I intend to preserve the story in the most original way possible so that the comparison between original and translated version is feasible. At the same time I want to refer to the oral presentation of the narrative. As the text of the interview shows, the interviewee tells his story in a disciplined and proper language; he answers with the whole sentences and uses literary Czech language. My questions were followed by a short pause and then brief, clear and descriptive answers in most cases. There were hardly any emotional moments during his narrative, which considering the age of the narrator and the content of the given information is most unusual. I consider this in the part of Interview Analysis below.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Views of Identity

Persons are describable in a multitude of ways, any of which could be regarded as “correct” in some decontextualised sense.³⁹ When I mentioned Czech/oslovak, Jewish and Communist identities in relation with my informant in the introduction to this, I touched the issue of national, religious and political *identity*. These issues need to be explained and made clear, possibly in a contextualised sense. However, I will pay special attention only to the national identity as a particular aspect providing individuals with a sense of belonging. I argue this sense is valid for both: religious and political identities too. Therefore I will focus more on the nature of identity itself.

This chapter will firstly deal with various definitions of *identity* and recent theories referring to this issue by different thinkers and researchers. My aim is to explain what we mean by *identity* according to different disciplines and point of views, then review recent discussion on this theme and finally choose one theory that best suits to my research focus. By applying the theory in the case of my informant I search for answer(s) as to what *identity* my informant reflects in his narrative.

3.1 Meanings of Identity

At first I turn to the keyword of this chapter. What is *identity*? According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary⁴⁰ the word *identity* means 1) who or what somebody or something is; or more interestingly: *identity* is 2) the characteristics, feelings or beliefs that distinguish people from others: *a sense of national / cultural / personal / group identity*. The examples given by the dictionary (in italics) show the wide context usage of *identity*, which is hard to enumerate. Therefore I do not focus on discussing different sorts of *identities* but I rather address the nature of *identity* alone. Further on, I use the general definition of the word’s meaning as an answer why I deal with identity in theoretical part of this thesis. I look at my informant as at an individual whose identity differs from the other people’s identities and I try to explain in what sense.

Together with Hester and Housley we can start the discussion by claiming that *identity* is something constructed through institutions, individuals and “discourse” within an

³⁹ Harvey Sacks, “An Initial Investigation of the Usability of Conversational Data for Doing Sociology” in D. Sudnow (ed.), *Studies in Social Interaction*, (New York: Free Press, 1972), pp. 31 - 74

⁴⁰ *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), at <http://www1.oup.co.uk/elt/oald/bin/oald2.pl>

“imagined community”.⁴¹ Obviously, identity is something all of us have, it differs and it is constructed. What do we mean then by constructing the identity? Mads Bielefeldt Stjernø’s delivered an extremely relevant thesis concerning this topic and his attitude to the issue helps to give us an answer:

“Instead, it (identity) is seen as a momentary self-understanding of a subject, which is – at least in principle – unstable and therefore exposed to constant modifications. This perspective could be labelled *non-essentialism*, since it claims that identities do not possess any essence prior to human interpretation, but are *constructed* through a continuous claim of its existence.”⁴²

That means identities are constantly modified thanks to two factors: the environment in which the subject lives and develops (that is an environment within the “imagined community”) and the subject itself. To put it differently the formation of identity is a process initiated by the meeting of “Others” and “I” as a reflector of the inputs coming from outside. To stress the role of time we can quote Thomas Reid defining identity as “a relation between a thing which is known to exist at one time, and a thing which is known to have existed at another time.”⁴³

The term “imagined community” itself is a key word of national identity theory mentioned by Benedict Anderson. He defines a nation as “an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign.”⁴⁴ The definition leads us to the debate on two different aspects of identity because the nature of identity can be namely distinguished in two basic ways. Identity means to us either a feeling of an individual (personal identity) or within a group of individuals (group identity). Anderson deals with the second attribute of identity and he connects it with the issue of nations. The sense of belonging to a nation as “Us” is a characteristic aspect of group identity that has a modifying impact on the “I” mentioned before. That is, although I focus on the self-consciousness of my informant in my research I take in consideration the forming aspect of the “Others” too because it has a strong influence on him. The idea of “imagined community” might play an important role in the whole life story, not necessarily only in terms of national identity but also religious and political sense of belonging. I keep this in mind in the analytical section of this thesis.

⁴¹ Stephen Hester, William Housley (ed.), *Language, Interaction and National Identity. Studies in the social organisation of national identity in talk-in-interaction*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 2

⁴² Mads Bielefeldt Stjernø, *Vicissitudes Of Post Communist Identity*, (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2001), p. 11

⁴³ Thomas Reid, “On Identity”, in John Perry (ed.), *Personal Identity*, (Berkley, L.A., London: University of California Press, 1975), p. 108

⁴⁴ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London, New York: Verso, 1991), p. 6

3. 1. 1 The “I” and the “Us/Them”

Ethnomethodologists speak of “social identity as a member’s phenomenon” where “its concern is purely descriptive one, namely to identify and describe how members of society *make use* of social identity in their talk and action.”⁴⁵ It considers collective identity as problematic for members of society and deals with social identity from the point of view of an individual member. This idea suits my focus because now I want to turn to the individual identity, to “I” as an instrument of awareness of “myself”. Again, Thomas Reid gives a philosophical notion of what he calls personal identity. He says “my thoughts, and actions, and feelings change every moment; they have no continued, but a successive existence; but the *self* or *I*, to which they belong, is permanent and has the same relation to all succeeding thoughts, actions and feelings which I call mine”.⁴⁶ Reid’s idea of personal identity is not a new issue in philosophy and his article is a actually “only” a critical development of John Locke’s theory of identity and diversity. In his book Locke describes a person as “a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different places and times”.⁴⁷

I would say that apart from the group identity important mainly for its sense of belonging to a group of “Us”, we could distinguish also the personal identity as an entity of *self* or “I”. Personal identity is connected not only with the body of an individual but mainly with its action, thoughts and memory, it changes in times and places and it is continuously modified by the Others. These two notions of identity I use here as a basic distinction within the complicated issue and I examine them in the analytical parts.

3. 2 Memory and Representing Pastness

Now I want to connect identity with memory and self-interpretation of history because I will need both in the following empirical chapters. Memory of an individual is something my thesis is mainly about. My interviewee talks about his memory of past and my focus is to analyse it in context with his identity. Elizabeth Tonkin has suggested that we look at the “interconnections between memory, cognition and history and show how they help to shape

⁴⁵ Stephen Hester, William Housley (ed.), *Language, Interaction and National Identity. Studies in the Social Organisation of National Identity in Talk-in-interaction*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002), p. 4

⁴⁶ Thomas Reid, “On Identity”, in John Perry (ed.), *Personal Identity*, (Berkeley, L.A., London: University of California Press, 1975), p. 109

⁴⁷ John Locke, “Of Identity and Diversity”, in John Perry (ed.), *Personal Identity*, (Berkeley, L.A., London: University of California Press, 1975), p. 39

our individual selves”.⁴⁸ Tonkin poses a key question when she asks how the past is “myself”? The answer that she gives is related to the focus of my thesis because she says, “we are our memories”.⁴⁹ She clearly connects the past, the individual and orality.

Firstly, concerning the past, Tonkin argues that to think about the past one must represent the aspects of it to oneself. Why? To be able to shape ones future in the light of past experience.⁵⁰ For her, telling means representing. Then, every teller as an individual represents the pastness usually in an oral way. “Orality is the basic human mode of communication, and although peoples all over the world now use literate means to represent pastness (...) the business of relating past and present for social ends has for most of the time been done orally.”⁵¹ This attitude she calls “historioracy” as a counterpart to “historiography”. In this approach, every storyteller’s bias is an essential part of his communication and not a flaw to which orality is particularly prone.

How do individuals perceive the past and why? Unfortunately, this seems to be hardly answerable question in general terms. Tonkin claims: “People talk of the past so as to distinguish `now` from a different `then`. At the same time, every `now` is the consequence of many `thens`, of vastly different durations, in an amalgam unique to each person experiencing it.”⁵² The consciousness of the past is therefore very different in the minds of each of us and the way we represent it orally probably differs even more. “The arguments on this question arise partly because our identities are both personal and social,”⁵³ Tonkin concludes. Personal identity therefore matters a lot in “historioracy” and as we can see each individual can deliver his/her own “version” of history thanks to his/her different lived experience of it.

For a recent theory suiting to my analytical work I therefore need to introduce one more author and his work.

3.3 Modernity and Self-Identity

Anthony Giddens, in his book *Modernity and Self-identity*, concentrates on what is an individual conscious of in the context of existential questions and modernity. He argues that institutions and modes of behaviour in post-feudal Europe had a world-historical impact.⁵⁴

⁴⁸ Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts. The Social Construction of Oral History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 1

⁴⁹ *ibidem*

⁵⁰ *ibidem*, p. 2

⁵¹ Elizabeth Tonkin, *Narrating Our Pasts...*, p. 3

⁵² *ibidem*, p. 9

⁵³ *ibidem*, p. 10

⁵⁴ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1991), pp. 14-15

One of the issues of the era of industrial world he defines as identity of self or simply “self-identity” on the same place. What does it mean? “Self-identity, in other words, is not something that is just given, as a result of continuities of the individual’s action-system, but something that has to be routinely created and sustained in the reflexive activities of the individual.”⁵⁵ What does Giddens mean by “reflexive activities”? In contradiction to Reid’s or Anderson’s comments on identity, he argues that it is not a continual modification of surrounding environment or even the “I” which changes the individual’s self-identity. “It is the self as reflexively understood by the person in terms of her or his biography.”⁵⁶ The agent as capacity to use “I” interprets the continuity in a reflexive, possibly oral or written way. What is more, such an individual with a reasonably stable sense of self-identity has a feeling of biographical continuity and is able to communicate it to others. “A person’s identity is not to be found in behaviour, nor – important though this is- in the reactions of the Others, but in the capacity to keep a particular narrative going.”⁵⁷ Giddens points at the fact that the ability to shape the ability in our minds in time and space does not work automatically and it is under great influence of lived reality. He speaks about robust and fragile aspects of feeling the self-identity:

“Fragile, because the biography the individual reflexively holds in mind is only one `story` among many other potential stories that could be told about her development as a self; robust, because a sense of self-identity is often securely enough held to weather major tensions or transitions in the social environments within which the person moves.”⁵⁸

Self-identity under the conditions of modernity has more to do with reflexive thinking and self-interpretation than ever before. Modern social life is a relation between the “global spread of modernity and the chronic mutability of local circumstances”⁵⁹ which brings an immense impact on personal engagements of individuals.

3. 4 How to Act and Who to Be?

For further exploration of Anthony Giddens’ concept of “self-identity” I will turn shortly to another aspect that describes the nature of changes influencing “existential terrain of late modern life”⁶⁰. The comparative difficulty with managing our lives Giddens puts very

⁵⁵ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity...*, p. 53, p. 52

⁵⁶ *ibidem*, p. 53

⁵⁷ *ibidem*, p. 54

⁵⁸ *ibidem*, p. 54

⁵⁹ *ibidem*, p. 21

⁶⁰ *ibidem*, p. 80

clearly: “Modernity confronts the individual with a complex diversity of choices and, because it is non-foundational, at the same time offers little help as to which options should be selected.”⁶¹ This situation stands every individual in a difficult existential situation and makes her or him carry a big burden of responsibility. The way she or he survives (if she or he does!) is actually the way of shaping the identity of self. “All such choices (...) are decisions not only about how to act but who to be.”⁶² The set of routines for coping with such situations we generally call a “life-style” and it has a serious connotation in regard to self-identity. Its importance lays in an argument that Giddens puts paradoxically:

“In conditions of high modernity, we all not only follow life-styles, but in an important sense are forced to do so – we have no choice but to choose. A life style can be defined as a more or less integrated set of practices which an individual embraces, not only because such practices fulfil utilitarian needs, but because they give material form to a particular narrative of self-identity.”⁶³

Everyday life brings small dilemmas such as what and where to eat, what to wear or how to behave legally. This “sustainability” of our lifestyles is a key shaping aspect of our identities.

In my analytical work in the next chapters I will observe the ways my narrator has managed his life style or together with Giddens - has been forced to choose it. The way my interviewee speaks about coping with different life-threatening situations during the different political regimes underlines his self-identity. In case of his unique life story the question of his political identity will be particularly interesting. This is one reason why I choose the theory of self-identity by Anthony Giddens as a leading theoretical concept for the main theoretical focus of this thesis.

⁶¹ Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity...*, p. 80

⁶² *Ibidem*, p. 81

⁶³ *ibidem*

Chapter 4

The First Republic

In this chapter I will briefly introduce the interbellum period of Czechoslovak history in order to give my research a basic chronological framework. I mention the key historical terms connected with the establishment and first two decades of the Czechoslovak Republic including its political system and I support my claims with relevant scientific literature. At this point, I deal with a similar problem as Mads Bielefeldt Stjernø who wrote a very relevant thesis related to this topic. He states:

“This notwithstanding, I find it appropriate to account for a few general historical events of recent Czech history both to provide the reader with a general idea of the historical setting, and to anticipate some of the historical references made by the political actors selected for analysis. I do not see the following account of Czech history as *true* in any objective sense, but as a quite general sketch of a few, historical events that are predominant within current discourses of Czech history.”¹

Together with Stjernø I am focusing on basic facts and I avoid detailed historical polemics. I aim to give the reader just a general idea of the political events mentioned in the narrative. Then I deliver the first interview referring to this historical era. In the interview I first ask questions prepared in advance. In its second part, called “Additional Questions for the narrator”, I ask for more details about the mentioned data and so I bring opening information about the informant’s life story. I conclude the interview with a reference section where I give more information and links to affairs, names or places mentioned in the narrative that I managed to find in the relevant literature or historical records. Last but not least, the interview analysis follows with a focus on the nature of identity the interviewee gives to himself in his narrative. I concentrate on the political meaning of terms *Czechoslovak*, *Jewish* and *Communist* to explain his attitude and understanding of them. Also, the analysis will make clear how to define the informant’s connection to Czechness or Czechoslovakness, which is not clear in the beginning. I mark this relation with “Czech/oslovak” so far to ensure both possibilities.

¹ Mads Bielefeldt Stjernø, *Vicissitudes Of Post Communist Identity*, (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2001), p. 42 on <http://www.diskurs.dk/litteratur/pdf/specialer/Thesis.pdf>

4. 1 Political Setting of “Democratic” Czechoslovakia²

Czechoslovakia was born on October 28, 1918 as one of the new republics emerging after the split of former Austria-Hungarian Empire defeated in WW I.

“The creation of Czechoslovakia was a culmination of a long struggle of the Czechs against their Austrian rulers and the Slovaks against Hungarisation and their Hungarian rulers. Although the Czechs and Slovaks have similar languages, they have a different mentality and different historical experiences. At the end of the 19th century the situation of the Czechs and Slovaks was very different, due to the different stages of development of their overlords – the Austrians in Bohemia and Moravia and the Hungarians in Slovakia – within Austria-Hungary. The only common feature was the fact that Bohemia was the most industrialized part of Austria and Slovakia that of Hungary – however at a different level. At the turn of the century, the idea of a "Czecho-Slovak" entity began to be advocated by some Czech and Slovak leaders. In the 1890s, contacts between Czech and Slovak intellectuals intensified.”³

The era between 1918 and 1938 is usually called the First Czechoslovak Republic or shortly “the First Republic” and the “Munich Agreement“ finished its existence⁴ in September 1938. This agreement established the so-called Second Republic on September 30, 1938. The First Republic was conceived as parliamentary democracy inspired by the American model of government and a strong position of president during its whole time of existence. The state was a unique formation uniting two different nations under one common national identity.

“The constitution identified the "Czechoslovak nation" as the creator and principal constituent of the Czechoslovak state and established Czech and Slovak as official languages. The concept of the Czechoslovak nation was necessary in order to justify the establishment of Czechoslovakia towards the world, because otherwise the statistical majority of the Czechs as compared to Germans would be rather weak. The operation of the new Czechoslovak government was distinguished by stability. Largely responsible for this were the well-organized political parties that emerged as the real centers of power.”⁵

However, the political leadership of the country was not as “Czechoslovak” as its name claimed. “Main Czech political parties renamed Czechoslovak parties during the 1918-1919 but their policies were concentrated in the hands of Czech political elites, except for the Republican (Agrarian) Party. Other political units (Germans, Slovaks) were seen with mistrust

² Precedent history of Czechoslovakia, respectively the history of so called Czech Lands anticipating the year 1918 and later is available in brief and clear form on: <http://users.ox.ac.uk/~tayl0010/history.htm>

³ Encyklopedia article about History of Czechoslovakia on <http://encyklopedia.thefreedictionary.com/History%20of%20Czechoslovakia>

⁴ The purpose of the conference was to discuss the future of Czechoslovakia and it ended up surrendering much of that state to Nazi Germany by the major powers of Europe. For more see: <http://encyklopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Munich%20Agreement>

⁵ Encyklopedia article about History of Czechoslovakia on <http://encyklopedia.thefreedictionary.com/History%20of%20Czechoslovakia>

and antipathy.”⁶ Non-Czech minorities, though many in number, were ignored which opened the door to future regional problems and contributed to another conflict of an unknown scale.

“The new state was characterized by problems due to its ethnic diversity, the separate histories and greatly differing religious, cultural, and social traditions of the Czechs and Slovaks. The Germans and Magyars (Hungarians) of Czechoslovakia openly agitated against the territorial settlements.”⁷

Apart from these ethnic issues that history would prove to work as a time bomb, the era was characterized by comparative democratic stability of the Czechoslovak state and economic growth, which the first part of my informant’s life story illustrates on the following pages.

⁶ Ladislav Cabada: *Český stranický systém 1890 – 1939*, (Plzeň: Západočeská Univerzita v Plzni, 2000), p. 6

⁷ Encyklopedia article about History of Czechoslovakia on <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/History%20of%20Czechoslovakia>

4. 2 Interview I: The First Republic

Original Version in Czech Language	English Translation
<p><u>Věk narátora:</u> 92 let</p> <p><u>Pohlaví:</u> muž</p> <p><u>Dosažené vzdělání:</u> 4 třídy klasického gymnázia a 4 třídy obchodní akademie s maturitou</p> <p><u>Zaměstnání za první republiky:</u> zaměstnanec pojišťovny, později zásobář NP, v důchodu pracovník státní kontroly</p> <p><u>Politická a náboženská orientace:</u> Organizován přes 50 let členství v KSČ, bez vyznání, roku 1989 vstup do Náboženské obce židovské</p> <p><u>Národnost, k níž se narátor hlásí:</u> česká - Čech židovského původu</p>	<p><u>Age of narrator:</u> 92 years</p> <p><u>Sex:</u> man</p> <p><u>Education:</u> 4 years of high school and 4 years of commercial school with leaving certificate</p> <p><u>Career:</u> insurance officer, later on supplier of the National Enterprise, when retired worker of the State Control Office</p> <p><u>Political and religious orientation:</u> More than 50 years organized membership in the Czechoslovak Communist Party, atheist, entered the Jewish Religious Community of Prague¹ in 1989</p> <p><u>Admitted nationality:</u> Czech of Jewish origin</p>
<p>Interview:</p> <p><u>1) Vyprávějte o své rodině. O městě, kde jste žil za první republiky.</u></p> <p>Narodil jsem se 19. 11. 1912 a svou rodinu řadím mezi střední vrstvy. Můj otec pocházel z Klatovska, z Pocínovic, z ryze české rodiny, byl praktikujícím židem, svou víru mně ani bratrovi nenutil (oba bezvěrci). V místě mého bydliště založil Sokol, tj. v Hradci Králové. Zemřel v koncentračním táboře Birkenau-Brzezinka.</p> <p>Má matka se narodila v německé Bílině, těžko se učila česky, což jsem jí do smrti nemohl odpustit a neměl jsem ji za to rád. Hlásila se</p>	<p>Interview:</p> <p><u>1) Speak about your family and about the town where you lived during the First Republic.</u></p> <p>I was born on November 19, 1912 in the town of Teplice (called Teplitz in German) and I consider my family to be a middle class family. My father was born in the Klatovy region (Southern Bohemia), in the village of Pocínovice. He comes from a true Czech family and he was a practising Jew. He never forced his religion on me or my brother (we both were atheists). Six months after I was born we moved to the town of</p>

k židovskému náboženství, do kostela však nedocházela. Zemřela v koncentračním táboře neznámo kde.

2) Žily v tomto městě (obci) ještě jiné židovské rodiny? Přátelil jste se s nimi, stýkal jste se s nimi?

V Hradci Králové se nacházelo několik dalších židovských rodin - obchodníci, lékaři, advokáti hlásící se bez výjimky k české národnosti. Já jsem se s nimi stýkal minimálně, byl jsem v kontaktu převážně s křesťanskými rodinami, vyrostl jsem v Ymce, Skautu a Sokole.

3) Pocítil jste ze strany nežidovských rodin nějakou diskriminaci?

S nežidovskými rodinami jsem měl velmi přátelské svazky a nesetkal jsem se z jejich strany ani v jednom případě s náboženskou či etnickou diskriminací.

4) Existovaly za první republiky smíšené sňatky? Jaká to byla manželství?

Ano, existovaly v hojném počtu, vesměs to

Hradec Králové, where my father established the Sokol organizationⁱⁱ. He died in the concentration camp of Birkenau-Brzezinkaⁱⁱⁱ.

My mother was born in German speaking Bílina, she had difficulties with learning Czech for which I could not forgive to her till the last of her days and I did not like her for this reason. She considered herself Jewish, but she did not go to church. She died in an unknown concentration camp.

2) Did other Jewish families live in this town? Did you have any friends among them? Did you meet them?

In the town of Hradec Králové there were several other Jewish families – merchants, doctors, advocates endorsing themselves to Czech nationality. I met them very rarely, because I was only in contact with Christian families. I grew up in the Ymca^{iv}, Skaut^v and Sokol organisations.

3) Did you feel any discrimination from the non-Jewish families?

I had very close contacts with non-Jewish families and I never felt, even in one case, any of religious or ethnic discrimination.

4) Did marriages of mixed religion exist during the First Republic era? What kind of married life was it?

<p>byla, pokud jsem mohl poznat, dobrá manželství.</p>	<p>Yes, there were many of them and they were usually –from what I could see- happy couples and good marriages.</p>
<p><u>5) Hlásili se Vaši rodiče k židovství? Proč ano (ne)?</u></p> <p>Moji rodiče se oba hlásili k židovství, jaksi řekl bych z tradice.</p>	<p><u>5) Did your parents openly declare their Jewishness/Judaism? Why yes (no)?</u></p> <p>Both of them declared it openly and they did it, I would say, for traditional reasons.</p>
<p><u>6) Byly podle Vás za první republiky nějaké rozdíly mezi židy a nežidy?</u></p> <p>Nikoli, za první republiky žádné zvláštní rozdíly mezi těmito lidmi nepanovaly, zejména ne v českých městech typu Hradce Králové. Soužití bylo dobré zejména na venkově. Odkazuji na spis česko-židovského spisovatele Vojtěcha Rakouse <i>Modche Aresi</i>.</p>	<p><u>6) Were there any differences among Jews and non-Jews during the First Republic era?</u></p> <p>No, during the era of the First Republic there were no particular differences between these people, especially not in typical Czech towns such as Hradec Králové. The cohabitation was very good in the country as well. I can reference the book of a Czech – Jewish writer Vojtěcha Rakous: <i>Modche a Rézi</i>.^{vi}</p>
<p><u>7) Mohli se židé za první republiky zúčastňovat všech společenských, politických, kulturních aktivit?</u></p> <p>Ano, všech beze zbytku až do roku 1938.</p>	<p><u>7) Could the Jews of the First Republic participate in all of the social, political and cultural activities?</u></p> <p>Yes, they could participate in everything without exception till 1938.</p>
<p><u>8) Vyprávějte o první republice. Případá Vám tato doba zajímavá či výjimečná?</u></p> <p>No pokud se týká první republiky, tak podle mého života nemohu říct, by byla něčím zcela výjimečná. Zajímavá byla pro toho, kdo se zúčastnil veškerého dění tak, jak jsem se ho</p>	<p><u>8) Speak about the era of the First Republic. Was this period interesting or unique by any means?</u></p> <p>Well, concerning the First Republic according to my life I cannot say the period was very outstanding. It was an interesting</p>

<p>zúčastňoval já.</p> <p><u>9) Kdy jste (Vaši rodiče) pocítil nebezpečí německé říše?</u></p> <p>Nebezpečí německé říše jsem pocítil v době, kdy v Německu vlastně to už bylo nebezpečí v době, kdy Hitler vydal svůj <i>Mein Kampf</i>. To bylo v době 1925 – 1927. To jsem z Německa pociťoval nebezpečí a pociťoval jsem ho i v době, kdy z Německa začali utíkat čsští čeští intelektuálové. A to bylo například spisovatel Lessinga a ing. Formis. Bylo to období tzv. Fémových vražd, kdy byli tito dva na území tehdejšího Československa zavražděni.</p>	<p>period for those, who took part on the entire happening as I did.</p> <p><u>9) When did you or your parents start to feel the danger of German Reich?</u></p> <p>I started to feel the danger of German Reich actually already during the time when Hitler published his <i>Mein Kampf</i>. It was between 1925 – 1927. I felt endangered and I felt it when Czech intellectuals started to flee from Germany too. It was the time of the so called “vehmic murders”^{vii} of writers Lessing and Formis, when these two were killed in former Czechoslovakia.</p>
<p><u>10) Věděl jste, co se v Německu děje? Odkud? Věřil jste tomu?</u></p> <p>Co se děje v Německu jsem věděl, ale těžko jsem tomu věřil. Věděl jsem to od těch lidí, kteří z Německa utíkali. Nechtěl jsem tomu nikdy věřit, poněvadž jsem nikdy nevěřil, že kulturní národ by se mohl takovýmto způsobem chovat.</p>	<p><u>10) Did you know what was going on in Germany? If so, how? Did you believe it?</u></p> <p>I knew what was going on in Germany, but I could hardly believe it. I knew it from those people who were fleeing from Germany. I did not want to believe it, because I never believed a cultural nation could behave like that.</p>
<p><u>11) Snažil jste se nebezpečí nějak čelit? Pokusil jste se o emigraci apod.?</u></p> <p>Já jsem nebezpečí nijak nečelil, poněvadž se mě zatím netýkalo. Chtěl jsem, jelikož jsem byl záložním důstojníkem Československé armády, tak jsem chtěl emigrovat. Můj otec mě ale přemluvil, že mám staré rodiče, že je mojí povinností zůstat s nimi a proto jsem take</p>	<p><u>11) Did you try to confront this situation? Did you try to emigrate or so?</u></p> <p>I did not face any danger because I was not concerned with it. I wanted, because I was a reserved officer of the Czechoslovak Army so I was going to emigrate. But my father persuaded me to stay because I had old parents and I was supposed to stay with</p>

neemigroval.

12) Změnilo se chování českých sousedů a známých k Vám v průběhu 30. let? Kdy? Jak?

Chování našich českých sousedů, které jsem znal v průběhu třiceti let, musím říct, že bylo vzorné, že se ke mě chovali velice dobře. Pokud jsem měl nějaký skromný majetek, než jsem šel do koncentráku, třeba hodinky, nebo prstýnky, tak jsem si nechal u nich a všechno mi bylo vráceno při mém návratu z koncentráku. Takže já si nemohu na to stěžovat.

13) Co je to podle Vás antisemitismus?

Pokud se týká antisemitismu, no tak já jsem byl vždycky toho názoru, že každý žid svým chováním si může antisemitismus přivodit. Je to samozřejmě, nebudu poučovat. Antisemitismu za první republiky podléhali příslušníci konkrétních zaměstnání či příslušníci Vlajky, Národního souručenství, Kuratoria mládeže apod., tak tam to byli "profesionálními antisemity", s kterými jsem ovšem nepřišel do styku.

14) Existoval tento jev za první republiky, existoval po válce a existuje dnes? Pokud ano, jaké měl (má dnes) projevy?

Tak tento jev existoval za první republiky, myslím, že existoval po válce a existuje i dnes. Ovšem říkám, jedná se vždycky o nějaký

them and this is also why I did not emigrate.

12) Did the behaviour of your Czech neighbours and friends change during the 1930's? When? How?

Behavior of our Czech neighbours that I knew the thirty years, I must say, was exemplary, and all treated me very well. When I left for the concentration camp I left some of my modest property, such as watches, rings, I left with them and all of it has been returned back to me when I came back from the concentration camp. So I cannot complain about it.

13) What does anti-Semitism mean to you?

Any Jewish person can incite anti-Semitism with his behaviour. Anti-Semitism during the First Republic was connected with members of some particular occupations or members of Vlajka, Národní souručenství, Kuratorium mládeže, who were "professional" anti-Semites.^{viii} However, I was not in contact with them.

14) Did this phenomenon exist during the First Republic, after the war and does it exist even now? If so, how did (does) it show?

It existed during the First Republic, after the war and it exists even now. There was

důvod. Tak například antisemitismus politický buď náboženský (založený na tvrzení, že židé ukřižovali Krista), který je však latentní a dále antisemitismus hospodářský (aktivní zejména během ekonomických krizí, kdy bylo lehkým projevem svést vinu na židy, nebo mající původ v lidské závisti - příklad bankéře Pečka, ovládajícího značný kapitál). Pokud se týká dneška, tak se jedná o "antisemitismus dědičný" - zděděný po rodičích, projevuje se v obtížných restitučních procesech židovského majetku, kdy se nežidovští majitelé přivlastněného majetku neradi vzdávají lehce nabitého bohatství. Též je to komplikováno "dvojitým" židovstvím v současné české společnosti - židé asimilanti a židé sionisté. Dnešním projevem je například vleklý spor o pražský židovský hřbitov pod stavenišťem České pojišťovny.

