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**For a New Approach to the Czechoslovak
Exile in Paris during the Normalisation
through Oral Sources**

Diploma Thesis

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Prague 2020

FORMAL DECLARATION

I hereby declare that I have written this diploma thesis solely by myself and I agree with its eventual publication in print or electronic form. All sources and literature were properly cited. The work was not used to obtain different or the same title.

In Prague, July 31st 2020

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a contribution to the study of the Czechoslovakian exile in France with a special focus on the years 1968-1989, or the so-called Normalization. The aim is to answer certain questions that can only be approached through oral history. Thus, on the basis of interviews with six different narrators, we will try to understand the reasons and conditions of their departure before focusing on the establishment of their new life without reference points in Paris, far from home but also in contact with other migrants. As exile has shaped our narrators, special attention will be paid to questions of identity and memory.

Keywords: Exile, Czechoslovakia, France, Communism, Normalization, Oral History.

ABSTRAKT

Tato práce je příspěvkem ke studiu československého exilu ve Francii se zvláštním zaměřením na roky 1968-1989, obvykle známé jako „Normalizace,“. Cílem je odpovědět na určité otázky, k nimž lze přistupovat pouze prostřednictvím orální historie. Na základě rozhovorů se šesti různými narátory se tedy pokusíme pochopit důvody a podmínky jejich odchodu, než se zaměříme na vytvoření jejich nového života bez referenčních bodů v Paříži, daleko od domova, ale také v kontaktu s ostatními migranty. Ptáme se, jak exil utvářel naše narátory a věnujeme přitom obzvláštní pozornost otázkám identity a paměti.

Klíčová slova: Exile, Československo, Francie, Komunismus, Normalizace, Orální historie.

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1. INTRODUCTION

*„You shall leave everything you love most dearly:
this is the arrow that the bow of exile
shoots first. You are to know the bitter taste
of others' bread, how salt it is, and know
how hard a path it is for one who goes
descending and ascending others' stairs”*

Dante - The Divine Comedy (1321)

Exile in the 20th century is a timeless theme in contemporary literature as it has shaped and inspired many who have experienced it. Kafka, Kundera, Garcia Marquez, a large part of the literature of the 20th century, which was that of the great displacements of populations, massive movements of migration due to wars, revolutions, is the work of the exiles. But as for the social sciences, the subject has only received significant attention in recent decades, leaving many areas unexplored. And the case of Czechoslovak exiles is no exception, and it is their history that will be discussed in this thesis.

The issue of Czechoslovak emigration and exile was long ignored before it came to the attention of researchers. However, much of the available literature focuses more on the period 1948-1969 on the one hand and on migration to North America and the United Kingdom on the other¹²³. Thus, we felt it was useful to enrich and complement

¹ MAZURKIEWICZ Anna, *East Central Europe in Exile Volume 1: Transatlantic Migrations* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014)

² DOSTÁL RAŠKA Francis, *The Long Road to Victory: A History of Czechoslovak Exile Organisations* (Columbia: East European Monographs, 2012)

³ It is interesting to note the list of works conducted by the Center for Czechoslovak Exile Studies: the case of Czechoslovak exile in France has not been studied since 1992 (Source: <http://exil.upol.cz/publikacni-cinnost>)

this research by focusing on the issue of Czechoslovak exile in France, and more specifically in Paris, during the years 1968-1989. Although it has been dealt with by historians such as Antoine Marès⁴⁵ and Jean-Pierre Namont⁶⁷, the question of the Czechoslovak exile in France is nevertheless not complete and devotes part of its research effort to the period 1948-1969, leaving the page of Normalisation very little explored.

And to do so, we will use testimonies and subjective presentations of the lived experiences of those who have left. Starting from episodic life stories, we will try to reconstruct the reasons that led these people to leave their homeland, as well as the course of their departure and the beginnings of the construction of a new existence in the host society up to their questioning about memory and identity. After defining the context and the historical framework in which the story of our narrators is set, we will give our meaning to the term exile and show how the narrators retroactively explain their departure and what motives and criteria they underline; we will thus attempt to answer the question whether it is really justified to understand the exile from Czechoslovakia at that time only as a consequence of the political system or whether wider societal roles played a role in the decision to go into exile, which is a more complex phenomenon and cannot be applied to simplistic models, which are still alive in some scientific disciplines⁸. Secondly, attention will be paid to the approach to development that the narrators had to go through in preparing for their departure and at the beginning of their stay in Paris. Then our work will describe the approach of our

⁴ MARÈS Antoine, *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995)

⁵ MARÈS Antoine, *Les intellectuels de l'Est exilés en France* (Paris: Institut d'études slaves, 2011)

⁶ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, *La Colonie tchécoslovaque. Une histoire de l'immigration tchèque et slovaque en France (1914-1940)*, (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Slaves, 2009)

⁷ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, „Construire l'exil : l'association Rovnost (1907-1940)” *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, vol. 103, no. 3 (2011)

⁸ For example, it is relevant here to talk about the theories of migration thought by French sociologists, who try to divide emigration into two camps: economic and political. We can cite here in particular the work of Emile Temime „Émigration "politique" et émigration "économique"” which we will quote later to explain our choice of the term "exile" for our work but which is part of this dual tendency to think about migration.

narrators towards their host society: their first impressions, difficulties, as well as their integration and relationship with the Czech community in France. Finally, we will question our narrators about their relationship to identity and memory.

Before starting our analysis, we would like to make it clear that we are not Czech: our study is therefore an external view of Czech society and the question of exile; we implicitly situate ourselves in a comparison between two systems of reference, the French and the Czech world. In this special situation, which has its share of advantages (hindsight), disadvantages (providing more explanations, justification, legitimation) and limits (ignorance), we had to make certain choices.

2. EXILE AND HISTORIOGRAPHY

In addition to the oral historical interviews we conducted, this work is based on a wide variety of scholarly literature. Indeed, the 20th century was that of migration and especially exile; not because it represents something new in history, but rather because after 1918 and even more strongly after 1945 and in the 1970s and 1980s, it gained in scope and importance.

The theme of exile and migration in general has been treated in several forms and by different branches of the social sciences: in sociology, anthropology and of course history. So how to explain that the sources are not richer in the Czech Republic as in France. In the case of French historiography, this can be explained in two ways; firstly, exile and emigration is an extremely well-studied subject in the social sciences because of the history of the country. However, the subjects of research are mainly on the main immigrations: especially Maghreb and African or Italian and Polish. The subject is moreover treated from a sociological rather than a historical point of view. As far as the Czechoslovak exile is concerned, the available sources are more limited and are mainly the work of two historians: Jean-Pierre Namont, for the period from the 19th century to 1945⁹ and Antoine Marès from 1945 to 1968¹¹. The first dealt mainly with the Czechoslovak Colony and the role of the Czechoslovak community in France and Paris through the various major historical events of the first half of the 20th century. Antoine Marès, a specialist in Czech and Slovak history, focused on the issue of exiles in Paris in his work „*Le Paris des Étrangers depuis 1945*”¹². However, the study stopped in 1969. Only one of his works is devoted to exile in the second half of the 20th century, but it concerns the whole of central Europe and not only the Czechoslovak

⁹ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, *La Colonie tchécoslovaque. Une histoire de l'immigration tchèque et slovaque en France (1914-1940)* (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Slaves, 2009)

¹⁰ NAMONT Jean-Philippe „Construire l'exil : l'association Rovnost (1907-1940)” *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, vol. 103, no. 3 (2011)

¹¹ MARÈS Antoine, *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995)

¹² MARÈS Antoine, *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945* (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995)

issue¹³. We shall see this a little later, but the interest of historians in Czechoslovak exile between 1948 and 1968 is justifiable: the country, and especially Paris, saw the arrival of a large number of important people, politicians, writers, poets, artists; a good number of works are devoted to them, but exile as a whole has - in my opinion - not yet been dealt with as a whole. But on the other hand, until the 1980s, the question of exile was little studied in France, notably because of the difficulties of access to sources and the atmosphere of the Cold War long delegitimized any criticism of the communist system.

As far as Czech research is concerned, the delay can first of all be explained by the state control of universities and research works and projects, which has had a real negative impact on the development of research and especially on the issue of migration. All the more so as the idea of exile was contrary to the principles of the Republic: a pro-communist and very anti-exile literature was developing, such as the famous „*Emigranti proti národu*”¹⁴. While in France research was a response to France's migration policies, in communist Czechoslovakia, the phenomenon had to be silenced. Exile was therefore mainly told by its own actors: in our case, Pavel Tigríd who, in 1968, published „*Politická emigrace v atomovém věku*”¹⁵.

The study of migration then began in earnest with the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia with a blank page just waiting to be written. Thus, since the early 1990s, a number of reference works have been published on the issue in the Czech Republic. The most successful work on the subject has been carried out by Zdeněk R. Nešpor; three works were selected for our thesis and constitute the most successful research on the subject: „*Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty: prolegomena k sociologickému studiu procesů procesů procesů 20. století se zvláštním Českém k západní*”

¹³ MARÈS Antoine, *Exils d'Europe médiane en France dans la seconde moitié du XXe siècle* (Paris: IES, 2017)

¹⁴ SUCHÝ Čestmír, *Emigranti proti národu* (Prague: Mlada Fronta, 1953)

¹⁵ TIGRID Pavel, *Politická emigrace v atomovém věku* (Prague: Prostor, 1990)

reemigraci 90.,¹⁶ and „*České migrace 19. a 20. století a jejich dosavadní studium*”¹⁷ which provide an extensive analysis of the Czech and foreign literature devoted to the study and a methodological basis for this topic. Indeed, Nešpor offers us a critique of the research done on the subject of exile, which we found very inspiring for our own thesis: thus, he underlines the shortcomings of the present research and advocates interdisciplinarity, especially the sociologization and anthropologization of Czech migration studies.¹⁸ On the other hand, the establishment of the Centre for Czech Exile Studies at the Faculty of Arts of Palacký University in Olomouc in 1992 contributed to the development of research on this issue. Since its foundation, a number of historical works have been created within its framework. However, the question of exile in France has not been addressed. The works of Antonín Kostlán¹⁹, also constitute an essential reference on the subject and more particularly on the exile of researchers and academics during Communism.

Again, it is essential to make it clear that this is by no means a criticism of the current studies on the Czechoslovak exile. We absolutely do not pretend to think that our work is the only work being done on the issue. The issue of Czech exile and migration is a recent subject; these works are the reason why we are doing this subject, they are the cause of our interest and curiosity on the subject. We are all simply trying to try a new, more subjective approach through oral sources as a complement to the research carried out on the subject.

¹⁶ NEŠPOR Zdeněk R, *Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty: prolegomena k sociologickému studiu českých emigračních procesů 20. století se zvláštním zřetelem k západní reemigraci 90.* (Prague: Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, 2002)

¹⁷ NEŠPOR Zdeněk R. „České migrace 19. a 20. století a jejich dosavadní studium”, *Soudobé dějiny*, 12 (2) (2005)

¹⁸ NEŠPOR Zdeněk R. „České migrace 19. a 20. století a jejich dosavadní studium”, *Soudobé dějiny*, 12 (2) (2005): 245-284.

¹⁹ KOSTLÁN Antonín, „Útěky do emigrace a Československá akademie věd” in *Sto českých vědců v exilu. Encyklopedie významných vědců z řad pracovníků Československé akademie věd v emigraci*, ed. Soňa Štrbáňová and Antonín Kostlán (Prague: Academia, 2011)

3. ORAL HISTORY THEORY AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 The oral history method

Due to the nature of our research project, we used the oral history method, which is considered appropriate for research on Czechoslovak emigration in the era of socialism. Zdeněk Nešpor also complained about its insufficient and still necessary application in the study of Czechoslovak migration. This method can also be used to find data that we would not otherwise have access to, i.e. especially when several sources are inaccessible or destroyed for various reasons. Emphasis is placed on the uniqueness of the narrator's personal commentary on his or her own experiences.

All the works of historians, anthropologists, sociologists, ethnologists - who rely on oral interview and its subjectivity - have this common cause and purpose: to provide answers where other sources have remained silent. Especially in the case of the Czechoslovakia and former totalitarian societies which suffer from a lack of plurality; oral sources thus make it possible to treat the subject of exile in a more complete and real way. In the case of our thesis, the image of the Czech exile like Milan Kundera or Pavel Tigrid did not coincide with those we met and the available sources did not really manage to know the real intentions of each one: why was it necessary to leave? It was a question that only the exiles themselves could answer. It was essential to rediscover exile, by and for those who had known it and who had never been heard of. The aim was not to quantify exile or to give a consensual definition of it, but rather to understand its diversity and to highlight the difficulties in qualifying it and making it its history. Our oral interviews were to provide us with new sources rich in factual information, whether on the conditions of exile, the how, but also on life, family, relations and work in communist Czechoslovakia and in France, far from his native lands. They would also open new windows on events such as the Invasion in 1968, the Normalization, the fall of Communism that our narrators experienced in different ways than most of their fellow citizens. The oral interview is a unique moment, in the present, but clinging to the past.

Thus, our view of oral history has in part been influenced by the initiators of the „cultural turn” of oral history in the 1980s, Luisa Passerini²⁰ and Alessandro Portelli²¹. The important thing was not necessarily the facts or the events but the way each of our narrators remembered them: whether it was their trust, exile, the Warsaw Pact invasion in 1968 or the fall of communism, no one experienced these events as they did and these transformed memories, their meaning, their place in the testimony or their absence are the reason why oral history is essential: the subjectivity of our sources. By their very nature, oral history projects are always subjective on the side of both the narrator and the interviewer. Subjectivity is inevitable, as Portelli advocates, but it is important not to consider it as an obstacle to our research, but on the contrary, to accept it and make it our ally. If we hadn't let it in, this thesis could not have been written. The importance of oral history is that it takes a turn towards a more theoretical reflection on the link between social groups, identities and the phenomena of memory and silence, as Luisa Passerini says²².

I understand migration, its motivations and manifestations, as a complex phenomenon, which prevents the adoption of a number of theories on migration. I promise to gain a more comprehensive view by focusing on the actor and his or her specific experiences. In my opinion, it would be too restrictive to explain and analyse the issue under study using a uniform interpretation scheme, which often relates to only one aspect of the issue under study. While I do not deny that some of the explanatory theories of international migration can be inspiring, I do not unequivocally support any of them. To illustrate, I state that, because of the nature of the wave of emigration I have examined, I consider economically oriented economic theories that justify emigration by the effort of an individual or his or her household to maximize their current income, or the theory of the world system, which sees the origin and causes of migration as the

²⁰ PASSERINI Luisa, *Fascism in Popular Memory. The Cultural Experience of the Turin Working Class* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987)

²¹ PORTELLI Alessandro, *The Death of Luigi Trastulli and Other Stories: Form and Meaning in Oral History* (New-York: SUNY Press, 1991)

²² ABRAMS Lynn, *Oral History Theory* (New-York: Routledge, 2010) 47-48.

result of historical organization, to be insufficient. market relations within the world system.

3.2 Setting up the interview

We will now get to the heart of the matter and we will now present our approach in detail. We will successively address the question of the target population or the corpus of narrators, the interview method, the conduct of the interview, but also briefly the material issues of place, time and material. At first glance, the questions we ask seem simple: who should be interviewed? How many people? How to contact them? How will they welcome the project?

3.2.1 Selection criteria for potential narrators

We are now at the beginning of the interviewing phase. Before embarking on the search for potential narrators, it is essential to conduct preliminary discussions, to carry out preliminary project boundary work aimed at firmly defining the general theoretical orientation of the research, its objectives and its final products. More simply, the question must be answered: what do we want to achieve in the end? The answer to this question is theoretically resolved in our previous section by the conclusions that have been reached on the definition and paradigms followed in our conception of oral history but also in the introduction to why we're doing this project. This thesis is not meant to be a synthesis of the Czechoslovak exile during the Normalisation, but an invitation to discover it from another angle that has not been touched upon or only to a limited extent. Our research is based on the questions we asked ourselves when we saw how exile was studied and then tries to see how, by studying first and foremost the exiles themselves, the phenomenon can be rediscovered. We needed at least five narrators for this project to be feasible in time while meeting our expectations. In a future project, it would then be interesting to study it on a larger scale.

In the context of research projects on a specific theme such as ours, we have had to move closer to ethnological methods where the best possible narrators are sought, i.e., to give priority above all to the quality of the interviews and the information they

contain²³. And in order to do so, it is necessary to determine criteria - which may not all be met - that will allow us to achieve a diversity of opinion while ensuring that the important points related to our research are addressed. We have therefore based our search for narrators on the following precepts.

First, it is important to define the chronological period under study. As we have seen previously, it is more relevant to focus on the period of Normalization rather than to make an overview of the phenomenon of exile over the entire communist period; indeed, the period following the Prague Spring offers many reflections and issues on the question of exile that allow us to highlight new approaches to the subject. Thus, the departure of our potential narrators was to take place between the year 1970 - or even later, many departures after 1968 being considered as responses to the invasion of the Warsaw Pact - until the Velvet Revolution, sounding the death knell of the Socialist Republic. We have observed that departures increased sharply after Czechoslovakia signed the Helsinki Accords in 1975, facilitating the exile of many citizens who also coincided with the arrival, and more towards France from the early 1980s with the arrival in power of the socialist president François Mitterrand, relaxing the conditions of residence for immigrants by sweeping away the harsh policies of his predecessor²⁴.

The second precept was the destination, the place of exile, in the case of our study, Paris. However, the issue was not whether or not the narrators had been to Paris, but rather how to consider Paris as the place of exile. Indeed, Paris, first of all, was built in the 20th century by successive migrations which are thus an integral part of its history and thus represents a welcoming place for exiles. On the other hand, like all big cities, even the capital, access to study, work and housing is easy. Then in terms of

²³ BEAUD Stéphane, „L'usage de l'entretien en sciences sociales. Plaidoyer pour l'entretien ethnographique”, *Politix*, vol. 9, n°35 (1996): 226-257.

²⁴ In 1976, French President Valéry Giscard-D'Estaing signed a decree authorising „family reunification” while encouraging the return of certain immigrants by offering a departure bonus. As immigration was on the increase, he announced in 1980 the 80-9 Bonnet law, which tightened the conditions of entry to French territory and provided for the expulsion of foreigners who entered the country without authorisation, outraged the socialist opposition.

accessibility, the city is simply the most served by train stations, airports and is therefore the easiest destination to reach when you want to leave. It is important to note here that a large number of exiles have actually travelled to Paris and have been recorded in the Parisian immigration registers. However, not all of them stayed for more than a few months, the time it took to regularise their situation and put in place a plan to leave and settle elsewhere, in the provinces: going into exile was the first step, but it was also necessary to settle and some decided to do so far from the French capital for reasons that would be extremely interesting to study. At the same time, others went first to the provinces, and mainly to the region of Dijon, where the Czech Section has been located since 1920. Thus, some passed through Burgundy to meet acquaintances before heading for the City of Light. All these situations made the geographical criterion more difficult to apply than we might have thought. It was then necessary to establish methodological rules in order to find the right narrators. How many months or years spent in the capital are necessary to consider Paris as the place of exile? Are there other criteria to be taken into account? Of course, there are no perfect answers, it is up to the interviewer to determine what is most appropriate for his study: in our case, it was decisive that Paris was „the place of action,, and not a correspondence between the first stage, exile, and the second, settling elsewhere. Thus we considered that a minimum of two years was sufficient while fulfilling criteria that show that the exile is not „on the run” but well settled, which can be qualified through work, stable housing or studies. And why Paris? Because Paris is divisive; it makes several generations of exiles cohabit under its roof; it highlights the disparities between them, the internal conflicts between these generations, which we will see later.

It is also crucial that the narrators fit into our definition of exile, which will be explained in more detail in the next chapters. But our criterion can simply be defined on the basis of the legality of the departure: did the narrators know that their departure was prohibited, illegal and would lead to irreversible criminal, punitive consequences on the part of the state? After the signing of the Helsinki Charter, Czechoslovakia had to let some of its citizens leave beyond its borders; the Communist Party often managed to get rid of many of its enemies, but despite ratification, few managed to leave and many

laws had to be broken either inside or outside the country borders to escape. It was therefore necessary to apply this notion of a break with legality, which can take many forms: arranged marriages, theft or use of false passports, not returning after studies, fleeing through organized trips or vacations, etc. Authorized departures or what can be called „legal emigration”, following a marriage or temporary trips were therefore excluded from our research field.

When talking about Czechoslovak exile in Paris, it is impossible not to associate it with Pavel Tigríd's magazine, *Svědectví*, a veritable cultural centre in exile in the heart of the capital. For the sake of the study, we thought it would be a good idea to seek in our narrators a kind of function linked to the magazine and to the Czech community, whether they are students, writers, poets or politicians in exile. But that would have been a mistake because it would not have done justice to reality since some people, including one of our narrators, sought instead to flee from his peers. On the other hand, everyone's involvement at *Svědectví* varied from person to person: some were active members of the editorial staff, others went to headquarters simply to meet their fellow citizens, read, debate, talk about the country. It is therefore essential to consider each story, and in the end, this criterion somewhat chose itself, as *Svědectví* has an impact on each of our narrators, in its own way. On the other hand, it was interesting, because of the Franco-Czech character of our study, to multiply the number of points of view and we absolutely wanted to include a French narrator who had had, in his own way, an experience of exile; this is what we call polyphony²⁵.

Finally, language had a key role in our research. On the one hand, from a communicational point of view: some of the emails could be sent in Czech, but for the most part, our contacts were made in French, as a priority, and possibly in English. The interviews had to be conducted in both languages as well, so it was essential that the narrators spoke one of these two languages. Of those contacted, only two indicated that

²⁵ DESCAMPS Florence, „De l'histoire orale aux archives orales” in *L'historien, l'archiviste et le magnétophone : De la constitution de la source orale à son exploitation*. (Paris: Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, 2005), 151-176.

they did not speak French²⁶. The ideal would have been to have a fellow Czech interviewer to conduct the interviews and it would have been interesting to note the differences in language or even attitude towards the interviewers. But this project was not feasible for this thesis, so our interviews had to be conducted in French or English²⁷. Language is also significant because it must be studied: we wanted to observe the existence or not of a certain „language of the exiles” a French vocabulary specific to their experience, translating the evolution and reorganization of the linguistic repertoires since their departure²⁸.

