

**Assessment of the thesis *The Revolution of 1989 in Czechoslovakia – Comparison of Memories in the Czech Republic and Abroad* proposed by Stephen J. C. Crawley, Department Oral History – Contemporary History, Faculty of Humanities, Charles University, 2014.**

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Stephen Crawley's thesis is the first non-Czech student's submitted within the Oral History – Contemporary History branch of study. Although we strive to provide Czech program and English program students with the same conditions and information, Stephen Crawley was disadvantaged at least in limited discussion with other students and limited approach to archive base and secondary literature because of language "barrier". I highly appreciate that student transformed this limit and disadvantage into a challenge and looked for other information sources. Finally, he processed the topic in a creative way: Stephen Crawley provide us with his view on 1989 events in our country "through the eyes of English-speaking witnesses, both at the time and in retrospect". He offers a picture of the events through web sources, various reports, news, photographs, and databases and from a methodology point of view he offers a new (or alternative) approach how to study contemporary history topics; in this respect the thesis can be a sort of inspiration for other students.

Stephen Crawley also took advantage of the fact that during the study he learned to work with the oral history method: he "created" a kind of complementary source for his work – two oral history interviews with English-speaking men. Those thesis sections where student uses oral history interviews as comparative and references points of his work I consider as the most successful parts of the text. Other sections suffer from student's effort to say on each individual topic as much as possible, to present issues from too many angles. With so many topics as the student deals with (Dubček, Havel, statue of King Wenceslas, the Magic Lantern, the revolution in Brno, Gorbachev, the replica of the Liberty Bell and many others) it is not surprising that some parts are a little bit simplifying (e.g. "Waiters in central Prague hotels were notorious black marketeers and would have reported to the StB." – I would recommend to avoid such generalizing statements). Still, even these chapters have their inner value – they show us, native Czechs, which symbols are important for foreigners, in which way they are accessible for foreigners to understand them etc.

My questions for the defence relate the oral history methodology. The student describes difficulties he faced up in searching contacts and asking for interview. He explains these problems that a contact person probably "could not find someone suitable and willing to be interviewed" (p. 20). Reflecting e.g. today's context, media or public discourse, are there any other reasons why the woman when being in a detail informed about the project, never replied (p. 20)? The first narrator is also author of a book on the Czech Republic *Czechs in a Nutshell*; the second is a father of one of Mr. Crawley's students. What are possible problems and bias for subsequent use of the interviews resulting from these characteristics? In what ways, e.g. could be an interview with a writer (even

if only of one book) different to that with a non-writer? What are specifics of interviews with people they know us and we know them (as in the case of a student's father?)

A note at the end: Czechs in Nagano 1998 did not win the world ice hockey championship but Olympic Games championship. The victory was not celebrated in the Wenceslas Square but in the Old Town Square. Maybe in his next work Stephen Crawley could make a research why we Czechs are so proud of these events...

I evaluate Stephen Crawley's thesis with grade 2, provided an excellent defence.



Prepared by:

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