15) Myslíte si, že ve vztahu k židům byla (nebyla) tolerantnější první republika než dnešní Česká republika? Proč?

Já mám dojem, že první republika byla tolerantnější, ale taky mám dojem, že dnešní republika bude brzy stejně tolerantní jako první republika, poněvadž demokracie přece jenom se zde zabydluje a pochopitelně k ní patří i tolerantnost vůči židům.

16) Mohli Češi (Češi nežidé) za holokaust? Mohli (měli) mu zabránit?

always both the religious anti-Semitism, based on the claim that the Jews crucified Christ, which is of a latent type, or economical anti-Semitism - mainly active during the economic crisis when it was easy to accuse Jews, or simply based on envy - one example is banker Peček having control of quite a lot of capital. Nowadays we deal with a hereditary anti-Semitism - passed on from parents, it is manifested in the difficult restitution processes with Jewish property where non-Jewish owners hardly want to give up their easily acquired affluence. This issue is also complicated due to the „double Jewry“ in contemporary Czech society - assimilated Jews and Zionists. A relevant demonstration of it is for example the long conflict about the Jewish cemetery in Prague under the building site of Česká pojišťovna^{ix}.

15) Do you find the First Republic more tolerant towards Jews than today's Czech Republic? Why?

The First Republic was more tolerant but today's Czech Republic will be similarly tolerant soon too because democracy is being established here and tolerance towards Jews is part of it.

16) Did Czech people (non-Jewish Czechs) cause the holocaust? Could they stop it?

No Češi rozhodně za holokaust nemohli. To byla záležitost, která se táhla léta, přišla s Hitlerem z Německa a Češi mu zabránit nemohli. Ovšem je smutná bilancem, že v České republice bylo 326 tisíc kolaborantů. Nevím, jestli to číslo je nějakým způsobem oprávněné, ale bohužel bylo hodně kolaborantů. Existovalo ale mnoho Čechů, kteří skrývali židy a zejména jejich děti. Na druhé straně je smutná bilance, že v Československu bylo 326 tisíc kolaborantů. Nevím, nakolik je toto číslo ověřitelné, ale kolaborantů bylo hodně. Sdružovali se ve Vlajce a v různých dalších pravicových uskupeních, měli svůj tisk jako Vlajka, Árijský boj aj.), které pochopitelně holokaust schvalovaly a bohužel ještě dnes existují nežidé, kteří pochybují, že vůbec nějaký holokaust byl.

17) Pokud máte děti, hlásí se k židovství? Proč ano/ ne, v jaké podobě? Chcete, aby se hlásili k židovství? Proč ano (ne)?

Mám jednoho syna a ten se hlásí k židovské víře. Je to ovšem pasivní věřící, nechodí do kostela, vidí v židovství jakési zázemí.

18) Myslíte si, že je možné srovnávat postavení židů a Romů dříve (za první republiky, za války, po válce) a dnes? Proč ano (ne)?

Pokud se týká Postavení židů pokládám za mnohem pevnější a pochopitelnější pro

Well, Czechs definitely did not cause holocaust. This affair went on years before the war and came together with Hitler from Germany. Czechs could not stop it. But there existed a large number of Czechs that were hiding Jews and primarily their children. On the other hand, there is the sad balance that 326 collaborators lived in Czechoslovakia. I don't know how far this number is attested to, but the truth is that there were a lot of collaborators. They associated with Vlajka and with other right-wing groups and they published their own press (Vlajka, Aryan Fight etc.)^x approving of the holocaust and unfortunately there still exist non-Jews, who doubt there ever was a holocaust.

17) If you have children, do they endorse judaism/Jewry? Why yes/no and in which sense? Do you wish them to endorse judaism/Jewry? Why yes/no?

I have one son and he endorses the Jewish religion. However, he is a passive believer, he does not go to church regularly and he sees Jewry as a sort of safe background.

18) Do you think it is possible to compare the position of Jews and the Roma population before (during the First Republic, during and after WW II)? Why yes and why not?

společnost. Romská otázka je velmi ožehavá záležitost, neboť mezi Romy je velmi mnoho vinných na zvýšené kriminalitě a pokusech o nelegální vystěhování. Romové za první republiky neměli dobrý život, neboť většinou kočovali. Čeští četníci je stíhali z jedné vesnice do druhé a nakonec jim byly zabaveny vozy a koně a Romové byli donuceni usadit se tam, kde byli. Za války byli také Romové v koncentračních táborech. Já sám jsem Romy viděl v koncentračním táboře Birkenau-Brzezinka, kde měli zvláštní tábor a bylo s nimi zacházeno tak, jako se židy.

19) Myslíte si, že dějiny židů jsou součástí českých dějin? Proč ano (ne)?

Já bych chtěl říct, že dějiny židů jsou nepochybně součástí českých dějin, poněvadž bylo mnoh českých autorů židovského původu (generál Československé armády František Langer, Poláček, Hostovský, bylo mnoho autorů píšících německy (Franz Kafka) i lékařů (plk. Engel - první náčelník Střešovické nemocnice, který vtiskl nemocnici vysokou úroveň). Dále do českých dějin vstoupila řada židovských jmen z oblasti průmyslu a bankovníctví (král knoflíků továrník Waldes -

I consider the position of Jews much more consistent and clear for society. The issue of the Roma population is a very thorny question, because among the Roma population there are a lot of guilty people whom contributed to increased criminality and attempts for illegal emigration. Roma people did not have a good life during the First Republic because they were nomadic. Czech police were chasing them from village to village and in the end, their conveyances and horses were seized and Roma people were forced to settle down there, where they were. Roma people were in concentration camps during the war as well. Personally, I saw Roma people in the Birkenau-Brzezinka concentration camp, where they had their own camp and they were treated the same as Jews.

19) Do you think that the history of Czech Jews is part of Czech history? Why yes/no?

I want to say the history of the Czech Jews is part of Czech history without any doubt. There were a lot of Czech eminent authors of Jewish origin - general of Czechoslovak army František Langer, a lot of authors writing in German - Franz Kafka or doctors - Colonel Engel – the first general chief of Střešovice hospital, who brought the hospital to a great level of proficiency. Further on a great number of Jewish names coming from industry and banking entered

shromažďoval umělecké předměty, sponzoroval českého malíře Františka Kupku atd.). Byli i tací, kteří podporovali německý režim (například pražské Stavovské divadlo bylo ovládáno výhradně německými pražskými židy). Židy je tedy možno konstatovat za součást českých dějin.

20) Vyjmenujte období klidného soužití Čechů a židů v historii, období neklidu a nevraživosti.

Seřaďte dle stupně závažnosti.

No já myslím, že pokud ještě republiku neokupovali Němci a pokud židé nevládli velkému kapitálu, lze říci, že soužití bylo pokojné. Kromě konfliktních “profesionálních antisemitů”, prosazujících myšlenku, že židovští kapitalisté vykořisťovali českou dělnickou třídu, se nevraživost projevovala vždy v dobách hospodářských krizí. První období nevraživosti se vztahuje k období hilsneriády. Další neklid začal panovat s vypuknutím pogromů v sousedním Německu.

21) Existuje podle Vás nějaká specifická česká vlastnost, dovednost?

Mluví se o zlatých rukách českých řemesníků a o snaze dělníků o poctivou práci (byť v porovnání se sousedskými státy nenáležitě

Czech history - “the king of buttons”, factory owner Waldes who collected art and sponsored the painter František Kupka, etc. There were also those who supported the German regime (for example the Prague “Stavovské (Nostitz) Theatre” was run by only German Prague Jews). It is therefore possible to include Jews as part of Czech history.

20) Could you name the periods of calm cohabitation between the Czechs and the Jews, then periods of conflicts and malice?

Put them in order of greatest impact.

Before the German occupation and until the Jews did not rule the big capital, it is possible to claim the cohabitation was calm. Aside from the conflict-of-the-kind known as “professional anti-Semites” who advanced the idea that Jewish capitalists were exploiting the Czech working class, hostility emerged in times of economical crises. The first period of malice is connected with the times of “Hilsneriáda”^{xi}. Another anxiety started to dominate with the outbreak of pogroms in neighbouring Germany.

21) Do you think there is any particular Czech attribute or skill?

People speak about the “golden hands” of Czech workers and about an effort of these workers to do their work properly, although

<p>honorovanou).</p>	<p>their work was inadequately paid in comparison with the neighbouring countries.</p>
<p><u>22) Existuje podle Vás (existovala za první republiky) nějaká specifická židovská vlastnost, dovednost?</u></p>	<p><u>22) Is there (was there during the First Republic) any particular Jewish attribute or skill?</u></p>
<p>Jedná se o zvláštní nadání pro obchod, vytrvalost a poctivost v práci.</p>	<p>It is a special gift for commodity dealings (trade), diligence and fair work.</p>
<p><u>23) Která z těchto otázek se Vám nelíbila? Proč?</u></p> <p>Žádná.</p>	<p><u>23) Which of these questions you did not like and why?</u></p> <p>None of them.</p>
<p><u>24) Jaká otázka Vám chyběla? Doplňte ji, prosím.</u></p> <p>Žádná.</p>	<p><u>24) Which question would you have liked? Add it, please.</u></p> <p>None.</p>
<p>Dodatečné otázky k tomuto časovému úseku:</p>	<p>Additional Questions:</p>
<p><u>24) Vyprávějte o své rodině. Jaká byla maminka, jaký tatínek? Jak fungovala Vaše rodina? Jak se Vaše matka hlásila k židovství, byla jen matriková židovka?</u></p>	<p><u>24) Tell me more about your family. What were your mother and father like? What about your family? How did your mother feel about judaism; was she just a Jew on paper?</u></p>
<p>Úvodem bych chtěl říci, že je mi téměř 90 roků a proto se omlouvám, za eventuální nepřesnosti v některých údajích. Moje rodina neměla celkem dobrý život. Můj otec a moje matka si nerozuměli. Moje matka byla matriková židovka, která nechodila ani do kostela ani se nijak jako židovka neprojevovala. Nebyla německé národnosti, ale mluvila německy a za</p>	<p>First of all, I would like to say, that I am almost 90 years old and therefore I apologize for the inevitable inaccuracy in some of the data. My family did not have such a good life. My father and my mother did not have a good relationship with each other. My mother was a registered Jew, she</p>

celou dobu, co žila v ryze českém městě, v Hradci Králové, se nenaučila česky. To bylo důvodem, že mezi otcem a matkou byly určité disproporce a ty se pochopitelně přenesly také na mě. Já jsem měl rád svého otce. Byl jsem natolik šovinista, že jsem ji z důvodů, které jsem uvedl, neměl rád. A také jsem ji neměl rád proto, že se nechovala dobře k mému otci. Proto jsem ji až do samého konce neměl rád. Já se za to nestydím, poněvadž pro mě to bylo celkem přirozené. Můj tatínek byl velice hodný a čestný člověk, chodil do synagogy v pátek a v sobotu, ale na druhé straně byl velmi dobrým Čechem (zakladatelem Sokola). Naše rodina žila bez zvláštních styků s jinými rodinami. Moje matka měla sestru, která byla taktéž provdaná v Hradci Králové a s její rodinou jsme se stýkali. Já jsem svoji tetičku také neměl rád, přestože uměla dobře česky. Mě na ní vadilo, že první, co bylo, když jsme se sešli, tak nastavovala ruku k políbení. A to se mi na ní nelíbilo. Já jsem měl až na tyto věci dobrý vztah k rodičům, nicméně lepší vztah jsem měl k otci.

25) Vaše rodina slavila Vánoce a Velikonoce.

did not go to church nor did she make herself feel like a Jew. She was not of German origin but she spoke German and for the whole time she was living in a purely Czech town, in Hradec Králové, she did not learn Czech. This was the reason why there were certain animosities between my father and mother and these were passed on to me also, of course. I liked my father. I was such a chauvinist, that I did not like my mother for the above-mentioned reasons. And I also did not like her because she did not treat my father well. That is why I did not like her till the very end. I am not ashamed of this because this was quite natural to me. My father was a very good and honest person, he went to synagogue every Friday and Saturday, but on the other hand, he was a very good Czech (founder of Sokol). Our family lived without any special relations to other families. My mother had a sister who had been married in Hradec Králové as well and we were in contact with her family. I did not like my aunt either, even though she spoke good Czech. I felt uncomfortable because the first thing she usually wanted me to do when we met was to kiss her hand. And I did not like it. But apart from these things I had good relations with my parents, however, I had a better relationship with my father.

25) Your family celebrated Christmas and

Byly to podle Vás “svátky” jen formou, formální a nebo i obsahem? Navštěvovali jste o svátcích kostely?

U nás bylo samozřejmým zvykem, že se slavily jak Vánoce, tak Velikonoce, protože jsem měl většinu přátel nežidovských a tak to pro mě bylo samozřejmé. Pro mě byly židovské svátky důležité proto, že jsem nemusel jít do školy – měli jsme jako židé volno, abychom mohli slavit svoje svátky. Já jsem je nijak zvláště neslavil, ale bylo pro mě důležité, že jsem nemusel jít do školy. Svátky nebyly pro nás formální. Já jsem cítil to, co cítili moji přátelé a to nebyli židé. O svátcích jsem byl několikrát se svými kamarády na půlnoční. Jinak jsem nechodil do žádného kostela. Jen jednou jsem byl za tatínkem v synagoze, kam chodil pravidelně, a to jsem jen od něho něco nutně potřeboval. Jinak jsem necítil žádnou potřebu do synagogy chodit. Otec chodil v pátek večer a v sobotu na tzv. šábés, já nikdy a moje matka zřídkakdy. Chtěl bych uvést jednu podrobnost. V synagogách byli odděleně muži a ženy. Muži byli zpravidla dole a ženy byly na balkóně, takže byli od sebe odděleni. To jen na okraj.

26) Zavzpomínejte blíže na dobu 30. let. Jak na vás působila? Jak jste vnímal období po

Easter. Were these “holy days” celebrated only in a formal way or did you also celebrate the “content”? Did you go to church during holidays?

It was a normal custom for my family to celebrate Christmas and Easter, because most of my friends were non-Jewish and therefore it was obvious for me. Jewish holidays were important for me because I did not have to go to school – as Jews we had days off to be able to celebrate our holidays. I did not celebrate in any particular way. Holidays were not formal for me. I felt what my friends felt, and they were not Jewish. I went to midnight mass at Christmas several times. Otherwise I did not go to church. I only went once to the synagogue with my father where he had been going regularly and I actually needed something from him very urgently that day. Otherwise I did not feel any need to go to the synagogue. My father celebrated Sabbath on Friday evenings and on Saturdays, I never went and my mother rarely went. I would like to mention one thing. Men and women were separated in synagogues. Men were generally downstairs and women were on the balconies so that they were separated. This is just by way of comment on the situation.

26) Remember closer the period of the 1930's. How did you find the era? How did

Mnichově? Srovnejte. Kdy a v čem jste pocítoval nebezpečí Německé říše?

Antisemitismus se tehdy, podle mě, více projevoval ve městech. Na venkově snad vůbec neexistoval. Já se domnívám, že většina židů, kteří pocítovali antisemitismus, si ho tak trochu vyráběli sami. Ten, kdo se s českými občany sžil, tomu nikdy nepřišlo za těžké, že je židem a také to nijak nepocítoval. Já to mohu říci za sebe. Vyrostl jsem v ryze českém městě a pokud tam byl antisemitismus, tak přišel, jak už jsme uvedli, s nastěhováním ředitelství Českých drah. Do té doby byli hradečtí židé liberální, sžití s českým obyvatelstvem. Dráhoví úředníci většinou mluvili německy a to české obyvatelstvo v Hradci těžce neslo a pochopitelně, že jsme to tak pocítovali i my. V Hradci vycházel časopis Osvěta lidu. Já sám jsem tam psal články proti němčení židů, kteří se do Hradce přistěhovali a kteří nám tam kazili naši pověst. Po Mnichově to bylo dosti nesnadné. Krátce před tím jsem se přestěhoval do Prahy, kde jsem byl zaměstnán u vídeňské pojišťovny Kotva, kde jsem brzy, jako žid, dostal výpověď. A pak jsem se živil všelijakým nákupem a prodejem, např. parketové pasty, parfémů. To jsem nakupoval u výrobců a zase jsem to prodával dále. Ovšem to bylo zaměstnání, které nebylo legalizované. Musím říci, že jsem kolikrát zažil velmi nebezpečné situace. Když jsme např. za druhé republiky měli vyhrazenou jízdu v tramvaji jen ve vlečňáku, v zadním oddělení, tak se mi stalo, že

you feel about the situation after the Munich Agreement? Compare those two periods.

When and in what, did you feel the danger of the German Reich?

Anti-Semitism was more evident in towns at that time. It hardly existed in the country. I believe that the majority of Jews who experienced anti-Semitism created it themselves. Anyone who was able to live together with Czech citizens did not find it hard to be a Jew and did not feel it anyhow. I can claim this from my own experience. I grew up in an exclusively Czech town and if there was anti-Semitism, then it came together with the headquarters of Czech Railways as I have already mentioned. Till that time, the Jews of Hradec Králové were liberal and familiarized with Czech population. Railway officers usually spoke German, which was hardly accepted by the population of Hradec Králové, and we felt the same of course. In Hradec Králové there was a magazine called "Folk's Alight". It was there that I published my articles against the "germaning" of Jews who moved to Hradec Králové and who were destroying our reputation (by speaking German). This became very uneasy after the Munich Conference (Sept. 29, 1938). Shortly before signing the Agreement I moved to Prague where I worked at Viennese insurance company called "Kotva". I soon got fired because I was a Jew. Then I earned a living

jsem vezl tašku plnou voňavých mýdel a proti mě seděl esesák v uniformě. Číchal, číchal a pak se mě zeptal (já jsem samozřejmě neměl hvězdu), co že to vezu. Já jsem řekl mýdlo a on se otázal, jestli bych mu ho prodal. Já jsem to odmítl, řekl jsem, že je to objednávka, kterou vezu do obchodu a on se s tím kupodivu spokojil. Nebylo mu ani nápadné, že jedu v tom zadním oddílu. Takto jsem prodělával dosti těžké chvílky, dnes se o tom lehkou vykládá, ale tenkrát to nebylo jednoduché. Nebezpečí z Německa jsme pocítovali velmi silně, poněvadž zdejší orgány, pravičácké spolky a kolaboranti nám ztrpčovali život, zejména když jsme byli označení žlutou hvězdou. Nenosit tu hvězdu bylo dost nebezpečné, já sám jsem to dost riskoval, poněvadž jsem se scházel se svými přáteli a nechtěl jsem je uvádět do nebezpečí. Ale také musím říci, že například moje některé přítelkyně, které se mnou chodily i s tou žlutou hvězdou do tančiren, které byly vyhrazeny přímo pro židy (v Praze to byl např. podnik na Vinohradské třídě, který se jmenoval Nica) se nestyděly za to, že mám označení a chovaly se ke mě vzorně. Podobně to bylo s drobným majetkem, který jsem uschoval u přátel, když jsem šel do koncentráku. Všechen mi byl navrácen. Ke mě se chovali moji přátelé velmi dobře. Velké nebezpečí hrozilo z pravičácké literatury (Vlajka, Árijský boj), kde sprostým způsobem napadali židovské rodiny, ženy a děti a nakonec ani úřady to necenzurovaly. Pokud to moji známí pro mne

through buying and selling parquet paste or perfumes for example. I bought those from producers and I resold to customers. But this occupation was not legal. I can say I experienced a variety of dangerous situations during this time. For example when on a tram we were allowed to travel only in the back of the second "Jewish" wagon during the period of Second Republic, I once happened to travel with a bag full of nice-smelling soaps and an uniformed SS soldier was sitting opposite me. He was sniffing and smelling and then he asked (I of course did not carry the star of David) what I was carrying in the bag. I said it was soap and he asked back whether I could sell it to him. I refused by saying it was a delivery for a shop and he surprisingly went with it. He was not even wondering why I was travelling in the back compartment of the tram. I experienced tough moments like this, it is easy to speak about it today but then it was not easy. We felt the danger coming from Nazi Germany very much because local authorities, rightist associations and collaborators embittered our lives, especially when we were marked with the yellow Jewish star. Not to wear the star was quite risky. I often risked it myself because when meeting my friends I did not want to put them in any danger. I also must say that some of my female friends were going with me to ballrooms restricted to

koupili, protože mě to zajímalo, tak jsem nad tím mnohdy vrtěl hlavou, jak je možné, že takové plátky úřady dovolily nechat vycházet. Pokud se někde poprvé projevil antisemitismus, tak to podle mého bylo v Lékařské komoře a u Advokátní komory. Ty jako první vylučovaly ze svého středu své židovské členy. A to byla čistě konkurenční závist, jelikož mezi židy byli vynikající lékaři, advokáti (ti měli snad zvláštní nadání) a jelikož zde byla velká konkurence, tak tyto dvě komory jako první vylučovaly. Osobně jsem si to nebezpečí jinak ani neuvědomoval, měl jsem stále svoje přátele, kteří ke mě chodili do bytu a od tohoto mou pozornost odváděli. Jediné nebezpečí byl transport, a tomu jsem pochopitelně neušel. Mě mnoho mých přátel také nabízelo, že mě ukryjí, ale já jsem to nechtěl. Jedna moje přítelkyně mě nabízela, že se za mě okamžitě provdá, aby mě zachránila. Já jsem to neudělal proto, že jsem ji měl rád a nechtěl jsem ji vystavovat nebezpečí. Z toho samého důvodu jsem nechtěl, aby mě někdo ukrýval. To šlo o život. A to já jsem nechtěl nikoho v tak velké nebezpečí uvádět.

Jews. In Prague it was, for example, a place called Nika, situated on Vinohradská street - even when I was wearing the yellow star and they were not ashamed that I was marked and they treated me exemplarily. I was treated similarly in case of my valuable property I hid at my friends' place. All of it was given back to me. My friends treated me very well. Great danger was denounced by the rightist literature (Vlajka/Flag, Aryan Fight), where Jewish families, women and children were attacked in a rude way and even the authorities did not censor it. When my friends bought it for me, as I was interested in reading it, I was often shaking my head over these texts and wondering how it was possible that authorities allowed these texts to be published. If there emerged anti-Semitism for the first time, it was in the Medical Chamber and the Lawyer's Chamber. These two institutions started to exclude their Jewish members as first. And this happened because of purely competitive envy as there were brilliant doctors and advocates among the Jews (who perhaps had a special gift for this occupation) and because of their high competition potential - they were excluded as first. Otherwise I did not realize this threat personally, I had my friends all the time that kept visiting me in my flat and they kept my attention away from it. The only danger was the transport to the concentration camp, and I did not escape

it of course. A lot of my friends offered me a hiding place but I did not want this. One of my friends offered to marry me in order to save me. But I did not do it because I liked her and I did not want to put her in danger. For the same reason I did not allow anyone to hide me. I did not want to put anyone in such a great danger.

27) Ve svém vzpomínání jste uvedl, že vaši rodiče byli židé z tradice. Co podle Vás tento termín představuje, jak jste židovství rodičů vnímal?

Židovkou z tradice byl spíše jen má matka. Otec byl pobožný, nikoli však sionista. Byl liberální, chodil do Grandu ve středu a v sobotu večer hrát s přáteli mariáš a pochopitelně, že jeho parta nebyla židovská. On své židovství vnímal, jeho přátelé o tom věděli, ale to nic nebránilo v tom, aby s ním nebyli dobrými přáteli. Pokud se týká matky, tak ta se stýkala jedině se svojí sestrou, která také nechodila nikam do společnosti. Její židovství se nijak neprojevovalo. Pocházela ze staré židovské rodiny, kde její předkové a prapředkové byli židy, ale podle mého názoru inteligence mé matky nedosahovala takového stupně, že by si to židovství nějak zvláště uvědomovala. Proto tedy židovka z tradice. Židovství rodičů na mě nijak nepůsobilo, otec mi židovské zásady nevštěpoval, v tom byl velmi tolerantní.

27) In your previous talk you mentioned your parents were Jewish by tradition. What do you think this meant and how did you perceive judaism/jewishness of your parents?

Being traditionally Jewish was more or less only my mother. My father was pious, but not a Zionist. He was liberal, he went to the Grand Hotel every Wednesday and Saturday to play cards with his friends and his group of friends was not Jewish of course. He was conscious of his Jewishness, his friends knew about it, but this did not stop them from being good friends. Concerning my mother, she was only meeting her sister who also did not go out in public. Her Judaism was not manifested in any visible way. She came from an old Jewish family where her ancestors were Jewish, but in my opinion my mother's level of intelligence was not that high to be able to realize her Jewishness in a particular way. That is why she was Jewish by tradition. The Judaism of my parents did not have any special impact on

<p><i>28) Popište blíže Vaši osobní účast v Ymce, Sokole, Skautu. Proč jste docházel právě tam?</i></p> <p>Já jsem do královéhradecké Ymcy docházel proto, že se tam hrál ping-pong, kulečnick, a tam jsme také měli svůj jazzový orchestr, který se jmenoval Ymca boys. Já jsem byl členem vůdcovského sboru, byl jsem předsedou mládežnické organizace, přestože Ymca je Young Man Christian Association, tak se tam nikdy nikdo nikoho neptal, jaké je jeho náboženství. Jezdil jsem například do Ymcařského tábora na Sázavu, kde byly pravidelně v neděli Sunday service (křesťanská bohoslužba). Automaticky jsem se toho zúčastňoval, když modlíci zavřeli oči, tak jsem je zavřel také a nijak mi to nepřipadalo podivné. Tam jsem měl přátele a dodnes na tuto dobu velmi rád vzpomínám. Do Sokola jsem chodil jen krátce, to byla víceméně městská organizace, tam jsem chodil pouze cvičit. Do Skautu jsem chodil také. Tam jsem byl ve dvou družinách. Jedna skupina se jmenovala Lišky, ti měli zelenožluté barvy a druhá Káňata a ti měli zeleno hnědé barvy. Do Skautu jsem chodil rád. Sokolské tábory nebyly taky dobře vybaveny jako Ymcařské, kde vařila paní Firstová, známé jméno zakladatele pražské Ymcy. Chodil jsem tam proto, že tam chodili moji kamarádi.</p>	<p>me. My father did not indoctrinate me in any Jewish fundamentals; he was tolerant in this sense.</p> <p><i>28) Describe more intimately your participation in the YMCA, Sokol, and Skaut. Why did you participate directly there?</i></p> <p>I attended the YMCA in Hradec Králové because we played ping-pong or billiards and we had our own jazz orchestra that was called The YMCA Boys. I was a member of the leading group/steering committee, I was the chairman of the youth organisation and even though YMCA means Young Men's Christian Association, I never asked anyone about his or her religion. I used to go to the YMCA camp on the Sázava river, where there were regular Sunday services. I was participating automatically in these events, when in prayers they closed their eyes, I closed them too, and it did not seem strange to me. I had my friends in the YMCA and I like remembering this time until now. I was going to Sokol only for a short time, that was more or less a town organisation and I only went to gym there. I was participating in Skaut as well. I was active in two groups at Skaut. The first one was called the Foxes, they had yellow-green colours as their symbol and the second one was the Buzzards, they had brown-green colours as their symbol. I liked to go to Skaut. The</p>
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summer camps of Sokol were not equipped so well as the YMCA camps, where Ms. Firstová was the chef; her name is a well-known name as she was the founder of the YMCA in Prague (*see ii, iv and v*). I was taking part in these events because my friends were there.

29) Jak si Vy sám vykládáte pojem antisemitismus? Co podle Vás skutečně znamená?

Již minule jsem ho rozdělil na předválečný a poválečný. Poválečný plyne z nároků přeživších židů na svůj původní majetek, který jim často nechtěl být přiznán. Z těchto sporů vznikla nenávisť nového antisemitismu, což je pochopitelné. Já sám jsem ho kromě koncentráku nezažil a jiné důvody neznám.

29) How do you understand the term “anti-Semitism”? What does it mean according to you?

I have already divided it last time into pre-war and post-war anti-Semitism. Post-war anti-Semitism came from demands of Jews who survived WW II and wanted their property, which was often not given back to them. These conflicts caused hatred of a new anti-Semitism, which is comprehensible. Personally, I did not experience it apart from the concentration camp and I don't know about other reasons.

30) Co pro Vás znamenalo židovství před 2. světovou válkou?

Pro mne to znamenalo jediné to, že jsem uctíval památku svých prarodičů a rodičů, kteří byli dobrými židy, což já o sobě říci nemohu.

30) What did Jewry mean to you before WW II.?

To me it meant only venerating the memory of my grandparents and parents, who were good Jews, which I cannot claim about myself.

31) Kdo je podle Vás dobrý žid?

To není tak jednoduché zodpovědět. Uvedu příklad. Já mám devadesátiletou přítelkyni, která chodí při každé příležitosti do synagogy,

31) Who is a good Jew according to you?

