

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.