The idea to remember is that in all cases, a corpus of narrators is built up from the analysis of the object of research, that it is never a natural given. It is therefore necessary to impose meticulously prepared criteria on oneself before embarking on the search for narrators.

3.2.2 Looking for narrators

A list of narrators never comes naturally, it is constantly being built up and enriched. We must not neglect the time spent finding our narrators, but also to put the list together. How do we contact these narrators and first of all how do we find them?

We were starting from scratch; we didn't know anyone who had been exiled in Paris or anyone who could have put us in contact with an exile. So in order to do this, we followed the methodological advice given by Donald A. Ritchie, who recommends finding narrators „*from particular groups or communities (...) through advertising in local newspapers, on radio or television stations, in the newsletters of companies, unions, churches, and civic organizations, in alumni magazines, and on the Internet*”²⁹,

²⁶ And when we came up with the idea that the interview could be conducted in English, they both declined our offer.

²⁷ The interviews were all conducted in French and subsequently translated into English.

²⁸ DEPRez Christine, „Langues et migrations : dynamiques en cours” *La linguistique*, vol. 41, no. 2, (2005): 9-22.

²⁹ RITCHIE Donald A, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 55-56.

while being careful to focus too broadly so as not to end up with numerous narrators who do not meet our expectations. However, our first reflex was to first of all move towards administrative research by going to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France (BnF) and the Centre des Archives Contemporaines (CAC) in Fontainebleau, which converse within their walls a great variety of administrative documents that make it possible to measure the variety of situations that lead Czechoslovakians to find themselves in France. This research has given us names (which appeared in police reports, articles, residence permits, etc.) but above all names of exiles from the years preceding the arrival of electronic archives in the administration³⁰. On the other hand, the documents did not stipulate whether or not the person had stayed in Paris, let alone their contact details. Names were then noted and some were found by other means.

So we redirected ourselves to the method advocated by Donald A. Ritchie by targeting first of all the Czech organizations in Paris³¹: L'Association des Originaires et mais des pays tchèques et slovaque (AOTS) and the Czech Centre in Paris. For the first organization, we contacted the President and asked him to place an advertisement in the bi-monthly newsletter of the association, but he declined. For the second, the director of the Czech Centre in Paris, Jiří Hnilica offered to help us and we went to the Association's headquarters. From this meeting, we came out with five names and subsequently three agreed to be interviewed, one of them anonymously. Then it was inevitable to consult the oral archives on the subject, which were, on our subject, very meagre. However, by extending our research to testimonies not only as part of a historical research project but also through journalistic interviews, testimonies, press articles, we managed to find several names. However, many of them, being relatively important public figures, could not find the time for our project or simply declined under the pretext that they had already been around the subject in different projects.

³⁰ In section F7 (on General Police) of the CAC, there is a section on aliens police. The topic is discussed there under reference 19900352 for the years 1946-1985. One can also read texts, notes and reports on foreigners and immigration, in particular on the regularization and renewal of work and residence permits for foreigners between 1945 and 1980 under reference 19950337, as well as numerous files on illegal workers, asylum seekers or refugees since the Second World War in France.

³¹ RITCHIE Donald A, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 50.

Despite our willingness to prove them wrong, they declined our offer once again. The two other narrators were contacted using the „snowball effect”³².

To get in touch with our narrators, we mainly used email contact or phone call. However, each of these contacts was inspired by the methods of call letters with personalized testimonials and had to include the following elements, inspired by Florence Descamps' interview method and reworked in our own way³³ :

- **The origin of our request** (presentation of the interviewer and the Department of Oral History of the University of Prague)
- **Aims** (master's thesis) and **means** (use of the tape recorder and what to do with the recordings)
- **Presentation of the research topic**
- **The purpose of the interview** (its potential length and its progress)
- **Commitment to confidentiality**

Whether the answer is positive or negative, we always get a response from the people we contact. Some even offered us other leads and new contacts. For all those who agreed to be interviewed, we organized a meeting, which could take place over the phone, as many were in Paris, but preferably in person. This first meeting is crucial because this is where contact is made, where both parties get to know and trust each other. It is also an opportunity to present our project in person and to answer the questions of our narrators. Usually, these first interviews are quite short, but they are essential because they actually serve to transmit to the narrators a certain number of instructions, instructions that allow a good understanding of the exercise: the purpose of the interview, the ethical rules surrounding it³⁴. We have also already printed out the documents for them to sign so that they could get an idea - the time that will be devoted

³² DESCAMPS Florence, *Les sources orales et l'histoire: récits de vie, entretiens, témoignages oraux* (Paris: Bréal, 2006), 42-43.

³³ DESCAMPS Florence, „La préparation et la conduite de l'entretien” in *L'historien, l'archiviste et le magnétophone : De la constitution de la source orale à son exploitation*. (Paris: Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, 2005), 335-366.

³⁴ VASSY Carine and KELLER Keller, „Faut-il contrôler les aspects éthiques de la recherche en sciences sociales, et comment?” *Mouvements*, vol. 55-56, no. 3 (2008): 128-141.

to it, the themes envisaged. It also allows us to note the strong and weak points of each one and what each interview was going to bring to the project³⁵.

As mentioned earlier, during these meetings the narrators asked many questions, long before we could finish explaining the project in detail; we don't know if this showed a strong interest in the subject or some kind of concern, such as a fear of being questioned and spied on. Apart from Carole Paris, who has been used to being interviewed³⁶, and Peter Brabenec, who was astonished at the „interest in his person” but confident in the idea of recounting his experience, the other narrators were all visibly stressed of being interviewed and especially of being recorded. This step was necessary because it allows to put in confidence the narrators, to answer their questions but also to convince some of them who were rather cold at the idea of surrendering. Some refused, their decision was respected, others accepted, but we could still feel their apprehension.

At this level, we encountered two difficulties: firstly, some people asked me to see the questionnaire. Proponents of this method argue that the advantages are the possibility for the narrators to prepare the interview, to consult archives and therefore the highest quality of information³⁷. But as opponents of this method, we argue the need to preserve the surprise effect as well as to maintain the effect of „spontaneity” without the interview sounding like our narrator thought in advance about what they were going to say or not say and how they were going to say it. It is obvious that during the first meeting, we must give the narrators as many leads as possible so that they know in which direction our interview is going to go and so that they can prepare themselves mentally to get their information, to bring out their memories. But giving the

³⁵ I was inspired by the methods of French sociologists and psychologists Alain BLANCHET and Anne GOTMAN presented in their collaborative work „L'enquête et ses méthodes: entretien” (Paris: Armand Collin, 2005), 49-52.

³⁶ One of her most recent interviews is available online on Paměť národa's website: <https://www.pametnaroda.cz/en/paris-carole-1960>

³⁷ DESCAMPS Florence, „La préparation et la conduite de l'entretien” in *L'historien, l'archiviste et le magnétophone : De la constitution de la source orale à son exploitation*. (Paris: Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, 2005), 335-366.

questionnaire in advance gives the narrator the impression that they will have to go through a test on their life again, that there will be good and bad answers and that their narrative scheme should not deviate from the question plan they were given. The spontaneity of the dialogue that takes place between the narrator and the oral historian, that is to say, in the original interactivity of the interview situation and in the real cooperation that can be established between them in order to create a life story that is rich, tonic and put into perspective³⁸. It is this interactivity that we believe must be preserved and encouraged, and it is on this point that the interview situation differs radically from the method of the written questionnaire to which the narrator answers in the silence, alone.

The second difficulty was the refusal of some of my narrators to have their names or testimony appear, a decision that we obviously respected. These decisions led us to have three types of situations concerning our oral archives:

- Carole PARIS, Ilja KUNEŠ and Peter BRABENEC agreed to make their interviews and transcripts accessible and used in our research;
- Petr KAŠPAR agreed to the use of the transcript and its citations in this thesis but refused to disclose the audio recordings;
- J.O. and K.M. refused to allow the interviews and transcripts to be published with my thesis and insisted on remaining anonymous. K.M allowed me to use some of his quotes with his permission. Both of these decisions were made a few weeks or months after the interviews were conducted.

These refusals were a huge setback for our research. It was already extremely difficult to find accessible narrators, but their testimony was far too valuable to be ignored. For a long time we thought that these difficulties would be detrimental to our research, but it is necessary to learn from them: why such a fear of giving one's testimony and especially of being read? There is a discomfort in finding one's place in the collective memory, a difficulty in telling one's story and a fear of not being

³⁸ DESCAMPS Florence, „La préparation et la conduite de l'entretien” in *L'historien, l'archiviste et le magnétophone : De la constitution de la source orale à son exploitation*. (Paris: Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, 2005), 335-366.

legitimate³⁹. such an objection would likely cause that person to be stricken from the list of potential interviewees, as there usually remains little reason to conduct an oral history if it cannot be recorded. But the individual researcher may consider the person a critically important source, regardless of the ground rules.⁴⁰

Thus, we have arrived at a total of six narrators, a number that corresponds to our means and the context in which this dissertation was written. But these six narrators have proved to us that there is room for others to be heard and that there is material for reworking the history of the Czechoslovak exile using oral history.

3.2.3 Preparing the scenario

First of all, before preparing the questions, it is important to be familiar with the narrators' curriculum vitae by putting together a detailed individual documentary file⁴¹. The first step was to develop biographical sheets for each of my narrators⁴²⁴³, taking up information that we had obtained beforehand, from the first meetings, which can be used to put in writing the different stages of their life, their studies, their career, and key dates that will enable us to reconstruct a little of their history. But our information could also come from press articles, documentaries, interviews with journalists, references and content of other testimonials that have quoted them, the organization charts in which they appear, articles they have wrote, especially for Svědectví. Doing this work beforehand, getting to know the narrator, to familiarize yourself with whatever information is available about them, their childhood, their families, communities, jobs,

³⁹ SCHLEGEL Jean-Louis, „La reconnaissance des mémoires, nouvel outil d’émancipation ?” *Migrations Société*, vol. 138, no. 6 (2011): 111-118.

⁴⁰ RITCHIE Donald A, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 112.

⁴¹ DESCAMPS Florence, „La préparation et la conduite de l’entretien” in *L’historien, l’archiviste et le magnétophone : De la constitution de la source orale à son exploitation*. (Paris: Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, 2005), 335-366.

⁴² We used the same narrator, Peter Brabenec, for each example used in the appendix, because it is the only one that was written directly in English.

⁴³ See Annex 1

accomplishments, etc., only makes us more comfortable with our narrator, who no longer becomes a stranger to us.

When it comes to working on your script, it is highly recommended that you do ten hours of research for one hour of interview time⁴⁴. It goes without saying that our narrators are not the only object of our research; it is essential to learn and master our subject and all that surrounds it (dates, places, characters, names, etc.) by reviewing available written sources, both primary and secondary, and by talking informally with people who know something about the subject. In the case of our study, a special effort was made to focus on the history of exile, historically important events in France and Czechoslovakia, but also of the Czechoslovak community in Paris, the institutions, organization and main members of Svědectví, locally significant places, networks of associations, etc. The richer your background knowledge is, the richer your interview will be.

Then, as part of an interview project, it is necessary to design an interview scenario by roughly calibrating the number and content of the sessions, so as to impose a relatively lively and voluntarist tempo of the interview. This work focuses on the personal life of our narrators but also tries to better understand the reasons and conditions of their exile but also what they have been through, how they feel at the time and what memories they kept from that experience. Thus, the aim is not primarily to verify facts or data, but to convey unique experiences of events, from an unique and personal point of view. The questions that will be asked had to respect their personal approach and should aim to reveal their personal opinions, feelings and point of view. Of course, questions will be asked about their professional life but more to try to shed light on the discrepancy between their level of education and the job they found when they arrived in France, or for those concerned, their activity within Svědectví. In the framework of this thesis, we had planned three sessions: one session for childhood, family and youth up to the moment of departure, one session on the moments before

⁴⁴ RITCHIE Donald A, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 85.

departure, the organization and means put in place and strategies for leaving and the departure itself, and then the life of exile in Paris. And finally, a third and last session but which also allows us to come back to points not discussed during the previous sessions or more sensitive subjects that we did not address but that the confidence acquired during the meetings allows us to discuss about it. In the end, the interviews were mainly conducted in two long interviews, at the initiative of the narrators themselves.

Once the interview scenario has been roughly calibrated over two or three sessions, for each of the sequences, we write a grid of questions, by major headings, combining both a biographical and event-related thread and some thematic inserts. As a beginner, it is preferred to write down the first questions in a precise form in order to avoid babble and to use the appropriate vocabulary or formulations. This allowed us to be more precise, more self-confident and „sharper”⁴⁵. As the interviews progressed, we would become more familiar with this grid and much more comfortable with our narrators. Of course, these interview scripts were just a basis: one has to be fully aware that interviews never go according to the plan. It is obvious that the interview scenario must be adapted according to the interviewee's throughput, their own priorities, interests, the quality and quantity of their memories, goodwill and involvement in the exercise⁴⁶. Flexibility and adaptation, patience and perseverance are the key words when it comes to successful interviews. Interviews will not always go in the direction of the script and that there will necessarily be a favourable moment to come back on words or memories that have been forgotten. At the same time, it is important to take into account new information learned during the interviews that will be added to our script.

3.2.4 Planning the interviews

Now that all the preparations had been made, it was time to organize the interviews. The first question we have to ask ourselves is where should the interviews

⁴⁵ KAUFMANN Jean-Claude, *L'entretien compréhensif* (Paris: Nathan, 1996), 50-52

⁴⁶ DESCAMPS Florence, „La préparation et la conduite de l'entretien” in *L'historien, l'archiviste et le magnétophone : De la constitution de la source orale à son exploitation*. (Paris: Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, 2005), 335-366.

take place? The location usually depends on the interviewee; in our case, our narrators were between Prague, Pilsen and Paris so we had to adapt and travel. So we made sure that several interviews that were to take place in Paris were scheduled at the same time. For the location of the interview, however, we had to impose our conditions more; as oral history methods recommend, it is essential that, regardless of the location, the interview should take place in „a quiet place away from everyday distractions. Too much commotion makes transcribing difficult and limits the eventual use of the recording for media or exhibits”⁴⁷. We have two types of locations for our known interviews; a neutral location that we have chosen or a location familiar to the narrator for several reasons. When the interviews took place in Prague, we always made sure to bring the narrator to a place that we had chosen⁴⁸, which allows for better control of the equipment and placement of the tape recorder or cameras and microphones.⁴⁹ The narrators felt perfectly comfortable there and we always suggested whether they wanted to sit on the couch or on the dining table. For other situations, we listened to our narrators. One of them - whom I interviewed in Pilsen and Paris - asked us if the interview could be conducted at his home, where he felt more comfortable. We agreed on the condition that possible distractions (telephone, open windows, televisions, etc.) would not compromise our recordings. This decision, however, had beneficial effects for our research: the three interviews conducted at our interviewee's home gave us access to images and original documents that we could not have had elsewhere, such as the previously confidential StB file on Carole Paris, which was recovered in the early 2000s and which she allowed us to examine for our research.

As far as the equipment was concerned, we had to be as well equipped and prepared as possible, especially considering that we had to travel to Paris or Pilsen several times. And the farther we must travel to an interview, the less we can afford a

⁴⁷ RITCHIE Donald A, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 61.

⁴⁸ In this case, an apartment in a hotel where I was working at the time. The place was quiet, easy to access and familiar to me and I had made a test there beforehand to test my equipment.

⁴⁹ RITCHIE Donald A, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 61.

malfunctioning piece of equipment⁵⁰. We have two recorders and several batteries, as well as a fully charged phone in case one of the recorders goes down. For the rest, we always carried our record narrators, our interview scripts, notes and bottled water. For the microphones, we always made sure that they were close enough to our narrators but not in plain sight to avoid a possible „mic fright” situation⁵¹.

3.3 On oral history interview: techniques and analyses

We are now in a position to start the interview. But what theories, methods and techniques can be used as a basis for an interview? For this thesis, Morrissey's work⁵² has been an authentic methodological guide that we have used on several occasions and that has provided us with solutions adapted to the situations we have been confronted with.

The interviews in general went smoothly; there was trust and listening on both sides. They are not all perfect, we are still learning, but they were conducted well enough to meet the expectations of our thesis. Our narrators were brilliant, cooperative and let us into their memories, their experiences without any difficulty. Before going back over the course of these, let's go back over two interviews that were a little more singular than the others, and our firsts; Ilja Kuneš and Carole Paris.

First and foremost, Ilja Kuneš' interview, which was a real teaching on the field and a perfect example of situations that are a priori complex but from which one can easily get out if one follows the methods. Our narrator had told us about his anxiety as the interview approached and this was felt during the first questions: the interview had a difficult start and Ilja Kuneš gave us only short answers and we found ourselves asking a lot of questions in a very short time. We then tried to let silence settle in after his

⁵⁰ RITCHIE Donald A, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62-63.

⁵¹ LANMAN Barry A. and WENDLING Laura W. *Preparing the Next Generation of Oral Historians: An Anthology of Oral History Education* (Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2006), 352-353.

⁵² MORRISSEY Charles T. „On oral history interviewing” in *The Oral History Reader*; ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2003), 107-114.

answers, to make the narrator understand that he has the possibility to take his time, to settle at a pace he will be comfortable with. The situation then unblocked very quickly; the narrator took a deep breath, took his time, and then played the interview game. That's when we understood the role of the interviewer and the need for prior research on both the narrator and the context and methods of oral history; this allowed us to unblock the situation, to know what questions to ask and when to ask them. When the narrator has not prepared a testimony or feels overwhelmed, stressed, dumb and is cautiously waiting for the oral historian to take the lead in the first few questions, the solution is to start slowly from the beginning, to focus on the individual biographical thread and to ask open-ended questions first, allowing the narrators to take their time to return to their own narrative scheme, to their own story⁵³. We also used anecdotes to help the narrator take a break and get back to the rhythm of before. In the case of our interview with Ilja Kuneš, we felt that he was losing the thread of his narration and so we took advantage of a coincidence - we lived on the same street - to give a lighter tone to the interview and allow the narrator to feel at ease, to pause and resume the interview and succeed in completing it. But in this interview we also learned from our mistakes. For my first narrator, some beginner's mistakes were made but not repeated afterwards, the main one being a tendency to point in which direction we wanted the answer to go. For example, „Okay, and did you consider these friends to be dissidents, or did they consider themselves to be dissidents?“⁵⁴. This question was very poorly worded and did not really leave the narrator a choice of answer. It is a mistake that is paid for in the result, since this kind of question formulation does not provide any relevant answers.

The case of the interview with Carole Paris was extremely interesting for quite different reasons. Ms. Paris told her story several times, including on Czech television; thus, her interview is therefore a quasi-monologue. As we had done our research, we were aware of this beforehand. So we had to take advantage of this knowledge, of what had been said or not said, to „master“ the narrative. So it was important to know how to

⁵³ DESCAMPS Florence, „La préparation et la conduite de l'entretien“ in *L'historien, l'archiviste et le magnétophone : De la constitution de la source orale à son exploitation*. (Paris: Institut de la gestion publique et du développement économique, 2005), 335-366.

⁵⁴ Interview of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

listen to it, but not to listen to the same story that we had already heard. We had to find our place and sometimes regain control of the situation and the interview. The challenge was to be able to make her deviate from her narrative pattern, to which she was accustomed, and to take her to places that no one had discussed with her.

The other interviews went rather smoothly, after a great deal of re-reading of the first interviews and retrospection. The narrators had no difficulty in giving themselves away - especially those who later decided to remain anonymous - and lent themselves easily to the question-and-answer game. The interviews were generally conducted in the same way: we made it clear to the narrator that we were going to take notes, for dates, names, cities, etc, so they did not feel spied on or observed. The lessons we learn from this experience is first and foremost not to be pushy and to be patient; several times, we went back on details, points that we thought had been missed. It is useful to approach things with different angles, to go back on points that needed to be reviewed. Being patient also means knowing how to leave the room silent, how to let the interviewee set their own pace and this only gave the narrator the opportunity to experience the interview at their own pace. Finally, one lesson that can be learned from these interviews is that it is essential to always tell yourself that the subject has not been completely covered. Just because our objectives have been achieved, just because our questions have been answered, doesn't mean that we have learned everything⁵⁵. We therefore tried, at the risk of repeating ourselves at times, to come back to certain subjects from different angles in order to obtain the most complete and elaborate answers possible, always with success.

Our interviews are semi-structured, even if the interviews with Carole Paris can be considered as biographical accounts. As far as the chronological structure is concerned, we have always started with shorter questions at the beginning, so that the narrator does not feel „overwhelmed” but the rhythm settles down gently. We followed

⁵⁵ MORRISSEY Charles T. „On oral history interviewing” in *The Oral History Reader*; ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2003), 107-114.

Morrissey's „two sentences format” method, with the first sentence, stating the problem and the second asking the question⁵⁶.

As regards the interval between the two interviews, the ideal is two to three weeks. Depending on the situation and when we could, we tried to get closer to two weeks, as the long intervals could be counter-productive to our research. Two weeks is ideal because the narrators still remember the first interview and it gives us time to do the transcripts and see what we have or haven't had to re-work and see what we have learned from the interview. The fact that the narrators live between Paris and Prague only made the task more complicated; we had to do it well in advance so that we could be available when they were in Prague (or Pilsen for one of them) or in Paris, to be able to do several interviews. We had to give up an interview project with one of the narrators who told us at the last minute, once in Paris, that he wanted to postpone it.

3.4 The key to successful transcription

Transcribing enables both the interviewer and interviewee to review the interview and ensure that the transcript reflects what each intended to say.⁵⁷ And in the case of our research, the transcripts and their translation from French to English are essential to make our sources accessible and understandable so that they support our ideas. The main challenge for our work was to know what method we were going to use for our transcription and to ask ourselves how much editing of interviews is acceptable. Indeed, apart from Carole Paris, the native language of our narrators was not French, although they all speak it very well. But there were mistakes, misused words, hesitations in looking for the right vocabulary. On the other hand, hesitations could also mean that we were venturing into a subject that was delicate for the narrator. Thus, and since the study of language is a source like any other in our analysis, we undertook to transcribe our interviews according to the model of verbatim transcription, where

⁵⁶ MORRISSEY Charles T. „On oral history interviewing” in *The Oral History Reader*, ed. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 2003), 107-114.