This is not so easy to answer. I give you an example. I have a 90 years old friend who goes to synagogue regularly, prays

<p>denně se modlí, je vychována v ortodoxní židovské rodině, drží všechny svátky, dodržuje šábés, umí hebrejsky a to je podle mého názoru dobrá židovka. A chtěl bych říci, že je nejenom dobrá židovka, ale i povahově je vynikající. Já nikoliv, protože já jsem sice žid náboženstvím a vyznáním, ale nebyl jsem vychován k rituálnímu životu a jako žid jsem nikdy nežil.</p>	<p>everyday, she was raised in an orthodox Jewish family, celebrates all holidays and feasts, celebrates Sabbath, knows Hebrew and she is a good Jew according to me. And she is not only a good Jew but she is also brilliant by character. I am not, because I am Jewish by religion and confession but I was not raised to ritual life and I never lived like a Jew.</p>
<p><u>32) Smýšlel jste před válkou spíše levicově či pravicově?</u> Před válkou jsem smýšlel levicově, tak jako po válce. Aktivní politiku jsem však nezastával.</p>	<p><u>32) Have you been politically oriented more towards left or right before the war?</u> I was left oriented before as well as after the war. But I did not take part in active politics.</p>
<p><u>33) Měl jste ve třicátých letech nějakou vazbu na židovskou komunitu (jakoukoli)?</u> Nikoliv, žádnou.</p>	<p><u>33) Had you been in any contact with Jewish community during 1930's?</u> No, in no contact.</p>

4. 3 Interview Analysis

I start the analyses of this impressive life story at its beginning where I introduce the interviewee with very basic information about his person. Then I follow the data given in answers on questions 1 to 39 that deal with issues connected with the First Republic.

The first striking fact is given by the information about the age of the informant. As I already mentioned, his age was at the time of recording the last interview 91 years. This is the first thing to be kept in mind when reading his narrative because the advanced age influences the gathered data with life experiences, reflections, and emotions but not with a limited memory capacity, which I will soon explain. Following pages show how far these influences matter.

Second important information is to be found in political and religious orientation of the informant. The answers may open the question of his religious identity. The interviewee mentions his mother's *banal Jewishness* characteristic by "not-going to church". An important remark here says the interviewee lost both his parents in concentration camps, which must have influenced him and his thinking about himself. All this is a basic frame

through which we should look at the interviewed person. He claims he was a member of Czechoslovak Communist Party but he entered the Jewish Religious Community of Prague in 1989. This statement tells that there were two great decisions at minimum made in the life of my informant that might have shaped his identity. Firstly, he decided to join Czechoslovak Communists and stayed a party member for half a century. Such an open admittance of a political orientation is unique and I connect it with his perception of self-identity. Secondly, his ethnic/religious orientation is admitted as another open declaration in one sentence. These are two basic inputs to be focused and analysed on the next pages because they might be the key for opening the door to how my informant perceives his identity.

From the first answer we can see that my informant was born in a town belonging to the then called Czech Lands within Austria-Hungarian Empire. These existed for some five years more when the empire split, and Czechoslovakia was established. What is more, the town of his birth belonged to an area that was later on called Sudetenland^{xii}, which means the majority population living in the region spoke German. This is important to mention with regard to his attitude to German language. We learn about the parents of the informant and the fact they moved with the whole family to a “Czech town” of Hradec Králové. He mentions his father on the first place when describing his parents in his narrative; he claims his father was Jewish but coming from a “true Czech family”. These remarks clearly stress the importance of Czechness for the informant and his preferences for his father too. Then a surprising claim comes. In contradiction to his father, his mother spoke German and the informant “could not forgive her” for the language difficulties she had with the Czech language and he even “did not like her for this reason” (answer # 1). He says he liked his father; he did not like his mother and aunt (answer # 30 in Additional questions). Such a strong position towards family members obviously speaks for the informant’s special feelings against the German language and resolution for defending Czech. The fact that my informant disliked German influence, refused any modifying pressures from German population including his mother and defended Czech positions against them, is clearly expressed in the answer on question # 32 as well. Also his strong reaction to this question shows that refusing the German influence already in his young life in Hradec Králové forms an important part of my informant’s memories. This influence must have had a strong modifying power on him especially during the age of his adolescence.

The answer to question # 2 refers to the minimal importance of the Jewish religion for the informant and opens another big topic of his life story. He seems to make it clear that it was mainly Christian society that had some modifying impact on his personhood. All the

three mentioned organizations he was member of as a boy or young man have connotations to national or Christian ideas but concerning Jewry keep silent. The same appears in answers # 3, 4, 6 and 7 where the informant interprets the importance of Jewish origin for himself and for the society of the First Republic in general, as irrelevant. It is interesting that the rise of “important” Jews he understands as having a “negative impact” on the social cohabitation in the state. Therefore he claims there were good marriages and exemplary cooperation between Jewish and non-Jewish people in the First Republic era to eliminate any doubts about clashing cohabitation. By claiming there was no difference between citizens of Jewish and non-Jewish origin, he wants us to understand he personally was as good citizen of the Czechoslovak First Republic as all non-Jewish citizens. To put it more clearly, with the non-Jewish citizens he means the “Us” to whom he inclines and the Jewish citizens he would call “the Others”. My informant, himself coming from a Jewish family according to what he says in this interview, felt the sense of belonging to the non-Jewish part of Czechoslovak society and although he says there were no differences between both groups (answer # 8), he still distinguishes between them already by calling them with different appellation (Jews and non-Jews).

The issue of anti-Semitism develops in the narrative as a religious issue. My informant understands the issue of anti-Semitism as an on-going process found at several levels. He speaks about “latent anti-Semitism” based on the claim Jews crucified Christ, “economic anti-Semitism” based on envying of Jewish property and skills and “hereditary anti-Semitism” passed on from parents (answer # 18). These personal explanations of the phenomenon are connected with assimilated Jews and Zionists as “double Jewry” as he puts it (again answer # 18). At this point it is rather difficult to say what influence the informant believes anti-Semitism has had on shaping his life. He explicitly refuses any influence of this kind, which is paradoxical concerning his life story. I will return to this question later after gaining more data on this topic in following chapters.

Concerning his relation to Jewishness it is interesting to look at what he describes as being a “Jew by tradition” (question # 5). I came back to this topic in question # 33; I ask what he means exactly by saying his parents were “traditionally Jewish”? The answer gives basically two sorts of Jewishness. Concerning his parents, my informant distinguishes between being a non-religious Jew by birth or, in another words, an ethnic Jew (the case of the mother and her sister) and a practising Jew, or with the informant’s words “a pious Jew” (the case of the father). He speaks about a third group too, for which he uses the name “Zionists”. According to the way he uses this attribution he dislikes Zionists because they are always mentioned in a pejorative way (see in the next chapter touching the WW II. issues

too). In his further narrative on his relation to Jewishness he shows that his own approach to Jewishness is more or less connected with ethnic legacy of Jewishness: "Jewry meant only venerating the memory of my grandparents and parents, who were good Jews, which I cannot claim about myself," (question # 37). He is able to accept this concept of Jewishness for his personhood; he takes it as his "I" according to how he talks about it. He refuses the Jewishness connected with religious life or even with political goals, in strict confidence, at least at this period of life.

To explain why my interviewee perceives himself as a *passive Jew* and why he actually hardly admits there was any influence of Jewishness on his life during the First Republic although both his parents were Jews we must turn to his sense of belonging to the "Us", that is to the majority population in his case. A good example to start with is the question # 12 asking about the greatest Czech personalities. In the answer my informant mentions the two important creators of Czech language of National Revival period (writers Palacký and Jungmann) and three popular Jewish authors of the First Republic writing in Czech. These clearly refer to the informant's perception of the dominant Czech population. Any connection with Czechness is mentioned in a thoughtfully positive way: "in typical Czech towns the cohabitation was very good" (answer on question # 8); or "the Czech neighbours that I knew at that time behaved in an exemplary way towards me" (answer on question # 16); or "Czechs could not stop the Holocaust" (answer on question # 20). The relation to Czechness is expressed in a proud and warm way on several places which points at the informant's perception of himself as a "true Czech" in his words at least during the era of the First Republic. Although he avoids going with his explanations further back in the history (answer # 25) he reflects a his sense of belonging to the Czech nation and he gives practical examples (speaking about writing in the Czech newspapers and magazines against Germans, being active in young men organizations' steering groups, camps and orchestras that were focused or even aimed at Czech/oslovakness, etc.). As another proof of his "Czechness" I might interpret his way of using the word "church" and actually meaning "synagogue" (answers # 21 and 29). It seems there is no difference in between both words for the informant. According to how he uses these words I can claim he again underlines his ethnic Jewish origin and Czech sense of belonging.

To comment on all three "keywords" mentioned in the introduction I must not forget the issue of political belonging and perceiving itself as a partly political entity. In question # 39 I ask on the political orientation of my informant. His answer postpones these issues till analyses of further narratives because although he admits he was "left oriented", he did not

take part in active politics and politics did not play bigger role for him than for other Czechs in his point of view. The sense of political belonging to a group and process of political identification comes later in following parts of my informant's life story.

4.3.1 Explanatory Summary

As an explanatory conclusion of the whole first part of my informant's life story I use the interesting idea of Leo Pavlát introduced in the article called "Jewish Persecution as the Historical Fact"⁸. Using the theory of Milton Friedman he comments on assimilation and emancipation of Jews in 19th century, which seems to be very helpful for my explanation. Why? My informant touches mainly the topics of Jewishness and Czechness in his narrative on the era of the First Czechoslovak Republic. He perceives himself as a Czech in terms of using Czech language and being ready to defend the Czech identity against German pressures. He does not perceive himself as a Jew in religious or political meaning of the word. The only shaping aspect of Jewishness that he admits he felt at this era was his "genetic legacy" after his parents. Anything from Jewish culture and traditional life remained uninteresting for him. Therefore we can call this behaviour as typical for assimilated Czech inhabitants. Pavlát delivers an interesting comment on this issue:

How did those Jews behave, who decided to traverse their contrasts? These assimilated people firstly asked: Are we really as bad as our enemies claim? By their action these Jews tried to fight the stereotype. They wanted to show they are not damnable *a priori* but they are the same in their characters and skills as other people. The effort to change, traverse imputed material propensity is according to Milton Friedman one of the reasons why Jews stressed social aspects of the development; they were often anti capitalist. M. Friedman gives another reasons: only liberal left wing allowed equal rights in public life of 19th century (...).

In another place he writes: "Jews did not accentuate the national aspect of their being, they accepted the nationality of hosting nation and ascribed any distinctive role only to their religion."⁹ These thoughts explain the described contrasting position of my informant towards his role in Czechoslovak society of that era. It is hard to tell if this is the only and true explanation but the narrative in following chapters might make this question clearer.

⁸ Leo Pavlát, "Persekuce židů jako historický fakt," in Václav Veber (ed.), *Židé v novodobých dějinách*, (Praha: Karolinum, 1997), p. 136

⁹ Leo Pavlát, "Persekuce židů jako historický fakt," in Václav Veber (ed.), *Židé v novodobých dějinách*, (Praha: Karolinum, 1997), p. 137

4.4 References

ⁱ For more information about the history of the Jewish Religious Community of Prague see:
<http://www.kehilaprag.cz/en/index.htm>

ⁱⁱ Sokol was founded by Miroslav Tyrš and Jindřich Fügner in 1862 as the first physical education organization in the Austro – Hungarian empire at a time of political freedom in the 1860's. Many significant Czech patriots took part in the foundation of The Prague Gymnastic Association (renamed Prague Sokol). (...)The patriotism of Sokol was to be seen from the very beginning - Sokols made trips in national costumes, were present to national ceremonies, public exercises, etc, and that all encouraged people to show their patriotism. Sokol fulfilled its patriotic role during the World War I. When Czechoslovak legions were founded and during the days of the revolution in October 1918, Sokol members helped to keep peace in towns. Sokols were often called Czech national army. Sokol leaders Schneider and Vaníček were one of those who started to organize a new Czechoslovak army. For more see: <http://www.sokol-cos.cz/English/History/history.html>

ⁱⁱⁱ "Construction of Auschwitz II, or Auschwitz-Birkenau, began in the vicinity of Brzezinka in October 1941. Of the three camps established near Oswiecim, the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp had the largest total prisoner population. It was divided into nine sections separated by electrified barbed-wire fences and, like Auschwitz I, was patrolled by SS guards and some dog handlers. The camp included sections for women, men, Roma (Gypsies), and families deported from the Terezín ghetto." For more see:
<http://history1900s.about.com/gi/dynamic/offsite.htm?site=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.ushmm.org%2Fwlc%2Farticle.jsp%3FModuleId%3D10005189>

^{iv} YMCA, the Young Men's Christian Association, started its activities during the second half of 19th century in the Czech Lands as "Christian Alliances of Young Men" or so called "Christian Association of Youth". After several years of function under Czechoslovak Legions and later under Czechoslovak Army, YMCA spreaded in 1921 all over the country mainly thanks to support from USA and the country's elite - first Czechoslovak president T. G. Masaryk, or Ing. V. Havla – father of president Vaclav Havel etc. The Czechoslovak YMCA was forced to finish in 1951 and was not allowed to reestablish even in 1968. Its activities were renewed only in 1990 after the Velvet Revolution. The Czech YMCA was established in 1992 with regards to the coming split of Czechoslovakia in January 1, 1993. For more see: <http://www.ymca.cz/engine.php?id=0200&oldid=0501>

^v A. B. Svojsík founded in 1914 an independent organization in Czech Lands, the name of which was "Junak - Czech Scout". In 1915 the Girl Guides began in Czechoslovakia. In 1912 A.B. Svojsík wrote the basic book of Czech Scouting "The Foundations of Scouting". In that book he combined Baden-Powell's system of education, ideas of the American writer, traveller and painter E. T. Seton (founder of woodcraft) and the traditions of Czech/oslovak nation. The word "Scout" he made up a Slavonic word "Junak" and as a symbol of the organization he used the head of a dog. It is the historical symbol of Czech frontiersmen. Scouting in Czechoslovakia developed very quickly. But during the second world war, in 1940, it was abolished by German State Secretary K.H. Frank. All the possessions of the organization were confiscated. Many troops, however, continued to work as illegal organizations. After 1945 they again began to work as an official organization. But in 1951 it was again abolished - now by the communists. Junak was again an illegal organization until November 1989 except for three years after the Prague Spring (1968-1971). For more see:
<http://n2zgu.50megs.com/CZE.htm>

^{vi} Vojtěch Rakous (1862-1935) was a merchant but also a satirist and humourist of First Republic. More importantly he was a Jew from a Czech-speaking village family. He wrote in Czech and he was mainly writing about good relations between Czech/oslovak Jews and their non-Jewish village neighbours.
See: <http://www.maskil.cz/5762-1-12/12/11.htm>

^{vii} Miscarriage of justice in a vehmic court.

^{viii} Czechoslovak parties and movements nowadays classified of fascist or terrorist type.
See: Ladislav Cabada: *Český stranický systém 1890 – 1939*, (Plzeň: Západočeská Univerzita v Plzni, 2000), p. 68

^{ix} The issue of ČESKÁ POJIŠŤOVNA (Czech Insurance Company), Vladislavova St, Prague 1, touches the

construction of a new headquarters in central Prague. Originally routine gap site excavations with jet grouting underpinning and sheeting structures became complicated when discovering bones - a Jewish 13th century cemetery burial site was found. A stake was invested to leave the 240m2 cemetery site untouched and the foundations of the proper new building are built around the site, which was encased in concrete.

Source: http://www.cgts.cz/documents/4003nosek_p.pdf

^x “Right-wing groups National Union, founded by Jiří Stribrný in 1927, the Czech Fascist Community, headed by the former general of the Czech army Radola Gajda, and the Vlajka (Flag) group explicitly supported anti-Semitism in their platforms.” For more see viii) and

[http://www.heritagefilms.com/CZECH.html#Emigration%20and%20Exile%20\(1938-45\)](http://www.heritagefilms.com/CZECH.html#Emigration%20and%20Exile%20(1938-45))

^{xi} The so-called “Hilsner trial” or “Hilsneriáda” was a myth of Jewish ritual murder. For more see:

http://web.isp.cz/jcrane/Hilsner_trial.html

^{xii} “*Sudetenland* is a term for the German settlement area of the Bohemian Lands (Bohemia, Moravia, Austrian Silesia), used only sporadically before 1918. The German ethnic group in Bohemian Lands with appx. 3.5 million citizens was named ca. since the beginning of 20C as “Sudetendeutsche” (Sudeten Germans), before German-Bohemians, Austrians, etc. The Bohemian Lands were until 1918 part of the Austrian Monarchy. 1918-1938 was Sudetenland part of Czechoslovakia. After the “Münchener Abkommen” (The Munich Agreement), 1938, Sudetenland was the official term (1938-1945) for the Reichsgau Sudetenland. After the end of WWII Sudetenland was again reintegrated into Czechoslovakia and its German ethnic group was expelled.” See the map in Attachment 1. (Source: http://www.genealogienetz.de/reg/SUD/sudet_en.html#gener)

Chapter 5

The War

Similarly as in the beginning of chapter four I am going to introduce in here the political development of Czechoslovakia, respectively the so-called Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia. During the time of Second World War, respectively during the duration of the Protectorate, which lasted longer than the war, the interviewee faced probably the biggest political threat of 20th century ever; the threat of the policy of Holocaust. Again, I do not aim to deliver a historically precise sequence of events but a politico-historical context of events related to the narrative.

5. 1 German Occupation, War Period and Soviet Liberation

For the inhabitants of the Czechoslovak Republic the era of WW II was connected mainly with German occupation, which came almost one year before the official beginning of the World War II on September 1, 1939. The occupation had two phases. In both cases Czechoslovaks did not offer any military resistance although the Czechoslovak Army was mobilised in advance and in busy preparations for the possible attack as the interviewee –being a Czechoslovak Army officer himself - witnessed. This is important to mention because these coincidences influenced the political atmosphere and the meaning of public in general. Concerning the life story of my informant this episode is of great importance because it opens an issue that he did not pay any big attention to during his previous life. It is the issue of Jewishness and its political aspect that turned out to be a direct sentence to death.

The key historical event that opened the country's borders for the Nazi Germany Wehrmacht Army entered the history under the name “the Munich Agreement”.

“By the Munich Agreement of September 1938, the Western Allies sacrificed democratic Czechoslovakia for the ill-fated sake of “peace in our time”, by offering the Germans access to the so-called Sudeten German areas of North Western Czechoslovakia. The remaining parts of Bohemia and Moravia was invaded by the Germans in March 1939, and at the same time, the first ‘independent’ Slovak Republic rose as a Nazi protectorate.”¹

¹ Mads Bielefeldt Stjernø, *Vicissitudes Of Post Communist Identity*, (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2001), p. 43 on <http://www.diskurs.dk/litteratur/pdf/specialer/Thesis.pdf>

The document is called after the conference in Munich where the leaders of former superpowers dealt with actual political situation. N. Chamberlain (Great Britain), E. Daladier (France), B. Mussolini (Italy) and Adolf Hitler (Germany) signed an agreement concerning the (non)future of Czechoslovakia without any previous or actual confrontation with the Czechoslovak side. It caused a great bitterness and disappointment between the Czechoslovak leaders and a huge disillusion and derogation among the Czech population as the interviewee confirms. The Munich Agreement, in another words, caused the fact that Wehrmacht invaded without fighting an area inhabited by German majority population (some 3 million people) in the end of September 1938 and secondly added the rest of the country inhabited by mostly Czech and Moravian population (some 7 million people) to the Third Reich in March 1939. "Fulfilling Hitler's aggressive designs on all of Czechoslovakia, Germany invaded what remained of Bohemia and Moravia in March 1939, establishing a German "Protectorate." By this time, Slovakia had already declared independence and had become a puppet state of the Germans."² Thanks to this, the Munich Agreement is sometimes called "the Munich Dictate" and it was interpreted in two different ways. The conference was seen either as preventing Europe from a war or as a betrayal of democratic Czechoslovakia. With regards to the future development of 1939 the Munich Agreement and the whole politics of appeasement turned out to be the biggest diplomatic failure in the international relations after WW I at least according to the point of view of my informant and the state press. What is more, the disillusion from the Agreement and its aftermath had a serious impact on thinking of the majority ex-Czechoslovak population and on forming of the "Czechness". The impact was maybe bigger than the whole war because it created a huge mistrust and disillusion towards politics generally. However the extent of this reaction is hardly provable in politico-historical research I am dealing with in this MA thesis and it is not my topic here. I mention this just to underline the political development in the Protectorate where my informant lived. The story of my interviewee reflects it in the following interview.

From the above mentioned reasons the rest of former Czechoslovakia, that means the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, became the area occupied by Nazi Germany after Austria and remained like this during the whole war.

² Abacci Atlas, *A Short History of Czechoslovakia* on <http://www.abacci.com/atlas/history2.asp?misspellID=546>

“In July 1940, an exile government was established in London under the leadership of pre-war president Edvard Beneš. In December 1943, Beneš signed a Czechoslovak-Soviet alliance agreement in Moscow, and by the end of the war, the Czechoslovak exile government was under heavy pressure from the Soviet Union.”³

The American Army finally liberated former Czechoslovakia on May 1945 in the western part of the country and Russian Army in the remaining (bigger) part. “A civilian uprising against the German garrison took place in Prague in May 1945. Following Germany's surrender, some 2.9 million ethnic Germans were expelled from Czechoslovakia with Allied approval.”⁴

Now I want to mention some framing dates concerning the history of Czechoslovak Jews and related events during the WW II because my interviewee refers to them in the following part of his life story narrative very often. The repressive laws and policies were applied against the Jewish population of former Czechoslovakia from the time of German occupation of the country until the end of the war in Europe in May 1945. The official numbers differ but “(...) 118 000 Jews lived on the area of today's Czech Republic in the beginning of WW II. During the war around 80 000 of them died in Nazi exterminatory camps (...) In the beginning of deportations to concentration camps (November 1941) there was 39 395 Jews in Prague, out of whom only 7540 survived.”⁵ My interviewee was one of them.

The most important development related to my informant's life story is as follows in the References section after the interview and analysisⁱ.

³ Mads Bielefeldt Stjernø, *Vicissitudes Of Post Communist Identity*, (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2001), p. 43 on <http://www.diskurs.dk/litteratur/pdf/specialer/Thesis.pdf>

⁴ Abacci Atlas, *A Short History of Czechoslovakia* on <http://www.abacci.com/atlas/history2.asp?misspellID=546>

⁵ History of Jewish Community of Prague on <http://www.kehilaprag.cz/>

5. 2 Interview II: War Memories

Original Version in Czech Language	English Translation
<p><i>1) Jak byl ovlivněn či zakázán Váš veřejný život po okupaci?</i></p> <p>Okamžitě po 15. březnu 1939 byla vládou formulována protizidovská opatření. Už v březnu byl proveden zákaz činnosti neárijských lékařů a advokátů. Tento zákaz vydala Lékařská a Advokátní komora. Židů podle Norimberských zákonů, tj. těch, kteří měli alespoň tři židovské prarodiče a byli členy nějaké židovské organizace, se týkala povinná registrace u německých úřadů, přestěhování a sestěhování (zejména moravská města se tímto stala "Juden rein" = bez židů, konkrétně např. Hodonín) a zabavování majetku. Do židovských obchodů a továren byli zařazováni tzv. treuhändři = důvěrníci. Příkladem může být polský film Obchod na Korse. V září 1940 pražský magistrát vydal zákaz vstupu do městských lesů, od července byl zákaz jízdy na parnicích a vstupu do parku. Na dráze byl zákaz jezdit v jiném než zadním voze, v tramvaji pak v zadním oddílu, pokud byla tramvaj dělená. Byl příkaz nakupovat pouze v obchodech pro židy určených a to v době od 11 - 13 hod a 15 - 16,30 hod. Tento zákaz se týkal také árijských zaměstnanců židovských firem, pokud tyto zaměstnance</p>	<p><i>1) How was your public life influenced or forbidden after the occupation?</i></p> <p>The government approved the anti-Jewish arrangements immediately after March 15, 1939ⁱⁱ. Activities of non-Aryan doctors and advocates were forbidden already in March. This ban came from the Medical and Lawyer's Chamber. Jewish inhabitants, according to Nürnberg laws (that means Jews who had at least three generations of Jewish ancestors and were members of some Jewish Community) were involved in compulsory registration with the German authorities, removal, moving together (especially the Moravian towns became "Juden rein" = free from Jews because of this, such as the town of Hodonín) and confiscation of property. So-called "Treuhänder" (confidants) were sent to Jewish shops and factories. For another example you could watch the Polish movie "Shop on the Promenade"? A ban on entering town forests was approved in September 1940; a ban on entering steamboat rides and town parks was approved in July 1940. It was forbidden for Jews to travel in any other than the last wagon of any train and in the last section of a tram, if it was divided. It was ordered to do the</p>

ještě měly. Od podzimu roku 1941 bylo nařízeno všem osobám židovského původu starších šesti let nosit žlutou hvězdu na levé straně prsou, která musela být pevně přišitá. Od roku 1942 měl každý takový občan v občanském průkazu červené „J“ jako Jude. Od podzimu 1941 do března 1945 byly prováděny transporty židů. Do Terezína bylo transportováno pro zajímavost 74 tisíc českých židů a z toho přežilo pouze tři tisíce pět set. V Brně například bylo k 1. 10. 1939 evidováno přes devět tisíc židů. K 30. 4. 1945 jich tam bylo pouze 840 a později se vrátilo jen dalších několik set. Mě se tyto zákazy velmi dotýkaly, jelikož jsem se většinou stýkal s nežidovskou společností. Ale musím říci, že moji přátelé, přestože jsem nosil hvězdu (pokud se mi jí nepodařilo zakrýt), se mnou chodili do všech podniků, které byly výhradně pro židy. Také měli někdy kvůli tomu s našimi občany problémy, ale přesto se se mnou stýkali. Navštěvovali jsme se, respektive oni navštěvovali mě, po celou dobu, než jsem byl odvezen do Terezína.

shopping only in special shops for Jews and only between 11 – 1pm and 3 – 4:30pm. This ban also involved the Aryan employees of Jewish companies, if these still employed any. Since the autumn of 1941 it was compulsory to wear a yellow star, sewn properly on the left side of chest, for all Jewish people, 6 years of age and older. Since 1942, each Jewish citizen had a big „J“ stamp in his or her ID, which meant “Jude”. Since the fall of 1941 until 1945 transports to concentration camps were carried out. Just to underline this, 74 000 Czech Jews were transported to the Terezín (Theresienstadt)⁶ ghetto and out of them only 3 500 people survived. In the town of Brno (Brün in German) more than 9 000 Jews were registered on October 1, 1939. On April 30, 1945 there were only 840 left and later only a few hundred came back. I was greatly affected by these restrictions because I used to meet non-Jewish people. But I must say that my friends, even when I was wearing the star (and when I did not manage to hide it), were following me in all the places of amusement designated for Jews. From time to time, they had trouble with our citizens because of me, but they kept on meeting me. We kept visiting each other; in fact, they kept visiting me till the time I was transported to Terezín.

2) Za jakých podmínek probíhala setkání (např. v noci)? Jak se vaši přátelé chovali konkrétně? Vzpomínáte si na akty solidarity ze strany Čechů?

Nežidovští přátelé se mnou chodili do podniků vyhrazených pro židy (např. kavárna na Vinohradské třídě Nica). Tam jsem byl dokonce svědkem toho, že tam zabloudili nějací zvědaví Němci, kteří když viděli tanečnický s hvězdami a bez hvězd, tak se dvoumých přítelkyň ptali, jak to, že tam chodí, když nenosí hvězdu? Ony mu odvětily, že tam mají přítele, a že tam chodí s ním. Takže naše setkávání probíhalo zcela běžně ve dne a bez jakýchkoli omezení. Chovaly se ke mně naprosto korektně. Vzpomínám si ale, že ještě když jsem žil v Hradci Králové, byl Vlajkař jménem Richter. Byl to syn hradeckého špeditéra a ten zuřivě pronásledoval všechny hradecké židy. Já nevím, zda jsem já a můj bratr byli výjimkou, ale nám nikdy neublížil. Přestože o nás věděl, znal nás, nikdy nám nic neudělal. Byli i případy, že nás přistihl při schůzkách s našimi nežidovskými přáteli, u jiných z toho byl ochoten udělat velký skandál, u nás si toho ale nevšímal. Nevím proč.

2) Under what conditions were the meetings held (for example at nights)? How did your friends behave in particular? Do you remember any acts of solidarity shown by the Czechs?

Non-Jewish friends were visiting the places of amusement designated for Jews (for example the Café Nika on Vinohradská Street) with me. I once witnessed two curious Germans there who lost their way and saw people dancing with the stars and without them too so they asked my friends how it is possible that even people not wearing the star visit the place. They answered they had a friend there and they were visiting the place with him. That means our meetings were normally held during the day and without any restrictions. They (friends) treated me very well. I remember when I still lived in Hradec Králové, there was a Vlajka sympathising person called Richter. He was a son of one forwarding-agent and he persecuted the Jews of Hradec Králové brutally. I don't know if my brother and I were an exception, but he never did anything bad to us. Even though he knew about us, he knew us; he never did us any harm. It happened many times too, that he saw us meeting our non-Jewish friends, and with other Jews he would make a big scandal out of it, but in our case he did not care. I don't know why.

3) Byl jste na konci třicátých let sestěhován s nějakou židovskou rodinou?

