

The Process

Interviewing Peter Dobias

Selecting who to interview

First, we had to decide on who to interview. We selected Peter Dobias, someone who grew up in Czechoslovakia during the communist regime. He was fortunately able to find time in his busy schedule to lend us a few hours to interview him.



Asking the right questions

Before the interview, we had to plan out which questions we would ask him. It was not too much of a challenge to decide what we wanted ask and learn about his perspective growing up in Czechoslovakia was like throughout the communist regime and Velvet Revolution.

Part 1: Introductions

- ☐ "Today is April 22nd, 2022, and we are in the house of Mr Dobias. Mr Dobias, can you tell us your full name and when and where you were born?"
Dnes je 22. dubna 2022 a jsme v domě pana Dobiaše. Pane Dobiaši, můžete nám sdělit své celé jméno a kdy a kde jste se narodil?

Part 2: Childhood and Youth in Czechoslovakia

- ☐ What effects did your family feel due to the communist regime?
- ☐ Were you aware of what was going on politically as a child such as propaganda? Did your parents openly talk about politics at home?
- ☐ What was school like when you were young? What community organisations and extra curricular activities were you involved in?

Part 3: Velvet Revolution*

- ☐ When did you start noticing that the political climate and general sentiments were welcoming of a revolution?
- ☐ Did you participate in the Velvet Revolution, and if you did participate, how? Do you have any regrets about what you did or didn't do?
- ☐ Historically, young students have often pushed for political change, do you think that being a student affected how involved you were in the revolution?
- ☐ Do you remember the way messages about the revolution were getting around? What was the main channel or platform for information among students? How did it differ from the message of the government?
- ☐ Youth is a time in which your values and identity really form. What was it like to be in your 20's in a time of revolution.

Part 4: Velvet Divorce*

- ☐ After learning Czechoslovakia had separated into two separate nations, what were your initial thoughts and feelings, how did you react, and how did your feelings and opinions change after the initial shock?
- ☐ Did you have any ties to people who lived on the Czech side? Did the political polarity at the time bring up any conflict in your interpersonal relationships?

Part 5: Post-Communism in Slovakia*

- ☐ Were parts of adapting to the post communist era challenging?
- ☐ After communism did you find that you and those around you continued to censor yourselves out of habit? How did it feel to have this new autonomy?
- ☐ Do you have any personal experiences of the "wild west" atmosphere in Slovakia during the 90s, regarding the fast political and business changes that were taking place at that time?
- ☐ Can you tell me about your experience opposing Meciar? Did you ever feel discouraged about having to continue the political fight even after the velvet revolution and divorce?

Part 6: Immigration and Living in Canada

- ☐ What was your thought process surrounding immigrating and why did you choose to emigrate after the velvet revolution and velvet divorce? How did it feel to leave your birth country after finally establishing democracy?
- ☐ Why did you choose to immigrate to Canada specifically?
- ☐ When you immigrated to Canada, what was your initial interaction with Canadians like and was it what you expected? Did you feel welcome and did you have access to resources that helped you settle in?
- ☐ How did you reconcile your new Canadian identity with your Slovak one?

Part 7: End (No Additional Questions in This Section)

- ☐ *máte nějaké motto nebo nějakou radu, o kterou byste se chtěli podělit s budoucími generacemi?*
- ☐ *We end the narration by asking the witness for a message or motto that they would like to tell to future generations.*

Appendix A: Probing Questions

- ☐ During the communist reign in Czechoslovakia there were specialty stores, Tuzex, that used a special currency, Bony. Do you remember these stores? Have you ever shopped at one?
- ☐ Do you feel like technology and the internet would have influenced the revolution and your participation? In what ways?
- ☐ Did you or people you know fear communism would return?
- ☐ How was your experience with the Canadian government in comparison to the post-communist government of Slovakia in the 90's?

Arrival

Peter and his wife live in a secluded area in Perth. When we arrived, they were very welcoming and offered us snacks and refreshments. We were a little nervous about how the interview might go, but overall quite excited.



Setting up

After meeting up at Peter's house, we set up for the interview and tested to make sure everything was working. We had some technical issues with the lapel microphones we had planned on using, so we improvised using a cellphone to record the audio.

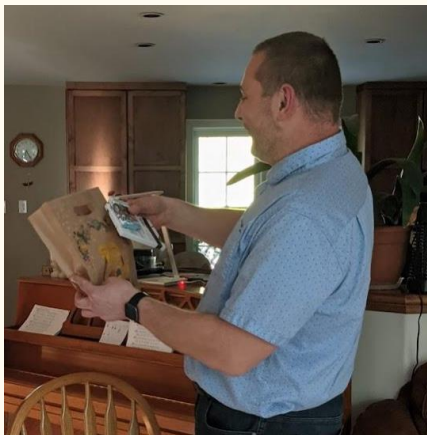




The interview

Once the audio was sorted out and we set the camera we were able to start the interview. Everything was going well, however, after a few minutes of recording, the camera ran out of storage. Luckily, we had a backup memory card, so we were able to continue filming without much delay. The rest of the interview went along well without any other issues. Peter provided really engaging answers and showed us some family photos and artifacts.





Wrapping up

When the interview terminated, everyone was feeling quite confident with how it had turned out. We packed our stuff, said our goodbyes and thanked him for his time.



Final thoughts

We had a great discussion with Peter and it was really interesting to learn about his story and experience during the communist regime over Czechoslovakia. Overall, we had a wonderful experience working together on this project and learned a lot of skills related to interviewing and recording processes.