⁵⁷ RITCHIE Donald A, *Doing Oral History: A Practical Guide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 64-65.

everything is included, such as filler sounds, pauses, interruptions, laughter, etc., in order to avoid any misunderstandings. Grammatical errors have not been corrected and we have tried to transcribe the recording of our interviews as faithfully as possible. However, when the narrators reread the interviews, we also sent them a copy in „intelligent transcription” style so that it would be more readable for them, while at the same time indicating that the first version would be the one studied. We also worked with an English-French translator to ensure that the English versions of our interviews were as faithful as possible to the original version.

As David Crystal has written: „*Extracts of informal spoken conversation look weird in print because it is not possible to show all the melody, stress, and tone of voice which made the speaker sound perfectly natural in context.*”⁵⁸ However, these indicative factors are essential for the analysis of our interviews. We have therefore put as many notes as possible on reactions, attitude, tone of voice in our transcripts in order to make them as vivid as possible and to allow anyone reading them to immerse themselves in the context of the interview.

3.5 Who are our narrators?

Let's finish this chapter by introducing our six narrators. To do so, we will study the narrators as a group and draw some general observations from them. And by group, we do not mean here to make an anthropological or sociological analysis of our narrators. It is simply to provide an overview of our narrators and to highlight their many similarities as well as their differences. But without knowing it, without knowing each other, all of them have had a similar experience and in a way a group of their own in Czechoslovak society: the exiles who fled to France. There is undeniably a certain unity among them as a group, in terms of their experiences and the context of their departure as well as their destination, even if they do not know each other, because the

⁵⁸ CRYSTAL David, *The Cambridge Encyclopaedia of English Language* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 214.

unity of place and time does not automatically create social unity.⁵⁹ And this unit that we're going to try to enhance based on our observations. Our analysis will come later in our work.

Our group of narrators is composed of five men, one woman. The woman, Carole Paris, is a French woman who helped a Czechoslovakian man to go into exile; she is an external point of view and is, in a way, apart in this group of narrators. As we saw earlier, the presence of Carole Paris was to give another angle, another vision of exile by someone who experienced it in a different way and especially in knowing more about the methods and connections between French and Czechoslovak people. As for the exiles themselves, it was the other five, five Czechoslovak men who went into exile in Paris from 1978 to 1982. Even though there was a great wave of departures in August 1968, it was more difficult to find narrators from that period; then the early 1980s marked the arrival of the Socialists at the head of France and thus a better reception given to the exiles. Then, after the events of the 1970s, the Communists were forced to pursue policies of openness - to a certain extent - and many scholarships and exchanges were set up - even though the Czech Section was closed from 1970 to 1990.

There are then many similarities between our narrators. First of all, they all decided to migrate at a relatively young age: our narrators were between 20 and 30 years old at the time of their exile and were either students or young workers or looking for work. Moreover, they all have almost the same education; they all have one or more university degrees; and four of our five narrators have graduated in a discipline related to the humanities, social sciences or languages. With the exception of Ilja Kuneš, who left with his wife, the other narrators have all made the decision to go on their own, leaving their families in their native countries. From the point of view of nationalities, Peter Brabenec was the only Slovak (from Bratislava) among our narrators, the others came either from the Prague and Pilsen region but all had studied or worked in the capital. Finally, they all returned to Czechoslovakia after 1989 and all of them remained

⁵⁹ BALANDIER Georges and CHAZEL François, „Groupe Social” *Encyclopædia Universalis* [Online], URL : <http://www.universalis.fr/encyclopedie/groupe-social/>

living in France - where they had obtained French citizenship - even after the fall of communism, with Ilja Kuneš dividing his life between Pilsen and Paris and K.M between Paris and Prague.

Name	Surname	Date of Birth	Year of exile	Age at the time of exile	Current address
BRABENEC	Peter	1951	1981	30 years old	Paris
KAŠPAR	Petr	1961	1981	19 years old	Paris
KUNEŠ	Ilja	1961	1982	21 years old	Paris/Pilsen
M.	K.	1954	1978	24 years old	Paris/Prague
O.	J.	1959	1982	23 years old	Paris
PARIS	Carole	1960	1981	20 years old	Paris

Table n°1: Table of narrators including their name, date of birth, year of exile, the age at which they left and their current place of residence.

4. THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The purpose of this chapter is to familiarize the reader with a detailed historical background which will enable him to understand Czechoslovak emigration from the years of Normalization in France as an integral part of a broader history. We will begin by describing Czechoslovak emigration in the 20th century, the components, conditions and regulation of which vary according to the various political and historical upheavals. For this purpose, we have organized this chapter in three parts: first of all, it is essential to look back at Czechoslovak exile and emigration from the Second World War to the 1980s by reviewing its components and the various waves established by historians. Next, it is important to look back at the relations between France and Czechoslovakia for more than a century: indeed, these two nations have a strong common past and the Czech community has had its place and importance in French society. It will therefore be our duty to detail the nature of its relations and to highlight the major role and impact of the Czechoslovak émigré community over the decades as it influenced the choice of France - and Paris - as a destination of exile for our narrators. Finally, we will finish by detailing the characteristics of Normalization as a period in the history of communist Czechoslovakia in which our narrators - despite the conservative takeover of the political apparatus by the Communist Party - managed to leave. These three points are the key to understanding the subject of our narrators. We are not looking here for a detailed explanation, but rather for an overview of the context in which the narrators' decision making took place.

4.1 Czechoslovak exile through the decades

The wave of exile to which our narrators belong is far from being the first to have taken place on Czech and Slovak territory and therefore does not represent an isolated case. Emigration and exile, throughout Czech literature, has often been linked to the country's historical destiny and the personal experience of its patriotic and rebellious intellectuals such as Comenius, who was expelled from his country after the Battle of the White Mountain, or Karel Havlíček Borovský, a poet fleeing the

oppressive regime in 1852⁶⁰ to Milan Kundera and his émigré „in permanent balance like an acrobat suspended on a wire”⁶¹ in the „Nesnesitelná lehkost bytí”. The path of exile has been told and encountered many times by Czechs and each individual period creates a specific environment for this factor with its specific historical context which is important to study. The 20th century alone saw several waves of exile and emigration in succession, but they were not always similar. Here it is necessary to establish a fine chronology and to understand the extent of Czechoslovak emigration and exile during the modern era as a direct consequence of the communist regime.

4.1.1 The pre-war period and the „transfer,, of the Germans

Although it precedes our chronology by a few years, it is essential to mention Czechoslovakia's first notorious exile, that of its government. After the Munich Agreement at the end of September 1938, which allowed Nazi Germany to enter Czechoslovakia in October 1938 and annexed the territories inhabited by the Sudeten Germans, Edvard Beneš, together with other emigrants, tried to get the Western powers to accept the idea of a government in exile: *Prozatímní státní zřízení československé*⁶². This political entity has always found it difficult to obtain full legitimacy, even from its allies⁶³. But it has been a recognised political force and a recognised force of resistance and has on many occasions carried out actions against the occupation and the Alliance, the best known of which was the attack on Reinhard Heydrich known as Operation Anthropoid, the result of collaboration between the Czechoslovak Provisional Government and the London Government.⁶⁴ If we decide to begin our chronology by talking about Beneš and his companions, it is because this image of the resistant and political exile is one that will remain engraved in Czechoslovak memory for a very long

⁶⁰ KRÁL Petr „Le thème et l'expérience de l'exil dans la poésie tchèque contemporaine” in *Les effets de l'émigration et l'exil dans les cultures tchèque et polonaise*, ed. Hana Jechova-Voisine (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1987), 161-174.

⁶¹ ALVES Ana Maria, „Pour une définition de l'exil d'après Milan Kundera”, *Carnets: revue électronique d'études françaises*, Série II, n° 10 (April 2017): 113-122

⁶² MARÈS Antoine, *Histoire des Tchèques et des Slovaques* (Paris: Tempus Perrin, 2005)

⁶³ MASTNÝ Vojtěch, *The Czechs under Nazi Rule. The Failure of National Resistance (1939-1942)* (New York: Columbia University, 1971), 112.

⁶⁴ KUKLÍK Jan, *Czech Law in Historical Contexts* (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2015), 120-125.

time⁶⁵ and will become a source of discord and separation between future generations of exiles. Indeed, it was difficult for many exiles from the Normalisation to be granted this term because of the lack of political involvement of the latter according to generations who fled and continued their struggle abroad, such as Pavel Tigrid in France.

After the liberation and the end of the government-in-exile, Czechoslovakia underwent an original political development in comparison with the other Eastern European countries liberated by the Red Army. While some of these countries had undergone either rapid and brutal sovietisation (Romania, Bulgaria) or the „salami tactics” (Hungary, Poland), Czechoslovakia experienced from 1945 to 1948 a situation of limited pluralism and saw its individual liberties curtailed before their eyes⁶⁶. Between 1945 and 1948, the right of citizens to leave the country freely was legally restricted compared to the laws that had been in place when Czechoslovakia was created in 1918. Indeed, the First Czechoslovak Republic had legislated the inalienable right of the individual to choose any place on earth for his or her life on condition that military service be performed⁶⁷. After the Second World War, these rights were trapped by more stringent policies. A passport was now required for travel or departure, but was often issued only for professional purposes and on the recommendation of a central government agency or professional organization. For private purposes, passports were issued only in exceptional and justified cases. These first departures, prior to the communist period, were thus mostly illegal departures, at the risk of their lives, estimated at just under 2000⁶⁸.

On the other hand, this period also saw the expulsion of German communities, the Sudetendeutsche, from Czechoslovakia, which was a form of exile, driven from

⁶⁵ MAYER Françoise, *Les Tchèques et leur communisme : mémoire et identités politiques* (Paris: E.H.E.S.S, 2004), 28.

⁶⁶ FEJTŐ Françoise, *Histoire des démocraties populaires: L'ère de Staline* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 201-204

⁶⁷ KUKLÍK Jan, *Czech Law in Historical Contexts* (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2015), 65-66.

⁶⁸ KOSTLÁN Antonín, „Útěky do emigrace a Československá akademie věd” in *Sto českých vědců v exilu. Encyklopedie významných vědců z řad pracovníků Československé akademie věd v emigraci*, ed. Soňa Štrbáňová and Antonín Kostlán (Prague: Academia, 2011) 19-207.

their land and stripped of their nationality. Before the Second World War, 3,231,628, or 22.3% of the population⁶⁹, Germans lived on the territory of Czechoslovakia. According to data from the German Ministry for Expulsion Affairs, 2,921,000 Sudeten Germans who could not prove their anti-Hitler attitudes were transferred at the end of the war⁷⁰. The „transfer”, as many historians call it, took place in three stages: the first took place even before the end of the war, when the sympathizers of the Nazi regime and those who had committed war crimes were fleeing. The second so-called wild stage was limited by the months of May and August 1945, the date of the Potsdam Conference of the victorious powers, which decided on the transfer of the Germans from Czechoslovakia. The third, organized stage, which followed in January 1946, took place under the supervision of the Allied Control Council and the International Red Cross (IRC). The organization of the expulsion was harsh and the Germans had to leave their house and all the belongings in a short period of time, while many of them were beaten, sometimes to death. Many violent incidents have been deplorable and some can be described as the „massacre of the German population”. We can cite in particular the night of 18 to 19 June 1945 in Přerov where Czechs organized a pogrom of the German population where 71 men, 120 women and 74 children died⁷¹. Whether they were chased away, captured or managed to flee, the case of these „Sudetendeutsche” is important to mention when talking about exile because it was the first example, much more violent and racially motivated, of forced departures resulting from an uncompromising policy. And like some of the exiles from communism, history does not necessarily do them justice.

⁶⁹ PYKEL Piotr, „The expulsion of German from Czechoslovakia” in *The Expulsion of 'German' Communities from Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War*, ed. Steffen Prauser and Arfon Rees (Florence: European University Institute, 2004), 11-12.

⁷⁰ PYKEL Piotr, „The expulsion of German from Czechoslovakia” in *The Expulsion of 'German' Communities from Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War*, ed. Steffen Prauser and Arfon Rees (Florence: European University Institute, 2004), 18

⁷¹ PYKEL Piotr, „The expulsion of German from Czechoslovakia” in *The Expulsion of 'German' Communities from Eastern Europe at the end of the Second World War*, ed. Steffen Prauser and Arfon Rees (Florence: European University Institute, 2004), 15

4.1.2 The first exiles and the communist fierceness

Taking advantage of a policy of friendship with the USSR inaugurated in December 1943 by Edvard Beneš, Czechoslovakia enjoyed political freedoms until February 1948, even if, as we saw earlier, departures were subject to rigid legislation aimed at containing departures⁷². The choice of exile was therefore later than in other people's democracies⁷³. Thus, in the post-liberation atmosphere, the first exiles who had fled Soviet troops and people's democratic regimes were suspected as much as collaborators. Until the Prague Coup of February 1948.

Against the backdrop of the economic crisis and rivalry between the various parties, Beneš is trying to turn Czechoslovakia into a „bridge between East and West”⁷⁴. But the break-up of the domestic coalition was only a matter of time. In the run-up to the elections scheduled for May 1948, the Communist Party held all the key posts: Gottwald was Prime Minister, but the Ministry of the Interior (Nosek), Information (Kopecký) and Defence (Svoboda) were controlled by the Communists⁷⁵. The latter will put pressure on Beneš, who is forced to give in to the red wave announced by Gottwald. Very soon, behind the elegant facade of the seizure of power by the KSČ, the real objectives became clear: the monopoly of power of the Communist Party in the state and, therefore, in the whole of economic and social life⁷⁶. The Communists then exercised totalitarian power in all areas of society through action committees. In addition to their predominance in government, they achieved a power monopoly in all lower powers, mass social organizations, cultural institutions but also academic societies⁷⁷. It was then that the Party decided to take firm and unjust action against all

⁷² FEJTÖ François, *Le Coup de Prague 1948* (Paris: Seuil, 1976), 40-45

⁷³ MARÈS Antoine, „Exilés d'Europe Centrale de 1945 à 1967” in *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995), 129-168.

⁷⁴ FEJTÖ François, *Le Coup de Prague 1948* (Paris: Seuil, 1976), 40-45

⁷⁵ BROWN Archie, „The Communist Takeovers in Europe: Indigenous Paths” in *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, ed. Archie Brown (New-York: Harper Collins, 2009), 148-161.

⁷⁶ RUPNIK Jacques, *Histoire du Parti communiste tchécoslovaque des origines à la prise du pouvoir* (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques, 1981), 196-198

⁷⁷ BROWN Archie, „The Communist Takeovers in Europe: Indigenous Paths” in *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, ed. Archie Brown (New-York: Harper Collins, 2009), 148-161.

those who were not on their side: enemy politicians were under surveillance, interrogated, tortured. Suspicious and disruptive students and professors were excluded from universities, which was later to become a powerful instrument of communist propaganda⁷⁸. Politically, the coup created a situation in which all the non-communist political forces combined found themselves in anti-regime opposition and instant public enemies of the state.

It is important to briefly recall these events because they are the ones that, right after February 48, will bring about the first wave of exiles. According to Nešpor, the first communist exiles left the country mainly out of fear of their own persecution and their own life by the newcomers to power.⁷⁹ This was the case, for example, of Hubert Ripka, already exiled after the signing of the Munich Accords, then whose second exile, organized by France in the aftermath of the Coup d'Etat⁸⁰, saved his life or Petr Zenkl, chairman of the Czechoslovak National Social Party, who managed, despite the Communists' constant surveillance, to escape with his wife to the West in August 1948⁸¹. This first wave affected different types of people, politicians as we just saw of course, such as representatives of non-communist parties or diplomats, but also intellectuals, such as artists, journalists and scientists, or writers, such as Jan Čep, exiled in France but also students, who had been deprived of the right to education. In the vast majority of cases this was not economic emigration, because at that time the chances of prosperity or professional employment in a broken Europe were indeed slim, the

⁷⁸ KOSTLÁN Antonín, „Útěk do emigrace a Československá akademie věd” in *Sto českých vědců v exilu. Encyklopedie významných vědců z řad pracovníků Československé akademie věd v emigraci*, ed. Soňa Štrbáňová and Antonín Kostlán (Prague: Academia, 2011), 19-207.

⁷⁹ NEŠPOR Zdeněk R, *Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty: prolegomena k sociologickému studiu českých emigračních procesů 20. století se zvláštním zřetelem k západní reemigraci 90.* (Prague: Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, 2002), 39-41.

⁸⁰ MARÈS Antoine, „Exilés d'Europe Centrale de 1945 à 1967” in *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995), 129-168.

⁸¹ NEKOLA Martin, „Peter Zenkl: The leader of Czechoslovak exile in the United States” in *East Central Europe in Exile Volume 2: Transatlantic Identities*, ed. Anna Mazurkiewicz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 169-176.

departure itself was for the most part quite complicated and staying in refugee camps for emigrants in needy conditions. was a very unpleasant stage of emigration.

The aim of the Communist Party was to ensure maximum impenetrability of the borders and to isolate Czechoslovakia as far as possible from the outside world and to eliminate departures across the borders and this effort was at its fiercest in 1948-1956. In order to control these departures, which were hurting its image - about 25,000 citizens fled to the West between 1948 and 1951⁸², 60,000 according to Tigris and Nešpor⁸³ - the Communist Party therefore immediately after coming to power began to close its borders. No private trips were allowed, including visits to family abroad. The borders with the other people's democracies have even been discussed and travel has been greatly reduced. At the same time, the State Department sent a circular that prohibited embassies abroad without the consent of the Ministry of the Interior in Prague to issue visas to Czechoslovakia. The issuance of passports, which had already been sharply reduced between 1945 and 1948, was made even more difficult and passes for small border traffic was practically stopped⁸⁴.

And at that time, the influence of Stalinist terror was sensed and that's when the Communist Party began to obstruct the law in order to make its own. Indeed, in October 1948, Act No. 231/1948 Coll. On the Protection of the People's Democratic Republic⁸⁵, declared as an offence and high treason the unauthorised departure of a citizen of Czechoslovakia, for which the penalty could range from 10 to 25 years' imprisonment. And even if the exile did not intend to harm the „interests of the Republic”, as they had been accused of, they had already, in the eyes of the unjust Communist law, damaged it

⁸² MARÈS Antoine, „Exilés d'Europe Centrale de 1945 à 1967” in *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995), 129-168.

⁸³ NEŠPOR Zdeněk R, *Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty: prolegomena k sociologickému studiu českých emigračních procesů 20. století se zvláštním zřetelem k západní reemigraci 90.* (Prague: Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, 2002), 39-41.

⁸⁴ RASKA Jan, *Czech Refugees in Cold War Canada: 1945–1989* (Ontario: University of Manitoba Press, 2018), 158-160.

⁸⁵ All our judicial and penal references have been found in: *Czech Republic Justice System and National Police Handbook Volume I Criminal Justice System: Strategic Information and Regulations*

by their exile. At this point, the convict was threatened with long prison sentences or even the death penalty, and they were forbidden to study or work in certain fields.

The political regime in place was intransigent on exiles until the second half of the 1950s. And the context was just as difficult because of the welcome given by these first exiles in the countries to which they were fleeing. Indeed, the West had not really prepared itself for such a wave of illegal exiles, and many were placed in assembly centres long before they were able to obtain their complete freedom. Through the International Refugee Organization (IRO), many exiles were able to benefit from the assistance offered by that institution, including legal protection and comprehensive emigration assistance⁸⁶.

This exile led to the creation or resumption of various organizations and associations such as the Council of Free Czechoslovakia, established in 1949 in the United States⁸⁷. Indeed, the exiles mixed with the organizations already existing in their host territory (Sokol) or set up organizations in order to perpetuate the national life of their country of origin⁸⁸. And one of the ways to continue to exist is through the press. As early as 1948, magazines in exile came into being, including *Skutečnost*, a magazine that travelled from Geneva to Munich, and *Svědectví*, a little later in the 1950s, under the guidance of Pavel Tigrid⁸⁹. The lives of his exiles remain intimately linked to the fate of their homeland: all of them are waiting and fighting, from their new headquarters, for the end of the totalitarian communist regime that separated them from their land. Often described as political, this exile has seen the birth of the great figures of the struggle in exile against the regime and with the hope of returning home soon.

⁸⁶ COHEN Gerard Daniel, *In War's Wake: Europe's Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 48-59.

⁸⁷ RAŠKA Francis, „History of the Council of Free Czechoslovakia” in *The Inauguration of „Organized Political Warfare”, The Cold War Organizations Sponsored by the National Committee for a Free Europe*, ed. Katalin Kádár Lynn (Saint Helena: Helena History Press, 2013), 71-120.

⁸⁸ MARÈS Antoine, „Exilés d'Europe Centrale de 1945 à 1967” in *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995), 129-168.

⁸⁹ MARÈS Antoine, „Exilés d'Europe Centrale de 1945 à 1967” in *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995), 129-168.

4.1.3 The „*détente*” of the 60's

The 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held during the period 14–25 February 1956, was the starting point for raising awareness at all levels of society of the problems which socialism has not been able to solve or which it has concealed under the guise of a dogmatic simplification of Marxism⁹⁰. The most general demands essentially concern individual and collective freedoms, the rehabilitation of political prisoners sentenced or executed in the 1950s, freedom of information and other social, cultural and even political topics that are discussed in a relatively freer press due to the abolition of censorship, economic reforms, national independence and the country's relations with the USSR.⁹¹ And a particular phenomenon is to be noted in the Eastern countries: indeed, the degree of satisfaction granted to these demands is proportional to the degree of liberalization of these countries: the case of Czechoslovakia is interesting because despite the initial economic capital, the lack of renovation and the lack of means for aging industry, the neglect of the labour force leads to a point of no return with a phase of decline at the beginning of the 1960s⁹². From then on, the Communist Party inevitably had to reflect on solutions that opened the door to discussion, exchange, speaking out; and when this became effective, people took the opportunity to criticize and reform.