Ano, byl jsem sestěhován do ulice Elišky Krásnohorské, v tehdejší Praze 5 - na Starém Městě, a dostal jsem se do bytu, jejímž majitelkou byla jakási paní Skálová. Měla tam tři pokoje a v jednom z těch pokojů byla umístěna rodina dr. Elberta (sionistický funkcionář a později činovník na židovské správě Terezína). Já jsem se s touto rodinou mnoho nestýkal, protože to byly sionisté a já jsem k nim proto těžko nalézal cestu. Krom toho tam bydlelo ještě jedno smíšené manželství (otec žid, matka křesťanka a jejich dcera) a dále tam bydlel pražský zubař dr. Ganz a pozdější vedoucí krevní banky v hradecké nemocnici, prof. Klen. S těmi jsem byl sestěhován. Pamatuji se ještě na jméno ing. Neumanna, byl odněkud z Moravy, a to byl také sionista. To mi bylo o něm známo, jelikož on chodil do sionistického střediska v Dlouhé třídě.

4) Proč jste si nerozuměl se sionisty? Vzpomínáte si na nějaké zážitky ze společného soužití? Setkal jste se se svými "spolubydlícími" po válce?

Já jsem jednoduše stál na druhé straně barikády. Nikdy jsem sionistou nebyl, byl jsem vychován v YMCE a Skautu, takže otázka

3) Were you forced to move together with another Jewish family?

Yes, I moved to Elišky Krásnohorské Street in what was then called Prague 5 – Old Town and I moved to a flat owned by Ms. Skálová. There were three rooms in her flat, and in one of them Dr. Elbert's family was moved (he was a Zionist official and later active in the Jewish administration of Terezín). I did not meet this family too often because they were Zionists, and I did not feel like contacting them for this reason. Apart from them, one mixed couple lived there (Jewish father, Christian mother and their daughter) and then a dentist from Prague, Mr. Ganz, and the future chief of the blood bank in Hradec Králové, professor Klein lived there too. I lived together with these people. Also, I remember another name of my flatmate, Mr. Neumann from Moravia, who was a Zionist as well. I knew this because he was going to the Zionist Centre in Dlouhá Street.

4) Why didn't you have good relations with Zionists? Do you remember some experiences from living together? Did you meet your flatmates after the war?

To put it simply, I was standing on the other side of the barricade. I had never been a Zionist, I was raised in the YMCA and Skaut

<p>sionismu pro mě byla naprosto nepřijatelná. Se svými spolubydlícími jsem ale konflikty neměl. Oni se ke mně chovali slušně, já jsem se choval slušně k nim. Po stránce politické jsme spolu často diskutovali, oni měli své názory, já také a tím to končilo. Se svými spolubydlícími jsem se po válce už nikdy nesetkal, ani mi není známo, jestli žijí.</p>	<p>and the issue of Zionism was absolutely unacceptable for me. But I was not involved in any conflicts with my flatmates. They treated me politely and I treated them politely as well. We often discussed our political view points, they had their opinion, I had mine and that was that. I did not meet these people after the war and I don't know if they are alive.</p>
<p><u>5) Kdy jste byl povolán do Terezína?</u> V Praze jsem vydržel až do 6. června 1943, kdy jsem byl s manželkou transportován do Terezína.</p>	<p><u>5) When were you called to Terezín?</u> I endured staying in Prague until June 6, 1943, when I was transported with my wife to Terezín.</p>
<p><u>6) Co se Vám vybavuje z Holešovického sraziště? Jaká tam panovala atmosféra? Jak dlouho jste čekali na transportní vlak?</u> Já vím, že na holešovickém srazišti panovala atmosféra strachu z budoucnosti, ženy tam měly hysterické záchvaty. Jak dlouho jsme čekali na transport, to se ale opravdu nepamatuji.</p>	<p><u>6) What do you remember from the Holešovice meeting point⁷? What was the atmosphere like? How long did you wait for the transportation train?</u> I know that the atmosphere of fear for the future was spread, there the women got hysterical. I really don't remember how long we waited for the train.</p>
<p><u>7) Vzpomenete si na nějaká gesta českých obyvatel při příchodu na Holešovické sraziště? Cítil jste z Čechů falešný soucit?</u> Nemohu se přesně upamatovat, jaká konkrétní gesta obyvatel lemujících ulice jsem viděl. Rozhodně bych si nedovolil říci, že české obyvatelstvo mělo radost z odchodu židů do</p>	<p><u>7) Do you remember any gestures by Czech inhabitants after you arrived at the Holešovice meeting point? Did you feel any insincere compassion?</u> I cannot remember seeing any particular gestures by the inhabitants surrounding the streets. But I could not say for sure that Czechs</p>

<p>transportu. To mohli být snad organizovaní jednotlivci z Vlajky nebo zfanatizovaní Árijským bojem apod., ale nedovolil bych si říci, že Češi obecně gestikulovali posměšně či falešně.</p>	<p>were made happy by the removal of the Jews to transport. Maybe some organized individuals from Vlajka or ardent supporters of Aryan Fight but I would not allow myself to claim Czechs in general gesticulated in a quizzical or false way.</p>
<p><u>8) Jaká byla cesta do Terezína? Mohl jste si ve vagónu sednout?</u></p> <p>Toto si též nevybavuji, ani nevím, zda-li jsme do Terezína jeli osobním vlakem či v tzv. dobytčáku.</p>	<p><u>8) How was the ride to Terezín? Was there a place to sit on the train?</u></p> <p>I don't remember, i don't even know whether we went to Terezín by passenger train or on the livestock train.</p>
<p><u>9) Jaký byl příjezd? Kde jste byl ubytován? Co se stalo s Vašimi osobními věcmi?</u></p> <p>Příjezd do Terezína pro mě byl dobrý, protože už tam byla matka moji manželky, která tam pracovala v kuchyni, měla tam už určité spojení s ostatními, takže já jsem ani nepřišel o svoje věci, neboť ona to na místě odebrání osobních věcí zařídila tak, že jsem o nic nepřišel. To znamená léky, vařivo a nejnnutnější ustrojení mi zůstalo. Ubytován jsem byl v Hamburských kasárnách a zase jsem měl to štěstí, že tam byl bratr mojí manželky, který byl truhlář, a který nám tam na půdě s manželkou vyrobil takové dvě palandy, takže jsme tam mohli bydlet spolu.</p>	<p><u>9) What was the arrival like? Where were you accommodated? What happened to your luggage?</u></p> <p>My arrival in Terezín was good because my wife's mother was already staying there. She worked in the kitchen, and she had had some contact with other people living there so that she arranged everything at the luggage area and I did not lose anything. That means pharmaceuticals, kitchen stuff and clothes most needed I kept. I was accommodated in Hamburg barracks where I was again lucky because my wife's brother was living there. He was a carpenter and he made a sort of two plank-beds for my wife and me so that we could live together in the attic room of the house.</p>

<p><u>10) Kde a jak jste v Terezíně pracoval? Jak jste si dopomáhal k přežití?</u></p> <p>V Terezíně jsem pracoval u komanda, které se jmenovalo "Rohrgraben", což obnášelo to, že jsme hloubili výkopy do hloubky cca 2 metry, do kterého se pokládalo potrubí na plyn či teplo, nevím přesně. Byla to velmi těžká práce, také jsme měli jako předáka vídeňského žida, který nás strašlivým způsobem proháněl. Vím, že jsme ho s mým kamarádem jednou dokonce hodili do té jámy a pohrozili mu, že jestli se k nám bude takhle dále chovat, tak ho tam zasypeme. Od té doby se k nám choval slušně. Tato práce byla těžká, ale výhodná, neboť nedaleko se nacházela plantáž s rajčaty a když byl dobrý doprovod, když s námi chodili čeští četníci, které jsme znali, tak ty nám dovolili, abychom si tam nabrali rajčata. Ty jsme ovšem museli schovat do nohavic, protože někdy byla při příchodu zpět do tábora osobní prohlídka, u které byli přítomni Němci. Já jsem takto nosil do tábora rajčata a už jsem měl známé, kteří pracovali v pekárně, ty potřebovali pro své děti rajčata, já zase jejich chleba. Takže tímto jsem si dopomáhal k přežití.</p>	<p><u>10) Where and how did you work in Terezín? How did you manage to survive?</u></p> <p>I worked at a commando called "Rohrgraben" in Terezín, which meant digging 2-meter deep holes for heat or gas pipelines, I cannot remember exactly. It was a hard job and the headman of our team was a Viennese Jew who worked us terribly hard. I remember that my friend and I once threw him in the hole and we threatened that if he continued behaving like that we would have covered him up with the soil and let him die. After that time he treated us well. This job was hard but its advantage was that we worked outside the ghetto, close to a tomato field and when our accompanying Czech policemen were good, we could fill our pockets with tomatoes. However, we had to hide them in our trousers because there was a personal check at the entrance of the camp where Germans were present. I was smuggling tomatoes in the camp like this, and the situation was that I had contact persons in the bakery who were in need of tomatoes for their children and I was in need of bread. So this was the way I was surviving.</p>
<p><u>11) Byla Vaše žena židovka? Jak jste se seznámili?</u></p> <p>Moje první žena byla židovka, pocházela z bohaté rodiny z Nového Bydžova, kde její</p>	<p><u>11) Was your wife Jewish? How did you meet each other?</u></p> <p>My first wife was Jewish, she came from a rich family from the town of Nový Bydžov,</p>

<p>rodiče a i prarodiče měli výrobu knoflíků, takže byla dobře situovaná. Setkali jsme se čistě náhodně na tehdejší Wilsonově nádraží, kde já jsem odjížděl na Hradec, kde já jsem bydlel a ona jela stejným směrem do Chlumce. Takže jsme se seznámili ve vlaku.</p>	<p>where her parents and grandparents had a button factory so she was well-off. We met by accident on what was then called Wilson's Railway Station (Prague's main railway station) when I was leaving for Hradec Králové where I lived and she was going in the same direction to Chlumec. So we got to know each other on the train.</p>
<p><u>12) Prodělal jste v Terezíně nějakou nemoc? Byl jste tam v nemocnici? Co se Vám z ní vybavuje za vzpomínky?</u></p> <p>V nemocnici jsem v Terezíně nikdy nebyl, jelikož jsem tam nikdy nestonal.</p>	<p><u>12) Did you suffer an illness in Terezín? Did you undergo a treatment in the local hospital? What memories do you remember?</u></p> <p>I was never in Terezín hospital because I was never ill there.</p>
<p><u>13) Co všechno se vědělo o transportech na východ?</u></p> <p>O transportech na východ se v Terezíně vědělo, neboť tam přicházely zprávy od komand, které pracovaly mimo ghetto a scházely se s civilisty, a kromě toho tam byli slušní a pro nás spolehliví čeští četníci, kteří nás informovali a věděli jsme tudíž, co nás čeká. Ty informace většinou mluvily o transportech na východ, ale mluvilo se o pracovních transportech, o zařazování lidí na práci. Někdy tam prosáky i informace o plynových komorách, ovšem ty nebyly nijak konkrétní. Navíc tam všichni přijímali každou informaci, protože jich bylo obecně málo.</p>	<p><u>13) What was known about the transports towards East?</u></p> <p>People knew about the transport towards the East, because commands of workers who worked out of the ghetto met civilians and spread the news and also good policemen and reliable Czech gendarme informed us so we knew what we were facing. The information usually told about the transports to east but people spoke about work camps, about distributing people to work. From time to time information about the gas chambers emerged but nothing concrete. What is more, people accepted every piece of information because they were in need of it.</p>

<p><u>14) Účastnil jste se v Terezíně nějakých kulturních či politických akcí?</u></p> <p>Já jsem se v Terezíně zúčastňoval kulturních akcí jen pasivně, tzn. viděl jsem tam představní Brundibár i různé koncerty na půdách, ovšem to bylo ilegální. Tedy kromě toho Brundibára, kde se toho představení také zúčastnili Němci.</p>	<p><u>14) Did you participate in any cultural or political events in Terezín?</u></p> <p>Well, I participated passively in the cultural events in Terezín which means that I saw the Brundibár performance and various concerts in the garrets, which were illegal. Actually instead of Brundibár, because this performance was attended by the Germans as well.</p>
<p><u>15) Účastnil jste se politického života? Patřil jste k nějaké politické skupině (sionisté, levicově orientovaní atd.)?</u></p> <p>Ne, žádného. Nepatřil jsem k žádné politické skupině.</p>	<p><u>15) Did you participate in any political activities? Did you belong to a political group (Zionists, leftist oriented etc.)?</u></p> <p>No, I did not. I did not belong to any political group.</p>
<p><u>16) Jak jste komunikoval se svými rodiči? Byli v Terezíně s Vámi?</u></p> <p>Komunikoval jsem pouze se svým otcem, který byl se mnou v Terezíně. Ovšem on tam byl mnohem déle, jelikož tam přišel s transportem z Hradce Králové. Matka byla v Praze v nemocnici, byla transportována rovnou do nějakého tábora, ani nevím do kterého a kde zemřela. Měl jsem tedy možnost podporovat otce.</p>	<p><u>16) How did you communicate with your parents? Were they in Terezín with you?</u></p> <p>I only communicated with my father, who was there with me in Terezín. But he was there much longer because he had arrived with the transport from Hradec Králové. My mother was in hospital in Prague, she was transported directly to a camp, I don't even know to which one and where she died. But I could support my father.</p>
<p><u>17) Kdy a kam jste byl z Terezína převezen?</u></p> <p>18. 12. 1943 jsem byl opět s manželkou transportován do rodinného tábora Birkenau</p>	<p><u>17) When and where did they transport you from Terezín?</u></p> <p>On December 18, 1943 I was transported,</p>

alias Osvětim II. Tam jsem byl do 17. 4. 1944. Pamatuji se, že než jsme se dostali do tábora, tak jsme prodělali Štědrý večer na nástupišti. V Birkenau, kde jsme byli všichni připravení do koupele, nás nechali všechny stát nahé na nástupišti až do rána, jelikož esesáci slavili Vánoce. Byli opilí a nás tam nechali stát přes noc až do rána. Já se pamatuji, že když jsme tam přijeli, bylo nás asi tisíc lidí. Za tu noc na mraze, jestli zemřelo pět nebo šest lidí, tak to bylo hodně. Tam jsem se přesvědčil, co člověk vydrží.

18) Za jakých podmínek probíhal převoz?

Do Osvětimi jsme byli přepravováni samozřejmě v dobytčácích, což byl strašný transport, kde nebylo postaráno o žádnou hygienu. Byli tam jen takové kbelíky, jídlo jsme žádné nedostali. Každý si něco vzal z Terezína. Nedostali jsme ani žádnou vodu.

19) Jel Váš transport přes Prahu? Povšiml si transportu někdo z běžných obyvatel?

Vlaky byly zapečetěné a vidět nebylo nic, snad jen u zamřížovaného okénka, ale tam se těžko dostávalo. Nevím tedy vůbec, kudy nás vezli. Lidé venku byli na tyto transporty zvyklí, určitě

again with my wife, to a family concentration camp Birkenau alias Oswiecim II (Auschwitz II in German). I was kept there until April 17, 1944. I remember that before we got to the camp, we spent Christmas Eve on the platform. They let us all on the platform, standing naked, ready for a shower, the whole night long because the SS-men were celebrating Christmas. They were drunk and they let us stand there till the next morning. I remember there were about one thousand of us when we arrived there. If five or six persons died during the freezing night, it was a lot. Here I was made sure of what are human beings able to stand.

18) In what conditions was the transport?

We were transported in livestock wagons to Oswiecim, which was a terrible form of transport, without any hygiene. Only some buckets were inside, no food was distributed. Everybody brought something from Terezín. No water was distributed either.

19) Did the transport go through Prague? Did some of civil citizens notice your transport?

The wagons were sealed and nothing was seen from inside, perhaps only at the small grated window, but this was hard to reach. Therefore I don't know at all which way we went. People

<p>si jich všimli, ovšem nebylo možno, aby nám pomohli. Ten vlak vždy zastavil mimo stanici a byl hlídáný.</p>	<p>outside were used to such transports, they must have noticed it, but it was impossible to help us. The train always stopped beyond a station and it was well guarded.</p>
<p><u>20) Prošel jste selekcí? Utrpěl jste nějaký šok?</u></p> <p>Ano prošel, a to dvakrát. Jednou při příjezdu do Birkenau, kde selekci vedl známý dr. Mengele. Já jsem prošel bez problému, jelikož jsem sportoval a měl jsem dobrou postavu a takoví lidé byli pro Němce dobří k práci a byli zařazováni do tábora. Žádný šok jsem neutrpěl, věděl jsem totiž dávno, co čeká mě a co manželku. Ta prošla také selekcí a byla se mnou v táboře.</p>	<p><u>20) Did you undergo the "selection"? Did you experience any shock?</u></p> <p>Yes I underwent selection two times. The first time just after the arrival in Birkenau, where the famous Doctor Mengele did selection. I passed without any problems, because I was a sportsman and I had a good figure and such people were good for Germans to make them work and class them in the camp. I did not experience any shock because I knew what was awaiting my wife and me. She passed selection as well, and stayed with me in the camp.</p>
<p><u>21) Kam jste byl přidělen na práci? Jaké byly v té době Vaše životní perspektivy?</u></p> <p>Na práci jsem byl přidělen ke kamarádovi z Prahy, který se jmenoval Červinka, byl z Liberce, a který pracoval u komanda jménem "Rollwagen". To byl žebříňák s popruhy, do kterého bylo zapřaženo osm lidí, čtyři na každé straně a jeden u voje, celkem devět, a krom toho tam byl předák, který měl na starosti nás popohánět. Vozili jsme hlavně mrtvé. Byla to těžká práce, ale byla tam možnost dostat se ven</p>	<p><u>21) Where were you sent to work? What life perspectives did you see at that time?</u></p> <p>I was sent to work with a friend from Prague, called Červinka who originally came from the town of Liberec and who was working at a commando called "Rollwagen". Rollwagen was a ladder-carrying vehicle with a harness that was harnessed by 8 people; four and four on each side plus one at the squad that is nine people and one gang boss who was lashing us. We were carrying dead people mostly. It was a</p>

z tábora, což bylo vždycky výhodné. Jako předáka jsme měli známého terezínského kata Adu Fischera, který v Terezíně popravoval lidi dopadené na útěku a v Osvětimi nám dělal tohoto předáka. Nemusím říkat, že se k nám choval špatně, on také nebyl normální, mlátil nás klackem, jako kdybychom byli opravdový dobytek a v tom polském blátě, kde žebříňák zapadal až po kola, to byla opravdu těžká práce. Ven z tábora jsme vyváželi mrtvoly do krematoria (já jsem na ten žebříňák kromě jiných hodil i svého otce) a zase zpátky jsme přiváželi prádlo, nebo těch pár balíčků, které nebyli zkonfiskovány. Zase záleželo na doprovodu. Všichni esesáci nebyli stejní. Jezdil s námi příkladně i esesák polského původu, který později uprchl s vězněm z tábora a dostali se až do Anglie. Když jsme měli jako doprovod jeho, tak jsme přiváželi do tábora např. čistý líh pro nemocnici, který nám zase zajišťoval pozdější polský premiér Cyrankiewicz, který dělal poštmistra v táboře číslo jedna. Tento polský doprovod nám pak na bráně zajistil, že nás nikdy neprohlíželi, takže jsme pod tím prádlem provázeli velmi potřebné demžony lihu pro nemocnici.

Životní perspektivy nebyli žádné. Pořád jsme viděli kouřící komíny krematoria, které opravdu kouřili ve dne v noci. Věděli jsme, že doba, kdy může být člověk v táboře, je půl

hard job but we had the chance to get out of the camp, which was always good. Our gang boss was the well know Terezín executor, Ada Fischer, who executed runaway people in Terezín and he was our boss in Oswiecim at that time. I don't think I have to mention he treated us badly, he was not a normal person, he was beating us with a club as if we were real livestock and there in the Polish mud where the vehicle went into it with whole wheels, that was a hard work indeed. We carried dead people out of the camp to the crematorium (among other people I threw on the vehicle was also my father) and back to the camp we were carrying clothes or the few packages that were not confiscated. Again it depended on who was our guard. All the SS-men were not the same. For example one SS-man of Polish origin was accompanying us too, he escaped from the camp together with a prisoner and they got as far as England. When he was doing the guard at our vehicle, we were smuggling pure alcohol for the hospital for example. The alcohol was provided by the future Polish Prime Minister Cyrankiewicz who was working in the post office of the camp I. Our Polish vehicle guard arranged for us not to have any personal checks at the entrance so that we smuggled the necessary alcohol flasks for the hospitals.

roku. Např. transport, který tam přišel před námi, byl 7. března (na to se přesně pamatuji, to bylo výročí narození prezidenta Masaryka) celý ten transport odvezen do plynu. To je známé. Já jsem též slyšel, jak tito lidé, když šli do komory, zpívali československou hymnu. Zpívali i v tom okamžiku, kdy stáli před objektem krematoria, když už věděli, že jdou na smrt. Dnes to mnozí lidé popírají, já to mohu potvrdit, poněvadž jsem to slyšel na vlastní uši. A příští den, když jsme zase jeli do krematoria s mrtvolami, tak jsem tam na hromadě šatů viděl šaty toho mého kamaráda Červinky z Liberce, který se mnou jezdil u Rollwagenu. I díky tomu jsem věděl, že ten transport šel do plynu.

22) Viděl jste při této příležitosti nějakou vzpouru nebo akty odporu jednotlivých vězňů? Nevzbouřila se část transportu?

Já vím, že se nějaké akce odporu připravovaly, ale nebyl jsem svědkem žádného výsledku. Neviděl jsem ani, že by se část transportu

There was no perspective of life. We saw continuously smoking chimneys of the crematorium and they were really smoking night and day. We knew, that the maximum time to be spent in the camp was half a year. For example, the transport, which arrived before us, was on March 7 (I remember this very well because that was the anniversary of president Masaryk's birthday) sent to the gas chamber all together. This is a well-known story. I also heard the people singing the Czechoslovak anthem while going to the gas chamber. They were singing even when they were standing in front of the crematorium, when they already knew, they were going to die. Many people deny this story nowadays, but I can prove it, because I heard them with my ears. The day after we went again to the crematorium carrying dead bodies I saw the clothes of my friend Červinka from Liberec who was with me at Rollwagen, on the pile of other clothes. Also because of this I knew the transport was sent to the gas chambers.

22) Did you see any organized revolt or individual counteractions? Didn't a part of the transport rebel against?

I know that some counteractions were prepared but I did not witness any results. I did not even see any rebellion of a part of

vzbouřila. Slyšel jsem ojedinělé výstřely, což jsem si vysvětloval tím, že někteří jednotlivci se o něco pokusili, ale rozhodně to nebyla organizovaná vzpoura.

23) V Osvětimi jste obdržel balíček z Prahy. Řekl byste od koho?

Já jsem skutečně zažil i chvíli štěstí, když jsem se sešel se svou ženou na společné latríně, kde jsme zkonsumovali dvoukilový balíček, který přišel na mou adresu z Prahy. To byla v tom táboře skutečná chvíli štěstí. Já jsem v Osvětimi dohromady dostal několik balíčků, stejně tak i moje manželka, ale nevím dodnes konkrétně od koho, protože zpětná adresa nebyla nikdy uvedena. Ty balíčky procházely cenzurou, takže konkrétní jméno odesílatele tam nikdo nevedl.

24) Měl jste nějaké zprávy o rodině? Dalo se ve Vašem táboře komunikovat s rodinnými příslušníky (např. v umývárkách apod.)?

Zprávy o rodině jsem neměl žádné. Matka mi zemřela neznámo kde. O otci jsem věděl, že jsem ho sám dopravoval na žebříňáku do krematoria. O ostatních rodinných příslušnících jsem nevěděl, jen můj bratr byl se mnou na táboře a později šel se mnou do Schwarzheide. Ten rodinný tábor měl výhodu, že se tam ti rodinní příslušníci mohli přece jen sejít a mohli

transport. I heard sporadic shootings, but I explained it to myself as the action of individuals who tried to do something but it was definitely not an organized revolt.

23) You received a package in Oswiecim. Would you say from whom?

I experienced a moment of happiness there indeed, when I met my wife at the common latrine, where we consumed the two kilos package I received from Prague. That was a real moment of happiness. I received several packages in Oswiecim as did my wife but I did not know where they came from because there was never a consignor's address mentioned. The packages went through censorship so that the name from whom it was sent was never known.

24) Did you have any information about your family? Could you communicate with your relatives in your camp (in the lavatories for example)?

I had no information about my family. My mother died in a unknown place. I knew that I transported my father to the crematorium. I did not know about other relatives except my brother who was in the camp with me, and continued to Schwarzheide later with me. The family camp had the advantage of meeting

komunikovat v umývárkách, na latrínách. V umývárkách se umývali muži i ženy, staří i mladí a nikomu to nevadilo, protože tam měl každý jiné myšlenky, ty na přežití.

25) Kam a kdy jste byl transportován dále?

17. 4. 1944 jsem byl transportován do Schwarzheide. Moje manželka byla téhož dne transportována do Bergen Behlsenu, to jsem se ovšem dozvěděl až po válce. Než jsme šli do dalšího tábora, tak jsme prošli další selekcí, zase u dr. Mengeleho. Já jsem jen věděl, že moje manželka tuto selekci také přežila a ona věděla, že jsem jí přežil já. Bylo to velice dramatické, poněvadž oni nás vedli z tábora, kde na jedné straně bylo krematorium a na druhé straně byl připraven vlak s lokomotivou. Nikdo z nás do posledního momentu nevěděl, jestli půjde doleva, nebo doprava. My jsme oba měli to štěstí, že jsme šli doprava, do toho vlaku. Do Schwarzheide jsem tedy přijel 17. dubna, a to sice z toho důvodu, že se tam nacházela továrna firmy BRABAG (Braunkohle-Benzin Aktiengesellschaft), podobná té v našem státě v Litvínově, byť byla na umělý benzin. My jsme byli přímo vedle této továrny v lágru a měli jsme za úkol odklízet trosky po denních náletech. Zase to byla velice těžká práce, strava byla minimální, ale zase jsem měl možnost dostat se ven

relatives in lavatories or latrines. Men and women were washing together. Nobody cared about it, because everyone thought differently there, about surviving.

25) Where and when were you transported further on?

I was transported to Schwarzheide on April 17, 1944. My wife was transported to Bergen Behlsen on that day, but I only learnt this after the war. Before we continued to another camp, we underwent another selection by Dr. Mengele again. I knew that my wife passed this selection and my wife knew that I passed it as well. It was a very dramatic moment because they led us out of the camp with the building of crematorium on one side and the locomotive with a train on the other. None of us knew till the last moment who would go to the left or right. Both of us were lucky because we went to the right, to the train. I came to Schwarzheide on April 17 because there was a BRABAG company factory (Braunkohle-Benzin Aktiengesellschaft), similar to the one in our Republic in Litvínov, although it produced artificial benzene. We were placed in a camp just next to the factory, and we were supposed to put out the debris after the daily bombings. It was a hard job again, diet was minimal but we could leave the camp again

z lágru, což bylo vždy výhodné, protože člověk přišel do styku s civilními zaměstnanci. Když byl dobrý doprovod, tak nám bylo dovoleno, abychom si do tábora něco přinesli. Mnohdy jsme vyklíželi vybombardované domy a stávalo se, že jsme našli spíž. V té byly různé potraviny, a tak jsme měli možnost si přilepšit. Táborová strava byla jeden litr polévky z tuřínu denně, dva krajíčky chleba, k tomu buď povidla nebo umělý med a jednou týdně margarín. To bylo vše. Práce bývala nejméně dvanáct hodin denně a v sobotu i v neděli. Zacházení bylo velice špatné, poněvadž velitelem tábora byl původním povoláním řidič tramvaje, ale sangvinik, neustále měl při sobě rákosku, a jakmile šel někdo kolem něj, tak se musel zastavit a smeknout (to bylo nařízeno), a když se mu jen trochu nelíbil, tak ho šlehl tou rákoskou. Zejména byl vysazen na lidi, kteří nosili brýle, poněvadž to byl podle jejich doktríny inteligent a toho museli pronásledovat. Fabrika byla denně bombardována anglickým letectvem a samozřejmě my, jako sousedící objekt, též, protože ti letci nevěděli, že je tam tábor.

26) Setkal jste se s německými lékaři?

Ve Schwarzheide nebyl žádný lékař, byla tam provizorní nemocnice, kterou vedl tzv.

and that was always good because we could meet with civil employees. If the guard was agreeable, we were allowed to bring something with us to the camp. We often cleared blitzed buildings and we happened to find pantries. There we found a variety of food and we could take it. The camp board consisted of one litre of turnip soup; two slices of bread with jam or artificial honey and once a week some margarine. That was all. We had to work 12 hours a day minimum and also on Saturday and Sunday. The treatment was very bad, because the commander of the camp was a tram driver in his original profession, but a sanguine/confident one, who had a cane with him all the time and when someone was passing by, they had to stop and remove their hat. If the commander did not like them, even just a bit, he hit them with the cane. He especially did not like people wearing glasses, because according to their doctrine, such person was an intellectual and needed to be persecuted. The factory was bombed every day by the Royal Air Force, along with our camp, which was a neighbouring complex because the aviators did not know it, was a camp.

26) Did you meet any German doctors?

There was no doctor in Schwarzheide; only a provisional hospital led by the Sannitätsdienst,

Sannitätsdienst, poddůstojník SS, který měl snad nějaké zdravotnické vzdělání. Tam se například stalo, že jednomu kolegovi to při bombardování utrhlo kus nohy. Ten Sannitätsdienst mu při plném vědomí zbytek nohy amputoval obyčejnou pilkou. Že tam nebyly žádné léky, to je samozřejmé. Kdo onemocněl, tak se z toho buď sám dostal, nebo zemřel. Zemřel tam také můj bratr, který byl sice sportovec, ale vášnivý kuřák. On veškeré jídlo, které nutně nepotřeboval ke svému udržení, vyměňoval za cigarety. Samozřejmě to nemohl při té těžké práci vydržet a také tam zemřel.