This relaxation of living conditions and government will lead to a new wave that is extremely different from the previous one, more numerous, freer: in general, there is a gradual increase in travel abroad, for whatever reasons. However, travel to the West was still rare for several reasons. First of all because of political concerns, but also because of the lack of foreign currency available. As far as other people's democracies are concerned, the conditions for departures have been relaxed: it was no longer necessary to apply for private trips to Socialist States as before and the administrative procedures have been reviewed to make them more accessible. Moreover, it was not even necessary

⁹⁰ BROWN Archie, „Krushchev and the Twentieth Party Congress” in *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, ed. Archie Brown (New-York: Harper Collins, 2009), 227-244.

⁹¹ FEJTŐ François, *Histoire des démocraties populaires: Après Staline* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 190-196.

⁹² BLAIVE Muriel, *Une déstalinisation manquée: Tchécoslovaquie 1956* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 2004), 157-175.

to have a passport to go there: special travel supplements were added to identity cards or simply to be on the list for group trips when these were organized by agencies or associations. The authorities remained cautious, however, and only travel to the BRD and Yugoslavia was subject to tighter controls due to the possibility of citizens escaping via West Berlin, Austria very often, and Italy more rarely.

Passport laws have been extensively reworked around a single criterion: whether a trip abroad was not in the interests of the state or whether the applicant's actions were damaging to the reputation of the country. Thus, departures were allowed but under certain conditions. According to Section 109, a „criminal offence” was committed even if a Czechoslovak citizen who travelled with a valid passport abroad exceeded the time indicated in the exit visa in the passport. The paragraph states that:

- Whoever leaves the territory of the Republic without permission will be punished by imprisonment for six months to five years or by corrective action or forfeiture of property;
- A Czechoslovak citizen, who remains abroad, will be punished;
- Whoever organizes the crime in paragraphs 1 or 2 or takes a group of persons or repeatedly takes persons across a border who leave the territory of the Republic without permission shall be punished by imprisonment for three to ten years or by the forfeiture of property.

Leaving the Republic without permission or remaining abroad without permission can be imposed for this offence in addition to five years in prison. It shall also apply to persons who organized the departure from the Czechoslovak Republic or transferred persons who were not authorized to leave the country across the border. Such persons risked imprisonment for between three and ten years.

Thus, the passport just had to be valid. A process that the Communists made quite difficult. In fact, to ensure its validity, it was mandatory to obtain an exit clause from the regional passport administration, a visa of sorts, which had to contain the following information:

- The country or countries to which the person was going;
- How long was the stay;
- Departure and return dates.

The travel clauses differed according to the purpose of the trip, which could be business, diplomatic or private. The issuance of exit clauses required the consent of the employer, confirmation of foreign currency coverage for the trip or an invitation from a foreigner who undertook to cover the costs related to the stay. All of these steps were slow, costly and could sometimes never be completed, causing many people to give up wanting to leave. The Communist Party did everything possible to limit the departures which, in its view, dealt a blow to the socialist national glory. For the leaders, the fact that citizens wanted to leave was synonymous with failure, especially during the current scientific and technological revolution, while they saw the number of intellectuals fleeing the country increasing.

As a result, travel has increased significantly and many have taken advantage of this relaxation to go into exile by staying abroad illegally or they have stayed abroad without permission and thus defying the law. During this period, the Communists also took advantage of the relaxation of the rules to get rid of disruptive and embarrassing elements. Thus, between 1966 and 1967, more than 15,000 requests for expulsion were granted. But all this will be strongly questioned after the invasion of the Warsaw Pact in 1968 and the stop of the reforms that will characterize the period of Normalization.

4.1.4 A faded spring: mass departures after 1968

The Coup d'état of 1948 had led to a wave of departures, especially for those whose lives were directly threatened; the one following the Warsaw Pact Invasion would be even more important. Like the previous case, it was the result of a major political upheaval: the Surprise Invasion of the Warsaw Pact in August 1968.

The reform drive begun in the spring of 1968, led by the new First Secretary of the Communist Party, Alexander Dubček, and Prime Minister, Oldřich Černík, was

frowned upon in Moscow.⁹³ And for a good reason; a programme is presented in the spring containing measures such as the abolition of press censorship and the rehabilitation of victims of political trials. The Soviets initially express concern about these changes in meetings with the Czechoslovak leadership, but clearly see the liberalisation of the Czechoslovak regime and the adoption of liberal reforms as a threat to socialist ideology. In contrast to the Hungarian intervention in 1956, Leonid Brezhnev, the leader of the USSR, decided to call on the forces of the Warsaw Pact and sent tanks to invade the country on 21 August 1968, crushing all hope of liberalisation in the process. In the days following the invasion a compromise agreement was signed in Moscow; the Czechoslovak leaders kept their posts but the Spring reforms were forgotten⁹⁴.

This political upheaval led to a wave of departures as early as August 1968, when the borders were still relatively open: it is estimated that more than 80,000 people left the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic between 1968 and 1969, Nešpor states that about 200,000 people fled between 1968 and 1989⁹⁵ with frequencies that vary over those 20 years. By the end of 1968, more than 9,000 people had applied for political asylum abroad and about the same number had requested an extension of their stay for work, study, health or family reasons.

From the point of view of the law, the state authorities first reacted to the mass exodus of population after August 1968 with an apparently accommodating approach and reassured citizens abroad that there was nothing to prevent their return to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. The competent authorities were even asked, upon request, to extend the travel clauses. However, travel conditions quickly and considerably tightened and the borders were closed in October 1969. Nevertheless,

⁹³ BROWN Archie, „The ‘Prague Spring’” in *The Rise and Fall of Communism*, ed. Archie Brown (New-York: Harper Collins, 2009), 368-397.

⁹⁴ FEJTŐ François, *Histoire des démocraties populaires: Après Staline* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 190-196

⁹⁵ NEŠPOR Zdeněk R, *Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty: prolegomena k sociologickému studiu českých emigračních procesů 20. století se zvláštním zřetelem k západní reemigraci 90.* (Prague: Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, 2002), 39-41.

thousands of people still managed to emigrate, as the resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party on a unified border system was only passed in 1971.

As for travel to the West, Czechoslovak citizens enjoyed relative freedom one year after the military intervention, but gradually the Communist Party has taken a number of measures that increasingly regulate and limit foreign travel. Initially, the Communist Party favoured a friendly approach towards persons who extended their stay abroad. From January 1969 Czechoslovak embassies were encouraged both to inform Czechoslovak citizens abroad that there was nothing to prevent them from returning to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, to provide the necessary assistance to return and to act sympathetically towards those who did not⁹⁶. The administrative process for approving travel to the West and Yugoslavia was tightened.

As with the previous ones, it is important to understand the composition and particularity of this emigration according to the different historical sources. People who refused to live in the occupied country, as well as those who did not feel sufficiently able to develop professionally in Czechoslovakia, began to emigrate. Many actors in the reform process also emigrated for fear of being persecuted. In some aspects, the post-August exile has similarities with the February exile; they are both reactions to the totalitarian regime and as a number of exiles have come together to form a force, a voice of opposition: the post-August exiles have been involved in current affairs activities, for example with the radio stations Free Europe or Voice of America⁹⁷. But there are also some differences; the vast majority of those who left after February 1948 were exiles because they did so out of a legitimate fear of persecution and because of a more fundamental disagreement with the communist regime. On the other hand, it was much easier to cross the borders, which were open until October 1969, a fact which the

⁹⁶ MARÈS Antoine, „Exilés d’Europe Centrale de 1945 à 1967” in *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995), 129-168.

⁹⁷ HANZLÍK Jan, „Československá emigrace očima tajných materiálů” in *Securitas Imperii: Sborník k problematice zahraničních vztahů čs. komunistického režimu*, ed. Jan Taborsky (Prague: Úřad dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu, 2002), 288-293.

February exiles will not fail to point out to their successors. Tigríd sees the post-August wave of exiles as opponents of the formerly imprisoned regime, people at risk of persecution, or participants in the Prague Spring reform movement, i.e. communist officials who broke with the conservative wing of the party. He considers much of the others to be members of economic emigration, which has gone under better material conditions⁹⁸. Unlike post-February emigration, which was predominantly anti-socialist and its members have mostly been compromised in the past, the composition of post-August emigration is largely positive in terms of political sentiment.

4.1.5 The 1970s and 1980s: exile in the midst of Normalisation

In the first half of the 1970s, the number of refugees from Czechoslovakia declined rapidly. The number of emigrants has increased again since 1977 as a result of the creation of Charter 77 and compared to the post-August wave of emigration, the structure of emigration has changed again, which is why we are doing two parts over this period. In the 1970s and 1980s, in addition to regular members of the Communist Party, there were escapes of high-ranking officials and workers. In the 1980s, emigration mainly concerned young people - especially university graduates - and families with children⁹⁹, which will be confirmed by the sample of our narrators.

In 1977, new principles for the permission to travel and expel Czechoslovak citizens abroad were adopted, allowing for expulsion for the purpose of family reunification (parents with children and mixed marriages), pensioners and, in case of appropriate special consideration. The number of deportation applications settled positively for the signatories of Charter 77, as well as for persons who had nothing to do with dissent, has increased significantly; Ivanka Lefeuve, a signatory of Charter 77 and exiled to France, was one such person. The communist power took advantage of this loosening of the immigration policy to get rid of many elements of the opposition; increasingly forced departures across the borders increased and some were even refused

⁹⁸ TIGRID Pavel, *Politická emigrace v atomovém věku* (Prague: Prostor, 1990), 40-57.

⁹⁹ NEŠPOR Zdeněk R, *Reemigranti a sociálně sdílené hodnoty: prolegomena k sociologickému studiu českých emigračních procesů 20. století se zvláštním zřetelem k západní reemigraci 90.* (Prague: Sociologický ústav Akademie věd České republiky, 2002), 39-41.

to return home after a stay abroad. This was the case for Pavel Kohout and Milan Kundera, among others.

During the Normalisation the issue of emigration and exile became a topical and at the same time very sensitive subject, which the government tried to solve with various measures while taking into account the effects of the Helsinki Agreements and Charter 77. The new Government Directive No. 58/1977 thus enabled approximately 115 000 Czechoslovak citizens living abroad for more than five years to adjust their legal status and relations with Czechoslovakia¹⁰⁰. Of these, only 452 emigrants used the option of return¹⁰¹. In the late 1970s, to control departures to the West from its German neighbours, Czechoslovakia made the conditions for granting asylum in Germany more difficult; but Yugoslavia and Austria very quickly became their new crossing points for exiles.

¹⁰⁰ HANZLÍK Jan, „Československá emigrace očima tajných materiálů“ in *Securitas Imperii: Sborník k problematice zahraničních vztahů čs. komunistického režimu*, ed. Jan Taborsky (Prague: Úřad dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu, 2002), 290-297.

¹⁰¹ HANZLÍK Jan, „Československá emigrace očima tajných materiálů“ in *Securitas Imperii: Sborník k problematice zahraničních vztahů čs. komunistického režimu*, ed. Jan Taborsky (Prague: Úřad dokumentace a vyšetřování zločinů komunismu, 2002), 290-297.

4.2 The French and the Czechoslovakians: a singular relationship

The presence in France of Czechs and Slovaks, then Austro-Hungarian nationals, dates back to the last decades of the 19th century. It fluctuated according to the geopolitical and economic context: World War I, the creation of Czechoslovakia, the need for labour in France, World War II, then the arrival of the Communists in Czechoslovakia.

4.2.1 „Zde se mluví česky”

At the end of the 19th century, Paris attracted workers, artists and gardeners; a few restaurateurs and craftsmen took over the Palais-Royal district. Associations were set up, such as Beseda (1862), the Sokol of Paris, which succeeded it in 1891¹⁰² which was a place where people helped each other to find work and housing¹⁰³. The cafés and restaurants run by fellow countrymen make it possible to find each other: „Zde se mluví česky” as a Czech tailor in the heart of Paris wrote on his shop front¹⁰⁴. It is in this context that ephemeral small groups are formed. One of them took the name of the Czech Socialist Union (Eské socialistické sdruení) in 1904 and recruited small craftsmen and workers from Paris. But from 1905 it became the Czech Freethinkers Group (Sdruení eskch volnch myslitel)¹⁰⁵. At that time, Edvard Beneš, the future Czechoslovak president and then a law student at the Sorbonne, frequented it. In September 1905, the association took part in the Parisian congress of the *Libre Pensée*, but soon collapsed, undermined by internal dissension. In February 1907, it became the socialist association *Rovnost*. and at the beginning had only about ten members¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰² BROUČEK Stanislav, „Ceši ve Francii” [*Les Tchèques en France*], *Ceši v cizině*, n°9, Académie des Sciences de République tchèque (2001): 136-154

¹⁰³ SAINT-MARTIN Jean-Philippe „Les Sokols tchécoslovaques, un symbole de l’identité slave entre les deux guerres mondiales”, *Cahiers d’histoire. Revue d’histoire critique*, 88 (2002): 43-57.

¹⁰⁴ STONE Norman and STROUHAL Edward, *Czechoslovakia: Crossroads and Crises, 1918–88* (Oxford: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1989), 192-193.

¹⁰⁵ SAINT-MARTIN Jean-Philippe „Les Sokols tchécoslovaques, un symbole de l’identité slave entre les deux guerres mondiales”, *Cahiers d’histoire. Revue d’histoire critique*, 88 (2002): 43-57.

¹⁰⁶ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, „Construire l’exil : l’association *Rovnost* (1907-1940)”, *Matériaux pour l’histoire de notre temps*, vol. 103, no. 3 (2011): 43-46.

Rovnost very quickly became part of the life of the Czech community in Paris and very quickly established itself at Senne, in the Palais Royal, where the Sokol was already meeting. Like its sister, the association is a place of sociability and has a vocation of mutual aid. It receives recently arrived Czechs to find them housing and employment. Rovnost also carries out cultural activities (library, lectures on literature and the arts, visits to museums, etc.).¹⁰⁷

4.2.2 The Czechoslovak Colony

In 1914, more than 3,000 people, mostly Czechs (about 2,000 in Paris)¹⁰⁸, were living in France. The First World War was an opportunity for many to show their loyalty to their homeland and to France. A „Colony” was created: from the summer of 1914, this structure brought together two Parisian Czech associations, the Sokol of Paris and Rovnost, to organize the enlistment of Czech soldiers in the Foreign Legion and to organize mutual aid¹⁰⁹ (for the benefit of the families and all compatriots in France), in particular by issuing Czech identity cards. These cards guaranteed their holders that they would no longer be considered nationals of an enemy country. It ensures the cohesion of the group through concerts and charity events, raises funds for the soldiers and their families and organizes propaganda aimed at the foundation of an independent state (conferences, newspapers)¹¹⁰. This strong sense of community rooted in France will play a considerable role in the choice of France and Paris as a destination for our narrators and also to previous generations. A true consulate, this „Colony” organizes the enlistment of 500 volunteer soldiers in the Czech Na Zdar company of the Foreign Legion¹¹¹. On August 22, 1914, members of two Czech associations gathered in the

¹⁰⁷ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, „Construire l'exil : l'association Rovnost (1907-1940)”, *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, vol. 103, no. 3 (2011): 43-46.

¹⁰⁸ MARÈS Antoine, „Exilés d'Europe Centrale de 1945 à 1967” in *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995), 129-168.

¹⁰⁹ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, *La Colonie tchécoslovaque. Une histoire de l'immigration tchèque et slovaque en France (1914-1940)*, (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Slaves, 2009).

¹¹⁰ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, „La Colonie tchécoslovaque en France, 1914-1940,, *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2009): 133-140.

¹¹¹ MARÈS Antoine, „L'armée tchécoslovaque en France (1939-1940)”. *Hommes et Migrations*, n°1148, (Novembre 1991): 22-26.

Colony in the gardens of the Palais-Royal to offer their help to the French authorities in the war that was beginning¹¹². In concrete terms, this resulted in the commitment of several hundred Czech volunteers to the Foreign Legion for the duration of the war.¹¹³ In 1917, the Colony took on the name of „Czechoslovakian”, while political emigration made Paris its centre, with the establishment of a Czechoslovak National Committee presided over by the future founders of the state like Masaryk and Beneš¹¹⁴. Participation in the fighting gave these Czechs and Slovaks a symbolic foothold on French territory and gave them a high profile among public opinion and political leaders.

4.2.3 The Inter-War Years

The major turning point in relations and exchanges between the two nations came with the victory of the Allies. Rovnost and the Czechoslovak Colony wanted to help the ever-increasing number of immigrants - there were nearly 70,000 of them by 1930¹¹⁵ - for one reason: in March 1920, France signed two agreements with the new Czechoslovakian state: the first one regarding emigration, in order to meet its labour needs, thus allowing the mass arrival of Czechoslovak workers on French territory, until the economic crisis in the early 30's¹¹⁶. Politically, the two countries opted for the creation of a militia, i.e. to create an army that France could count on despite the attacks on its form and to overturn its defence priorities.¹¹⁷

¹¹² NAMONT Jean-Philippe, „La colonie tchécoslovaque en France pendant la première guerre mondiale”, *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, vol. 216, no. 4, (2004): 41-57.

¹¹³ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, „La colonie tchécoslovaque en France pendant la première guerre mondiale”, *Guerres mondiales et conflits contemporains*, vol. 216, no. 4, (2004): 41-57.

¹¹⁴ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, „La Colonie tchécoslovaque en France, 1914-1940”, *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2009): 133-140.

¹¹⁵ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, „Construire l'exil : l'association Rovnost (1907-1940)”, *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, vol. 103, no. 3 (2011): 43-46.

¹¹⁶ HUBSCHER Ronald, *L'immigration dans les campagnes françaises (XIXe-XXe siècle)* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2005), 95-107.

¹¹⁷ MARÈS Antoine, „Mission militaire et relations internationales: l'exemple franco-tchécoslovaque, 1918-1925”, *Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine*, tome 30 N°4 (October-December 1983): 559-586.

During the inter-war period, a national environment was reconstituted in France, thanks to local associations and the Central Colony. The dominant figure of the Czechoslovakian immigrant became that of the worker. The Czechoslovak community, which is based on solidarity, continues to develop, to rebuild itself and to strengthen its ties: thanks to local associations and the Colony and with the help of the new Czechoslovak state, new associations are developing. Libraries and press associations, theatre groups, football teams or gymnastics groups (Sokol and its branches), the celebration of the national holiday every 28th October bringing Czech and Slovak immigrants closer together¹¹⁸.

It was also at this time that the Czechoslovak Section in Dijon was set up. It was Edvard Beneš, a doctor of law from the University of Dijon and future president of the Czechoslovak Republic, who took the initiative, at the end of the First World War, to set up a Czechoslovak section at the Carnot High School in Dijon¹¹⁹. Thus, according to a cultural agreement dating from 1920, every year some thirty pupils, recruited through a national competitive examination for their particular aptitude for French, came to Dijon to follow a school curriculum from the second year of secondary school until they obtained the baccalaureate¹²⁰. In this way, a real community was created in Burgundy which would play a crucial role for the future exiles a few decades later. During the inter-war period, the Colony managed to set up structures to serve Czechoslovak immigrants, effectively supporting the state in quantifying needs and adapting its actions to meet them.¹²¹

¹¹⁸ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, „La Colonie tchécoslovaque en France, 1914-1940”, *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2009): 133-140.

¹¹⁹ HNILICA Jiří, *Fenomén Dijon: Století českých maturit ve Francii* (Prague: Karolinum Press, 2017), 46.

¹²⁰ Interview of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 15/05/2020, Plédéliac.

¹²¹ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, „La Colonie tchécoslovaque en France, 1914-1940”, *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2009): 133-140.

4.2.4 The Czechs of France in the face of Nazism and the war

The Czechoslovak population and its emigrants had very little involvement in national political life until 1936, when it was boosted by a combination of international events: faced with the rise of Nazism and the inevitable Second World War at the end of the decade, the lives of Czechoslovak citizens in France were to be profoundly disrupted¹²². They first of all financially supported their native country threatened by Hitler and carried out propaganda activities reminiscent of those of the Great War. But they will look helplessly at the success of the Anschluss, which emboldened the Sudeten Germans and the Fall Grün, a plan of aggression against Czechoslovakia in 1938¹²³. The sledgehammer blow came when Hitler threatened a European war if the Sudetenland was not surrendered to Germany. In addition to a large German-speaking population, this was also where the defensive positions of the Czechoslovak army were located in the event of war with Germany. On 29 and 30 September 1938, British, French, Italian and German leaders took part in a conference in Munich. In what became known as the Munich Agreement they agreed to the German annexation of the Sudetenland in exchange for Hitler's promise of peace¹²⁴.

In spite of the popular indignation and the willingness of the people to fight, Czechoslovakia must submit to the Munich decisions without having been associated with them. It abandoned the Sudetenland to Germany, the territory of Teschen to Poland, and the south of Slovakia and south-western Ruthenia to Hungary, which led to the influx of several thousand exiles into France. The declaration of war in September 1939 will push the Czechoslovak people to organize, meet and fight once again. Ambassador Osusk, having refused to hand over the diplomatic buildings to the Germans and considering himself still in office, took over the leadership of a Central

¹²² MARÈS Antoine, „Exilés d'Europe Centrale de 1945 à 1967” in *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995), 129-168.

¹²³ MILZA Pierre and BERSTEIN Serge, *L'Allemagne de 1870 à nos jours* (Paris: Armand Collin, 2014), 169-182.

¹²⁴ PAXTON Robert O., „The Paris Peace Settlement Dismantled: Aggression and Appeasement, 1933-1939”, in *Europe in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Robert O. Paxton (Boston: Wadsworth Publishing, 2011) 349-372.

Committee for Czechoslovak Action in France¹²⁵, in connection with all the associations in France; together with Beneš - who became persona non grata for the Nazi leaders - he became a leading figure among the politicians in exile.¹²⁶

However, after the French defeat in June 1940, not everyone made the same choice, and two paths emerged for Czechoslovakia in France. On the one hand, some would join the resistance, which had been organized as early as 1938. From then on, they tried to help politicians who had gone abroad (Beneš, Masaryk) to organize a free Czechoslovak army and prepare for the reconstitution of a free republic by a provisional government¹²⁷. The Czechoslovak resistance in France was recognised and praised for its tireless work in serving the interests of both countries¹²⁸. But on the other hand, many Slovaks decided to return home: between 1941 and 1944, around 6,000 of them joined the independent Slovak state¹²⁹, a satellite of Nazi Germany.