27) Jaký byl Váš poslední převoz na konci války? Kam směřoval? Jaký byl příjezd, jaká strava ?

Kam směřoval můj poslední převoz na konci války jsem nevěděl, ale potom jsme se dozvěděli, že jsme měli dojít (!) do Terezína, kde se tenkrát plánovala stavba plynových komor. To byl tzv. transport smrti, kdy jsme odcházeli ze Schwarzheide 18. 4. 1945 a došli jsme do Terezína 8. 5. 1945. Celou tu cestu jsme absolvovali pěšky. Kdo nevydržel, kdo prostě už nemohl, a koho už ti kamarádi, kteří byli sami vysílení (my jsme měli na nohách po celou dobu dřeváky), nemohli nést, tak prostě odpadl do příkopu a ti esesáci, kteří nás

a SS non-commissioned officer, who perhaps had had some medical education. For example, it happened, that one colleague lost a part of his leg during the bombing. The Sannitätsdienst amputated the rest of his leg using a regular saw while he was fully conscious. It was obvious that there were no pharmaceuticals. Anyone who fell ill either healed himself or died. My brother died there as well, even though he was a sportsman, he was also a heavy smoker. He was exchanging all the food he did not necessarily need for cigarettes. He could not survive due to such a hard work and so he died there too.

27) How was your last transportation at the end of the war? Where did you go? What was the arrival and the diet like?

I did not know where my last transportation was heading but we learnt later on that we were supposed to walk (!) back to Terezín, where they planned to build gas chambers at that time. It was so called "transport of death". We set out on the journey on April 18, 1945, and we reached Terezín on May 8, 1945. We went the whole long way on foot. Whoever did not last, who simply could not go on anymore, and whom his friends could not carry anymore because they were exhausted themselves (we had patens on our feet the whole time), they

doprovázeli, ho tam střelili. To se s nikým nebabrali, kdo nemohl, dostal ránu do týla a byl konec. Z Birkenau do Schwarzheide nás odešlo tisíc a z celého transportu přežilo 220 lidí. Poslední noc jsme nocovali pod širým nebem na hřišti ve Varnsdorfu. Byli jsme na tom tak zle, že jsme spásali první trávu. Tam jsem si říkal, že nás mají tam, kde nás chtěli mít, poněvadž jsme se tam pásli jako dobytek. Krátce před Terezínem se najednou objevili Rusové. Ti nás osvobodili. Okamžitě šli na náš doprovod. Esesáci museli svléci uniformu a ukázat své tetování, které každý esesák měl v podpaží a Rusové, jakmile viděli tetování, okamžitě střelili. Také se s nikým nemazlili. A nám řekli: Vy si jděte, kam chcete, jste svobodní. My jsme ale po takovém věznění ani nevěděli, co máme dělat. Tak jsme šli do Terezína. Když jsem tam došel, tak mě má tehýně, která tam stále ještě byla, vůbec nepoznala. Já jsem vážil 30 kilogramů. Měl jsem kýlu a byl jsem ve strašném stavu. V Terezíně řádil tyfus. To pro nás bylo nebezpečné, protože nikdo z nás neměl žádné protilátky, takže každý se koukal z Terezína dostat zase ven. V té době už do Terezína jezdily autobusy z Prahy, z Hradce atp. a odvážely ty, kteří chtěli někam jet. Já jsem tam viděl hradecký autobus, poněvadž jsem žil v Hradci, tak jsem k němu šel. Ti řidiči mě

simply fell down in the ditch and the SS-men accompanying us simply shot them. They did not potter about anyone, those who could not go on were shot in the head and it was finished. We left Birkenau for Schwarzheide with 1000 men, and from them only 220 people survived. We spent the last night under the free sky on a playground in Varnsdorf. We were in such bad condition that we were browsing the first spring grass. At that moment I told myself that they have us there where they wanted us because we were feeding as livestock. Close to Terezín the Russians appeared. They liberated us. They immediately focused on our guards. The SS-men had to take off their uniforms and show their tattoo that each SS-man had in his armpit and as soon as the Russians saw the tattoo they shot them immediately. They did not dither about anyone either. They said to us: Go where you want, you are free. But we did not even know what to do after such a long jailing. So we went to Terezín. When I arrived at Terezín, my mother-in-law, who was still there, did not recognize me. My weight was 30 kg. I had an umbilical hernia and I was in terrible condition. At that time, typhoid was blustering in Terezín. It was dangerous for us because none of us had any antibodies so we were trying to get out of Terezín quickly. At that

znali, tak mě naložili a já jsem chtěl okamžitě do Hradce. Ale když jsme přijeli na silnici k Litoměřicím, tak nás zastavili Rusové a autobus nám vzali. Na něco ho potřebovali, tak si ho vzali a odjeli. Já jsem přes noc zůstal v Litoměřicích. Byla mi strašná zima. Měl jsem jen ten pruhovaný obleček. Uviděl jsem Němce, který měl bílou pásku a měl krásný svetr. Já jsem byl v takovém stavu, že jsem k němu šel a řekl mu, aby ho svlékl. On ho okamžitě svlékl a já jsem si ho oblékl. Později mě to hrozně mrzelo, ale tenkrát jsem byl v takovém stavu, že jsem ho prostě potřeboval. Také se pamatuji, že se v Litoměřicích ten večer konaly veřejné popravy Němců. Celé město se na to chodilo dívat. Já jsem tam nešel, protože jsem toho za celou dobu viděl dost. Také jsem přišel do nějaké rodiny, kde mě dávali jídlo. Byli tam i Rusové, kteří mě hned bajonetem otevřeli konzervu s masem. Já jsem je prosil, jestli by mi udělali krupicovou kaši, protože kdybych snědl vepřovou, tak by to můj žaludek nevydržel. Ten Rus, co mě tu konzervu podával, mě málem tím bajonetem probodl, protože si myslel, že to od něj nechci vzít.

time there were buses that were going from Prague, Hradec Králové etc. and they were taking people who wanted to go somewhere. I saw a bus there from Hradec Králové and because I came from this town I went closer, and the drivers knew me and took me with them. I wanted to go to Hradec immediately. But when we reached the road to Litoměřice, Russians stopped us and took the bus from us. They needed it for something so they took it and went away. I spent the night in Litoměřice. I was terribly cold. I had only the striped clothes. I saw a German with white tape on his arm wearing a beautiful sweater. I was in such shape that I came to him and asked him to take the sweater off. He took it off immediately and I put it on. I regretted this very much later on but at that moment I was in such condition that I simply needed it. I also remember that there were public executions of Germans in the evening in the town of Litoměřice. The whole town went to see it. I did not go there because I had seen enough during the entire period. I also came to a family where I was given food. There were Russians who opened a can of meat with a bayonet for me immediately too. I asked them if they could prepare some porridge for me instead because if I ate pork my stomach would never bear it. The Russian who was passing me the can almost stabbed

<p><u>28) Byli to zcela neznámí lidé? Jaká to byla rodina, jak se k Vám chovala?</u></p> <p>Tu rodinu jsem skutečně nikdy předtím ani potom neviděl. Potkali mě na ulici, nevím, kde přesně to bylo, ale viděli mě v tom trestaneckém oblečku a zuboženém stavu, tak mě sami sebrali a vzali k sobě. To, co jsem jim vyprávěl, brali na vědomí, byli celkem informovaní. Ale jinak to byli zcela neznámí lidé, o kterých jsem pak už nikdy neslyšel.</p>	<p>me with the bayonet because he thought I did not want to take the meat from him.</p> <p><u>28) Was it complete strangers that you went to? What kind of family was it, how did they treat you?</u></p> <p>In fact, I had never seen this family before. They met me on the street, I don't remember exactly where but they saw me in the prisoner's clothes and in abject condition so they took me to their place. They accepted the things that I was telling them, they were informed quite well. Otherwise they were completely unknown to me and I never heard of them after that either.</p>
<p><u>29) Která etapa věznění byla pro Vás nejhorší? Kde?</u></p> <p>Nejhorší etapou bylo věznění ve Schwarzheide, protože tam byly denní nálety. Chtěl bych říci jednu příhodu. Když jsme tam šli po silnici do tábora, přiletěli hloubkaři a začali to na nás házet. My jsme nesměli do krytu, zalezli jsme do příkopu, stejně tak i náš doprovod (to už nebyli esesáci, nýbrž domobrana, takže ti byli již celkem lhostejní, jelikož věděli, že se chýlí ke konci války). Když ten nálet přešel a my jsme se z toho dostali, tak jsem se nedíval, jestli jsem zraněný. Na poli před sebou jsem z příkopu viděl řepu, moje první starost byla,</p>	<p><u>29) Which period of jailing was the worst for you?</u></p> <p>For me, the worst period was jailing in Schwarzheide because of the daily bombings. I want to tell you one story. When we were walking on the road to the camp, bombers came flying above us and started to throw bombs on us. We were not allowed to go to a shelter so we holed up in a ditch with our guards (those were not SS-men anymore, but militia, who were quite careless because they knew the end of war was close). When the bombing was over, and we survived, I did not check if I was injured. Looking out of the ditch</p>

<p>abych se k ní dostal. Nezajímalo mě, jestli jsem já, nebo někdo okolo, zraněný. My všichni jsme byli na tom už tak, že jsme sáhli jen po té řepě.</p>	<p>I saw a beetroot on the field in front of me, so my first thought was to get it. I did not care if myself or someone else around me was injured. We had all come so far, that we only cared about the beetroot.</p>
<p><u>30) Jaký byl Váš návrat do Prahy? Kdo Vás tam dopravil?</u></p> <p>Z Litoměřic jsem se postupně dostal po vlastní ose do Prahy, kde jsem měl bratrance. To byl lékař - internista, pozdější docent, dr. Dub. Ten mě začal okamžitě aplikovat kalciové injekce. Měl jsem i zasažené plíce, ale kýla sama nějak srostla, denně jsem přibíral jeden kilogram a vše se spravilo. Chodil jsem na kontroly, na Národní třídě byl doc. Basař, který byl primářem tuberkulózního sanatoria na Pleši, ten mě prohlížel, konstatoval zasažené plíce a ujistil mě, že se z toho dostanu, což se stalo.</p>	<p><u>30) How was your arrival in Prague? Who took you there?</u></p> <p>I got to Prague step by step, on my own, from the town of Litoměřice. I had my cousin there. He was a doctor – internist, later an associate professor, Dr. Dub. He started to give me calcium injections immediately. My lungs were hit as well but the umbilical hernia healed itself, I put on a kilo of weight per day and everything went well. I was going for check-ups to an associate professor Mr. Basař in Narodní Street, he was the head of the tuberculosis sanatorium in Pleš. He checked me, he said my lungs were hit, but he assured me that I would get over it, which did happen then.</p>
<p><u>31) Změnil se nějak Váš přístup k židovství? Změnilo se Vaše politické smýšlení vlivem věznění?</u></p> <p>Než jsem šel do transportu, žádný svůj přístup k židovství jsem neuznával. No, to se po válce nezměnilo. Stejně tak ani mé politické smýšlení. Zůstal jsem na levé straně barikády. V roce 1945, ještě v květnu, jsem z vděčnosti,</p>	<p><u>31) Did your relation to Jewry change? Did your political disposition change due to the jailing?</u></p> <p>Before I was transported, I took my relation to Jewry with no consideration. This did not change after the war. The same happened with my political disposition. I remained on the left side of the barricade. In 1945, still in May, I</p>

<p>že mě osvobodili Rusové, vstoupil do KSČ.</p>	<p>became a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party as an act of gratefulness for being liberated by the Russians.</p>
<p><u>32) Jaké bylo po Vašem návratu chování Čechů vůči Vám?</u></p> <p>Chování Čechů vůči mě se nezměnilo, bylo naprosto tolerantní. Nikdy jsem kvůli svému židovství žádné problémy neměl, zejména ne po mém návratu z koncentračního tábora.</p>	<p><u>32) How did the Czech people treat you after your return?</u></p> <p>The behaviour of the Czech people toward me did not change, it remained absolutely tolerant. I never had any problems because of my Jewry, especially not after my return from the concentration camp.</p>
<p><u>33) Jak se díváte na odsun/vyhnání Němců? Je spravedlivý?</u></p> <p>Já odsun pokládám za naprosto spravedlivý a zdůvodněný. Pokud došlo k divokému odsunu, k některým výstřelkům, tak s tím nemohu samozřejmě souhlasit. Já také neházím Němce do jednoho pytle, ale pokud došlo k nějakým excesům, tak i proto mám odůvodnění, protože lidé, kteří trpěli šest let pod jařmem Němců, a pokud se k nim Němci chovali špatně, je třeba pochopit, že si s nimi lidé v květnu vyřizovali účty. Jsem absolutně proti zrušení Benešových dekretů. Bohužel situace je taková, že německá propaganda, zejména sudetská, je už v pohraničí taková, že dochází k vylepování nálepek v Karlových Varech. Myslím, že by bylo dobře, kdyby naše vláda k tomu učinila patřičná opatření. Myslím, že vystoupení</p>	<p><u>33) What do you think about the displacement/expulsion of Germans? Was it just?</u></p> <p>I consider the displacement absolutely just and reasonable. Of course, I cannot agree with the brutal/violent displacement or with other fads. I also don't consider all Germans to be the same but if there happened some fads, I have an explanation for it because if people suffered for six years under the German rule and when Germans treated them badly, it is necessary to understand that people got even with them. I am absolutely against abandoning of the so-called Beneš' decreesⁱⁱⁱ. Unfortunately the situation is that the German (especially Sudeten-German) propaganda is so strong in border-regions, that there are propaganda stickers pasted up in Karlovy Vary. I think it</p>

představitele sudetských Němců, Berndta Posselta, v České televizi, by mělo být mementem pro naši vládu, aby si uvědomili, jak daleko se sudetští Němci dostali s nenávisť vůči českému národu.

34) Mohli Češi za holokaust?

Rozhodně to nemohu generalizovat. Češi se holocaustu ani nemohli bránit, ani ho nevyalezli, ačkoli tu bylo dost kolaborantů, kteří z něho profitovali, měli tu své úřady a radovali se z něho. Někteří židé měli velké majetky, o které přišli díky konkrétním Čechům, o kterých se tedy nedá říci, že by byli proti holocaustu, naopak. O normálním Čechovi s normálním vzděláním, pokud se o takovém dá hovořit, se ale absolutně nedá říci, že by měl z holocaustu potěšení. Na tuto otázku nemohu odpovědět kladně.

would be good if the Czech government took appropriate action in regard to this. I think the appearance of Bernd Posselt, representing the Sudeten Germans on Czech TV should be taken as a memento for the Czech government and realize how far Sudeten Germans have gone with hatred against the Czech nation.

34) Did Czechs cause the Holocaust?

I absolutely cannot generalize about it. Czech people could not resist the holocaust; they did not invent it either, even though there were quite a lot of collaborators who made profit and joy from it. Some Jews owned a lot of property, and they lost it thanks to the Czechs. So it is hardly possible to claim that they were against the Holocaust, on the contrary. It is absolutely impossible to claim that a normal Czech person with normal education, if one can speak about such a person, was happy about the holocaust. I cannot give my assent to this question.

5.3 Interview Analysis

As we can see already from the first answer, the interview deals with a time of liberty and the restrictions of Jewish public life in the Protectorate greatly involved the personal life of the informant. His memories from the beginning of war go in details and describe the amount of different restrictive policies targeted against Jewish inhabitants. The detailed information are probably coming not only from personal experience but also from related literature that the informant read to clarify some of the situations that touched his life story in that time. Again, he stresses the importance of Czech people for him. At that time it was the Czech friends of his age who kept contacting him even when it was dangerous for them (answers # 1 and 2). He mentions the wearing of David's star as a marking acquisition to distinguish Jewish inhabitants from non-Jewish ones. It is interesting, that my interviewee says nothing about wondering why he had to wear the star, when he was refusing to live a "Jewish life" before, when he treated himself as Czech and not a Jew as I have shown in the previous chapter. The atmosphere of that time was maybe so intransigent, that such thoughts were even unrealistic and impossible. But perhaps therefore it is important to mention that at the moment he had to sew the star on his coat he was forced to realize his Jewish origin more than ever before. On another place he directly claims: "Hitler..." (answer #) which supports this idea. Although he was not involved in daily offending of Jews as he documents on the story of "Vlajka sympathizing person Richter" (answer # 2) or his success in the small illegal jobs he did before going to the transport, he must repose the question of his identity during the jailing in Jewish concentration camps. However, it seems the informant solved his possible re-identifying himself with the nation already at the time of living together with other Jews in the common flat in Prague Old Town (answer # 4). There he experienced the Zionist atmosphere and refused it forever. He does not say what he means by Zionism in particular, but in regard to his young age spent in Christian and Czech organizations he claims he could not accept Zionism. I would conclude, the fact of being labelled by Nazis as a Jew did not change his point of view and his perception of his own Jewry did not change the pre-transportation era either.

The information about comparatively late date of transportation (answer # 5) shows that the informant must have been either a lucky or skilful person, or both since not many people managed to stay in the capital of the Protectorate for such a long time. The question # 6 was aiming at memories from the usually emotional and painful moments of leaving the town without

knowing the future. Unfortunately, the interviewee did not remember much from the common meeting of the organized transports and the transportation to Terezín itself, but he did not forget to say that Czechs did not contribute to the transports' panic by any bad gestures or expressions of complacency (answer # 7) or could not resist the holocaust (answer on my rather controversial question # 36). This underlines the pro-Czech feelings of the informant again.

The luck was standing at my interviewee even in Terezín ghetto, where he met his relatives and gained bearable accommodation and work, which was not automatic under those conditions then. In the answer # 17 my informant speaks about the possibility to "support his father" who was an old person as we already know and which can be considered as a great luck as well if we take in consideration he was transported to the ghetto from a different town and much earlier. It seems the way the informant managed the hard work, gained the respect from the guard and adapted to hard and even dangerous conditions in the ghetto "trained" him in a certain way for more difficult situations in the concentration camps later on. The description of providing himself and others with tomatoes and the underground exchange trade among inhabitants of the ghetto are a unique source of information about the life in Terezín and it helps to understand how the interviewee could stay in relatively good physical and mainly psychological condition and bear further suffering in a brave way. The way he describes the difficult and tragic life in the ghetto witness his equanimity with probable solution of the relation to such difficult memories.

The memories from Birkenau give us the narrator's own explanation why he was able to survive and pass the selection. He claims he was a sportsman that means he was able to bear a certain level of physical endurance better than older and sick people, which saved his life probably. By working at the "Rollwagen" commando he stuck to the same life saving habits as in Terezín and he exchanged information and sometimes even smuggled some food. What is very surprising is the way my informant describes his "work" at the commando. When he says he "threw on the vehicle also his father" he does not even change his voice or expression, which is shocking I must admit. It shows how strong and conciliated one must be to avoid attacks of emotions and pain^{iv}. The moments of no life perspectives, rare happiness caused by receiving a box and meeting closest relatives in the bathroom were situations we can hardly imagine. The important thing for my MA thesis is that even these events did not change the narrator's perception of his identity. He manly continued in vegetation and continued to another camp.

He arrived to Schwarzheide and lost the contact with his wife, who was transported to Schwarzheide. In the camp he underwent another selection and lost even his brother later on. According to his words, Schwarzheide was the toughest time from the whole jailing in Nazi concentration camps. The value of the memories from the time of compulsory labour are beyond price, but concerning the focus of my paper they embody “just” a tragic background. The body weight of 30 kg, health problems and overall exhaustion were the results of the two years of jailing and hard labour. Still, the two years can be considered “lucky” ones.

5. 3. 1 Conclusion of Interview Analysis II

The era of WW II did strengthen my narrator’s negative perception of Jewish identity and since that time he kept on connecting his “I” with the majority Czech nation (answer # 32). During this time he was also confronted with the ideas of Zionist part of Jewish population, which he strictly refused as “unacceptable” (answer # 4). Actually neither the attitude to Jewish nationalists, nor the relation to his own political orientation was changed by the time of jailing. At the very end of the war my informant even stressed his political (left wing) sense of belonging when he entered the Czechoslovak Communist Party that was traditionally strongly affected by the USSR leadership. He says: “In 1945, still in May, I became a member of the Czechoslovak Communist Party as an act of gratefulness for being liberated by the Russians.” (answer # 32). Finally, also his position towards the Benes decrees and the transfer of German population after the war underline his leftist political thinking. It is actually identical with today’s position with Czech Communists too.^v

To put it simply, my informant remained understanding his self-identity as a Czech “I” but he identified himself with the Communist political doctrine after the WW II. According to his narrative, his “political self” finally got a name.

5.4 References

ⁱ As a source of the chronological data I use "From the Munich Agreement to the Communist Takeover in Czechoslovakia" in A. Dagan, G. Hirschler, L. Weiner (ed.), *The Jews of Czechoslovakia, vol. III*, (New York, 1984), pp. xxviii – xxxix:

1939

June 21: Reich Protector von Neurath proclaims comprehensive decree to eliminate the Jews from virtually all the economy of the Protectorate. The decree defines Jews in accordance with the Nuremberg racial laws of 1935.

August 11: Jews in provincial areas of the Protectorate are ordered to leave their homes and resettle in Prague within one year.

October 19: First transport of Jews from Moravská Ostrava arrives at "agricultural reservation" (read: concentration camp) near Nisko (German-occupied Poland), south of Lublin.

1940

April 25: The Slovak parliament enacts the "First Aryanzation Law".

April 30: The Jews in the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia are ordered to sell their gold, platinum, silver, pearls and precious stones to the HADEGA purchasing agency and to deposit all their stocks, bonds, and other securities at a foreign currency bank.

July 28: Slovak leaders meet with Hitler in Salzburg (Salzburg conference) and agree to set up a National Socialist regime in Slovakia. Dr. Josef Tiso, formerly Prime Minister, become President of the Slovak state.

1941

September 1: All Jews in the Protectorate are ordered to wear a yellow Star of David.

September 15: First reports of initial experiments with gas chambers in Auschwitz.

October 16: First transport of Jews from Prague leaves for ghetto of Lodz.

October 19: Terezín (Theresienstadt) is chosen as ghetto.

November 24: First transport of young Jewish men from Prague arrives in Terezín as *Aufbaukommando* (construction detail).

November 30 - December 4: First large transports of Jews from Prague, including old people, arrive in Terezín.

1942

October 28: First transports from Terezín are sent directly to Auschwitz and Treblinka.

1943

January 20 – 26: Mass deportations from Terezín to Auschwitz.

1944

August 29: Slovak uprising begins. German Tatra Division moves into Slovakia to quell the Slovak uprising.

September 13: Soviet troops reach Slovak border.

November: Last deportations from Terezín and Slovakia to Auschwitz.

1945

April 4: Bratislava, capital of Slovakia, liberated. In London, Beneš as president and the Communist party form a

coalition government headed by Zdeněk Fierlinger, a Czech “Marxist Social Democrat” who served as Czechoslovak ambassador to the Soviet Union before and during WW II.

April 15: Bergen – Belsen liberated.

May 11: Soviet troops enter Terezín.

ⁱⁱ Nazi-Germany occupation of the so called Protectorate Böhmen und Mären. See the previous historical overview.

ⁱⁱⁱ To present the issue of Benes decrees in brief I decided to quote two different sources of information: 1) Czech Ministry of Foreign Affairs (see www.mzv.cz) and 2) Proposals and initiatives of the Hungarian government regarding the rights of national minorities at EU level (see <http://www.htmh.hu/background.htm>):

1) “The Decrees of the President of the Republic are regulations issued in London during the occupation of Czechoslovakia by Nazi Germany and later in Czechoslovakia immediately after the end of the occupation, until the parliamentary system was restored and the Provisional National Assembly held its first meeting (a total of 141 decrees issued between 21 July 1940 and 28 October 1945). (...) The whole series comprises 141 decrees regulating many aspects of political, economic, cultural and social life. The present debate concerns only a small group of seven decrees concerning property, citizenship and criminal regulations. (...) The decrees are also incorrectly associated with the transfer of the German population, though in fact there is no Czechoslovak (Czech) regulation (a decree or a law) ordering the transfer. The only decision on this issue was taken at the Potsdam Conference (Soviet Union, United Kingdom, United States) on 2 August 1945 and concerned the German populations living in Czechoslovakia as well as in Poland and Hungary. In Czechoslovakia the transfer was regulated exclusively by tools available to the executive branch. In general, the measures adopted in post-war Czechoslovakia cannot be viewed outside the context of the punitive approach of the Allied Powers to Germany.” Source:

<http://www.czechembassy.org/www/mzv/default.asp?ido=14080&idj=2&amb=1&ikony=&trid=1&prsl=&poccl=>

2) “The exact title of the laws called Beneš decrees is: “decrees of the President of the Republic of Czechoslovakia” (...) The Beneš decrees are still valid and effective today, though in practice they are no longer actively applied due to the newer laws and the Slovakian practice of dispensation of justice. (...) It was in late 1942 and early 1943 that the Czechoslovak government in exile in London and President Beneš amended the programme of creating the Czechoslovak national state with the demand that the Hungarian population be displaced. (...) According to figures provided by Slovak historian Jurij Zvara, the deportations affected 41,640 people in 9,610 families. Those forcibly displaced were selected from 393 villages in 17 districts. There were 5,128 smallholders among the deported. As a result of “community labour” in Bohemia repeated waves of refugees reached Hungary, further swelling the ranks of the thousands of refugees who had arrived earlier. The decrees formulated upon the principle of collective guilt, or rather their timing is related to the fact that the Czechoslovak government had turned to the Potsdam Conference concerning the displacement of Hungarians but had failed to secure international consent. This only aggravated the impatience of the Czechoslovak authorities towards Hungarians.”

Source: <http://www.htmh.hu/benesangol.htm>

^{iv} During Christmas 2003 I was offered the possibility to visit the Jewish Senior Day Centre in Prague 6 with my informant. At that time I was given the chance to speak to some of the Jewish seniors living in the house as constant inhabitants. One of them told me one thing that is very much relevant to my paper and that predicates about my informant too. He said he did not want to speak about his memories from jailing in WW II because of two reasons: the first one was he did not believe any of his memories could change anything (he probably meant the fact that the memories happened and cannot be changed and also the attitude of the public to this issue wouldn't change as well), secondly he did not want to report on any of the events because it caused him continuous depressions and psychical problems. At that moment I realised how lucky I was with having such a direct and talkative informant.

^v Compare on http://www.kscm.cz/news_detail.asp?menu=1&neclD=243&neclD2=243&newId=132

Chapter 6

Czechoslovak Socialist Republic

Concerning the life story of my informant the Communist episode is the second episode of greater importance because it opens the issue of his political orientation and thinking in the light of lived history and past experience from the concentration camps. This time, the narrative refers to forty years of Communist rule in the country. I will observe how the interviewee views the regime in context of his own role over that time. A short historical description of the war aftermath and the Communist takeover in 1948 in Czechoslovakia follows to approximate the dynamic changes of the era.

6. 1 Communist Takeover and Political Processes

The development and result of WW II prepared the field for the strong position of Czechoslovak Communist Party governed from Moscow. The party enjoyed a great popularity of not only voters but also the London exile government.

“The Communist Era in Czechoslovakia truly began during World War II while president Benes made postwar plans including the nationalization of much of the economic system. In the Parliamentary elections in 1946, the Communists obtained one third of the vote in part due to the successful advertisement of the friendship between Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. The Communist Party declined in popularity soon after this in 1947, but this only resulted in new policies and tactics implemented to secure the position of the Communists. In February, 1948, twelve non-Communist members of Parliament resigned in protest against Communist actions hoping to bring down the government. Instead, this caused a re-structuring of the cabinet to include almost solely Communists and their sympathizers. At the elections in 1948, only Communist-approved candidates could compete and Klement Gottwald, the Communist Party Leader, became the country's leader.”¹

During the war exile of Czechoslovak Communist leadership in Moscow an establishment of the governance of National front was prepared. The limited party system imposed by the Communists was not allowing “mainly the Agrarians (Republicans), National Democrats, Trader's Party and some smaller right-wing parties to enter the scene and they were forbidden.”² The Communist Party became the most important political power of Czechoslovakia already in the first years after 1945, when it managed the people to believe that it was the strongest organisation of resistance of German Nazism. Therefore the very basic principle of the Communist political system in reunited Czechoslovakia was underlined

¹ *Communist Czechoslovakia. 1948 – 1989.*

See: <http://www.macalester.edu/courses/geog61/kmjolsnes/hist6comm.html>

² Karel Vodička, Ladislav Cabada: *Politický system České republiky*, str. 46

with the so-called “leading role of Communist party” and it meant the absolute party monopoly of power and ideology.³ Democratic centralism was a fundamental rule of the political system at that time where all the steering committees party bodies and minorities were subordinated to the superior structures.

Such dramatic changes lead to establishing a completely different Czechoslovakia compared to the one in 1920s and 1930s. Within few years, a previously occupied protectorate became a “reunified” republic within the Communist Block under the leadership of Moscow.

“Following the ‘betrayal of Munich’ by the Western allies, support for the Communists was strong in post-war Czechoslovakia. Combined with the plain fact of Soviet military occupation, this culminated with an unofficial Communist coup d’etat in February 1948, which led to the obscure death of Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk in March and ultimately to the resignation of Beneš in June. The country was now facing another forty years of imperial rule – this time in the shape of a Soviet satellite state.”⁴

Communist Czechoslovakia experienced soon after the takeover an era that I would generally call “the political show trials of the 1950’s”. This era, usually introduced as one historical part of the Communist control development, plays a central role in the life story of my informant because he was one of the eyewitnesses and victims of it. Not even the revolutionary year 1968, the time of reformation attempts and Soviet occupation of Czechoslovakia do not matter so much for the interviewee as the epoch of 1950s. Soon after recovering from the results of imprisonment in Nazi concentration camps a manipulated political trial shaped his life for many years again and involuntarily.

“In the 1950s, the Stalinists accused their opponents of “conspiracy against the people’s democratic order” and “high treason” in order to oust them from positions of power. Large-scale arrests of Communists with an “international” background, i.e., those with a wartime connection with the West, veterans of the Spanish Civil War, Jews, and Slovak “bourgeois nationalists,” were followed by show trials.”⁵

“Shortly after the World War II, after the communists took power during the February coup, there was a mass arrest of people considered as enemies of the peoples’ democratic system by the new regime in the then Czechoslovak Republic. From Slovakia, 27,000 persons were sentenced by the National Court to

³ Karel Vodička, Ladislav Cabada: *Politický systém České republiky*, str. 54

⁴ Mads Bielefeldt Stjernø, *Vicissitudes Of Post Communist Identity*, (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2001), p. 44 on <http://www.diskurs.dk/litteratur/pdf/specialer/Thesis.pdf>

⁵ History of Czechoslovakia on

[http://www.campusprogram.com/reference/en/wikipedia/h/hi/history_of_czechoslovakia.html#Communist%20Era%20\(1948-%201968\)](http://www.campusprogram.com/reference/en/wikipedia/h/hi/history_of_czechoslovakia.html#Communist%20Era%20(1948-%201968))

death or received life and long-term sentences during manipulated political trials in the years 1948 - 1952. More than 70,000 persons received sentences by other courts until 1989 and suffered in hard prisons and forced labour camps. The investigators often used torture and many died due to cruel treatment. The political prisoners spent their sentences in forced labour camps, like in the uranium mines of Jáchymov and Příbram, and prisons in Bohemia (Valdice, Mírov, Plzeň-Bory etc.).”⁶

The era of political trials was replaced by the economical reforms in the 1960’s caused by the stagnating economy and changes in Communist leadership in both Soviet Union and then Socialist Czechoslovakia.ⁱ However this was not the end of the Communist control of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Soviet occupation after the Prague Spring in 1968 closed the era of political and economical reforms and established the “Program of Normalization” under the new pro-Soviet government. “Normalization entailed thoroughgoing political repression and the return to ideological conformity. A new purge cleansed the Czechoslovak leadership of all reformist elements.”⁷ This continued until the Velvet Revolution of 1989 when Communism failed to endure in Czechoslovakia.

6. 2 Interview III: Witness of Communist Czechoslovakia

Original Version in Czech Language	English Translation
<p><i>1) Jaký byl pro Vás návrat do zaměstnání po skončení druhé světové války? Byla zde určitá návaznost mezi předválečným zaměstnáním?</i></p> <p>Ihned po skončení války jsem nemohl nastoupit do zaměstnání, jelikož jsem byl následkem věznění těžce nemocen. Měl jsme kýlu a měl jsem oboustranné zastínění plic. Při návratu z koncentráku jsem vážil 32 kg. Poměrně dobře jsem se ale vyléčil. Kýla mi zarostla a zastínění mi vyléčili, takže jsem nastoupil do práce půl roku po skončení války.</p>	<p><i>1) How did you get back to work after the end of WW II? Was there any connection to your previous occupations?</i></p> <p>I could not start working immediately after the end of war because I was seriously ill due to the jailing. I had an umbilical hernia and double-sided hit of my lungs. My weight was 32 kg after I came from the concentration camp. But I healed quite well. The hernia fixed itself and the lung eclipse was cured successfully so that I began working half a year after the end of war.</p>

⁶ To the Memory of the Victims of the Political Trials on <http://www.telecom.gov.sk/znamky/2001/01247e.html>

⁷ History of Czechoslovakia on

http://www.campusprogram.com/reference/en/wikipedia/h/hi/history_of_czechoslovakia.html

2) Kam jste nastoupil?

Nastoupil jsem v Novém Bydžově u firmy Karel Braun a spol. – výroba knoflíků, kterážto výroba patřila původně mojí tchýni. V té knoflíkárně jsem nastoupil jako národní správce a zároveň jsem začal pracovat jako člen strany v místní bydžovské organizaci. Jelikož úroveň tamějších funkcionářů nebyla zcela na výši, nějakým způsobem jsem vynikl tak, že jsem byl povolán na krajský výbor strany do Hradce Králové. Zde jsem pracoval bez jakéhokoli stranického vzdělání jako organizační tajemník. Pracoval jsem tam asi rok a odtud jsem přešel, respektive strana mě povolala, jako přednostu Referátu pro vnitřní obchod a výkup na krajský Národní výbor. To mohlo být asi v roce 1950.

3) Věděli Vaši spolupracovníci o Vašem původu a o tom, co jste prožil za války? Jaký byl jejich přístup k Vám?

Zaměstnanci pochopitelně věděli o mém původu, také věděli, že jsem byl v koncentráku a jejich přístup ke mně byl naprosto korektní.

4) Zvyšoval jste si po válce kvalifikaci? Chodil jste např. do večerní školy?

Kvalifikaci jsem si po válce nezvyšoval, ani

2) Which profession did you enter?

I started a job at Karel Braun and Company – Button production in Nový Bydžov. My mother-in-law had previously owned this factory. I started working as a national administrator in this factory and I started working as a Party member at the local Nový Bydžov organization. The activity level of the local functionary was not very high which was why I happened to be before them so that I was called up to a regional Party committee in Hradec Králové. There I worked as an organization secretary without any Party education. I worked there for one year or so and then I moved, respectively the Party called me up, as a reeve of the Department for Domestic Trade and Purchase of the Regional People's Committee. This could happen around the year 1950.

3) Did your colleagues know about your origin and what you experienced during the war? How did they treat you?

My colleagues knew about my origin of course and they knew I was in the concentration camp as well and they treated me well.

4) Did you try to get new qualifications? Did you attend some evening schools etc.?

I did not try to get any qualifications and I

jsem nechodil do žádné večerní školy.

5) Setkal jste se výrazněji s antisemitismem v době po skončení války? Z čí strany?

Já jsem se po skončení války vůbec nesetkal s nějakým antisemitismem. To jsem opravdu nikdy nepocítil, přestože jsem se pohyboval v prostředí dělníků z té fabriky, stejně jako v prostředí intelektuálů. Neměl jsem žádné potíže.

6) Jaká byla politická situace v ČSR po válce? Jak velký byl podle Vás vliv KSČ? Jaký byl vztah KSČ k židům?

Je pochopitelné, že absolutní vliv tady měl Sovětský svaz, protože taková byla propaganda, která směřovala k argumentům o našem osvobození. Také tu byl velký vliv KSČ a co se týká vztahu k židům, tak v té době byl její vztah k nim celkem korektní. Lidé byli zpočátku KSČ nadšeni. Já mám dojem, že většina národa souhlasila s politikou KSČ, což byla euforie z osvobození. Ovšem ta postupně upadávala, když se lidé seznámili s jejich programem. Už když se dělal nábor do strany v roce 1948, tak například státní zaměstnanci, kteří doposud nebyli ve straně, nuceně vstupovali, aby si udrželi své funkce. Lidé také nuceně vstupovali, aby třeba umožnili studium svým dětem. Takže po válce byl vliv KSČ v ČSR velký a je možno říci, že byl podporován.

did not go to any evening school either.

5) Did you come across any stronger form of anti-Semitism after the end of war? From which side?

I did not come across any form of anti-Semitism after the end of the war. I really never felt this, even though I was circulating in an environment of factory workers as well as intellectuals. I did not have any problems.

6) What was the political situation in Czechoslovakia after the war? What was the influence of the Czechoslovak Communist Party (CCP)? What was the CCP relation to Jews like?

It is understandable, that the USSR had absolute dominance, because this was the propaganda, like mentioning the arguments about our liberation. There was also great influence concerning the CCP and the relationship towards Jews. It was quite correct with them at that time. People were enthusiastic about the CCP in the beginning. I have the feeling that the majority of the population agreed with the policies of the CCP. There was a sort of euphoria because of the liberation. However this euphoria was decreasing little by little as people got to know their program. When the Party recruitment was held in 1948, state employees who were not yet members entered the Party compulsorily to keep their

7) Jak proběhlo vaše zatčení?

Bylo to v září roku 1952. To si pamatuji docela přesně, protože jsem byl v té době ještě ve své funkci a strana mě tehdy žádala, jako ostatní členy, abych se hlásil na brigádu do dolů. Já jsem se na tu brigádu přihlásil. Mým přímým nadřízeným byl ministr vnitřního obchodu Krajčírⁱⁱ, který mě doslova řekl: Běž na tu brigádu, až se vrátíš, tak zůstaneš v Ostravě a budeš mi tam dělat spojku mezi Ministerstvem obchodu a Ostravou a budeš dohlížet na zásobování města. Když jsem si jeden zářijový večer chtěl jet domů pro zimník, jelikož už byla zima, tak když jsem vyfáral, čekal na mě u vchodu strážník. Řekl mi, že tam mám nějakou návštěvu. Ta návštěva byli dva estébáci. Řekli mi, že půjdu s nimi. Zeptal jsem se kam? Proč? Odpověděli, že se to vše dozvím, zatím že si mám jít do ubytovny sbalit své věci a jet s nimi. To bylo 25. září 1952. Strčili mě pak do auta a zavázali mi oči. Když jsem se ptal, co to se mnou dělají, opakovali, že se to dozvím. Jeli se mnou do Ostravy, kde jsem přenocoval v nějakém kriminále a ráno se mnou jeli do Hradce Králové. Když jsem je prosil, aby mi zastavili na stranu, jeden z nich vytáhl pistoli a stál nade mnou. Pořád jsem opakoval, že

positions. People also became members compulsorily to allow their children to study. So the influence of the CCP in Czechoslovakia was quite big then and it was possible to say it was given support.

7) How did your arrest happen/take place?

It happened in September 1952. I remember this exactly, because I was still in my position at that time and the Party asked me as well as other members to report for volunteer temporary work in the mines. I applied for it. My direct superior was the Minister of Trade, Mr. Krajčír, who told me word-for-word: "Go for the volunteer work and when you come back, you will stay in the town of Ostrava, you will work as a link between the Ministry of Trade and Ostrava and you will take care of food supplies for the town." When I wanted to go home to get a winter coat one September evening (it was already quite cold), I came out of the mine and a policeman was waiting for me at the entrance. He told me a visitor is waiting for me. The visitors were two Stb-men⁸. They told me to go with them. I asked them where and why? They answered I would be told this later, then I was asked to go to my boarding house, pack my things and leave with them. It was September 25, 1952. I was taken in a car and my eyes were blindfolded. When I asked them what were they doing with me I was told I would find out later.

ničemu nerozumím, jejich odpověď byla ale pořád stejná. V Hradci mě navlíkli do tepláků a byl jsem vězněm.

They took me to Ostrava where I spent the night in a prison and we went to Hradec Králové the next morning. When I asked them to stop to spend a penny, one of them took out his gun and was standing behind me. I kept repeating that I did not understand but their answer was always the same. I was dressed in a track suit in Hradec Králové and I there became a prisoner.

8) Za co jste byl zatčen? Jaký byl uveden důvod?

Byl jsem zatčen jako přednosta Referátu pro vnitřní obchod a výkup na krajském Národním výboru v Hradci Králové. Bylo mi předestřeno, že jsem se dopustil sabotáže. Můj odbor zodpovídal nejen za výkup obilí v kraji, ale také za jeho řádné uskladnění. Bylo mi dáno za vinu, že jsem toto řádně nezajistil. Já jsem to pochopitelně zajistit nemohl. Nebyla totiž síla a obilí se uskladňovalo v tanečních sálech hostinců a lépe to tehdy zajistit nešlo. Nebylo to prostředí vhodné pro uskladňování, nebylo tam větráno a mnohdy tam docházelo ke zkázám toho obilí. Jelikož se ale obilí od rolníků vykoupit muselo, tak se také muselo někde uskladnit. K tomu se použilo těchto míst. Dali mi tedy za vinu, že jsem nedostatečně pečoval o to, aby se to obilí nezkazilo, což bylo ovšem obvinění směšné.

Další z důvodů mého zatčení byl také ten, že jsem porušil svou povinnost, abych náležitě zapracoval svou zástupkyni. Byl jsem

8) Why were you put in jail? What reason was used against you?

I was imprisoned as the head of the Department for Domestic Trade and Purchase of the Regional People's Committee in Hradec Králové. I was accused of committing sabotage. My department was not only responsible for regional corn purchases, but also for the proper storage of the corn. I was blamed for not ensuring this properly. But I could not ensure this of course. There were no silos available, and the corn was stored in the dance halls of public houses and so it was impossible to ensure this any better. It was not a suitable place for storing the corn. There was no ventilation and it often went bad. As it was necessary to buy the corn from the peasants, we also needed to store it somewhere. Places like that were used for these purposes. Therefore I was accused of insufficient care in regards to preventing the corn from going bad, which was quite an

obviněn z toho, že moje zástupkyně, p. Strašidlová z Náchoda, coby dělnický funkcionář nebyla řádně zasvěcena do svých úkolů. To bylo obvinění zcela nesmyslné. P. Strašidlová později o mém zatčení věděla, ostatně byla i přítomna při mém procesu a musela vědět, zda to obvinění bylo na místě či ne.

9) Zakročila p. Strašilová proti Vašemu věznění?

Nezakročila. Ona nebyla tak zodpovědnou funkcionářkou, ani nebyla na takovém postu, aby to obvinění mohla vyvrátit. I kdyby chtěla, tak nemohla. To tedy mělo být součástí mé sabotáže, kdy jsem si měl takovýmto zanedbáním své povinnosti před ní pojistit své místo. Neměl jsem jí podle obžaloby umožnit, aby se zapracovala. Obvinění jsem samozřejmě odmítl.

10) Jak probíhalo vyšetřování?

Zpočátku jsem byl asi jeden a půl roku ve vyšetřovací vazbě v Hradci Králové. Po tu dobu jsem byl v samovazbě, chodil jsem na vycházku tak jednou za týden na jednu hodinu, vždy v odděleném prostoru tak, aby nikdo

absurd accusation.

Another reason for my imprisonment was that I did not show my assistant her duties properly, which was one of my responsibilities. I was accused of the fact that my assistant, Ms. Strašilová from the town of Náchod, working as worker's functionary was not properly dedicated to her duties. This accusation was insane of course. Ms. Strašilová knew about my imprisonment later, after all she was present in court during the trial and she must have known if the accusation was correct or not.

9) Did Ms. Strašilová intervene with regards to your imprisonment?

She did not. She was not such a responsible functionary and she was not in such a political position to refute the accusation. Even if she wanted to, she could not. So this was a part of my sabotage, that I was ensuring my position by neglecting my duties. I did not enable her to learn about all her duties according to the indictment. I denied this accusation of course.

10) How did the investigation continue?

I spent about one and half years in custody in Hradec Králové in the beginning. I was kept in solitary confinement during this time. I went for a walk for one hour, once a week, always in a detached area so that I could not

neviděl mě a já neviděl nikoho, kromě toho bachaře, který nahoře seděl se samopalem.

Můj vyšetřovatel se ke mně nejdříve choval slušně. Bylo mi řečeno, že když se příznám, můj trest bude minimální. Když jsem se vždy ohlásil svým číslem (nikoli jménem), vyšetřovatel si dal kávu a zeptal se mě, zda si dám také. To šlo ale jen dokud jsem měl podepsat protokoly, které si on sám napsal. Pak to začalo. Poprvé jsem šel do temnice 19. listopadu, na své narozeniny. Řekli mi, že když nechci vypovídat, tak půjdu do díry. Tam se nepodávala strava. Byl jsem tam vždy dva tři dny a pak mě ten vyšetřovatel opět zavolal, aby se zeptal, zda chci vypovídat. Já jsem řekl, že nemám co. On na to, že mi to napíše a já to jen podepíši. Tak jsem odpověděl, že podepíšu jen to, co je pravda a co napíše on a nebude pravda, nepodepíšu. A tak zazvonil a řekl: Soudruhu, vemte si drbana, a dejte ho zpět do díry. A tak jsem šel do temnice třeba desetkrát za sebou.

Také mě trestali samovazbou a tím, že mi vyšetřovatel napsal na dveře cely: Bez stravy. Takže v neděli jsem například cítil, že se rozdává vepřová, knedlík a zelí, které ovšem nebylo pro mě. Také mě volali v noci několikrát za sebou k výslechu a nenechali mě spát. Musel jsem v cele stále chodit. Jak jsem si sedl, bachař mě okamžitě okřikl nebo mě polil vědrem studené vody. Stalo se, že jsem pak u výslechu omdlel. Polili mě tedy vodou znovu a vrátili zpět na celu. To dělal hlavně velitel vězeňské směny, který se jmenoval Štěp.

see anyone and no one could see me apart from the guard who was sitting above with a machine gun.

My investigator treated me well at first. I was told that if I confessed to what I was accused of, my punishment would be lessened. When I reported with my number (not with a name), my investigator ordered a coffee and asked me if I would have one too. But this was possible only till the moment I was supposed to sign protocols he had written himself. Then it began. I went to a dark cell for the first time on my birthday, on November 19. I was told if I did not want to confess, I would go to a pit. There was no food provided. I always spent three days there and the investigator called me back to ask if I wanted to confess. I said I had nothing to confess to. He told me he would write down everything for me and I would just sign it. I answered I would only sign what was true and if what he would write would not be true, I would not sign. So he rang a bell and said: "Comrade, take the stiff, and put him back into the pit." So I went to a dark cell ten times in a row.

I was punished by solitary confinement and also by the investigator's sign on my door saying: no food. I could smell it. Pork, cabbage and dumplings were served on Sunday for example, but not for me. They called me to hearings several times a night, as I was also not allowed to

Také si vzpomínám, že vyšetřovatel měl na stole rádio. Řekl jsem mu tehdy, že to rádio znám. On se zeptal jak to, že ho znám. Já na to, že je to moje rádio, které mi ukradli. On odpověděl, že si ho jen vypůjčil a po trestu, že mi to vše vrátí. Tento vyšetřující referent byl mým prvním vyšetřovatelem, byl to estébák a jmenoval se Prošek.

Jindy mi dali na celu svého člověka, který se mi představil, jako nějaký herec a začal na mě vyzvídat. Mě to bylo celkem jasné, proč mi ho tam dali. Nakonec mi dali celý obžalovací spis, abych si ho přečetl a podepsal. Já jsem řekl, že jsem nikdy žádnou sabotáž neudělal a nikdy jsem se nepřiznal, což odporovalo textu v obžalobě. Proto jsem řekl, že to nepodepíšu, a že prosím o pohovor s dozorčím prokurátorem. V tom mi museli vyhovět. Prokurátor tedy přišel; já jsem toho člověka znal z civilu a řekl jsem mu, že tu obžalobu nikdy nepodepíšu a před soudem prohlásím, že mě nutili podepsat a řeknu, co se mnou prováděli. On na to odpověděl, abych si to dobře rozmyslel, neboť mi vyšetřovací vazbu mohou prodloužit i s příslušnými vyšetřovacími metodami. Řekl jsem, že beru na vědomí, co mi řekl, ale že u soudu řeknu, co jsem slíbil.

U soudu pak byli v lavicích pro publikum milicionáři, estébáci a samá stranická veřejnost. Na začátku procesu jsem požádal o slovo a předseda soudu se mě zeptal, o čem chci mluvit. Řekl jsem, že o formě zacházení během vyšetřování. On mi na to odpověděl, že

sleep. I had to walk in my cell all the time. As soon as I sat down the guard shouted at me or poured a bucket of cold water over me. It happened that I fell senseless during the hearing. They poured water over me again and they brought me back to my cell. It was mainly Mr. Štěp, a chief of the jail shift who did this.

I also remember the investigator had a radio on his table. I told him that moment I recognized the radio. He asked me what I meant. I answered it was my radio that they had stolen from me. He answered he just borrowed it and I would get it back after my punishment. This investigating officer was my first, he was an Stb-man and his name was Prošek.

Later a person working for them came to share my cell with me. He introduced himself as an actor and started to ask me things. It was quite clear to me, why they had put him there. I was given the whole arraignment in the end, to read and sign it. I told them I never committed sabotage and I never confessed to it, which was in contradiction with the text of the arraignment. That was why I said I would not sign it and I asked for an audience with a supervisory prosecutor. They had to meet this demand. The prosecutor came then, I knew the man from my civil life, and I told him I would never sign the arraignment, and that I would say in court that I was

se jedná o služební tajemství a že proto dává vyklidit soudní síň. Po jejím vyklizení jsem pak řekl, že jsem byl donucován vypovídat, že jsem se sabotáže nedopustil a nepřiznal jsem se k ní. Pak soud pokračoval. Sabotáž mi nikdy neprokázal, já jsem se k ní nikdy nepřiznal a soud mě odsoudil tak, že „nabyl přesvědčení“, což při tehdejší justici bylo možné. Později už musel mít soud konkrétní doznání, za mě stačilo toto. Můj proces byl tedy skončen po necelých dvou letech vyšetřovací vazby v roce 1954 a dostal jsem patnáct let.

11) Měl Váš původ význam při politickém soudním procesu? Jak si to vykládáte?

Mož židovský původ měl význam při soudním

forced to sign it and I would describe how I was treated. He answered I better think seriously because they could prolong my custody alongside with appropriate “investigative methods”. I told him I was considering what he had told me but I would say in court what I had promised to say.

There were militiamen, Stb-men and Party public sitting on the auditory benches at the court. I asked to be allowed to speak at the beginning of the trial and the chairman of the court asked me what I wanted to speak about. I told him I wanted to speak about the treatment during the investigation. He told me it was a functional secret, which was why he cleared the court. After the court was cleared I said I was forced to confess, that I never committed sabotage and I never confessed to it. After this the trial continued. They never proved I committed sabotage, I never predicated about it and the court condemned me because it “gained assurance”, which was in judicial terms possible at that time. The court had to have the admission of guilt but in my case it was enough. So my case was finished after almost two years of custody in 1945 and I was sentenced to 15 years of prison.

11) Did your origin matter during the political trial? How do you understand it?

My Jewish origin mattered during the trial.

procesu. Snažili se mě vklínit do Slánského procesu. Dle mého názoru to byl nápad z Moskvy, dle kterého se musel i v královéhradeckém kraji nalézt žid, kterého by bylo možné obvinít. Tím jsem se stal já.

12) Jak to, že tak brzy po válce byla tato politika tak jednoduše přijatelná?

Proč se tento antisemitismus tak snadno aplikoval v Československu, se sebe ptám celý život a nikdy jsem si tuto otázku nedovedl zodpovědět. V českých zemích nebyl ten antisemitismus takový, jako na Slovensku či Polsku. Tam to přičítám víře. Na Slovensku to byl Tiso a Hlinka, což byla opět katolická církev. Bylo tam třeba hodně slovenských židů.-krčmářů, nebo i lichvářů, ale na druhou stranu v odboji byli z velké části židé. Nevím, proč tomu tak bylo u nás.

13) Proč Vy?

Důvodem byl zkrátka můj židovský původ. Tenkrát byl téměř v každém kraji obviněn nějaký člověk židovského původu. Pamatuji se, že v Ostravě to byl krajský tajemník Fuks. Z dalšího kraje si pamatuji jméno Landa. V každém kraji byl někdo vyhledán a obviněn.

14) Byl jste obviněn před, či po procesech

They tried to connect me to the process with Slánský. In my opinion, it was an idea that came from Moscow according to which there had to be a Jew found to make his case possible in the Hradec Králové region too. The Jew was I.

12) How was it possible that such policy was so easily accepted just after the war?

Why was this anti-Semitism so easily approved in Czechoslovakia? I have been asking myself my whole life and I have never been successful in answering this question. Anti-Semitism was not so strong in the Czech lands as in Slovakia or Poland. I ascribe it to the religion. It was Hlinka and Tiso in Slovakia; from Catholic Church this time. There were quite a lot of Slovak Jews – pub keepers or moneylenders, on the other hands the majority of people participating in the revolt, were Jewish. I don't know why it was like that in Czechoslovakia too.

13) And why did they choose exactly you?

The reason was simply my Jewish origin. At that time, a person of Jewish origin was accused in each region. I remember it was Regional Secretary Fuks in Ostrava. I remember the name Landa from another region. In each of them, there was someone found and accused.

14) Were you accused before or after the

s Miladou Horákovou či Slánským? Pamatujete si nějaká další jména vyšetřovatelů?

Bylo to po procesu s Miladou Horákovou a během procesu se Slánským, neboť moji vyšetřovatelé byli ti, kdo mě ujišťoval, že vyšetřovali Slánského, a že si tudíž také budou vědět rady se mnou. Jedním z mých vyšetřovatelů po Proškovi byl estébák Hampl. Byli tam i sovětští poradci. Jeden za mnou přišel na celu a začal mluvit rusky. Byl to ale nadporučík Státní bezpečnosti, kterého jsem znal, což on ale netušil. Tak jsem se ho zeptal, proč na mě mluví rusky, když vím, že není Rus? Šéfa vězeňské stráže tam dělal člověk, kterého jsem znal z civilu také, znali jsem se a tykali jsme si. Když přišel na celu na inspekci, tak kouřil a přede mnou tu hořící cigaretu hodil na zem. Já jsem řekl, ať si nemyslí, že se na ni vrhnu, a že ji může klidně zašlápnout. Tak byl překvapen.

15) Co jste si o těchto procesech myslel?

Já jsem o těch procesech neměl možnost nijak do hloubky uvažovat, jelikož jsem byl na samovazbě a neměl jsem žádný kontakt s civilními lidmi. Samozřejmě později jsem o těch věcech věděl a bylo mi např. trapné, že byla žena popravena v politickém procesu. Co se týče Slánského a jeho společníků, tak mě

processes with Milada Horákováⁱⁱⁱ or Slánský^{iv}? Do you remember some other names of the investigators?

It was after the processes with Milada Horáková and during the process with Slánský because my investigators were the ones, who assured me they investigated Slánský so that they would know what to do with me. One of the investigators after Prošek was Stb-man, Hampl. There were also Russian advisors. One of them came to my cell and started to speak Russian with me. He was a First-Lieutenant of Stb whom I knew but he did not know it. So I asked him why he spoke Russian with me when he was not of Russian origin? I also knew the chief of the prison guards from my civil life and he knew me. When he came to my cell for inspection he was smoking a cigarette, he threw it (still lit) onto the ground in front of me. I told him not to look forward to seeing me swooping-up the cigarette so that he could easily tread it into the ground. He was surprised then.

15) What did you think about the procedures?

I could hardly reflect on the procedures deeply because I was kept in custody and I had no contact with civilians. I got to know what had happened later on and found it embarrassing that a woman had been executed in a political process. Concerning

bylo jasné, že to byl vyloženě protižidovský proces zinscenovaný ze Sovětského svazu.

16) Jaký to mělo na Vás vliv?

Vliv to na mě mělo, i když jsem o těchto věcech neměl možnost uvažovat, protože jsem neměl na samovazbě možnost něco se dozvědět. Několikrát denně jsem jen spatřil strážného, když mi bylo podáváno jídlo. Jinak ale pro mne bylo nejhorší, že mě soudili vlastní soudruzi a jen kvůli tomu, že jsem žid.

17) Jaké byly věznice do nichž jste byl umístěn?

Můžete srovnat nejhorší/nejlepší?

Byl jsem ve věznici v Hradci Králové, potom také v Praze na Pankráci a v Plzni na Borech. Později také v Jáchymově. Tam jsem byl také 4. července 1955 či 1956, nevím přesně, když se vězni domluvili na stávce. Bylo to také kvůli tomu, že vedení tábora dalo kuchařům příkaz uvařit nudle „na oslavu“ amerického národního svátku; muklové tomu pak říkali „nudleday“. Do Jáchymova se tenkrát sjeli milice z celého kraje, všechny baráky byly hermeticky uzavřeny a byl vydán přísný zákaz vycházení. Já jsem byl mezi těmi stávkujícími, ačkoliv jsem nestávkoval, odvezen na Mírov. Ten transport probíhal v antonech, kdy jsme seděli na zemi a s námi tři až čtyři bachaři a dva psi. Ta cesta s těmi psy v ohromném vedru byla příšerná.

the process with Slánský and his colleagues, it was clear to me it had been a strictly anti-Jewish process produced in USSR.

16) What impact did it have on you?

It had an impact on me even though I could not meditate about these things because of the custody and hardly any possibility to learn something about it. I only saw the guard several times a day when I got my food. Otherwise the worst thing for me was, that I was judged by my own comrades and only because I was a Jew.

17) What were the prisons you were placed in like? Can you compare the worst/best jail?

I was in prison in Hradec Králové, then in Prague's Pankrác prison and in Plzeň – Bory prison. Later on I went to Jáchymov camp too. There I witnessed the prisoner's strike on July 4, 1955 or 1956, I don't know exactly. The reason for the strike was also the fact, that the leaders of the camp demanded the preparation of noodles to "celebrate" an American national holiday; cons called it "noodle day" then. Militia from the whole region arrived in Jáchymov that day, all the barracks were "hermetically" closed and it was strictly forbidden to come out. I was one of the strikers, who were transported to Mírov prison, although I did not participate in the

strike. The transport took place in a paddy wagon (Black Mary) where we were sitting on the floor with three to four guards and their dogs. The transport in warm weather with the dogs was terrible.