Thus at the end of the Second World War there was a new wave of returns, but the Czechoslovak community in France was extremely small. In 1946, there were no less than 19,000 Czechoslovakians in France, including 3,819 in Paris, data which are certainly incomplete and do not provide a satisfactory exhaustive series¹³⁰. But their

¹²⁵ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, „Construire l'exil : l'association Rovnost (1907-1940)”, *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, vol. 103, no. 3 (2011): 43-46.

¹²⁶ MARÈS Antoine, „VI. Entre le marteau et l'enclume. 1938-1945”, in *Edvard Beneš. Un drame entre Hitler et Staline* (Paris: Éditions Perrin, 'Biographies', 2015), 293-361.

¹²⁷ KRAJINA Vladimír, „La Résistance Tchèque”, *Cahiers D'histoire De La Guerre*, no. 3 (1950): 55–76.

¹²⁸ The sources concerning the Czechoslovak resistance fighters in France are rare but there is this testimony of Milos Nekvasil which allowed us to understand the extent of the involvement of the resistance fighters during the Second World War that can be found in this historical review:

NEKVASIL Milos, „Témoignage sur la résistance tchécoslovaque en France pendant la Seconde Guerre mondiale”, *Matériaux pour l'histoire de notre temps*, n°31 (1993): 47-56.

¹²⁹ NAMONT Jean-Philippe, „La Colonie tchécoslovaque en France, 1914-1940”, *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2009): 133-140.

¹³⁰ MARÈS Antoine, „Exilés d'Europe Centrale de 1945 à 1967” in *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995), 129-168.

number will increase in the 1940s and then gradually decrease, either through departures or naturalization¹³¹.

4.3 Normalization

Finally, it is essential to understand the peculiarity of the Normalisation period, in the communist era. It was, however, little understood as a real cause of the departure of our narrators, especially by some historians and not the exiles of the first hour. After the excitement of the Prague Spring, Czechoslovakia plunged under the leaden blanket of normalization. Provoked by the invasion of the Warsaw Pact Five on 21 August 1968 and the accession to power of Gustáv Husák in April 1969, the „new course” caused deep trauma among the Czechoslovak population¹³².

As early as January 1968, the desire to bring about changes in the current model of post-Stalinist Soviet socialism with the aim of withdrawing A. Novotný from the foreground and thus freeing space for reformist political actors resulted. After the January abdication, he was replaced by A. Dubček as the first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party and in March he was replaced by L. Svoboda as president. Individuals supporting the reforms became among the political elite, although there was gradually greater differentiation even within this current. The CPC Programme of Action was created, a document that does not question the leading role of the Communist Party, but nevertheless promises certain measures for democratisation.

The recovery process has gained considerable support. The interest of society in general has been awakened, civil society has been born. In February, censorship was lifted, opening up a number of previously taboo subjects. More and more attention was focused on the illegalities of the 1950s, and the issue of citizens' rights and freedoms entered the discussion in a more significant way. At the same time, freedom of association and assembly was restored. Resolutions, petitions, manifestos, public

¹³¹ MAREŠ Antoine, „Exilés d'Europe Centrale de 1945 à 1967” in *Le Paris des étrangers depuis 1945*, ed. Antoine Marès (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 1995), 129-168.

¹³² FEJTŐ François, *Histoire des démocraties populaires: Après Staline* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 245-322.

meetings and gatherings were drafted. New organizations and associations were created. People could travel more freely.

4.3.1 Eradication of Prague Spring

This new course of action has first of all had unprecedented impacts on the regime and the political life of the country: the exclusion of half a million communist-reformists from the KSČ, the trials of the early 1970s and the muzzling of culture by the authorities are all factors that are ruining the hopes raised by the Prague Spring. This country, which was at the heart of an original process, the „third way”¹³³, is slipping away. It is slowly sinking into a lethargy that will characterize it for some thirty years in the eyes of international public opinion¹³⁴. The so called „normalization,, was initially centered on the systematic elimination of the reforms of the spring of 1968, the Prague Spring, and the exclusion of those who had promoted them¹³⁵. However, the experience of „socialism with a human face,, was above all an attempt to resolve a deep crisis in Czechoslovak society, which challenged the Stalinist model of planning and the revolt of intellectuals against the arbitrariness of censorship in the cultural field. In short, the society was challenging a bureaucratic and centralized system, which, under the leadership of Antonin Novotný, had refused to carry out even partial de-Stalinization after 1956¹³⁶. Attempts at reform and a certain cultural revolution were thus born, giving hope to the population but fuelling the anger of the USSR. Thus, the invasion of Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968 and the subsequent normalization put an end to the reformist project, but left the new leadership confronted with the major structural

¹³³ FEJTÖ François and RUPNIK Jacques, *Le printemps tchécoslovaque: 1968* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1999), 219-222.

¹³⁴ GUTMANN Benjamin, „Relais et réseaux de la Charte 77 en France, entre 1977 et 1989”, *Bulletin de l'Institut Pierre Renouvin*, vol. 33, no. 1 (2011): 49-64.

¹³⁵ BRACKE Maud, „Chapter 7. Resetting Internationalism 1969–1970” *Which Socialism, Whose Détente? West European Communism and the Czechoslovak Crisis of 1968*, ed. Maud Bracke (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2007), 275-322.

¹³⁶ BLAIVE Muriel, *Une déstalinisation manquée: Tchécoslovaquie 1956* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 2004), 157-175.

problems to which the Prague Spring claimed to provide an answer¹³⁷. Gustáv Husák's first task when he came to power in April 1969 was to re-establish the „leading role of the party in society”¹³⁸ and, to do this, first of all to „normalize” the party itself. Between 1970 and 1971 this led to a purge of the communist movement that was unprecedented since the war: in total, therefore, the Party was cut back by nearly half a million members, that is to say nearly a third of the membership. Unlike the Hungarian or Polish parties, the Czechoslovak party had remained deeply Stalinist in comparison. Having eliminated the very idea of reform, it soon found itself at odds with the changes in Moscow, Budapest and Warsaw.

4.3.2 The paralysis of public space and silencing the Opposition

These political choices have had a significant impact on society and on the lives of the people involved. In the first place, one of the characteristics of Normalization and its impact on society was the paralysis of public space. Indeed, any politically oriented civic activity that did not conform to the official ideology essentially disappeared until 1989. This was mainly aimed at correcting „mistakes” and „purging” society as a whole of undesirable political influences. Those who refused to express their consent to the occupation had to leave their jobs or were expelled from the Communist Party.¹³⁹ Then, having played an important political role during the Prague Spring as spokespersons of popular aspirations, intellectuals became the main target of normalization in the 1970s. Several thousand of books were blacklisted, plays by Václav Havel and Pavel Kohout were banned, censored, driven out¹⁴⁰, and filmmakers of the „new wave” of Czechoslovak cinema of the 1960s, such as Miloš Forman, had to start their lives again elsewhere. True intellectual and educational censorship was taking place: nothing was accessible anymore and access to knowledge was extremely restricted.

¹³⁷ FEJTŐ François and RUPNIK Jacques, *Le printemps tchécoslovaque: 1968* (Paris: Editions Complexe, 1999), 219-222.

¹³⁸ EKIERT Grzegorz, *The State against Society: Political Crises and Their Aftermath in East Central Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996) 179-183.

¹³⁹ FEJTŐ François, *Histoire des démocraties populaires: Après Staline* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 245-322.

¹⁴⁰ DELEIXHE Thibault, „La censure littéraire ‘normalisatrice’ en Tchécoslovaquie : une tentative de définition” *Les Cahiers Sirice*, vol. 21, no. 2, (2018): 83-103.

This this way of life leaves little room for opposition and alternative thinking, but some have tried to make their voices heard and the role of dissent during this period is still debated today. In the words of Václav Havel himself, „*A specter is haunting Eastern Europe, the specter of what in the West is called dissent.*”¹⁴¹ Through them, a certain opposition rose up against the totalitarian communist regime, particularly in the 1970s. Indeed, in 1977, dissidents founded the Charter 77 Association. They publicly reminded the government of its commitment to respect human rights signed in 1975 at the Helsinki Conference¹⁴². They sought to use détente, and particularly the Helsinki agreements of 1975, to put pressure on the authorities and demand respect for the laws in force. In this sense, the Charter signalled the emergence of a new form of opposition based on as broad a base as possible socially (a large part was workers) and politically (all currents of thought were represented without exclusion). But at the end of October 1979, ten signatories of Charter 77, including three spokesmen, were sentenced for „attempted subversion” to prison terms of up to five years. This was the most important warning shot since the Charter was launched and seemed to confirm the authorities' refusal to consider the process of normalisation as completed and to continue to live as before, or to the „communist norm” from which Czechoslovak society had deviated during socialism with a human face¹⁴³.

4.3.3 Breach of privacy

But what was most frightening was a certain habituation to this movement, a certain „normalization” to normalization: many people became accustomed to living where there was little room for contradiction anyway. The normalisation regime penetrated the personal life too, primarily in the form of TV shows containing hidden ideological codes, affecting society even many decades after the fall of the regime¹⁴⁴. Criticism of society and politics was only possible in private. Normalised everyday life was tied together by different forms of control, manifested, for example, in education

¹⁴¹ HAVEL Václav, *Moc bezmocných* (Prague: Edice Archy, 1990) .

¹⁴² FEJTŐ François, *Histoire des démocraties populaires: Après Staline* (Paris: Seuil, 1992), 245-322.

¹⁴³ BOUIT Delphine, „Charte 77, Prague 87”, *Sigila*, vol. 30, no. 2 (2012): 109-119.

¹⁴⁴ BREN Paulina, *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after 1968 Prague Spring*, (Cornell: Cornell University Press, 2011) 112–129.

policy and limited freedom of movement. The regime also did not hesitate to use repressive methods, most frequently taking the form of criminal persecution of those who deviated from the period of „normality”. A physical and moral violence that was one of the main reasons for the exile of our narrators.

5. THE NOTION OF EXILE AND THE DECISION- MAKING PROCESS

Exile is certainly a major turning point in everyone's life, and few people choose to do so without major reasons. In this part, we will therefore assess the decision-making process of our narrators, the reasons that pushed them all to leave, the problems that followed and the difficulty of assuming this new status. But first of all, we are going to discuss what makes an exile and why we chose that term for our narrators.

5.1 What is meant by exile?

Migration has been a source of human survival and adaptation across centuries until today. This is why the very diverse training of researchers who analyse migration and the various human movements leads to a multiplicity of terms and concepts that can hinder the understanding of this phenomenon. In the end, the same concept can be represented by different terms. William Mc Neill warns: „*The juxtaposition of historical, legal, economic, anthropological, sociological, geographical and philosophical vocabularies (...) underlines the intellectual confusion that needs to be dissipated before any really satisfactory understanding of human migration can develop*”¹⁴⁵. This is even more the case in our study, where the definitions of exile and emigrant differ according to the approaches, the periods, the Czechoslovak authors in particular on the adequacy of the various terms. Naming the object of study is one of the first scientific difficulties encountered by the social scientist. There are many words to describe the phenomenon of migration: „emigre”, „immigrant”, „foreigner”, „refugee”, „exile”, „emigrant” are among them and seem semantically close. However, far from being synonymous, each has its own specificities. The complexity of the reasons, contexts and conditions of departure has something to do with this confusion of words and the difficulty of arriving at precise definitions, of finding the right words, of not

¹⁴⁵ MC NEILL William and ADAMS Ruth, *Human migration: Patterns and policies* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978), 11-18.

intermingling the terms¹⁴⁶. The problem is that when economists, geographers, demographers and sociologists do not hesitate to intervene and define the different types of migration, in history, each study makes its own contribution, but the definitions and vocabulary are different according to each source. Historians have often used the term „political emigration” as opposed to „economic emigration”, while acknowledging that it is difficult to differentiate between „*those who were really political and those who came to the West in search of better living conditions*”¹⁴⁷. Qualifying and quantifying political emigration is a difficult result to achieve and the historian tends to take into account political asylum in political emigration, to study the militant in exile, the one who expresses himself, the one who is visible and to overshadow the one who „keeps silent”. Thus, in the social sciences, the predominant term „emigrant” and „political emigrant” does not do justice to the people who are the subject of this study because it implies the continuity of a political activity which, endangered in the country of origin, was the reason for departure.

While it is difficult for the different disciplines to agree on a definition, the same applies to the Czechoslovakian experience. The question of definition was dealt with by the representatives of the exile themselves, as a way of shaping their own identity. Whether it's on the side of those who left or those who have studied it, each are giving us different lineages, that intermingle but also confront each other. For example, Antonín Kostlán simply expounds exiles as people who have gone to live freely and according to their faith¹⁴⁸. On her side, Lucie Wittlichová differentiates between exile and emigration on the basis of the „voluntary” nature of the departure. Therefore, she defines emigration as the legal and voluntary act of leaving one's country or moving to

146 MILZA Pierre, „Introduction et problématique générale” in *L'émigration politique en Europe aux XIXe et XXe siècles. Actes du colloque de Rome*. (Rome: Publications de l'École française de Rome, 1991), 3-12.

147 TEMIME Emile „Émigration 'politique' et émigration 'économique’” in *L'émigration politique en Europe aux XIXe et XXe siècles. Actes du colloque de Rome* (Rome: École Française de Rome, 1991), 57-72.

148 KOSTLÁN Antonín, „Útěky do emigrace a Československá akademie věd” in *Sto českých vědců v exilu. Encyklopedie významných vědců z řad pracovníků Československé akademie věd v emigraci*, ed. Soňa Štrbáňová and Antonín Kostlán (Prague: Academia, 2011), 19-207.

another country. The word exile, on the other hand, implies that people are involuntary expelled from their own country. Jeřábek adds that it is necessary to dissociate the two terms and asserts that exiles do not identify with the terms of emigrants, even reject them. Emigrants are thus, according to the exiles, those who have gone to live a more comfortable life elsewhere¹⁴⁹. Finally, in the words of an exile, Otto Pick gives us two very different definitions of the terms exile and emigrant: according to him, exiles are people who left their country of origin, for political reasons, but with the aim of returning to it. On the other hand, he differentiates between exiles to emigrant by saying that the latter would be leaving definitively¹⁵⁰.

Whether this comes from the mouths of Czechoslovakian, but also French and Anglo-Saxon researchers, or from those who recounted their experiences, there is a heterogeneity - which can sometimes be conflicting - in the definitions of the concepts of emigration and exile. It is indeed difficult to classify my narrators into one of these predominant concepts that we have cited especially the one my predecessors chose: emigrant or political emigrant. The problem lies first of all in the fact that political emigration, as we said earlier, has too much of a tendency to tell us the story of political activists expelled from Czechoslovakia and not enough emphasis on those who did not choose the public voice but nevertheless took the same paths to leave the country. On the other hand, differentiating exile and emigration on the simple basis of „voluntary” or „involuntary” departure is an error that does not allow for a full understanding of the situation. The concept of „free will” that hides behind the notion of „voluntary” is itself up to interpretation when compared between then and nowadays. It would be a big mistake to believe that my narrators simply left in search of better material conditions. Although it was for them a „voluntary” act to chose to leave, was it free will if there is only one reasonable choice to make? The best way to apprehend the situation is first of

¹⁴⁹ JEŘÁBEK Vojtěch, *Českoslovenští uprchlíci ve studené válce* (Brno: Stilus Press, 2005), 11-12.

¹⁵⁰ PICK Otto, „Politický význam exilu” in *Češi za hranicemi na přelomu 20. a 21. století: symposium o českém vystěhovalectví, exulantství a vztazích zahraničních Čechů k domovu 29. - 30. června 1998*, ed. Stanislav Brouček and Karel Hrubý (Prague: Karolinum ve spolupráci s Etnologickým ústavem AV ČR, 2000), 16

all to qualify their departure as exile and, under this term, to understand the steps that push someone to leave.

To use the term exile to refer to my narrators is going against the grain to the research that has already been done on this subject. The term exile is indeed often used either metaphorically or for those who have been expelled from Czechoslovakia as a result of a court decision or mostly to describe the first waves of exiles between 1948 and 1968, as a response to a political and violent event. But the term that makes it possible to take into account notions, causes, that are being ignored in the definition of political emigrants. We will approach the problem with a psychological, even phenomenological approach by giving meaning to the experiences of our narrators.

According to Bolzman, exile can be defined as the „*obligation to leave one's state as a result of political violence and to seek refuge in another state for an unpredictable period of time*”¹⁵¹ Let us first focus on the notion of violence. By violence, the sociologist means the act of actors who act directly or indirectly, by harming one or more persons to varying degrees, either in their physical or mental integrity, or in their possessions, or in their symbolic and cultural participation¹⁵². In this manner, exile is a reaction to a context of violence - in all its forms - that testifies to an attack on individual freedom or living conditions which can take several forms: it ranges from a feeling of suffocation, an existential questioning to a feeling of being threatened, or literally being judged¹⁵³. In other words, the violence drives displacement, regardless of its origin, whether its forms. It leads to an internal rejection of living conditions, a verdict, a political situation or a feeling of being threatened or a kind of visible or invisible oppression that hovers over the future exiles. These violences can be physical but are above all psychological and hurt the person deep inside, psychologically, emotionally, leaving invisible but painful traces that become

¹⁵¹ BOLZMAN Claudio, „Exil et errance”, *Pensée plurielle*, vol. 35, no. 1 (2014): 43-52.

¹⁵² MICHAUD Yves, *La violence* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1996), 3-10.

¹⁵³ NOWOTNY Magdalena, „Émigration - Un voyage forcé” in *Les effets de l'émigration et l'exil dans les cultures tchèque et polonaise*, ed. Hana Jechova-Voisine (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1987) 1-17.

impossible to ignore. In some of the interviews we find people who testify to the violence and pressure by the secret police, which are then visible, quantifiable.

Exile is a situation of radical rupture¹⁵⁴: on the one hand because it implies that one loses one's usual place of living, without the guarantee of finding a new place to live in. Exile is experienced as a cut, a fracture, a loss. It therefore marks a rupture between a land and an individual who comes from it and who maintains a very special intimacy with it. This lived fracture, this forced uprooting often assimilated to a small death. What interests us in exile is that it does not exist on the sole mode of physical being; to go into exile is not only to change place, but that consciousness itself tends to exile. It is also the rupture of one's place in society; it is like losing one's place in the world. As we have said above, it is a personal decision-making process that affects the person at the deepest level, questioning their existence. In this exile context, that is precisely the continuity of existence that poses a problem, since all areas of a person's previous social life are affected¹⁵⁵. It is a process in which several phases can be observed, but the first of which is simply an inner break, a kind of „inner exile” if we may say. Indeed, before a physical rupture, a concrete departure, it occurs first of all within the Czechoslovak society in which they have lived and in which they continue to live. Exile represents a rupture of daily life and its evidences, its predictability, habits, plans that made us believe that tomorrow would not be too different from today and yesterday. It is also a rupture of the status and social roles of the people concerned. This rupture reaches a point of no return which is, in my opinion, the trigger of an awareness, of an existential crisis at its paroxysm which pushes the person to consider exile as the only liveable option. It is when everything that made sense to them is presented to be problematic. They feel like they don't fit in anymore, like they are sometimes accused of being responsible for everything that is wrong. In fact, their legitimacy to hold meaningful opinions and to influence the social world is no longer recognised. They are put out of the social world.

¹⁵⁴ BOLZMAN Claudio, „L'exil : ruptures, épreuves, preuves, résistances”, *(Re)Penser l'Exil* (2012):
Online: <http://revue-exil.com/lexil-ruptures-epreuves-preuves-resistances/>

¹⁵⁵ BOLZMAN Claudio, „L'exil : ruptures, épreuves, preuves, résistances”, *(Re)Penser l'Exil* (2012):
Online: <http://revue-exil.com/lexil-ruptures-epreuves-preuves-resistances/>

This process has direct consequences for the individuals concerned: it makes their emigration reactive (one goes from somewhere, not to somewhere) and random (the decision concerning residence in another State and the moment of return to their country escapes the individuals)¹⁵⁶. And this is the essential difference between an emigrant and an exile, thus qualifying the people my narrators as „exiles”. And this vagueness, this randomness around the place, the date of departure and the duration of the stay is very well reflected in the interviews we collected. In the words of Ilja Kuneš many Czechoslovak people thought that „*The regime is not going to stay for ever but at least for our whole life*”¹⁵⁷. Thus, the exile is the one who asks himself the question „*for how long will I be gone*” but does not have the answer. A little further on, Ilja Kuneš tells us: „*When I went to Sušice, my hometown, I took some pictures and so on. Because it was really when I thought, „You're seeing all this for the last time in your life. Are you able to live this or will you be unhappy?”. And I thought, ‘Yeah, I'm gonna keep those pictures in my head, that's what I'm gonna do’*”¹⁵⁸.

Finally, the rupture also occurs in the eyes of the law. Without being hunted, without necessarily being political enemies, our narrators nevertheless risked their lives and diverted the laws to flee, knowing the risks that this journey would imply. This is why it is impossible for me to call them emigrants. Their status and the term „exile”, without necessarily being fully illegal, plays with the limits of illegality and constitutes a break with the laws and codes of Czechoslovak society at the time.

5.2 How is the decision made?

The decision to go into exile is a complex decision caused by several factors. Unlike post-February and post-August exile, the wave of departures to which our narrators belong is not an immediate response to a major political turning point. But, the invasion and Normalization did have an impact on the decision of our narrators. The

¹⁵⁶ BOLZMAN Claudio, „De l'exil à la diaspora. L'exemple de la migration chilienne”, *Autrepart*, n° 22, (2002): 91-107.

¹⁵⁷ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2020, Pilsen

¹⁵⁸ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2020, Pilsen

occupation marked the end of a period for the narrators who could change something, and although they could not imagine exactly what was in store for them, they were filled with the feeling that it would not be the same anymore. And it is by studying this decision-making process, this break in several stages, that we can see that our narrators are indeed exiles. But how do the narrators themselves characterize their motivations? How do they justify their decision? Let us now focus on more specific aspects.