18) Proč jste se stávkou nezúčastnil také Vy?

Tu stávkou organizovali národní socialisté a jelikož o mě věděli, že jsem byl členem strany, neměli ke mně důvěru. Tak jsem se toho také nezúčastnil. Přesto jsem byl obviněn, vyšetřován a eskortován na Mírov. Při výslechu jsem pak ale uvedl, z jakých důvodů jsem se stávkou nezúčastnil a vyšetřovatel to uznal. Na Mírově jsem byl tedy asi půl roku a pak mě opět převezli do Jáchymova.

Právě Mírov byl nejhorší věznicí. Byli jsme tam transportováni jako stávkující. Na Mírově byla strašná zima, neboť celý hrad měl velmi tlusté zdi. Za sebemenší prohřešek byla za trest ukládána temnice, která byla ve sklepě a byla tam ještě větší zima. Na noc nám tam dali jen jednu příkrývku a vůbec se tam netopilo. Také zacházení bachařů bylo nejhorší, co jsem kde zažil.

19) Jak probíhal obyčejný den ve věznicí?

Tak např. Jáchymov nebyl žádným rekreačním místem, jelikož tam byla dost těžká práce. Dostal jsem se tam hned po odsouzení v roce

18) Why didn't you participate in the strike as well?

National socialists organized the strike and since they knew the fact I was a Party member they did not trust me. So I did not participate in it. But I was accused of it anyway, and I was escorted and investigated in Mírov. I explained during the investigation the reasons why I did not participate in the strike, and the investigator accepted it. I spent about half a year in Mírov and I then was transported back to Jáchymov again.

Mírov was the worst prison though. We were transported as strikers in there. Mírov was a terribly cold place because the whole castle was built of thick walls. We were sent to a dark cell for any wrong. The dark cell was in the cellar and it was even colder. We were given only one blanket and there was no heating. Also the guards' treatment was the worst I had ever experienced.

19) What was an average day in prison like?

Well, for example Jáchymov was not a place for recreation, because we did hard work

1954. Pracoval jsem tam v uranovém dole Svornost. Fárali jsme do do dolu a nikdo nevěděl, zda pokaždé vyfára také zpět na povrch. Já jsem pracoval na dvanáctém patře. Měli jsme tam alespoň klid od bachařů, jelikož ti zůstávali nahoře. Obávali se jet s námi. Když jsme vyfárali, osprchovali jsme se, odložili jsme gumáky a potom nás vedli na tábor. To probíhalo tak, že nejprve prozkoumali celý jmenovitý seznam všech, co fárali dolů, pak kolem nás dali ocelové lano, aby po čtvrt hodinové cestě do tábora nikdo neutekl. Chodili jsme namačkáni v trojstupech a doprovázeni ještě bachaři se psy.

Na druhou stranu jsem měl štěstí, že mi tam to fárání na uran neublížilo. My jsme pro příklad na začátku šichty hodili špinavé prádlo do barelu s vodou a na konci šichty, aniž by na to prádlo někdo sáhnul, bylo čisté. Díky té aktivní vodě.

Na Mírově jsme obvykle pracovali pro Moravolen. Dostávali jsme taková vřetena syrového lnu, který jsme museli připravovat na ty cívky, aby se mohl rovnou zpracovávat. Tam se také hodně sabotovalo. Každý byl odměňován podle toho, kolik lnu zpracoval za šichtu. A tak se to dělalo tak, že se v místnosti v kamnech na uhlí ta vřetena páčila. Trvalo to dost dlouho, to se nám dařilo, až z lékařského baráku jednou uviděli, že se z těch komínů příliš kouří. Tak nám na to přišli a já byl mezi nimi. Nepokládám to za hrdinství, byla to otázka být či nebýt. Každý se snažil, aby toho

there. I reached the place just after my condemnation in 1954. I worked in a uranium mine called Svornost (Concord in English). We were going down into the mine and none of us knew whether he would come up again. We were at least safe from the guards down there, they stayed above ground. They were afraid to go with us. When we came up, we took a shower, laid aside the oilskins and we were brought back to the camp. This took place as follows: firstly they checked the whole name list of prisoners going into the mine, then we were bound with an iron rope so that no one could escape during the 15 minute walk to the camp. We were walking in threes, tightly bound, and followed by the guards with their dogs.

On the other hand, I was lucky that the uranium mining did not harm me. For example we threw dirty clothes to a barrel full of water at the beginning of each shift and they was clean without even touching them at the end of the shift due to the active water.

We worked for a Moravolen company in Mírov prison. We were receiving spools of raw flax and we had to prepare it for direct treatment. A lot of sabotage was carried out there. Everyone was rewarded according to the amount of flax he treated during the shift. The spools were burned in a coal oven in every room. It lasted a long

zpracoval nejvíce, neboť podle toho byl odměněn stravou.

Z Mírova jsem byl po nějakém čase zase transportován zpět na šachtu do Jáchymova. Tam jsem měl štěstí, že tam byl nadporučík, který mě znal z civilu. Ten věděl, že jsem byl zavřen neprávem a od něho jsem měl na táboře různé výhody. To jsem celkem absolvoval dobře. Pak přišla Amnestie. Ta se mě netýkala, jelikož z ní byla vyloučena sabotáž. Vrazi a raubřiči amnestováni byli a já, který byl odsouzen za sabotáž, kterou jsem neudělal, nikoli.

20) Jaký byl kontakt s domovem, byl-li jaký?

Kontakt se odvíjel od toho, že jsem byl uvězněn ženatý. Manželku jsem měl v Novém Bydžově, kde jsem měl tedy rodinu. Občas mi povolili nějaký balíček či korespondenci, ale to až tak půl druhého roku po mém uvěznění v Hradci. Do té doby jsem přicházel do styku jen s vězeňským personálem.

time, we were good at it, but then someone saw from the medical houses the chimneys were smoking too much. So they found out what happened and I that was one of them who did it. It wasn't bravery, it was a question of to be or not to be. Everyone was trying to work as much as possible because we were rewarded with food.

I was transported back to Jáchymov after some time. I was lucky because there was a First-Lieutenant that had known me from my civil life. He knew I had been imprisoned unjustly and I gained various advantages from him. I went through this quite successfully. Then, amnesty came. I was not involved in it, because the charge of sabotage was excluded. Murderers and hooligans were given amnesty but not me, who was condemned for committing a sabotage that I had not done.

20) What was your contact with home like?

Did you contact your family?

My contact was based on the fact that I was imprisoned as a married person. My wife lived in Nový Bydžov where I had my family too. I was allowed to receive a package or correspondence from time to time, but this was one and half years after my imprisonment in Hradec Králové. Till then I was only in contact with the prison personnel.

21) Věděla Vaše rodina, co s Vámi bylo a kde jste?

Věděla, ale důvod neznali. Dělali všechno možné pro moje osvobození. Vím, že měli v Praze nějakého advokáta jménem Pecha, kterého kvůli mně sháněli, ale nic z toho nepomohlo.

22) Čekal jste na amnestii? Měl jste nějakou naději?

Na amnestii jsem čekal, i naději jsem měl. V poslední chvíli ale vyšel zvláštní předpis, že amnestie se netýká sabotáže. Já jsem tedy nebyl amnestován. Bylo mi sleveno pět let za dobré chování. Tak jsem se dostal na jaře 1962 z vězení. Měl jsem nové soudní přelíčení v Karlových Varech a návrh na předčasné propuštění.

Samozřejmě, že mnohokrát během mého věznění, stejně jako i po něm, jsem byl žádán o spolupráci s StB. Já jsem s tím nikdy nesouhlasil, neboť jsem byl jimi protiprávně uvězněn.

23) Jak byste srovnal koncentrační tábory a komunistické lágry? Lze mezi nimi nalézt nějakou podobnost?

Koncentrační tábory a komunistické lágry se, myslím, nelišily, s tím rozdílem, že v koncentracích se vězňové víc zabíjeli. To v lágrech nebylo, i když tam lidé přicházeli také o život, jako např. útěkáři, nebo lidé

21) Did your family know what happened with you and where were you?

My family knew it but they did not know the reason. They did everything possible to gain my freedom. I know they had a lawyer in Prague, named Pecha, whom they found for me, but nothing helped.

22) Did you wait for amnesty? Did you have hope?

I was waiting for amnesty and I had hope as well. But a special law was adopted at the last moment that sabotage was not involved in the amnesty. So I was not given amnesty. I got a 5 years reduction for good behaviour. So I got out of the prison in the spring of 1962. I had a new trial in Karlovy Vary and the suggestion of early release.

I was asked to collaborate with the Stb during my sentence and after it too, of course. I never agreed because I was imprisoned irregularly.

23) How would you compare concentration camps and Communist prisons? Can you see any similarities?

I think concentration camps and Communist prisons were not so different too much, apart from the fact that people were killed more in concentration camps. This did not happen so often in Communist jails, although people

s těžkou prací a špatnou stravou. Jinak ale ta podobnost není náhodná. Mnoho znaků bylo společných, ale o nějakou přípravu v koncentráku na věznění za komunismu, se nejednalo. Komunistické lágry mě jen moc nepřekvapily, protože jsem měl již zkušenosti z koncentráku.

24) Které věznění bylo pro Vás více nespravedlivé?

Ani jedno ani druhé nebylo pro mě spravedlivé. V prvním případě jsem byl vězněn proto, že má matka byla židovka. V druhém proto, že jsem byl komunistickým funkcionářem a tehdejší tendence byla antisemitská ze sovětského popudu. Spravedlivé to pochopitelně nebylo, jelikož jsem se nikdy ničím neprovinil.

25) Jak vás přijalo Vaše okolí po návratu z věznění za komunismu?

Moji přátelé mi zůstali a věděli, že jsem byl odsouzen nespravedlivě. Navíc jsem byl později rehabilitován. Strana tedy uznala, že jsem byl neprávem vězněn a byl jsem v plném rozsahu rehabilitován. Trest mi byl vymazán, figuroval jsem jako netrestán a byl jsem také odškodněn.

26) Kde jste se seznámil se svou druhou manželkou?

Se svou druhou manželkou jsem se seznámil prostřednictvím svého bratrance, doc. Duba.

died there too, especially runaway prisoners and people with hard work and bad food. Many things were in common, but no preparation for Communist jails was gained in concentration camps. I just was not so surprised by Communist prisons because I had the experience with the concentration camps.

24) Which jailing was fairer for you?

Neither first nor second was fair. In the first case I was jailed because my mother was Jewish. In the second because I was a communist functionary and the tendency of that time was anti-Semite USSR style. It was not fair of course because I never did anything wrong.

25) How were you accepted after you came back from Communist jails?

My friends remained the same, as they knew I was judged unjustly. What is more I was rehabilitated later on. The Party admitted I was unjustly jailed and I was rehabilitated to the full extent. The punishment was deleted from my file and I was living as a non-prisoner and I was also compensated.

26) Where did you meet your second wife?

I met my second wife through my cousin Mr. Dub. It was in Prague in 1963. She was a widow with one son studying at university

Bylo to v roce 1963 v Praze. Byla vdovou se synem na vysoké škole a pracovala na magistrátu.

27) Věděla o Vašem původu? Jak jste vychovávali děti s ohledem na minulost?

Vyprávěl jste svým dětem někdy o pobytech ve vězení?

O mém původu pochopitelně věděla. Sama byla v koncentráku. Děti jsem neměl příležitost vychovávat, jelikož můj syn z prvního manželství byl vychováván po dobu mé nepřítomnosti matkou a babičkou a v druhém manželství jsem už žádné děti neměl. Také jsem neměl žádného důvodu, abych nějaké informace záměrně chránil nebo zatajoval.

28) Po návratu z vězení byl Váš pohled na KSČ jiný, či zůstal nezměněn?

Po mém návratu z vězení jsem byl pozván na Ústřední výbor KSČ, kde mi bylo vráceno členství ve straně. Nabízeli mi i pracovní místa a okamžité bydlení. Já jsem to ale odmítl, nastoupil jsem do stavebnin a jezdil jsem s V3Skou. Pak jsem si udělal zkoušky na jeřáb a nakonec jsem tam pracoval jako obchodní náměstek. Můj pohled na partaj zůstal nezměněn a zůstal jsem tím, čím jsem byl před svým vězněním. Vždy jsem byl přesvědčeným komunistou. Do strany jsem vstoupil z vděčnosti, jelikož mě Rusové zachránili život. Snad bylo mojí chybou, že jsem zůstal padesát let ve straně, jaksí ze setrvačnosti. Svoje

and she worked at the town council.

27) Did she know about your origin? How did you raise your children in regards to your past? Did you tell your children about your time in prison?

Naturally, she knew about my origin. She was in a concentration camp herself. I did not have a chance to raise my children because his mother and grandmother raised my son from the first marriage during my absence and I had no other children from my second marriage. But I also had no reason to hide or disguise the information.

28) Did your reflection of the CCP change after your return from jail or did it remain unchanged?

I was invited to the Central Committee of CCP after I returned from jail and I was given my Party membership back. I was offered immediate employment and accommodation. But I refused and I started to work in a building company and I started driving a V3S truck. Later I passed the tests for handling cranes and I worked as a trade assistant in the very end. My view of the Party did not change and I remained the same I was before prison. I was always a sure-footed communist. I became a Party member grateful for the fact that the

členství jsem zrušil, až když mi bylo osmdesát let, jelikož jsem se z důvodu stáří nemohl účastnit stranického života.

29) Jaký byl vztah KSČ vůči židům? Co si myslíte o procesu se Slánským?

No, já toto nemohu generalizovat. Já jsem byl v KSČ padesát let. Nikdo mi nedával najevo, že mu vadí, že jsem žid či nejsem. Když pak došlo k diktátu a k zatýkání židovských funkcionářů (mezi něž řadím celý proces se Slánským a spol.), tak věřím, že to celé zinscenoval Sovětský svaz. Já sám jsem nebyl vysokým funkcionářem, ale byl jsem taktéž obětí tzv. kultu osobnosti. Za sabotáž, kterou jsem nikdy neprovedl, a ke které jsem se nikdy nepřiznal, jsem dostal patnáct let. Prodělal jsem Jáchymov, Mírov a další výchovné tábory. Byl jsem půldruhého roku v Hradci na samotce, poněvadž jsem se nechtěl k ničemu přiznat, neviděl jsem půldruhého roku nikoho jiného než toho, kdo mi dával okénkem jídlo, a potom bachaře. Takže já jsem se o tom přesvědčil na vlastní kůži, kupodivu jsem i tohle přežil. Měl jsem silné nervy, i když také mi někdy povolily. Stalo se, že jsem vzal psací stroj, který ležel při výslechu přede mnou a tomu vyšetřovateli jsem ho omlátil o hlavu. Výsledek pak byl, že jsem měl další léta v kriminále přes obleček takovou zelenou pásku, kterou měli

Russians had liberated me. It was perhaps my mistake that I remained a Communist for 50 years, as it was stagnation. I abandoned my membership when I was 80 years old because my age did not allow me to participate in Party life.

29) What was the relation between the Czechoslovak Communist Party and the Jews? What do you think about the Slánský' process?

Well, I cannot generalize about this. I was a member of KSČ for fifty years. Nobody indicated whether they minded I was a Jew or not. When the time of dictate came and Jewish functionaries were sent to prison (I consider this a case of Slánský and company as well) then I believe it was all prepared by the Soviet Union. Personally, I was not a high functionary but a victim of a so-called personality cult as well. I was sentenced to 15 years of prison for sabotage, which I never committed, and I never pleaded guilty. I went through Jáchymov, Mírov and other disciplinary camps. I spent one and half years in solitary confinement in Hradec Králové where I did not see anyone else apart from the person who was giving me the food through a small window and then the prison warder. So I experienced it on my own and surprisingly I survived even this. I had strong nerves, even though I lost them from time to time. Once it happened that I

útěkáři. Jakmile jsem byl pak někam transportován, tak vždy v okovech.

Slánského proces byl zinscenován ze Sovětského svazu, také zde byli sovětsí poradci, kteří to vše řídili. Ovšem mám velké výhrady ke Gottwaldovi, který byl Slánského nejlepší kamarád z mládí a nakonec podepsal jeho rozsudek smrti. To nemusel. V tomto směru mám vůči Gottwaldovi velké výhrady.

took a typewriter that was lying on a table in front of me, and I smashed it on the head of the investigator during one interrogation.

The result was that I had to wear a green band on my clothes in the prison, that was usually worn by runaway prisoners.

The process with Slánský was masterminded by the Soviet Union. There were Soviet advisors here too who were conducting everything. But I take exceptions to Gottwald, who was Slánský's best friend from a young age and who signed his death sentence in the end. He did not have to do it. In this case I strongly object to Gottwald.

6. 3 Interview Analysis

The narrative of my informant brings us the war aftermath of re-united Czechoslovakia and as we know from the last chapter, this time he perceives himself as a Czechoslovak Communist. After recovering from serious health problems caused by the jailing in concentration camps, he started to work as an officer in a button factory. At the same time he says he started “working as a Party member at the local organization” of Czechoslovak Communist Party (CCP) (answer # 2). It seems his qualities became very attractive for the party because soon he was called to the regional Party committee as a organization secretary. By saying this he wants us to see there were not many active functionaries among the local Party members and that is why he became the “reeve of the Department for Domestic Trade and Purchase of the Regional People’s Committee”. That means within four years he got quite an important role in the Communist bureaucratic (red) tape although he did not extend his qualification after the war (answer # 4).

By asking what did his colleagues and comrades knew about his past I wanted to find out if his suffering in the Nazi camps influenced the thinking of majority population. However, his perception of majority Czech population did not change during his narrative at all. He claims his colleagues treated him well, he “did not come across any stronger form of anti-Semitism” and he “did not have any problems” (answers # 3 and 5).

The political situation in the country is something he, as an active Communist, refers to in an interesting way in answer # 6. Even though he was one of “Them” he claims there was “propaganda, like mentioning the arguments about our liberation” and there was “a sort of euphoria because of the liberation”. What does he mean by admitting this? It seems my interviewee wants us to understand he knows about the fact that although there was a large electorate supporting Communists in the first years after the war, a lot of this support was “compulsory” and the “euphoria decreasing little by little as people got to know their program” (answer # 6). CCP was big in then Czechoslovakia but he admits it was caused by “propaganda” too. These remarks indicate that my informant was not a majority Communist member accepting every policy ordered from “above”. He seems to reflect the situation and admit not everything was as clear and pro-Communist as his Party declared.

By question # 7 I came to the crucial point of this period of his life story. I knew before that his own Party had sent my informant to jail and I asked how it happened, where and most importantly why? The detailed description of events following his arrest, investigation and trial refer to an important period of CCP development which is connected with so-called Stalinist policies of the 1950’s and the “show trials” that were abandoned not

sooner than in 1960 by “de-Stalinization reforms” (see references # iii and # ii). Again, the narrative is a lived history material of great importance and anomaly that refers to two most important show trials of the time. The practices and sessions my informant was treated with are the evidence of Communist system of control. The reason why in his point of view he was put in jail is important. As he claims, the official reason “was quite an absurd accusation” and he wants us to know it was not an “insufficient care in regards to preventing the corn from going bad” that caused his imprisonment (answer # 8). Sabotage was just a official excuse he says and he illustrates it with the different means of torturing and oppression that would probably make him confess if he had done it. The reason he believes was the real was, surprisingly, his Jewish origin (answer # 13). He who always treated his “I” as non-Jewish respectively ethnic-Jewish, he admits his Jewish origin caused his imprisonment. Although he previously declared he was not confronted with any form of anti-Semitism before, it was anti-Semitic doctrine again, who sent him to prison and sentenced him to another persecution. This time it was a Stalinist policy. “It was an idea that came from Moscow according to which there had to be a Jew found to make his case possible in the Hradec Králové region too. The Jew was I,” (answer # 11). How did this shocking accusation change his view of Communism, his attitude towards the Party and his identity itself? These are the key questions I was pushing in this part of my informant’s life story narrative.

Concerning his view of Communism I can sum up the ten years of jailing in Communist prisons and working camps did not change it. He believed it was Soviet Moscow who was spreading the unjust anti-Semitic policies in then Eastern Block (answer # 24). This is the reason why he did not change his political orientation, he remained Communist and for example, he did not participate on the strike in Jáchymov working camp (answer #18). He wants us to see his position as a supporter of Communist doctrine and not a fighter against it. He did not agree with Moscow policies, of course, but he remained the same Czech Communist he was before the imprisonment because it was not Czech Communists who changed or even destroyed another part of his life. It was wrong USSR policy that caused it. Losing the contact with family and his wife, long years waiting for amnesty without any big hope, hard and dangerous work would be aspects strong enough to change his mind and secede from the Party organization apparatus. But his surprising reaction was the opposite. After he came back from the jail, he worked for the Party again. “The Party admitted I was unjustly jailed and I was rehabilitated to the full extent. The punishment was deleted from my file and I was living as a non-prisoner and I was also compensated,” (answer # 25). It seems he understands his come back to the Party as a start of a new life, which is possible to explain

only with regard to the tremendous vitality probably typical of him. The Central Committee of CCP offered him immediate employment and accommodation. "But I refused and I started to work in a building company and I started driving a V3S truck," (answer # 28). However, he did not take the chances offered by the Party and he started building his career from the very beginning again. This was for the third time in his life. He was successful again. He married his second wife who survived jailing in concentration camp herself and in the end, he was working as a trade assistant in a state building company.

Concerning his perception of his national identity, my informant remained distanced from Jewish identity during the Communist period. He does not comment on any Slovak influence in terms of his perception of "self" in the whole interview which means he treats himself Czech and not Czechoslovak. There is actually only pejorative connotation with Slovakia mentioned in answer #12 where he speaks about some sort of historical Anti-Semitism. This remark does not support any strong feeling for his "Czechoslovakness". The big political show trials with Rudolf Slánský and Milada Horáková he understands as "masterminded anti-Semitic processes by the Soviet Union" (answer # 29) and he avoids claiming it was CCP who was the cause again. Even when my informant "strongly objects to Gottwald" (answer # 29 again) he still remains devoted to CCP and thanks to his "strong nerves" he claims to survive even this very difficult period of his life without any obvious changes of his identity.

6. 3. 1 Explanatory Summary

The reason why I was pushing the questions of his Jewishness in relation to the majority population even in this part of his narrative was the preceding era of war anti-Semitism and the following era of Communist persecution that might have influenced his thinking and perception of his own identity. As the answers of the Interview III: Communism prove, this hypothesis appears to be wrong because neither during the war, nor after it his attitude to his Jewishness changed. Not even Communist jailing, investigation and hard work in gulag-type camps changed his view of "self". He still considers himself as a part of majority "Us" when incorporating back to the Czechoslovak after-war society. In his narrative regarding the Communist Czechoslovak Socialist Republic he acts as Czech Communist of Jewish origin, which was sentenced to fifteen years of prison based only on his origin. Although it was a Soviet tactic, he remains a confident Communist Party member grateful for the fact that Russians liberated him in 1945 (answer # 28).

6.4 References

ⁱ The 1960 Constitution declared the victory of "socialism" and proclaimed the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. De-Stalinization had a late start in Czechoslovakia. In the early 1960s, the Czechoslovak economy became severely stagnated. The industrial growth rate was the lowest in Eastern Europe. As a result, in 1965 the party approved the New Economic Model, introducing free market elements into the economy.

Source: History of Czechoslovakia on

[http://www.campusprogram.com/reference/en/wikipedia/h/hi/history_of_czechoslovakia.html#Communist%20Era%20I%20\(1948-%201968\)](http://www.campusprogram.com/reference/en/wikipedia/h/hi/history_of_czechoslovakia.html#Communist%20Era%20I%20(1948-%201968))

ⁱⁱ V letech 1950 – 51 z podnětu vedení StB zaměřil útvar ekonomické kontrarozvědky svou pozornost na "podezřelé počínání" hospodářských ministrů Otakara Šimůnka, Ludmily Jankovcové, Františka Krajčírka a dalších vedoucích pracovníků v ekonomické oblasti. Uposlechl tak pokynu vedení StB připravit velký hospodářský proces. Namísto ministrů se nakonec spokojil s náměstkou a generálními řediteli. (in Karel Kaplan, Pavel Paleček, Komunistický režim a politické procesy v Československu, Barrister & Principal, 2001, str. 142)

ⁱⁱⁱ (...) After the occupation of the Czechoslovakia in 1939, Milada Horakova and her husband, Bohuslav Horak, joined a resistance movement and were both arrested by the Gestapo in 1940. Milada Horakova was sent to the transit camp at Terezin. In 1944, she was sentenced to life in prison. She was sent to the concentration camp at Ainzach near Munich, where Allied forces liberated her in May 1945, and she promptly returned to Prague. (...) With her experience of the resistance movement against the Nazis, Milada Horakova soon joined an illegal group of former members of the National Socialist Party, which held meetings regularly. Until, that is, Milada Horakova was arrested by the Communist secret police on September 27th, 1949, along with many other members of the same group, and with the help of two prosecutors from Moscow, set about preparing a case against them. (...) The trial of Milada Horakova and twelve other resistance group members began on May 31st, 1950. From start to finish it was a show trial, based on the Russian show trials of Stalin's purges of the 1930s. It was even broadcast by radio to the nation. (...) Alone amongst all of the defendants, Milada Horakova stood erect and argued with her accusers, but to no avail. On June 8th, 1950, Milada Horakova and three of her co-defendants were sentenced to death. Despite calls for clemency from such people as Winston Churchill and Albert Einstein, the Czechoslovak president Klement Gottwald confirmed the sentences. On the morning of June 27th, 1950, Milada Horakova was executed by hanging.

Source: Radio Prague/Czech Radio, Czechs in History: Milada Horáková, <http://www.radio.cz/en/article/36657>

^{iv} On November 20, 1952 Rudolf Slánský, General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and 13 other Communist leaders (11 of them Jews) were accused of participating in a Trotskyite – Titoite – Zionist, convicted and executed. The trials were the result of a split within the Communist leadership on the degree to which the state should emulate the Soviet Union and was part of a Stalin inspired purge of "disloyal" elements in the national Communist parties in Eastern Europe as well as a purge of Jews from the leadership of Communist parties reflecting Stalin's growing anti-Semitism.

Source: Prague Trials on <http://encyclopedia.thefreedictionary.com/Prague%20Trials>

Chapter 7

Post Communist Czech/slovakia

The last part of the life story delivered in this paper is apparently the shortest similarly as the era that it relates to. Also the amount of gathered data is not that dynamic and perhaps shocking in terms of historical testimony as the previous chapters. But here are some balancing ideas to be found in the text perhaps even solving the interviewee's attitude to his whole life and his role in it. The interview concludes the self-identity reflections of my narrator that I was up to in this thesis. The reflection of the democratic changes of 1989 as well as split of Czechoslovak Federative Republic comment on the most important years of establishing democratic Czech Republic and Slovakia. The epoch creates the fourth type of political regime that affects the narrator's life story and apparently the perception of his identity as well.

7.1 Velvet Revolution and "Democracy"

To comment on the historical frame of events, Stjernø's approach is comprehensive again:

The subsequent loss of Soviet back-up isolated the hard-line Czechoslovak leadership both nationally and internationally, and political demands for change materialized in the course of 1989. Following the demise of the Communist regimes in Hungary, Poland, and the fall of the Berlin Wall in DDR, a huge demonstration was organized among Czechoslovak students on 17 November. The next day a general strike occurred in support of the students' demands, and on 19 November, the 'Civic Forum' was formed as a sole mouthpiece of the various independent groupings taking part in the anti-regime activities. (...) On 28 November 1989, the parliament voted to strip the Communist Party of its guaranteed monopoly on political power. Just a fortnight later, on 9 December, The Civic Forum formed a transitional "Government of National Understanding", reorganizing the governmental bodies of Czechoslovakia in order to eliminate the Communist monopoly on power. The collapse of the totalitarian regime went reasonably smooth in Czechoslovakia compared to elsewhere in Eastern Europe. Accordingly, these events were given the symbolic name of the 'Velvet Revolution'.¹

The following years of democratic Czechoslovak Federation were accompanied by the nervous debate about the future cohabitation of both Czech and Slovak nation. The result of the two years of modern nationalism resulted in the split of the Federation and establishing of Czech Republic and Slovakia on January 1, 1993.

¹ Mads Bielefeldt Stjernø, *Vicissitudes Of Post Communist Identity*, (Copenhagen: University of Copenhagen, 2001), p. 47 on <http://www.diskurs.dk/litteratur/pdf/specialer/Thesis.pdf>

7. 2 Interview IV: Tackling Jewishness

Original Version in Czech Language	English Translation
<p><i>1) Přijal jste změny roku 1989? Jaký byl Váš vztah ke KSČ v této době?</i></p> <p>Já jsem měl ten názor, že rok 1989 byl špatně připraven; že tu změnu měli dělat lidé, kteří byli pokrokoví v rámci KSČ. Kdyby to bývali dělali oni, tak to muselo vypadat jinak, než to, co se dělo opravdu, a co nebylo vlastně připravené. Můj vztah ke straně byl vždycky kladný. Pokud se vyskytly nesprávnosti či výstřelky, tak se mi to nelíbilo, ale musím říci, že jsem proti tomu nijak aktivně nevystoupil. A to byla moje chyba, za kterou jsem se svým přátelům omluvil. Neměl jsem však takovou funkci, aby moje aktivita proti tomuto byla brána v úvahu. Ačkoli jsem ale v roce 1990 ze strany z důvodu vysokého stáří odešel, vnitřně zůstávám komunistou.</p>	<p><i>1) Did you accept the changes of 1989? What was your relationship to the CCP at that time?</i></p> <p>I had the opinion, that 1989 was badly prepared; progressive people within the CCP should have made the change. If they did, it would have looked different to what actually happened and what was not actually prepared. My relationship to the Party was always positive. When errors or inconsistencies emerged I did not like it, but I must admit, I did not take part in any active action against it. It was my mistake and I apologized for this to my friends. But I did not have such political power, which would allow my activities to be taken into consideration. Although I left the Party in 1990 because of my old age, inwardly I remained a Communist.</p>
<p><i>2) Jak nyní vnímáte své dřívější členství ve straně?</i></p> <p>Za svoje dřívější členství ve straně se nestydím. Nikdy jsem nikomu neublížil, naopak jsem mnoha lidem pomáhal, aniž bych se jich ptal, jestli jsou ve straně. Také proto jsem neměl po změně režimu žádné potíže. Naopak jsem byl pozván, abych pracoval v novém občanském výboru, což jsem pochopitelně odmítl.</p>	<p><i>2) How do you reflect upon your former membership in the Party nowadays?</i></p> <p>I am not ashamed of my former membership in the Party. I never hurt anyone, on the contrary I helped many people without asking whether they were Party members or not. This is also why I had no problems after the change of regime. Again, I was asked to work in the new Civil Committee, which I refused, of course.</p>

3) Co si myslíte o KSČ nyní?

Já nesouhlasil s Havlovou politikou a s tím, že postavil stranu téměř mimo zákon. Nakonec, ta strana tu existuje, má své legální oprávnění, byla řádně zvolena a myslím, že ta strana má tolik schopných lidí, že by se měly jejich schopnosti využít k celkovému prospěchu. Jsou to lidé noví, kteří se ničím neprovinili, snad jedině tím, že byli řadovými členy. Neměli by se vylučovat ze spolupráce s ostatními stranami a nemělo by se jim zazlívat, že odmítají změnu jména strany. Jestliže se změnila politika strany, tak to jméno není nikterak rozhodující. Myslím, že ostatní strany by měli využít schopností komunistů i proto, že například pomohli ke zvolení dnešního prezidenta (Václava Klause) ale i minulého (Václava Havla). Prezident Klaus to ve vztahu ke straně dělá rozumně a spolupráce by tu mohla být ku prospěchu. Dnes vidíme, že mnoho lidí souhlasilo s referendem (o přistoupení k EU), jelikož chtějí tu spolupráci tímto způsobem prokázat. Shrnu bych to tím, že se za své dřívější členství naprosto nestydím a kdybych byl mladší, byl bych v ní i nadále.

3) What do you think about the CPCM² nowadays?

I did not agree with Havel's policy and the fact that he made the Party almost illegal. By and by, the Party still exists, it has a legal capacity, it has been regularly elected and I think this Party has got so many effective people that their abilities should be used for the benefit of all. They are new people who did not do anything wrong. Perhaps they were only ordinary members. They should not be excluded from cooperation with the other parties and they should not be blamed for not wanting to change the name of the Party. If policies have changed, the name is then not decisive. I think other parties should use the abilities of Communists because they helped today's president (Václav Klaus) and even the former president (Václav Havel) to be elected for example. President Klaus does a good job in relation to the Communists and cooperation could be beneficial in this area. We can see that many (Communists) agreed with the referendum (about entering the EU) because they want to show their will to cooperate this way. I would conclude that I am absolutely not ashamed for my former membership and if I were younger I would have remained there henceforth.

² Communist Party of Czech and Moravia

4) Jaký je váš dnešní vztah k Židovské náboženské obci?

Můj vztah k Židovské obci je naprosto kladný. Já jsem dříve žádnou židovskou společnost okolo sebe neměl. Žida ze mě udělal Hitler a dnes se k té Obci hlásím nejen proto, že z toho mám prospěch, ale i proto, že tak, jak se obec chová ke svým seniorům, se nechová žádné jiné církevní společenství. A nechová se tak jen kvůli dotacím z ciziny.

5) Proč je dobře, že židovská komunita prožívá značnou renesanci? V čem spatřujete výhody tohoto jevu, kromě vzorné péče o seniory?

Co se renesance týče, je pravdou, že v pražské obci existuje ortodoxní vedení a pak občanské sdružení Liberální unie, které jsou spolu znepřátelené. Jinak se renesance jeví hlavně u pokrokových židů, kteří nejsou ortodoxní. Já sám patřím k liberálnímu směru, poněvadž se táhne jako červená niť celým mým životem. Já nemohu být ortodoxní, protože k tomu nemám poměr. Na druhé straně si vážím současného ortodoxního vedení, kvůli zmíněné péči o seniory. Já když přijdu do denního centra domu seniorů v Praze 6, tak se mě nikdo neptá, jestli jsem ortodoxní nebo nejsem. Jsou tam samozřejmě křesťanští zaměstnanci, ergoterapeutky, a přestože to patří pod sociální oddělení Židovské obce, jsou tam pro mě i divné věci (pro košer maso se jezdí do Bratislavy, neboť v Praze na jatkách nikdo

4) What is your current relationship with the JRC?

My relationship with the JRC is absolutely positive. I did not have any Jewish company around me. Hitler created me as a Jew, and I endorse their Community not only because I gain benefits from it, but also because of the way Community treats its seniors, like no other communities do. And it does not act this way only because of the financing from foreign countries.

5) Why is it good that JRC enjoys its renaissance lately? What other advantages can you see apart from exemplary care of senior people?

Concerning JRC renaissance it is true that among Prague Jewish Community there exist the orthodox leadership and then civil Liberal Union that act antagonistically. Otherwise renaissance appears mainly at progressive Jews who are not orthodox. I personally belong to the liberal movement, because it is typical for my whole life. I cannot be orthodox because it is not my attitude. On the other hand, I appreciate orthodox leadership because of the mentioned care of senior people. When I come to the Day Center of Seniors in Prague 6, nobody asks me if I am orthodox or not. There are Christian employees working there of course, ergotherapists, and even though this institution belongs to the social

nedovede porážet dobytek košer, košer sýr se dováží z Vídně). Na druhé straně jezdím na rekreaci do Krchleby, kterou organizuje manželka rabína, kde se opět vaří košer. Komu to nevyhovuje, ten si může jít do obchodu koupit šunku. Před paní rabínovou jí nesmí jíst, ale nikdo nikoho nepronásleduje, když to dělá. V pražské obci je i druhý pražský rabín, který je liberální, a kdo se chce modlit s ním, může chodit do Španělské synagogy v Dušní ulici, kde se jinak odehrávají i světské kulturní programy.

6) Na co byste chtěl ze své celoživotní zkušenosti upozornit nejvíce?

Chtěl bych upozornit na to, že v dnešních stranách pracuje mnoho lidí, kteří byli komunistickými funkcionáři, a dokonce velmi aktivními. Dnes pracují v jiných stranách jen proto, že vyměnili kabát, a to je, myslím, to nejhorší, co může funkcionář strany udělat. Nezachovává si tím rovnou páteř, jedná jen pro svůj prospěch, a takový člověk nemůže být nikdy pro žádnou stranu spolehlivý. Převážnou část svého života jsem strávil ve straně. Důvodem toho bylo mé sociální cítění. Já jsem

department of Jewish Community there are also strange things for me (for kosher meat one has to drive to Bratislava because there is no butcher in Prague who would know how to slaughter domestic animals in a kosher way and kosher cheese is imported from Vienna). On the other hand, I take part in recreation trips to Krchleby village, organized by the wife of Prague Rabbi, where again only kosher food is served. Who does not like it he or she can go to a shop and buy ham. One cannot eat it in front of Rabbi's wife but no one is persecuted for doing this. In the Prague Jewish Community there is also another Rabbi who is a liberal and who wants to pray with him, he can go to the Spanish synagogue in Dušní Street where also profane cultural activities are held.

6) What would you like to most emphasize about your life experience?

I would like to stress that in today's parties there are a lot of people working who once were Communist functionaries and even very active ones. Today, they work in different parties only because they have changed their coats and I think this is the worst thing a functionary can do. One does not keep a good reputation like this, one acts only for their own benefit and such a person cannot be reliable for any party.

I spent most of my life as a Party

byl od malička vychováván v rodině, která měla „vysoko do žlabu“. Z toho také vyplýval můj sociální cit. Do strany jsem vstoupil nejen proto, že mě Rusové osvobodili, ale proto, že v ní převládá tento pocit. Práci ve straně jsem dělal rád, byť na úkor rodiny, a nikdy jsem jí nelitoval. Nikdy jsem z toho neměl nějaký mimořádný úspěch. Platově jsem byl vždy na úrovni ostatních pracovníků, neměl jsem žádné mimořádné výhody, neměl jsem a nemám žádný majetek. Jestliže se mi dnes daří dobře, tak si připadám jako prostitutka, která se živí svým tělem. Já беру odškodnění za to, že jsem přežil všechny ty útrapy, že jsem to jako výkonný sportovec všechno přežil. Dnes za to od švýcarského fondu pobírám odškodnění, které mi dnes již bohužel není moc platné.

member. My social feeling was the reason for it. I was raised from an early age in a poor family. My social feeling is connected with this fact. I did not become a Party member only because the Russians liberated me but also because this kind of feeling dominates in it. I was glad to work for the Party, although I worked to the detriment of my family and I never regretted my work. I never gained any great benefit for it. I was always on a similar salary as other workers, I had no exceptional advantages, I had and I have no property. If I am well nowadays, I feel like a prostitute that earns her living using her body. I take compensations for all the sufferings I survived as an efficient sportsman. Today I take compensation from a Swiss fund. However, it is not worth much for me any more now.

7.3 Interview Analysis

The dynamic changes of the year 1989 brought the so-called “collapse of Communism” and therefore it is interesting to observe what influence did the inversion have on the narrator. According to what we already know about his perception of identity the establishment of democratic Czech Republic could have meant to him a reinterpretation of his self-identity because the Communist doctrine obviously failed, at least in terms of real politics and his political orientation might have been questioned once again.

This is why my first question was pointed at the acceptance of the changes. The answer of my narrator actually contains answers to other questions but does not answer the asked one itself. My narrator suggests a different way of political changes of 1989. He calls for changes prepared by the “progressive people within the CCP” and not the actual ones. Already this first remark shows his strong believing in the Party. Finally, in this interview he explicitly admits: “My relation to the Party was always positive,” (answer # 1). The possible answer on my question that he means is he would still prefer Communists in the government although the leaders should have been reformists.

Suddenly the narrator refers to “inconsistencies and errors” done by the Party in the past and he claims he apologized for them to his friends. By this claim it is hard to explain what he means but it clearly points at one thing, which is his perception of political failures of the CCP. My interviewee admits there were some; he calls them diplomatically “inconsistencies and errors” but he can mean even the show trials or the Party loss in 1989. He says he could not influence the development because of his low position in the apparatus. Unfortunately, he does not mention any particular time of his possible interference with the situation. But his political identity becomes clear from his words anyway. “Although I left the Party in 1990 because of my old age, inwardly I remained a Communist,” he says (end of answer # 1). He continues in supporting this statement when he says he was never ashamed for his membership in the Party because he “never hurt anyone”, he thinks he “helped many people without asking whether they were Party members or not,” (answer # 2). I would sum up he sees his role in the Party as helpful and not harmful, which he believes is documented by “no problems after the regime,” (answer # 2). He was not punished for his Party work and he was even asked to work in the new (democratic) Civil Committee (ibid.).

Therefore it is natural that he refuses the policy of “illegalization” of the CCP that was practised by president Havel. He prefers cooperation with other democratic parties for which the CCP should be an equal political partner because of its quality functionaries. This would point more on his perception of the CCP as changed and different party from the one in the

Communist era. He says the CCP of 1990's is a legally elected part of the political spectra and it should be treated so. To put it simply, my narrator underlines his stable political identity when he says "I am absolutely not ashamed for my former membership and if I were younger I would have remained there henceforth," (answer # 3). For him the work for the Party is a belief and not a job, which is nothing one should be ashamed of especially when one does not hurt anyone. My interviewee speaks about the membership in naïve terms of benefit for the others and "not changing the coat" (answer # 7) which allows him to adopt an exclusive posture to the Party constantly.

In 1990s the narrator experienced the establishment of democratic Czech Republic as a kind of fourth political environment he once lived in. As a retired person he did not only secede from the Communist party he also became a member of Jewish Religious Community in this time. This might look surprising and he admits he did not have any Jewish company around him before which means he did not think of Jewish identity in any personal level before. He explains such a change using a sentence that could be a definition of his relation to Jewry too. He claims: "Hitler created me as a Jew (...)," (answer # 4). This is perhaps the clearest expression of what he had in mind when speaking about his Jewish "I" in all the interviews long. It was always the enemy doctrine, either Nazism or Communism, respectively anti-Semitism in general as a part of the doctrines, which created the narrator as a Jew. It was not earlier than at the very end of his life, when he started to reconsider his attitude to Jewish identity. The reasons for this were the political changes in Central Europe and the reestablishment of Jewish Religious Community in Prague (JRC) as a result of it. With opening such an institution that (apart from other activities) takes care about Jewish seniors and the victims of war and political trials my interviewee seems to change his attitude to Jewishness. "I endorse their Community not only because I gain benefits from it, but also because of the way Community treats its seniors, like no other communities do," (answer # 4).

Such "exemplary" care of JRC became important for my interviewee even more after his wife died and he had to manage living and being alone. The small remark about the religious orientation of the wife tells also a bit about the Jewish issue. Although she was in concentration camp as well because her father was a Jew, she was actually Evangelic herself. That means even the second wife of my narrator did not bring any connections to Jewish issues in the marriage. It was therefore the impact of JRC and its benefits that made my narrator think and actually live as a Jew more then ever before. As he says in context with the death of his wife: "Me, because I admired her very much, I go to pray for her after her death at Jerusalem synagogue, during our holy days," (answer # 5). He admits he does not know

how to pray and how to read in Hebrew; he still does not distinguish between the expression of Jewish synagogue and Christian church but he started to live much closer to a religious and mystic life. Most importantly, using the sentence about praying for his wife he tells us, that he became a member of another “Us”. He says he goes to pray during *our* holy days. He says *our* but he means Jewish which an important change in his perception of his identity. Further on, he declares his “new” point of view even more when he even identifies himself with the one opinion branch among Czech Jewish community. “I personally belong to the liberal movement, because it is typical for my whole life,” he says in the answer on question # 6. Suddenly he considers himself a liberal Jew. Again, I can argue it might be the conditions of 1990’s and the benefits of JRC who created him as a Jew but this time, there is a clear difference. This time, he perceives himself as a liberal Jew and the topic of Czechness loses its importance for him. According to his narrative in its fourth part he gives himself the role of Prague retired person identified with Jewishness more then ever before, although I cannot claim he “became” a religious and practising Jew.

In the last answer # 9 he gives a final explanation to the perception of his life and his life roles. He says his political beliefs were caused by the financial situation of his parents and he calls his position as “social feeling”. At this place he admits it was not only Russians liberated him but also because of this feeling he became the Party member and worked for it during the great part of his life. He wants us to believe he did it for the benefit of all and not his personal advantages, which he supports by claiming he did not have and does not have any bigger property. The difficult thought of his when he feels “like a prostitute that earns her living using her body” he probably wants us to understand he never gained any compensation for his sufferings before. What is more, now, when he receives it from the Swiss fund, he actually cannot use it anymore because of his age. That means he believes he still has the “social feeling” and that is why he remains a Communist inwards.

7. 3. 1 Conclusion of Interview IV.

His unique, if not shocking memories are concluded by the explanation of the narrator’s “social feeling”. The 1990’s made him think and behave more as a Jew than ever in the past and he admits his “I” became a part of a “new Us”. Even though he remains a sure-footed Communist, he started to live according to some of the Jewish traditions and customs, mainly in regard to the memory of his wife who obviously meant very much for him. Jewish Religious Community attracted his “I” by the benefits and social background that he can be

provided with thanks to his origin and resulting life sufferings. The narrator became a left oriented (in his words liberal) favourer of nowadays' Jewish community.

Chapter 8

Conclusion

There are more conclusions to be drawn from this work. My thesis has shown that studying identity is a two-way process. The perception of identity presented by my interviewee influenced also my own perception of identity and identity in general too; this is seen in the questions I posed during the interviews. I consider this an important finding of this paper. In many places I am pushing questions of Jewish identity and I keep receiving “Jewishness-excluding” answers. This is caused by the fact that my “me”, perceived as a non-Jewish “I”, tended to focus on the idea that the Jewish issue is the key element of the whole life story I delivered in this thesis. On the contrary, my interviewee refuses any kind of such influence and he argues that being raised in Christian society and lower middle class conditions shaped his life story on the first and most important place. This shows that my identity shapes and influences understanding of my interviewee’s identity. After analysing all the interviews I found that the narrator takes his Jewishness much less seriously than I assumed. This is an important point to be made because such finding I consider a helpful output of my work. By asking about his Jewish identity I understood I gained a different story than an interviewer perceiving himself a Jew would gain. This finding is a typical aspect of qualitative research because of its interactive nature. In this thesis I learned also about my “self”; about my initial bias. In the beginning I believed Jewishness matters much more for my interviewee but his narrative shows the opposite.

Thanks to the nature of this work my thesis touches the gender of Holocaust and Communist witness literature. The story refers to four different political regimes of former Czechoslovakia and addresses the key historical issues from its birth in 1918 until the collapse of Communism in 1989 and the establishment of the independent Czech Republic in 1993. However, the gathered material presents the past in a lived (witnessed) way and refers to each issue with a human bias and natural personal and political involvement. The approaches I used for gathering and analysing the material helped to explain some of the historical events of Czechoslovak past mentioned in the interview. I believe the explanations are fruitful mainly for understanding the personal position of the involved witness. Such methods introduce the events in a very humane way and make the reader him/herself personally involved in the story. This meets the aim of this paper; I have argued that personal involvement when studying the past helps to imagine the events better and therefore remember them better too. This is why I consider the oral history and life story interview

appropriate approaches for the thesis. They helped me to conclude my fieldwork with following results.

I will refer to each empirical chapter and make an overall summary of the findings. In the first chapter, the “Beginning” - the first part of the life story - I wanted to point out two facts. Firstly, it was the newly born Czechoslovakia (so called First Republic) that was witnessed by my then young interviewee. The only aspect of his Jewishness he recognized at that time was his genetic legacy. Between 1918 and 1938 he acts as an assimilated Czech inhabitant in his narrative. Secondly, it was the era of the “beginning” in the sense of questioning his political, national and ethnical identity, which I focus on in my whole work. Politically he stands on the left side of the spectra because – as he points out – he came from a rather poor family and he already at that time had a particular sense for communion, community and something we would call “welfare state values” today. In this time of his life as well as Czechoslovak “beginnings” he says he perceived his “I” as a “left oriented Czech”. Following parts of his story show what he means by these words.

During WW II, the former Czechoslovakia was occupied by Nazi Germany and the Jewish origin of my interviewee meant persecution and transports to several concentration and exterminatory camps for him. I call this part View from the “Bottom” because his social position was doomed to the very bottom. The brutal jailing, hard work and inhuman conditions in the camps –it seems- did not change anything on his perception of “self” which might sound surprising. However his neutral attitude to Jews presented in the first part of the story explains why this issue remained unquestioned for him even after such a tragic experience. His political belief only became stronger after the war period and he became a member of Czechoslovak Communist Party right after he was set free in 1945. The explanation for this behaviour appears in the third part of the story. The shocking detailed information witnessed during the stay in Terezín, Auschwitz-Birkenau and Schwarzheide are the typical example of Holocaust witness literature and the idea of being attached to the Communist party is not rare as well.

His lower middle class origin and the “social feeling” together with liberation by Soviet troops in 1945 are the reasons why the interviewee became an active political officer and an active Communist in the third part of the story. Referring to that time he means his family and society environment predestined his role for building a Communist society. Using the term “social feeling” he declares his political inclination towards socialism. However, the exact meaning of Communist society, its doctrine and his political belief remain hidden

because according to the narrative he identifies his own political identity as a “left-oriented identity” or “Czech Communist identity”.

It is hard to say if there were any further objections in his mind apart from the strong influence of Moscow on Czechoslovak Communists. But one thing is clear. Even the show trial and 10 years of jailing in Czechoslovak prisons and gulag-type forced-labour camps did not change his attitude to the Party respectively to the leftist ideology. His objections were not strong enough because otherwise he would refuse further membership after the jailing. Thanks to the work in Communist apparatus in early 1950s and his trial process and politically motivated sentence I called this period of his life the View from Inside; the interviewee reports on the Communist past of former Czechoslovakia from an inside perspective of an imprisoned state officer rather than politician. His perception of his role in this era can be therefore called “an assimilated Jew but sure-footed Czech Communist”.

Here I want to bring back the idea of M. Friedman that I mentioned on page 47. I quoted Friedman’s claim that “only the liberal left wing allowed equal rights in public life of 19th century”. His explanation of the leftist orientation of assimilated Jews fits very well with the life story I delivered, referring to the 20th century. It could be used as a possible explanation of the perception of national, political and even ethnic identity of my interviewee. Socialist orientation might have provided my interviewee with a safe assimilated (non-Jewish) life. However, such explanations fail after the Nazi as well as Communist aftermath in former Czechoslovakia, respectively after approving the Stalinist show trials and anti-Semite processes. Even though Jews-Communists stressed social aspects of the development and they were strong anti capitalists in Czechoslovakia, this did not save them from persecution in 1950s. The life story narrative shows it clearly.

By labelling the concluding part of the story as the View from Above, I mean a narrative delivered by a then Czech pensioner suddenly perceiving himself a Jew more than ever in the past. Again, in regard to what he means by speaking about his “I” it is not surprising. He watches the historical changes of 1989 as a non-active but still a Communist and a member of Prague Jewish Religious Community. These changes bring to his identity an invitation to a “new Us”. He follows the given chances and becomes a left oriented (with his words “liberal”) proponent of the present day Jewish community in the Czech Republic. According to this finding I stress the political changes and reestablishment of Jewish community in independent Czech Republic. They appear as the main reasons why the interviewee gains a different perception of his identity and admits the Jewish part of it.

Politically the narrator remains leftist in his old age and surprisingly his strong Czech “I” does not seem to pay any attention to the split of Czechoslovakia and birth of the independent Czech Republic in 1993. However this fact can be caused by a variety of different topics questioned during the interview and me as the interviewer not asking about this particular political change.

The story resulted in comments on the present-day democratic Czech Republic and I see it as an evidence of an ideological paradox. At different places the interviewee argues it was Hitler who created him a Jew. With this sentence he wants us to see he believed it was the discriminative laws of Nazi Germany which made him realize for the first time in his life his parents were Jews and such a fact might have been problematic for him. But I believe there is something more to this claim. The narrative actually shows that Hitler’s regime did not “only” aim to get rid of the Jewish population from this world. **This life story points at the fact that Hitler did not only kill Jews. Hitler also created Jews.** My interviewee was first “made” a Jew when he was transported to the concentration camps. He was “made” a Jew for the second time in his life when the show trial sentenced him to 15 years of jailing only from political reasons during the Communist era. Finally in 1990s the interviewee adopts the genetic legacy and he re-identified himself with Jewish “I”. This is something I consider the most important finding of the fourth and last part of the story. It helps us to understand how political anti-Semitism contributes to building Jewish identity.

To conclude my findings I want to quote an editor of *Süddeutsche Zeitung* from Munich, Petr Brod, who comments on the political and religious identity in totalitarian regimes in regard to the label “Jew”. He says:

When I use the wide definition of the word Jew I do it because every human of Jewish origin was once confronted with what his origin meant to him and which consequences did it bring to him in the times of totalitarian regimes such as Nazism or Communism. The fellowship, determined by its common religion and greatly changed by the assimilation, Zionism and external events, became a community. German language found the expression “*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*” – the community of doom – for such a fellowship that has lost the aspect of folk, nation or walk of life after its emancipation. It is not a community established by a subjective choice. Only part of this community feels bounded with a common religious, historical or national tradition and we must count on reality of its existence as the one determined by the view from outside.⁸⁰

However this claim can be discussed and confronted, the life story shows that “the view from outside” determines the existence of my interviewee’s perception of identity strongly. Without the historical events, political changes and social treatment of Jews my

⁸⁰ Petr Brod, “Židé v poválečném Československu”, in Václav Veber (ed.), *Židé v novodobých dějinách*, (Praha: Karolinum, 1997), p. 147

interviewee would never experienced the story he shared with me in his narrative. His story is mainly about confronting the Jewish “I” caused by the various impulses from “the Others” over different political periods.

The different perceptions of identity of this man, which were mentioned during the interviews about political rule of four regimes, are the findings of my work. They not only helped me to understand some of the historical events of the former Czechoslovakia and today’s Czech Republic. They also touch the issues of political anti-Semitism and totalitarian ideologies ruling even far behind the borders of my country because their impact on ordinary people can be very similar. My work should make clear how a Communist Jew might have survived in the dramatic past of former Czechoslovakia; become a Holocaust witness and a proud “Czech”. Herewith I hope my study contributes to the idea we all are constant students of (oral) history: we need to forget the bitterness of past but remember its taste for the future.

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9.1 Internet Resources

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Abstract

This MA thesis delivers the life story interview of Czech Communist of Jewish Origin who survived jailing in Nazi concentration camps and Czechoslovak Communist prisons. Using the delivered narrative I aim to explain the historical context of today's Czech Republic from a human perspective. The story is divided into four historical periods of Czechoslovak past for this reason. The interviewed memories touch the key events of the former Czechoslovakia and today's Czech Republic but they deal with anti-Semitism and political oppression, which are international by its nature.

In my work I focus on Czech/oslovak, Jewish and Communist identities as three issues the interviewee mentions in all four historical intervals of his narrative. My intention is to clarify the keywords and to explain their meaning for the interviewee in context with the different political situations in the past. My hope is to give the story a complete form and preserve the narrative, which belongs to the genre of Holocaust and Communist witness literature.

I use the method of oral history and the life story interview in my thesis because they are the most fruitful approach for my paper. These methods allow the interviewed person to speak about those parts of their lives they consider important. As for the theoretical background I use mainly the findings of Benedict Anderson and Anthony Giddens. Their works deal with different aspects of identity that helped me to distinguish the perceptions of personal and group identities in the interview and later their analysis.

In my study I show the characteristic aspect of qualitative research, which is its interactive nature. Asking about Jewish identity of my interview I understood I gained a different story than an interviewer perceiving himself a Jew would gain. The story shows, my interviewee never understood his ethnic origin so seriously as his memories seem to prompt. Only the last part of his story he admits his Jewish "I" matters to him.

I hope my study contributes to the idea we all are constant students of history. We need to forget the bitterness of past but remember its taste for the future no matter which country it relates to.

Tomáš Bouška. Prague, April 2006.

Resumé v českém jazyce

Tato magisterská diplomová práce se zabývá životním příběhem českého politického vězně, jehož skutky si neklade za cíl ani glorifikovat ani kritizovat, nýbrž poukazuje na jejich výjimečnost a historickou hodnotu v kontextu některých politických událostí bývalého Československa. V práci předkládám přehled pamětí osoby, která byla očitým svědkem závažných historických momentů a díky svému původu také jejich přímým účastníkem. Dotazovaný pamětník se v různých obdobích vyskytoval (ať už z vlastního rozhodnutí nebo cizím přičiněním) v prostředí, které významně přispívalo „k tvorbě“ historických událostí a běh bývalého Československa doslova „žil“ z někdy bolestivě bezprostřední vzdálenosti.

Narátor ve svém příběhu byl postupně: záložním důstojníkem prvorepublikové Československé armády, vězněm ve třech nacistických koncentračních táborech včetně Osvětimi, poválečným členem KSČ, obětí politického procesu v 50. letech 20. stol., vězněm odsouzeným za sabotáž mj. k nucené práci v uranových dolech v Jáchymově, rehabilitovaným členem KSČ, i nadále přesvědčeným komunistou a v důchodu členem Pražské židovské náboženské obce.

Zpracovaný materiál je výsledkem vědecké práce a slouží jako aplikované metodologické cvičení, spíše než zevrubná tematizace všech historických aspektů vyprávění a natočených rozhovorů. Hlavní metodou pro výzkum empirického materiálu natočeného během posledních čtyř let je orální historie. Teorií vysvětlující zachycená svědectví je teorie identity (v tomto případě se zaměřením na národní, náboženskou a politickou identitu v rozhovorech udávanou narátorem samotným jako tzv. *selfidentity*). Analyzovaná a interpretovaná data jsou doprovázena krátkým historickým vzhledem do politických událostí sledovaného období československé historie a výkladem způsobu jejich komentování.

Již jen množství historických, politických a společenských událostí, jichž byl dotazovaný svědkem a referoval k nim s neobyčejně svěží pamětí, by posloužilo k zmapování nejednoho zlomového okamžiku naší moderní historie, který v učebnicích doposud zůstává skryt pro svou těžko generalizovatelnou lidskou stránku tzv. „žitých dějin“. Pro zachování předepsaného rozsahu práce se zde proto omezují na aplikaci vědecké metody a teorie a podrobný historický komentář nechávám stranou, neboť přínos celé práce spočívá v zachyceném příběhu jako pohledu jednotlivce spíše než v obecném popisu historických událostí

Tomáš Bouška. Praha, duben 2006.