The decision-making is the result of a confrontation of several factors. Let's start at the beginning: childhood. Indeed, the environment in which the narrators grew up has also become important in life stories. The anti-communism that marked their childhood allowed the narrators to amplify the reasons that led them across borders and to form a backdrop for their decision-making process. Indeed, many of our narrators had a history with communism in their past, and the anticommunist attitude came from previous experiences of political persecution. Take the case of Peter Brabenec, for example, whose family, from grandfather to parents, was a victim of communism. This is how he begins his testimony directly: *„My grandfather, who was a carpenter and who had set up a manufacturing company, a small factory to make the roller shutters on the windows, but made of wood, it was done at the time, had just been robbed, everything was taken from him.. (...) My mother, who did not yet have the baccalaureate, who was in high school, she, in 49, was expelled from high school because she could not do her baccalaureate. [...] [My father, note C.M.] was kicked out of the university, which was largely run by young Communists. (...) Anyone in this country had a resume that he lugged around, that wasn't made by him, that was made by, something called HR in France but here it was called Kádrovák, members of the Communist Party or retired policemen. And they were the ones who made the files, the file on each person, everything was recorded, all the movements, my grandfather's problems, everything was written in this file, which accompanied you everywhere.*”¹⁵⁹ Some of the narrators said that their parents or grandparents made their antipathy more obvious by despising the

¹⁵⁹ Interview #1 of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 15/05/2020, Plédéliac

system, disagreeing with it. As a result, critical thinking developed in our narrators who experienced the unfair policies of the Party first-hand, more than others.

Exile after 1968 is closely linked to the denial of access to education or work and the persecution of one's family. Influencing access to education has become one of the Communist Party's effective weapons in maintaining at least the external consent of citizens. Already at the end of primary school, school principals rather than parents had a great deal of influence on decisions concerning further education, within the framework of valid political considerations, not to mention the possibility of studying at university¹⁶⁰. This was also the case for Petr Kašpar, whose highly committed parents' anti-communist stance had denied him access to university. „*When I left high school, I couldn't enroll at the university. At least I could, but I was refused under various pretexts. (...) At that time, my parents really understood that it had to do with their political commitment - they were very anti-communist my parents and they would attack me and my sister if they didn't keep quiet.*”¹⁶¹ But for Ilja Kuneš, it was his own personal commitment that penalized him: „*At that time, to get into University, you had to have a recommendation from.. from high school. And as we were a group that was called anti-socialist youth at the time, I couldn't go to university*”¹⁶².

In all the statements of the emigrants themselves, we encounter the theme of freedom and its restriction. Their accounts are interspersed with the idea of restricting personal freedom and freedom of expression in a general sense, but also with concrete examples. Already freedom of movement was largely restricted; it was extremely difficult to leave the country as we have seen earlier. But also freedom of the press and access to knowledge were extremely restricted. But in general, they were critical, for example, of restrictions on cultural life, but also of the concealment and distortion of information, of the fact that one could not be sure what was true, or who one could trust

¹⁶⁰ KOSTLÁN Antonín, „Útěky do emigrace a Československá akademie věd” in *Sto českých vědců v exilu. Encyklopedie významných vědců z řad pracovníků Československé akademie věd v emigraci*, ed. Soňa Štrbáňová and Antonín Kostlán (Prague: Academia, 2011), 19-207.

¹⁶¹ Interview #1 of Petr Kašpar by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 23/06/2019, Paris

¹⁶² Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

in society and who one could not. Once again, Peter Brabenec's testimony is a good illustration of this idea, especially since our narrator spent his high school years in France; for him, the shock was all the greater: „*The story of Katyň, we knew absolutely nothing about it! The story of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact, Staline-Hilter, that, we never heard of it in Czechoslovakia. (...) But we were amazed at that. Well, it was.. All that, we learned that here [In France, note CM].*”¹⁶³

Several narrators spoke of purely economic motivations, mainly related to the impossibility of obtaining the work that corresponded to their studies. Ilja Kuneš is the one who has suffered the most in finding work, because of his past: „*I started looking for work because work was compulsory. But it's a long story..Every time I showed up somewhere they said 'yes' but..then they always had a month or three weeks [to hire him, C.M. notes]..They asked the police. And each time I get the answer, „Oh well, in the end, no, the job didn't open up and that's it.*”¹⁶⁴ But what's interesting to observe is that economic motivations, low wages, unemployment are mostly invoked when our narrators compare their situation to that in France: „*So yes, it wasn't my dream job, that's for sure. But I was so happy to have something, to have a job, to earn my own money, everything I didn't have..there*”¹⁶⁵ says K.M. Overall, however, economic motivations are rather lagging behind, contrary to what for example Pavel Tigríd could say¹⁶⁶.

It is essential to conclude by saying that despite the external factors, exile is above all a personal choice, made by a work a self-reflection which is the result of a series of ruptures, pushing the individual to leave. It may be conflicting, but which is specific to each person. In our opinion, the causes of exile are above all of an existential nature before being material or economic; it is the result of a moment of rupture that

¹⁶³ Interview #1 of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 15/05/2020, Plédéliac

¹⁶⁴ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

¹⁶⁵ Selected excerpts from Interview #1 of K.M by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin 8/07/2019, Prague

¹⁶⁶ TIGRID Pavel, *Politická emigrace v atomovém věku* (Prague: Prostor, 1990), 40-57.

takes place in everyone. And this rupture, this triggering moment is the result of a deep malaise and „void”, which the narrators have all felt. These wounds, result of the violence generated, were translated in my interviews the term „void”, which has been mentioned several times. A void in society and in the future of their society. To explain what I mean, I will quote two of my interviewees, starting with Ilja Kuneš: *„I said to myself, listen, what's your future? There isn't one. Either you become a conformist, you.. you follow others. I thought, „Well, I can't do that.,” Either you become an alcoholic, but or you become a real dissenter, but I can't do that to my parents, because my dad was already fired once, so they're going to fire him again. I couldn't, I didn't have the courage to do it because it wasn't my life, it was also theirs. Thirdly, no conformism or dissent so you become an alcoholic, you're going to spend your life like that. Finally, you get the hell out of here.”*¹⁶⁷ The defining phrase here is *„there is no future”*. In this quotation, there is an awareness on the part of the exile of the importance of having to leave in order to escape from the void he seems to be heading towards if he stays in Czechoslovakia. An idea that is again vividly expressed by one of my interviewees, K.M: *„When I thought about the future, all I saw was darkness, a giant void that I didn't want to head towards. I had to go. (...) I had to save myself”*¹⁶⁸. Violence, which takes many forms, causes inner wounds that result in a crisis in the person's very existence, a questioning of his or her usefulness, desperately seeking a way to live again.

Understanding what happens inside each person when they decide to leave is the reason why we conducted these interviews. It is up to the individual to judge what is bearable or unbearable for them, what they can endure or not, but also to become aware of the realities of the conditions of their and to know whether, like others, they can simply get used to them¹⁶⁹. It is up to the individual to do this work of reflection, to

¹⁶⁷ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

¹⁶⁸ Selected excerpts from Interview #1 of K.M by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin 8/07/2019, Prague

¹⁶⁹ NOWOTNY Magdalena, „Émigration - Un voyage forcé” in *Les effets de l'émigration et l'exil dans les cultures tchèque et polonaise*, ed. Hana Jechova-Voisine (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1987) 1-17.

know their own limits but also the dangers and risks that they incur by staying or leaving.

5.3 The reject of the term „exile” in Czechoslovak society

The status of the exile is neither pleasing nor easy to live with. And it is even less easy to bear when it is subject to language manipulation designed to make the status one finds oneself in non-existent or when it is difficult to find a term that is not strongly codified by the emigrants and exiles themselves.

First of all, there is a political manipulation on the part of the Czechoslovak authorities, which has long gone unnoticed but which has had, and I think still has, long and persistent repercussions on how society saw the exiles. The problems that Czechoslovak exiles have experienced and are experiencing are those of the language manipulation by the communist authorities, which consisted in omitting, making taboo or simply trying to erase the words „emigrate”, „emigration” or „exile” from the common vocabulary, even though they correspond to a real experience that part of the population has to experience. Thus, in official but also common terms, we find instead of the appropriate terms of exile or emigration, words such as „stay abroad,, or „temporary travel” or even „authorized tourist stay”. In the collective imagination, emigration is non-existent and simply deleted from the vocabulary¹⁷⁰. Admitting these departures means first and foremost acknowledging one's mistakes and shortcomings, including persecution, lack of freedom and lack of opportunity, which are therefore incompatible and contrary to the communist ideology during Normalization. Recognizing the status of the exile and sharing what one has to say, such as the lack of a future, of hope, which we spoke about earlier, means recognising that the ideal of society advocated by the party, the image of a perfect society, to the happy citizens that the communist propaganda is trying to emit is just one of theirs, a lie that will expose

¹⁷⁰ NOWOTNY Magdalena, „Émigration - Un voyage forcé” in *Les effets de l'émigration et l'exil dans les cultures tchèque et polonaise*, ed. Hana Jechova-Voisine (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1987) 1-17.

the country to the whole world. To recognise the exile is to recognise that the system is imperfect.

While removing the words, we do the same with the social phenomenon. This is an issue that is increasingly being studied by linguists and political scientists because language, since ancient Greece, has been the most important and effective means of executing power. Instead of informing, the language of propaganda creates its own reality in order to establish its power among the masses. By removing the words, the same is done with the social phenomenon and offers the population what she calls not a living reality, but a reality desired by the ruling elite¹⁷¹. And the strategy of communist power in Czechoslovakia is based on the same mechanisms as any totalitarian regime: a binary system, of good and evil, of white and black, where grey does not exist and the emigrant is bad. The concept of emigration in the subconsciousness of Czech society has always been defined as a concept with rather pejorative connotations and affects the perception of emigration representatives to date. From the first wave of emigration, following the coup d'état of 1948, one already finds vile feelings towards exiles on the part of the elites. Long before the regime began to erase the term exile and emigration from the common vocabulary, it referred to „unfair” or „treacherous” emigration, seen as the highest treason for the nation, albeit a legal one¹⁷². The exiles were above all catalogued as delinquents, poisons of society, migrants with a failed existence, an erroneous and manipulated image which, however, would remain anchored in the Czechoslovak imagination for a long time to come. Propaganda is even propagated in literature, such as the famous slanderous book „*Emigranti proti národu*”¹⁷³, „*Emigration against the nation*”, which takes up the idea of unfair, antinational

¹⁷¹ NOWOTNY Magdalena, „Émigration - Un voyage forcé” in *Les effets de l'émigration et l'exil dans les cultures tchèque et polonaise*, ed. Hana Jechova-Voisine (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris-Sorbonne, 1987) 1-17.

¹⁷² KOSTLÁN Antonín, „Útěky do emigrace a Československá akademie věd” in *Sto českých vědců v exilu. Encyklopedie významných vědců z řad pracovníků Československé akademie věd v emigraci*, ed. Soňa Štrbářová and Antonín Kostlán (Prague: Academia, 2011), 19-207.

¹⁷³ SUCHÝ Čestmír, *Emigranti proti národu* (Prague: Mlada Fronta, 1953).

emigration, seen as a treason of the utmost importance¹⁷⁴. Of course, the term exile still exists in the vocabulary. It could not disappear completely in a few decades. But it does, in a way, when it comes to talking about the recent phenomenon of emigration. It is still possible, in official language, to speak of emigration or exile, and especially, in the case of France, of emigration during the First World War, such as the Czech Colony of France. It can sometimes be used to speak of great figures, authors, filmmakers, but for the rest, exile and emigration are spoken of in a tone of contempt.

¹⁷⁴ ČELOVSKÝ Bořivoj, „*Uprchlíci po Vítězném únoru*”, (Ostrava: Tilia, 2004) 12-15.

6. THE ROAD TO EXILE

The decision to leave is only the first step of a complex and difficult itinerary for those who take it. The purpose of this chapter will be to tell the story of this road that our narrators have taken, the difficulties that were overcome, the obstacles that had to be overcome, the laws that were braved, the fears that were felt, and the strategies and means that were adopted in order to leave. Each story is unique and offers us a different angle of approach, but the goal of each of my narrators was the same: to leave.

During the Normalization, there were not many opportunities to leave, but in our opinion, they can be grouped into three categories. First of all, there was legal expulsion, in other words, an exit ticket issued by the state, for whom the departure of its disruptive elements did it a good service. Secondly, the State also allowed their citizen to leave to live in their spouse's country of origin. Then the others; and here we take the liberty of going against what some have written: indeed, there is a tendency to say that there was „legal” emigration, in the sense that people crossed the border legally by obtaining an exit visa, and illegal emigration, where this time people had to cross the border without being seen or caught by the authorities. But why call one illegal and the other not when the purpose is the same: illegal status abroad. In both cases, laws were not respected and were voluntarily broken in order to exile themselves, and it was at the border where once there, the individual knew what laws they were hindering and the consequences. In the case of our narrators, as we will see, they all, for the most part, legally crossed the border before deciding to stay, against the law, in their new host country. Only one, whose story Carole Paris told us, had to cross the border under another identity.

6.1 Finding the right path

No matter how our narrators left, they were confronted with the laws and restrictive measures for departure regulation made by the Party. As we saw earlier, from the end of 1969, the state made the conditions of departure more difficult in order to avoid mass exile. Guards were posted at the borders and laws were added to the

previous ones; thus, to travel successfully, a valid passport and an exit clause mentioning the number of states visited and the duration of the trip. It was also necessary to provide a written invitation abroad or a promise of exchange from the State Bank, a confirmation from the employer or the head of the school and proof of military service. The administrative procedures were therefore not to be neglected and could make departure almost impossible for some people. Procedures that had discouraged Peter Brabenec when he simply wanted to return to France for a while: *“You could leave, but it took six months of preparation. You know, you had to ask your employer for permission first. So the employer, in each job, in each structure, there was always the party, there was always the party cell. So you had to go through that as well. Afterwards, you had to ask for what was called the promise of currencies. (...) If you went out for three weeks, you could get \$100, which was obviously absurd. So you had to ask for that and you had to wait three or four months. And when you had all that, you had to ask for the exit VISA. (...) The police, Czechoslovakian police, gave that VISA and when you had that, you could ask for the VISA to enter the country, because you had to have a VISA to go to France. A French residence visa plus a German transit visa, all that took six months”*¹⁷⁵.

Yet all of our narrators have managed in different ways to get away and circumvent the laws, and luckily, they offer us a range of ways in which we can get away. Peter Brabenec, like many students and young workers, took advantage of an offer to study in Paris to leave: *„There are translators, the ‘Union des Traducteurs’, who offered me to leave - because it was organized through the Ministry of Culture - and who said ‘we have some scholarships for France’. So the Union of Translators proposed me, my work proposed me too and afterwards I had to pass a small contest in front of the French cultural attaché who came from Prague. (...) So I went to the Sorbonne 3, Paris Sorbonne 3 I think, to Censier, the Censier University. There was a chair of dramaturgy and I was taking classes there and I was interviewing the teachers*

¹⁷⁵ Interview #1 of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 15/05/2020, Plédéliac

but I had no work to do, I was really a free listener."¹⁷⁶ France had been keen, and even more so with the signing of the Helsinki Accords and the coming to power of Socialist President François Mitterrand, to resume its ties and exchanges with Czechoslovakia. Thus, the case of Peter Brabenec is not an isolated case: many exiled people used these study stays in Paris to go away but unlike many of them, it was once he was there that he decided not to go back: *„I didn't have a project but a month before I started to give in to a certain good panic.. Stomach, stomach getting knotted up and so on. My stomach, belly was knotting up and so on. I was beginning to find out why. I don't know exactly when or how, but I made the decision to seek political asylum.*"¹⁷⁷

A godsend for those who wanted to leave were the trips and especially the organized trips as was the case for Ilja Kuneš who we will use as an example. In 1982, Ilja Kuneš managed to exile with his wife thanks to a ski trip organized with the help of friends who were still at tourism school and who had advised him to go through this system having themselves, a few weeks later, fled through this same system. He tells us: *„I found a week's skiing in Austria in an agency specialising in sports excursions"*¹⁷⁸. For the financing, he then called on a German friend *„he was relatively rich, he financed it all"*¹⁷⁹ he tells us. But he and his wife were faced with two obstacles: on the one hand, they were not members of a sports association, which was a compulsory condition for going on this tour, and they didn't know how to get permission from their university. But they found a solution to both problems. So to get the tickets his friend advised him to give some money to one of the employees to get the tickets and information: *„So he gave me I don't know...I think it was two hundred Deustchmark and after good, I was there to fill in the form etc, chatting, I still didn't know where was the right time to slip the money envelope. (...) She told me it's enough to be a member of a sportswomen's association of supporters. (...) And she told me 'Go to Letná, to Sparta stadium, they*

¹⁷⁶ Interview #1 of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 15/05/2020, Plédéliac

¹⁷⁷ Interview #1 of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 15/05/2020, Plédéliac

¹⁷⁸ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

¹⁷⁹ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

*have an office there, you join there, you come back with their card so that I can register you''*¹⁸⁰. Once they got their fan card, Ilja and his wife were able to get on the list and so were registered for a ski trip to Austria. As for the authorisation from the University, where they were both studying, this time they had to pretend that his wife was expecting a child, ruining her study trip to France, and that this ski trip was a gift from him to her. They got the stamp. This was one of the most widely used methods of leaving, and these trips were commonly known to be a way out. Kuneš tells us *„During breakfast, we were two minus, three minus and that was pretty funny, we... We befriended a couple who were younger than us and there, between us, we said 'I'm out' 'I'm out' 'I'm out' 'I'm out too''*¹⁸¹.

These quotes from our interviews tell us a lot about departure procedures. First of all, they show us that the laws were a real brake on exile and that departure required a certain number of bureaucratic acts where each step was an obstacle that could seem impossible to overcome, and that was the goal. Czechoslovakia, while giving its citizens the opportunity to leave, as it had promised under oath when signing the Helsinki Accords, nevertheless made the process difficult. In order to leave, it was therefore necessary to take into account all the requirements of the state, and sometimes, as in the case of Ilja Kuneš, to find ways of circumventing them or compelling oneself to do so, but obtaining what one wished by one's own means. Above all, however, these testimonies show that these measures are - to some extent - ineffective. Indeed, by telling us about the different strategies they adopted - retroactively linking the success of their approach - our narrators have shown us the flaws in this system whose measures can fail. But we are entitled to ask ourselves, if our narrators have succeeded, why not others? It is because there is, beyond the bureaucratic approach, another parameter to take into account: networks and the help of others.

¹⁸⁰ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

¹⁸¹ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

7.2 Whom to trust and to confide in?

Social contact was a necessary condition for being able to leave. One tends to imagine exile for a journey that one undertakes alone, excluded from everyone, but it is impossible that each of my narrators could have left without the help of a circle, albeit limited, of people who came to help them. Limited, because to put one's chances on one's side, it was better to leave as many people as possible in ignorance. Petr Kašpar tells us: *„Nobody in my family knew about it, in my entourage. The only person who knew was my sister, but I was not supposed to go to the police. No one should know, no one should foresee that I was not going to come back”*¹⁸². Families were at risk of persecution and that is why the exiles could not warn their relatives. Asked whether or not he had warned his family, Ilja Kuneš raises an even more interesting point: *„I didn't want to because they were being questioned by the police, etc. I didn't want them to be forced to lie or so on. And also, maybe also a little bit, that they will try to persuade me not to do”*¹⁸³. As a reason for this action, the narrators most often expressed the fear of speaking about their intentions in public, so that someone would not give them away and thus prevent their plans. As we saw in the previous section, exile is a wrench, an uprooting that tears the individual away from his land and his family. It took a certain amount of will and psychological strength to make that decision. All of our narrators chose not to tell their families and all of them - without necessarily expressing it directly - felt ashamed when speaking about this subject. This is a brutal step, to protect others but also to protect oneself, but at the expense of others. For not informing relatives was a way of not arousing suspicion and ensuring one's departure: *„I left with a suitcase with enough to last a whole week, my passport, my outward ticket, my return ticket...I had left everything at home. No one could think that I would never come back. So I left without the police suspecting anything”*¹⁸⁴.

¹⁸² Interview #1 of Petr Kašpar by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 23/06/2019, Paris

¹⁸³ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

¹⁸⁴ Interview #1 of Petr Kašpar by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 23/06/2019, Paris

„*The only person who knew was my sister.*”¹⁸⁵. By speaking of the caution in mentioning exile, Kašpar brings us to another subject, namely that the circle of people with whom the emigrants consulted their real plan was made up of only a few individuals. Most of the narrators mostly hid their thoughts of escape and only discussed them with their relatives, especially with their partners, with whom they would leave if they emigrated together. For some, this circle was extended to other relatives, but as a rule, only the final decision was announced. In their testimony, Ilja Kuneš and Carole Paris - when she tells us how she helped Jindrich Tomes to go into exile - both describe various situations that perfectly testify to the fear and anguish of being caught and the difficulty of trusting others. The first time Carole Paris met Jindrich Tomes was because a mutual friend had asked her to help her escape. She tells us about this particular first meeting: „*So he was very, very, very careful he said to me „Listen...It's a little bit difficult to explain, I'm in a particular situation, I prefer not to give you my name, right away.*”¹⁸⁶ Later, she even explains how she and Tomes had to organize their meetings so as not to raise any suspicion and because they knew they were being followed: „*We took the tram, bus, something a bit complicated to lose them [StB agents, note C.M]. We were followed all the time, I think we ended up losing them because we got on a train at the last minute, I don't know what we did but we ended up finding Jindra in this café, we were settled in, we talked for a while and...Then we saw, all of a sudden, we saw them, they were approaching from all sides. We said ‘That's it, it's over; they are there, we are doomed!’*” For those who had problems with Czechoslovak justice, exile was a game of hide and seek with the authorities until someone came to help you. But it was very important to keep your circle closed and trust the right people. In Ilja Kuneš' narrative, the reason for the fear of revealing one's intentions and the possible consequences emerges most clearly, as we saw earlier. But through another anecdote, he manages to depict the tense and paranoid atmosphere of the journey into exile: „*And it's pretty bizarre...The fear. Because we were afraid all the time, even there. And so were the others. I went - because the toilets were in the corridor - I went late to the toilets and I saw a guy with his suitcases (laughs). And I look at him*

¹⁸⁵ Interview #1 of Petr Kašpar by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 23/06/2019, Paris

¹⁸⁶ Interview #2 of Carole Paris by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 23/05/2019, Paris

like that (Ilja Kuneš opens wide his eyes) and he, he started to say 'Oh yes yes, I'm just going to see my sister in Canada,,. I looked at him and I said „Well...I don't care, I don't care you know!' (laughs). But even then, over there [In Austria, note C.M], people were afraid of me too”¹⁸⁷. Fear was pervasive and followed the exiles every step of the way until they didn't know who to trust or who to talk to.

But they couldn't hide everything. Apart from Peter Brabenec - who decided to stay once he was there - our narrators all called upon a closed circle of acquaintances to achieve their ends. And this circle was composed of very few individuals but was very important because they are intimately linked to the success of the exile of our narrators. Paradoxically, these people may have been eclipsed from the narrative scheme, which is normal, and then the interview tends to place our narrators at the heart of the testimony. There is a certain tendency to recount the path of exile as a personal achievement and to retain the solitude of the process and the exclusion of others. But all our interviews tell us who were those people, from the shadows in a way, who came to the aid of these exiles. First of all, inevitably, there are the former exiles, those of previous generations - even from before the communist period. Above all, they were of invaluable help when the exiles arrived on French territory, because they had already formed a community in Paris, around the AOTS or Svědectví, which was very close-knit and which we will talk about later. The most important link, whose traces were difficult to trace, is the one between the French, especially from Dijon, and the Czech exiles. In each of the interviews with our narrators, the Burgundian city was mentioned and this plays a decisive role in the outcome of their exile and the choice of country. As we have seen in our section on Franco-Czech-Czech-Slovak relations, the city of Dijon is a place of connection and link between the two countries, notably thanks to the establishment of the Czech Section at the Lycée Carnot and the Summer Universities. A year and two years ago, Ilja Kuneš and Petr Kašpar had visited the region and made friends, and Peter Brabenec spent one of his three years of high school in Dijon. This exchange put them all in a better situation than some who would have liked to leave; they all had help on the spot, a foot on the ground that allowed them not to arrive as alone as they would

¹⁸⁷ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

have thought. Ilja Kuneš tells us „*The day before boarding, before I called my friend in Dijon*”¹⁸⁸ who had later promised to help him. And once we arrived: „*And all of a sudden I see my friend with a woman behind the border police counter waving at us. I arrive, I remember, it was the cop, it was a big, big black guy, so I uh...I wanted to give him my passport and all of a sudden, the lady, or the girl, was there with her lawyer's card. She said, „I'm a lawyer, these are my clients., So he found for us, a friend who was a lawyer and he was waiting for us at the airport.*”¹⁸⁹ The case of Carole Paris is an example that is crucially mentioned. It is rare, of course, that she herself tells us that she did not wait to talk to other French people who took as many risks as she did. When asked whether she had subsequently helped other people or been in contact with other French people who were trying to help exiles, her answer was: „*No. (...) Either no one knew it was me, or they thought it was too dangerous, because it was still extremely dangerous, and then...Maybe no one knew anyone who had to flee, at least not officially.*”¹⁹⁰ Thus, these testimonies prove to us that, although the procedures were flawed, without this network of knowledge, exile was almost impossible.

6.3 Saying goodbye

We mentioned earlier the fact that few narrators notified their families and relatives because the smaller the circle of defendants, the greater the chances of leaving, according to our narrators. But one part that is often overlooked in studies on exiles is the impact of the aborted goodbye that many did not have the chance to say. And it is again necessary to remember that everyone left thinking they would not return. These missed goodbyes is a theme that comes up a lot but is always very briefly addressed. „*To my sister I was able to say goodbye very quickly. When...When she came to see me I told her to go outside to talk (Pause). And I gave her my keys my ID. (...) I also showed her where some of my things were*” Petr Kašpar confided. Ilja Kuneš had also left some things behind: „*We left our ID cards in our apartment. And when they saw that, they [his parents, note C.M.] said to each other: 'They're not going to come back you*

¹⁸⁸ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

¹⁸⁹ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

¹⁹⁰ Interview #2 of Carole Paris by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 23/05/2019, Paris

know...''¹⁹¹ before continuing as we had seen before: „*One, I didn't want to because they were being questioned by the police, etc.,. I didn't want them to... I didn't want them to have to lie or anything.*”¹⁹² So both narrators left their important belongings behind so their families could put them back in the appropriate places to avoid the inconvenience of retrieving them. The narrators tried to minimize the negative impact of their departure on their family and friends who remained in Czechoslovakia. In a sense, one could say that the individual stories thus incorporate the theme of a kind of effort to justify themselves, to reduce the guilt that the narrators felt towards their loved ones who remained. But we also understand from these two testimonies that exile builds „guilty,, individuals. Guilty by law, but guilty in the sense that they had to accept the fact that the punishment that was incumbent on them was not only incumbent on them but on their loved ones. The penalties could be extremely punitive, as severe as they could be unjust, such as dismissal or prohibition from practising certain professions or from entering university. Peter Brabenec - whose parents had even been persecuted by the Party - spoke to us with great emotion of the moment when his mother went to court in his place: „*There was a trial. My mother attended it. There was a trial, well, there was a court that decided that. My mother was summoned, but well, as a... not even a witness, it was just... She attended.*”¹⁹³

Decision making is always accompanied by a rejection of that same decision. And sometimes, it is not always clearly expressed by our narrators, but some signs do not deceive and have allowed us to analyze certain silences and not said as such. K.M., one of our anonymous narrators, dodged every question about the impact of his decision making. When asked how he thought his parents would react, the narrator returned to a point made some time earlier: „*Yes... You know I think the police were following me-I really had to be discreet about my plans, my plans. We were hearing these things, you*

¹⁹¹ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

¹⁹² Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

¹⁹³ Interview #1 of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 15/05/2020, Plédéliac

*know, friends of friends who had been caught...*¹⁹⁴. As if to transfer the guilt onto others, K.M. develops a defence mechanism, as if to free himself from all guilt, from this feeling of shame and rejection of his own exile. Same thing with Petr Kašpar; to the question „*How did you know that your decision was final and that you were going to leave for good?*“, the latter answered: „*I had been really marked by the aggressiveness of a couple of friends. The StB, you know, the communist police, the StB had come to my friends, Ivana and Boris. They all broke into their house. They were injured, Ivana had bruises on her face. They didn't say anything. (...) I was terrified*“. Even today, it seems difficult and painful for our narrators to talk about this tearing, this uprooting and to accept it as a personal decision.

With the exception of Peter Brabenec, all of our narrators left with the idea of exile, and thanks to their testimonies, it is possible to trace certain strategies by which the narrators tried to mitigate the possible negative consequences of their decision, to overcome various obstacles and to ensure the success of their departure. These testimonies are also a way of knowing fully how a departure and the feeling of each ordeal experienced from an individual's point of view. In the interviews, not only is the fear of a possible failure of the whole event and the arrest reflected in various ways, but also the overall emotional charge associated with leaving one's home country.

¹⁹⁴ Selected excerpts from Interview #1 of K.M by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin 8/07/2019, Prague

7. A NEW START: THE LIFE OF EXILES IN PARIS

Emigration so far leads to a radical change in life, the initial phase of which is characterised by uprooting, exclusion from one social group and inclusion in another. Emigration leads not only to the interruption of the current way of life but also to a change in the environment and in existing social and family relationships¹⁹⁵. Through it, one gives up one's share in a certain society; one must therefore start a new life.

Confrontation with a new environment causes a so-called culture shock. This occurs when a person is separated from his or her own system of cultural and linguistic meanings and finds himself or herself in a situation or world in which the meanings of words and actions are foreign¹⁹⁶. Ways of dealing with these challenges, and time, which will cause them to vary from person to person. The culture shock in the case of our study is not brutal, as all our narrators have a connection with France and most of them have already been to the country. But still, living abroad requires the emigrant to create new social ties, to learn a language, to find a new job, to find new landmarks, to think differently. In this chapter, we will try to reconstruct and analyze some of these phenomena associated with the arrival of the narrators in Paris through their testimonies.

7.1 The first moments in Paris

A not insignificant part of the description of the first days is occupied by the negative confrontation with the French administration. Even the narrators who emigrated earlier remember in great detail the procedures they had to follow before obtaining asylum: *„I was used to German precision. Uh...My first impressions there were disastrous. Because each time I got...how shall I say, I got different and even contradictory information. Each time, in front of a counter, I said to myself ‘Tomorrow*

¹⁹⁵ LACOUÉ-LABARTHE Isabelle and MOUYSSSET Sylvie, „La mémoire et l’oubli : écrire l’exil,, *Diasporas*, 22 (2013): 7-14

¹⁹⁶ CHOUEIRI Raja „Le ' choc culturel ' et le ' choc des cultures ' ,, *Géographie et cultures*, 68 (2008): 5-20.

you'll have ulcers up to your neck'. Uh...the experience was: I received information, because at the time it was - you always had to have papers, attestations, certificates, everything. So I get information about what I have to bring. I bring this, I come across another person, she says 'Well, we don't need that, we don't need that, but why don't you have that?' Because I wasn't told, But how come? I still need that. That means that even afterwards, I got used to it, I got used to it and I became completely placid. (...) The administration for me, it was horror. But I got used to it quickly."¹⁹⁷ This anecdote mainly reflects the stress and pressure felt by the narrators upon their arrival. Although French administrative slowness is not a legend, it is true that these long procedures and the way in which they are described and shared reflect a stress with regard to the procedure: a fear of not being in order and having to return.

For the first few days, all the narrators agree that everything was suddenly different and new: *„I was studying French at school but we weren't studying France! (...) When I arrived, I was completely lost! (laughs). I felt like I was seeing colours again.*"¹⁹⁸ Even Peter Brabenec, who had lived for three years during his high school years in Dijon, seemed to find everything different. The narrators described a lot about their first moments in Paris, their first impressions. Here it is possible to observe how the reaction to the new environment was influenced by previous experiences and the culture they have lived in so far, and how they saw the new residence through the prism of the current one and compared it with it. One of the results of this is that the vast majority of the narrators first mention the feeling of freedom. A personal freedom, like a liberation, when they set foot on French soil, but also individual and collective freedoms that they had been deprived of in communist Czechoslovakia. Peter Brabenec tells us: *„The pleasure I had in going to the newsstand, buying Le Monde, Le Figaro in the morning and then reading it. (...) And that I could read it in the metro, for example! Well, because from time to time, there were French people passing by in Bratislava, so I could have, from time to time, an Express, or I know... Un Nouvel Observateur etc. But I*

¹⁹⁷ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

¹⁹⁸ Interview #1 of Petr Kašpar by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 23/06/2019, Paris

couldn't read it on the tram or in the bus. It was an astonishment that was hard to explain when we came here. I buy Le Monde, I read it in the subway."¹⁹⁹

Among the challenges our narrators faced upon arrival, we decided to focus our questions and analysis on two issues: work and language. First, language. In their stories, most of the narrators describe how they had to learn the language on a daily basis. It is interesting to note that France was not one of the most favoured destinations for Czechoslovak exiles. But those who did, chose France mainly because they spoke French. Of our five exiles, three of them spoke it with a very good level, two of them had enough knowledge to make themselves understood. But there was a real willingness to start learning the language very quickly: *„We rented our first apartment - the first thing I bought when I went to the Porte Montreuil flea market was an old black and white television set because to learn the language, that's the best thing and especially because, because you can see, you can't see the radio.*"²⁰⁰ says Ilja Kuneš. K.M. read books and took some classes thanks to the generosity of these neighbors. *„I also and especially learned French thanks to my neighbour, a retired French teacher. Madame Prigent. She was the one who made the first move. She knew where I came from, she knew my situation and all that...So she offered me classes, about ten hours a week when we had the time. Sometimes less, sometimes more. I owe her a lot. Without her, I probably wouldn't have been able to find a job.*"²⁰¹ What is interesting to observe is also the reaction of the French. Petr Kašpar tells us *„You know, after a month, a year, ten years, I was still getting a reflection, here and there, on my accent. Even though I knew the language, being a French citizen, my children are French. I always have someone to pick up my accent.*"²⁰² The fact that this reflection annoys our narrator shows his desire to integrate perfectly through language.

¹⁹⁹ Interview #2 of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 18/05/2020, Plédéliac

²⁰⁰ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

²⁰¹ Selected excerpts from Interview #2 of K.M by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin 15/10/2019, Rennes

²⁰² Interview #2 of Petr Kašpar by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/09/2019, Paris

The other challenge was work; there was a huge gap between the level of education of our narrators and the work, placing them in a certain precariousness. To speak of precariousness in a thesis on precariousness is to take the risk of making a natural association between migrants and precariousness. However, it must be noted, and social statistics show it, that globally migrant populations have a lower socio-economic level than the general population.²⁰³ The case of Peter Brabenec, although he speaks perfect French, is a flagrant case. A former translator, with a master's degree in languages, trilingual, Peter Brabenec tells us about his precarious status when he arrived in Paris: „*I started working at the Bibliothèque Nationale but it was in '81 and that's precisely when Mitterand had made all the contract workers permanent. (...) And so he said that there would be no more ti--that there would be no more contract workers. And I couldn't be a permanent employee or take a competitive examination because I didn't have French nationality at the time to work in the civil service, you had to have French nationality. And the National Library needed me because I had access to, well, access to Slavic languages and there were...they had funds*”²⁰⁴. So Peter Brabenec found himself for the first few months in Paris in an extremely precarious situation where every month he could lose his work contract, as long as he had not obtained French nationality. After complicated months, he managed to obtain his nationality and then got a more stable job. But his testimony does not end there and is really very characteristic of Parisian life. Indeed, what is interesting to observe is the lack of opportunity and the case of Paris was extremely interesting to study because many people had disillusion about their work: „*It may have been my project, to go into a publishing house but I understood quite quickly that it was done differently in France. It's mostly by knowledge, by piston, so...I was doing the work of a reader. I very quickly felt that...My reading reports were read, taken into account but I was never called to the reading committee meetings and so I gave up because...It was not worth it*”²⁰⁵. What is interesting to observe here is that

²⁰³ BOUCHAUD Olivier and CHA Olivier, „8. Migrants, précarité et vulnérabilités” in: *Innover contre les inégalités de santé*, ed. Pierre-Henri Bréchat (Paris: Presses de l'EHESP, 2012): 105-116.

²⁰⁴ Interview #2 of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 18/05/2020, Plédéliac

²⁰⁵ Interview #2 of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 18/05/2020, Plédéliac

Peter Brabenec is the third of five narrators to have a similar experience of missed opportunity. And yet all of them in their speeches must have had difficulty expressing this frustration at not having had the same opportunities as the others, because they felt very grateful to France for having welcomed them. Kuneš also tells us: „*Yes, we arrived a fortnight later, uh... I started working, I found a job as a night watchman, ideal.*”²⁰⁶ The way he portrays this precarious situation faces their old life. Kuneš especially, who couldn't find a job. For them, the job was to help them become self-sufficient, to integrate into society and also to raise money for various needs, including housing.

Finally, the last point that is interesting to raise when observing the way our narrators describe their new material conditions. K.M tells us „*We went shopping one morning with my friend, the second...the third day I think. We went to a mini-market a little further down the street, towards Porte de Charenton. (...) My friend made fun of me, I was completely lost. There were so many choices! (...) You know us, we had nothing, we couldn't buy anything, the shelves were always empty...But there! There was everything, fresh bread, good meat, wine, bed linen in every colour...newspapers! (...) But I remember that my basket was barely full. You know, I stayed a bit like that. Not very materialistic... It conditioned us, you know...The lack.*”²⁰⁷ It's interesting to raise the reconstruction of memories in terms of materialism. Indeed, it is automatic in comparison to Czech society, even 40 years later. It is above all at this point that the cultural clash takes place, in our view; capitalism versus communism, abundance versus scarcity. But the relief the narrator feels at the sight of the filled shelves shows us that the need for material security was essential to them.

7.2 Rediscovering social ties

On leaving, each person breaks some existing social ties, but on the other hand, they are given the opportunity to establish new relationships. In our thesis, the focus was mainly on relationships with other migrants. Svědectví, at the university, the cafes.

²⁰⁶ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

²⁰⁷ Selected excerpts from Interview #2 of K.M by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin 15/10/2019, Rennes

These relationships were very complex and we will spend this part trying to present them as a whole. And this relationship is based on three notions: trust, mistrust and distance. And for some people, these three feelings can coexist, at different times.

First of all, trust; first of all, one can see that this contact with other Czechoslovak emigrants could also be supportive in some respects - some mention help in finding an apartment or a profession, others mention the possibility of temporary accommodation or advice on living in France in general. This was done by Czechs in Paris, but also by Czechs in Dijon and this whole network of people helping Czechs to escape. This help was certainly provided on the basis of friendly relations, but knowledge of the same language, the awareness of belonging to a group and also the fact that everyone went through a similar process could also play a role here. Svědectví and especially Pavel Tigríd and his wife Ivana have always been useful to the emigrants who came to Paris. They provided information on offices where they could obtain the necessary documents, but also on where to stay, etc. For Kuneš, it was a job opportunity: *„I was studying Political Science, Political Science, which was what I later learned about Tigríd's dream, he never did it, but wanted to do it. I don't know, so I was there practically three or four times a week, so we started to get on well, in 84, he offered me to do the research for him, because he was preparing a book. I started doing research for him and then, I don't remember if it was '84 or '85, he offered me a job there.,”*²⁰⁸ For K.M. an accommodation on his arrival: *„I stayed with friends of Tigríd when I arrived, they had a small guest room with a bed for a child. Tigríd (...) I was lucky enough to meet him the first week and I was able to thank him, because I knew he was behind it.”*²⁰⁹ The role of the magazine and of Tigríd is present in every testimony and some of our narrators do not hide their admiration for the man, the writer, but also a true figure of the exile who resisted in love with his country, Czechoslovakia. Petr Kašpar says: *„I was very impressed...The first time I saw Tigríd. He had gathered so*

²⁰⁸ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

²⁰⁹ Selected excerpts from Interview #2 of K.M by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin 15/10/2019, Rennes

many exiles around him at the magazine. Some of them I'm sure came to Paris to join him and the magazine."²¹⁰

Indeed, as we saw earlier, there was a rather politicized, literary Czech community in Paris; great Czechoslovak figures and characters had taken refuge in the French capital; Tigris, Jan Čep, Petr Král, Ivanka Šimková or Milan Kundera during the Normalisation. Svědectví and Tigris were landmarks for some; all of them met him and stressed that in their own way the magazine and the place was a parenthesis, a place where one could „*be Czech, again*”²¹¹. But also for Czech relations outside the magazine; it was a moment to be able to talk about what happened in Czechoslovakia but also in France, the life of an exile; his relations lost to find a link that had been lost during exile and even if our narrators tell us that they were not necessarily all friends, all of them tell us that these links, these encounters had a positive impact at times when the life of exile could seem difficult: „*What we went through emotionally was in-transportable. Only those who have gone through the same thing can talk about it., With some people on the outside, yes, also what. There was also, there was also, it wasn't only there. Because every Friday, we had a date at a bar...which was next to Svědectví. And there, there were a lot of people who came what, who wasn't, who didn't necessarily go to Svědectví but sometimes there were fifteen, twenty of us. It was every Friday.*”²¹²

On the other hand, there was also mistrust. A feeling less present in our narrators but which we feel it is important to highlight. Let's remember that there was really a period during which the physical violence committed by the StB multiplied. Some had even witnessed it: „*I had been really marked by the aggressiveness of a couple of friends. The StB, you know, the communist police, the StB had come to my friends, Ivana and Boris. They all broke into their homes. They were injured, Ivana had bruises on her face. They didn't say anything. (...) I was terrified*”²¹³, Peter Kašpar told us. Later he tells us: „*One day, at the very beginning when I was in Paris, I was with a friend on a*

²¹⁰ Interview #2 of Petr Kašpar by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/09/2019, Paris

²¹¹ Interview #2 of Petr Kašpar by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/09/2019, Paris

²¹² Interview #2 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 23/05/2019, Paris

²¹³ Interview #2 of Petr Kašpar by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/09/2019, Paris

*terrace and there was this man...You know, a little suspicious, who was looking at us. My legs were shaking, I was there „It's not possible...they came looking for me! I'm screwed!,, (...) Then he left. I never knew if...If it was, if he was part of the StB. But it made an impression on me. For a while, I felt like I was being followed.”*²¹⁴ Our narrators were extremely suspicious and this seemed to be a generalization. This quote from Kuneš shows us that the spectre of the agent, of the StB was very present and seemed to affect every individual: *„That I told you already, when I started working there [in Svědectví, note C.M], I refrained from asking questions. Because I didn't want to be suspected of being a cop.”*²¹⁵

And finally the distance. Which translates into two things. First the distance in the sense that some people wanted nothing to do with the Czechs in Paris. This was not the case with my narrators, but other testimonies can corroborate this idea. But above all it is a distance in the sense that some of our narrators could not get close to the Czechs in Paris. First of all, because some of them did not consider them exiled. There is a phenomenon that cannot be ignored, a kind of sectarianism of the generations preceding the one under study. The three waves of Czechoslovak emigration that we saw earlier can certainly be studied separately, but we should not forget, due to their temporal proximity, that we must also observe their interaction and the extent to which they had an impact, especially on the segment of emigrants that we observe and study in this work. And especially because these interactions give rise to what we will call here consciousness of the exile, a kind of awareness on the part from the Normalization's exiles of a kind of differentiation between the other waves of exile and their own.

A differentiation that can be explained, on the one hand, quite naturally, by the fact that the exiles of 48 and 68 had not experienced Normalization. Talking about Pavel Tigrid, Ilja Kuneš says: *„He [Tigrid, note C.M] had a kind of empathy, which I didn't find, for example, in the people of '68. The immigrants of '68. They didn't understand at all what...what Normalization was, what life was like here.(...) Yes, the*

²¹⁴ Interview #2 of Petr Kašpar by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/09/2019, Paris

²¹⁵ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

facts in their heads, they had them. But they didn't know that atmosphere, you could see right away that they didn't experience that."²¹⁶ This is a feeling that we find in many testimonies. There is a kind of class consciousness, and individuals of the same origin who have had the same experience do not necessarily seem to fall under the same definition of the term exile. One adds: „*There were the exiles of 48, those of 68. We...It wasn't the same thing. We were the emigrants, as if we had the luxury of being able to leave when they couldn't,*„ K.M says, „*No, I didn't really have any contact with the '68s, but we certainly hadn't experienced what they went through*”²¹⁷. There is a phenomenon that is extremely peculiar to my understanding of Czechoslovak exile, where there is a kind of clear distinction between the waves of exiles before and after normalization. But what is striking in these last quotations is that words that we had presented as synonymous end up trying to refer to two different people. There is a phenomenon of hierarchy between these two categories of exiles, the first one unconsciously placing itself in front of the other in the position of victim, refusing to mix and consider themselves as equals. It would of course be exaggerated to think in this way and to make a generalization by conflicting two generations that, as we will see later, have had very strong ties. But it would be just as mistaken not to mention these quotes which show that emigrants had difficulty identifying themselves as such, when they lacked words in the common vocabulary, but also when they could not identify themselves with figures who were similar and identifiable.

However, there is a willingness on the part of some exiles to distinguish what they call the exiles, victims of communism, emigrants, those who have left to live a more comfortable life elsewhere. In the discourse of the early exiles, there is a willingness to distinguish between exiles and emigrants, who correspond to those who, according to them, left later, who were not fighting against anything. And it is obvious that if this discourse is taken up, spread, it can explain why our narrators do not find words to qualify themselves or involuntarily make a distinction between them and the generations of exiles before them. Thus we can find this idea in the strong words of the

²¹⁶ Interview #1 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/04/2019, Pilsen

²¹⁷ Selected excerpts from Interview #2 of K.M by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin 15/10/2019, Rennes

anti-communist writer and columnist Lubos Zink and exile of 1948: „I would like to ask you to make a distinction between exiles and emigrants. These are two completely different concepts and you throw them in the same bag (...) Individuals who started to leave the betrayed republic in 1938-1939 and then from the Protectorate to join the fight against Nazism were not emigrant but exiles. And the same thing happened after February 1948. (...) So please refer to us who lived abroad and fought for the restoration of freedom in World War II and then in the so-called Cold War as we deserve: exiles, not emigrants.”²¹⁸ He goes on to say what he thinks is an insult: „And you, now you say „these are emigrants,, so you are committing the same insults to all of us who have gone abroad to fight, not to have a good time.”²¹⁹

What our interviews have shown is that a gap was also felt on the side of our narrators, like Peter Brabenec: „We continued to be linked to the culture, the language etc. We spoke our own language, but we didn't plan to go back at all. (...) Like Pavel Tigrid, who left around 48, just before the communist coup d'état, they were much more attached to this country. They believed, they were convinced that they were going to return...But also because their activity was centered on...on this country which has not existed for a long time, therefore, a kind of democratic Czechoslovakia. And, well, they were still writing in Czech, in Slovak, the magazine...Then they were trying to. To get the issues into Czechoslovakia, they had networks when they didn't, it was more like, well. They were really looked at as naive people.”²²⁰ Brabenec gives us the impression that all the other exiles felt that they were misunderstood by another generation that had simply not known about Normalization and that, according to them, seemed to have underestimated it as well, and this is where a distance, a gap is created: „They had absolutely no understanding of what...what Normalization was, what life was like here.

²¹⁸ KOSTLÁN Antonín, „Útěky do emigrace a Československá akademie věd,, in *Sto českých vědců v exilu. Encyklopedie významných vědců z řad pracovníků Československé akademie věd v emigraci*, ed. Soňa Štrbáňová and Antonín Kostlán (Prague: Academia, 2011), 19-207.

²¹⁹ KOSTLÁN Antonín, „Útěky do emigrace a Československá akademie věd,, in *Sto českých vědců v exilu. Encyklopedie významných vědců z řad pracovníků Československé akademie věd v emigraci*, ed. Soňa Štrbáňová and Antonín Kostlán (Prague: Academia, 2011), 19-207.

It means...how to say...Yes, the facts in their heads, they had but they didn't know that atmosphere, you could see right away that they didn't experience that."²²¹ The difference here also lies in the fact that while most post-February emigrants thought that the communist regime would not last as long, post-August emigrants, who had 20 years of experience of life in a totalitarian regime, considered changes in the Soviet bloc unlikely.

7.3 A willingness to fit in

It was very important to ask our narrators - and also to observe - the degree of integration and assimilation of French culture in their lives. To our surprise, a considerable amount of time was devoted to this topic. Integration as an individual journey, the speed and final outcome of which depend on the characteristics of the migrants and their length of stay. Oral sources highlight the complexity and multidimensionality of the integration process, and also the diversity of possible integration models.

Thus, our generation of exiles has experienced a totally different assimilation and integration from the previous ones, proving to us that it is essential not to stop at 1968 and to understand all the waves that took place during communism. First of all, it experienced a faster assimilation and the cause was mainly the fact that this generation did not expect to return as we said earlier. To quote Brabenec: *„So there were a lot of people, including Tigrid, he didn't really fit into French society. Well, he spoke French, a bit hesitant but...He lived with other emigrants from his editorial staff, with his wife who was Czech etc.*"²²² Unlike the generation embodied by Tigrid, this one had no hope of returning home. The goal was to get his life back together again, and fast. To succeed, to forget the failure that exile represents, it was necessary to learn the language

²²¹ Interview #2 of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 18/05/2020, Plédéliac

²²² Interview #2 of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 18/05/2020, Plédéliac

- which the generation of 48 did not do, for example, or very little and to mix with others.

But how can the degree of integration and sense of belonging be measured? According to Mirna Safi, integration involves several groups of indicators that play a role in different spheres of immigrants' lives. This class of indicators is thus reminiscent of both Gordon's marital assimilation and structural assimilation. Indeed, it attempts to measure the degree of „mixing,, of populations without specifying a single type of relationship²²³. Integration indices can therefore be measured by several indicators such as the mix of relationships, languages, education and work, the dimension of national belonging or cultural references and norms. We have already seen that at the levels of relationships, language and work, all our narrators have made a considerable effort to integrate in the best possible way in these areas. But what about other criteria? Let's go back briefly to them, and in particular to national belonging and cultural references.

It was a point that was at the core of our interviews. Particular attention was paid to questions of assimilation and customs. And once again there is undeniably an even greater effort on the part of the studied generation of exiles to open up to French culture as much as possible and to welcome it in order to create new points of reference. Kuneš tells us: *„So no, at the beginning I couldn't be integrated. At first I couldn't be integrated. I had just arrived. But as time went by, I integrated very, very well. And uh... I learned the customs, I understood that the world is very different, that it's not Germany everywhere, that it's very different. For example, just one example, it's food, dinner, it's a ceremony! It's like going to the opera! Whereas here or in Germany, we eat to fill our stomachs. And that's all, and as soon as possible! I remember when we were invited for the first time to someone's house for dinner.”* We see the importance and the will to be accepted and to integrate into French society. And this will is really a determining characteristic for our exiles and which is incomparable to previous generations. The Food and Opera mentioned by Kuneš can be seen as indicators of this

²²³ SAFI Mirna „Le processus d'intégration des immigrés en France : inégalités et segmentation”, *Revue française de sociologie*, vol. vol. 47, no. 1, (2006): 3-48.

dimension of cultural references that deal with everything that can refer in one way or another to the cultural integration of the individual²²⁴.

²²⁴ SAFI Mirna „Le processus d'intégration des immigrés en France : inégalités et segmentation”, *Revue française de sociologie*, vol. vol. 47, no. 1, (2006): 3-48.

8. REFLEXIONS ON MEMORIES AND IDENTITIES

Finally, we will devote this last brief chapter to two issues related to exile: questions of identity and memory.

8.1 Questioning the identity

Migration depicts a brutal change in the lives of our narrators and the first moments after their arrival remain the most difficult. In addition to a psychological upheaval, migrants are exposed to a deep questioning of themselves: their social and cultural identity no longer responds to the new circumstances. What do we mean by identity? According to E.M. Lipianski, identity *„is not a pre-constructed entity assigned to an individual since childhood. Rather, it is a dynamic process in perpetual motion, characterized by crises and ruptures. In the course of his or her life, the subject must work towards the coexistence of his or her own behaviours and thoughts, according to the circumstances with which he or she is confronted”*.²²⁵ So everyone has several identities. The individual belongs to different local, cultural, professional, political groups, corresponding to as many statuses. At the beginning, our narrators had to rebuild everything: a new identity development is constantly taking shape and questions the belonging: migration causes ruptures with the daily life of these people and especially with their landmarks that allow them to identify with something. According to Morreale, once the individual has migrated, he is then confronted with the construction of a multiple identity, in which two elements must be integrated: *„on the one hand, the family history of the country and culture of origin and, on the other, the novelties of the host country”*.²²⁶ In order to achieve this assimilation, the subject adopts different identity strategies, *„through which he tends to defend his existence and his social visibility, his integration into the community, while at the same time valuing and*

²²⁵ LIPIANSKY E.M, „L'identité personnelle,„ in *L'identité: l'individu, le groupe, la société* (ed.) Jean-Claude Ruano-Borbalan (Auxerre: Sciences humaines PUF, 1998), 21-29.

²²⁶ MORREALE Calogero, „L'enfant migrant et son identité,„ in *Etrangers, Migrants, Réfugiés, Requérants, Clandestins. Et les Droits de l'Enfant?* (Sion: Institut Universitaire Kurt Bösch/Institut International des Droits de l'Enfant, 2000), 117-122

seeking his own coherence” and this is why there may have been ambivalent relations with other exiles, between distance and the desire to find oneself.

As simple as it is to accept this idea, of multi-identity, it is extremely difficult to live it as exiles. What emerged from our interviews is a real problem of understanding about identity issues. Not on the part of the exiles themselves, but on the part of those who stayed and those who welcomed them. It is a phenomenon that I think is essential to highlight because it has had such a place in everyone's discourse. For Peter Kašpar, the observation is simple: *„I am Czech and a French citizen.”*²²⁷. This problem was especially accentuated after the fall of Communism, when our narrators were able to recreate links with their country and the Czechs: it is at this point that the individual finds himself confronted with a questioning of his belonging, Czech and French. *„I still have problems in France,, says Peter Brabenec, „Because I have - on history, on the present too, I have opinions that are not necessarily shared with French people and... When I put out some arguments I am told ‘Ah but you come from there!’ (Laughs). So... I’m...I’m...I’m very quickly put in a box. But in Czechoslovakia, in Czech Republic, in Slovakia, it's exactly the same thing. So I appear very critical on both sides, everywhere. Because, well, over there, I...I make the criticism, well, I make arguments from here and here, I make arguments from there. So it’s...it's an identity - I think it's very enriching but it can be difficult to carry, especially for people who would like to be like everybody else. But I think that's the end of us, being like everybody else.”*²²⁸ These testimonies show us that exile leads to a certain solitude of never really being understood. And this also comes from the fact that the memory of the exiles has often been forgotten.

²²⁷ Interview #2 of Petr Kašpar by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/09/2019, Paris

²²⁸ Interview #2 of Peter Brabenec by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 18/05/2020, Plédéliac

8.2 Reflections on memory and the place of exile in communist history

Memory is there so as not to lose the thread of one's own existence, and storytelling is the means of not forgetting, of remembering, of telling oneself and reinventing the story of a past that is no longer, in a present that is sometimes very difficult to grasp. We decided to end this work by talking about the issue of memory and the dangers of oblivion in the Czech collective memory and in the way of dealing with the history of communism. With our narrators the question of memory and history was only briefly addressed. It was a subject that made our narrators quite uncomfortable and even sad. However, we did manage to draw some lessons from it that are important to share now.

Many of our narrators have expressed this lack of representation in their history, especially in Czechoslovakia. Because in France many associations are working on Czechoslovak culture and history. This is the case of the AOTS in particular but also of the Czech Centre in Paris. And our narrators are well aware of this. But as if wounded in their pride, it is the silence of their conditions and their experiences in their country of origin that they expressed themselves more: *„You know, for them [Czechoslovakians], the exiles are Havel or Tigrid. We've written books about them, we respect them... We... We've been forgotten a little bit.*”²²⁹

But The origin of the problem stems mainly from the treatment of the communist question after the fall of the regime in 1989. After 1989, the post-communist regimes of Central Europe built their legitimacy on the rejection of the communist experience and reorganized their identity system on the basis of the founding myth of the death of communism. There were need for political discontinuity: should we remember or forget? What should be remembered, to what extent and how? Kuneš also tells us how he experienced the policies conducted against the Communist Party after 1989: *„After 89, in Czechoslovakia, there was a big discussion if we should draw a big line behind the past and start again. For example, Tigrid was for it. To make a clean slate, we forget everything. You don't forget, you forget everything, but...I was against*

²²⁹ Interview #2 of Petr Kašpar by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 17/09/2019, Paris

it. At the time I would have banned the Communist Party."²³⁰ This consensus exists at the social level and plays a role in the way individuals see themselves in everyday life. The imperative of rejection and distancing does not alter the official memory. Everyone felt this injustice in them, as if the way history had been treated was a lack of respect for what they had experienced. For beneath the apparent homogeneity of the communist rejection, a number of contradictions betray the ambivalence of the political and social relationship of the past, and the exiles, victims of this communism, pay the price of a policy of memory of silence, reducing the place of their experience to nothingness. And how can one exist when exile occurred during communism but the term „communism” refers to a past experience; and to explore communism after 1989 is to disrespect the politics of oblivion that has been put in place. Our narrators therefore found themselves in a situation where they could not afford to exist, where in society, in history, in collective memories, their experiences had no place²³¹.

More than thirty years after the fall of the regime, the reference to the communist past weighs, more than any other, on this identification process. Individuals, groups and entire corporations are regularly „recalled,, to their past. Post-communism has created a situation where, except for those who have no past, all „adjust” their memory. The forms of condemnation they institutionalize, their implications for the lives of groups and individuals also contribute to division. The condemnation of communism stirs up memory as much as it obliterates it, it leads to the assimilation of the term „past” with that of communism, the former often reduces the latter, the latter supposed to cover the former. Thus, it is impossible to understand the history of the exiles if we do not question the memory and if we do not open the fields of research to these isolated groups, forgotten by History.²³²

²³⁰ Interview #2 of Ilja Kuneš by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 23/05/2019, Paris

²³¹ MAYER Françoise, *Les Tchèques et leur communisme : mémoire et identités politiques*, Paris: E.H.E.S.S, 2004, 225-230.

²³² MAYER Françoise, *Les Tchèques et leur communisme : mémoire et identités politiques*, Paris: E.H.E.S.S, 2004, 225-230.

9. CONCLUSION

The aim of this thesis was to make a contribution to the study of the Czechoslovak exile during the period 1968-1989 in France and more precisely in Paris. To do so, we based ourselves on research work that has already been carried out on the subject, but the particularity is that we also based ourselves on the results of our interviews with seven narrators who had lived through this experience.

The question of Czechoslovak exile and migration to France under communism has been the subject of research only very recently: the interest of historians in Czechoslovak exile between 1948 and 1968 is justifiable: the country, and especially Paris, saw the arrival of a large number of important people, politicians, writers, poets, artists. But on the other hand, until the 1980s, the question of exile was little studied in France, notably because of the difficulties of access to sources and the atmosphere of the Cold War long delegitimized any criticism of the communist system. But no matter how the subject was studied, the fact remains that it was cruelly lacking in the subjectivity and analysis that only oral sources and interviews with our narrators could provide. As we said before, our thesis does not aim to question all the work that has been done, but we hope to offer a new angle and new elements that only oral sources can bring. It is this subjectivity which is sorely lacking in history and which must be embraced in order to understand exile as a whole. Unfortunately, a single thesis was not enough to address the whole subject; we had to make choices and concentrate our efforts and analysis on certain topics that we found interesting to note. In this conclusion, we simply wanted to come back, not to the strengths and lessons learned from our research.

First of all, we focused on the term exile, because we felt it was important to use the right terminology. Those who had to leave during Normalization had indeed a different qualification from their predecessor, which meant a kind of depreciation and a misunderstanding of their fate. So we have tried to give a definition of exile to see that it applied to every person who had to leave his country to go to another one. The

important notion was that of rupture, which we felt defined each person who had experienced this fate.

Then, it was important to understand how the departure was made. And again, our interviews allowed us to see the departure from another angle and to understand what goes through the minds of our narrators as they leave. Several results were obtained from this research: first of all, that not everyone was given the opportunity to leave. Indeed, without a network and means, it was impossible for some people to be able to leave. Moreover, certain factors (high level of education, anti-communist background in the family) are criteria that are very little emphasized when studying the typical profile of Czechoslovak exiles in France. Then we learned that decision-making is multidimensional; it is not just a simple desire for a better life, but is the result of an existential crisis, of a rupture between man and his country which requires a separation, a departure, a new life. It is necessary when studying a phenomenon such as exile to always place the human being at the centre of our priorities and our research because it is up to him or her to teach us and to share his or her experience with us.

In a third phase, we took an interest in the new life of our exiles. The case of Paris was interesting because the capital is home to many generations of migrants and exiles. Thus, when we had to choose on which points we were going to focus, we found it interesting to highlight the relations with the community. We thus observed three phenomena: trust, mistrust and distance. Trust because it is sometimes difficult to find the words, in one's new life, with one's new friends, to talk about how complicated exile and uprooting were. Thus, in some of our narrators, there was a small part of them that pushed them to get closer to the Czech community in Paris. To find a job, but more often to find a bit of home. Even if all our narrators say that they did not try to get closer to the Czechs in Paris, all of them talked about this community and the beneficial effect it could have - in the short or long term - on their experience of exile. Then we have a second phenomenon: mistrust. This case is rarer, but the experience of exile and the fear that surrounds it has affected our narrators. Finally, distance, which in our opinion was the most interesting phenomenon to study. Although they all had the same experience, a

gulf grew between the different generations of exile who lived together under the roof of Paris. There were many reasons for this, but one of the most recurring is the fact that the old generations misunderstood and misunderstood Normalization, tending to qualify its destructive effects. There is a real impact on the social bond that these generations could have created and that explains why the generation of exiles of Normalization is in its own right.

Finally, we looked at the question of the identity of memory, which is a real source of problem in the case of our narrators. For although they are all certain of who they are, Czechs and French, their identity poses a problem for others; not French enough for some or too French for others, the case of Czechoslovak exiles in France is a phenomenon that would be interesting to study better, and from the point of view of the exiles themselves. History, particularly through oral sources, would be a way of ensuring that their unique identity is not a source of exclusion but a missing piece to be added to the puzzle of Czechoslovak history and memory.

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10.5 Interviews

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- Interview #2 of Ilja by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 23/05/2019, Paris
- Interview #1 of Carole Paris by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin, 15/05/2019, Prague
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- Selected excerpts from Interview #1 of K.M by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin 8/07/2019, Prague
- Selected excerpts from Interview #2 of K.M by Clémence Martin, translated by Clémence Martin 15/10/2019, Rennes

11. LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOTS	Association des Originaires et amis des pays tchèques et slovaque
BnF	Bibliothèque Nationale de France
BRD	Bundesrepublik Deutschland
CAC	Centre des Archives Contemporaines
CPC	Communist Party of Czechoslovakia
IRC	International Red Cross
IRO	International Refugee Organisation
KSČ	Komunistická strana Československa
StB	Státní Bezpečnost
UN	United Nations

12. APPENDICES

Annex 1: Narrator Record (Peter Brabenec)



NAME : BRABENEC
SURNAME : Peter
DATE OF BIRTH :
PLACE OF BIRTH : Slovakia
PHONE : 0149778802
EMAIL : brabenec.peter@neuf.fr

NARRATOR RECORD

IMPORTANT DATES

- **1968-1973 :** High school in France
- **1981 :** Exile in France
- **1989 :** Christmas in Czechoslovakia with his kids for the first time

IMPORTANT NAMES

- Pavel **TIGRID**
- Jan **VADISLAV**
- Pavel **VILIKOVSKY**
- Xavier **GALMICHE**

KEYWORDS

Dijon, Section Tchèque, Lycée Carnot, Svedectvi, "Un chien sur la route", traducteur, Pavel Vilikovsky,

EDUCATION AND LIFE IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA

- Slovak origins
- High School and baccalauréat in France in Dijon (Section Tchèque)
- Parents had issues with the Communist Party, strong opponents
- Scholarship in 1981, studies in Paris
- Despite being banned from staying, he remains in Paris and is sentenced to two years in prison

EXILE AND LIFE IN FRANCE

- Works as a literary critic and translator
- Married to a French woman, two kids
- Was never able to return to Czechoslovakia until Christmas 1989, his wife was taking the kids to see his parents
- Translated Pavel Vilikovsky works

Annex 3: Interview Scenario (Peter Brabenec)

Interview scheme

Session	Timeline	Level 1			Level 2	Level 3
		<i>Personal life</i>	<i>Career/ Education</i>	<i>Outside of career</i>	<i>Organization</i>	<i>National life</i>
1	1950's 1960's	Birth Youth in Czechoslovakia Family fleeing communism				
	1968-1973 (Dates to be redefined)	A stay in France that left a deep impression on him.	Studied in France, at the lycée Carnot in Dijon.		Section tchèque, Lycée Carnot in Dijon	May 68 in France and Prague Spring and the Warsaw Pact invasion from distance
	1970's	Difficult return to the country, willingness to leave becoming stronger and stronger				Helsinki Accords Charter 77 Normaliza- tion
	1981	After the end of his stay, he decides not to return and is sentenced to 2 years in prison.	Scholarship to study in Paris		Paris IV	Election of François Mitterand, relaxation of the laws on immigration and exile in France

Questions Cheat Sheet

- I want to begin by asking you when and where you were born
- Tell me about your family, what were your parents' names? Do you have any siblings? What did your parents do?
- Your parents were opponents of the communist regime. What was it like growing up in that kind of environment?
- You lived and studied in France for three years in high school. What impact has this experience had on your life?
- You are now a literary critic and translator. Is that what you studied in college?
- When did you know you wanted to leave?
- You applied for a scholarship to study in France: at that time, did you know that you were not going to return?
- A threat of two years in prison awaited you in Czechoslovakia: but were you afraid, even in exile?

NOTES:

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