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**Stories of Trauma, Survival, and Resilience in the Czech Republic:
An Oral History Conversation in Honor of George Placzek**

In October 2021, I gave a talk at Masaryk University in Brno on the Burnett Research Group's recently completed project: an oral history of Czech physicists who participated in the transition from totalitarianism to a democratic society. Although these interviews were an important contribution to the history of Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic, they were all conducted in English.

The purpose of this set of discussions at the Czech Academy of Sciences is to facilitate the production of oral histories of science by Czechs in the Czech language, to expose Czech historians and students to oral history techniques, including theory, ethical issues, videography, audio recording, interview techniques and trauma narratives, project conceptualization and organization, archiving, and multimedia interpretive work, such as podcasts and documentaries. The training and materials will be in English, but the goal is to encourage further production of oral histories in Czech.

There is a second motivation for this project, which is inspired by the story of the Placzek family. Tony Placzek is the only surviving member of the prominent Placzek family of Brno. His uncle George, a famous physicist, was in anguish after his friends and colleagues in Kharkov were imprisoned by Stalin, in part because of their ties to the well-traveled Placzek. With over 100,000 refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine now living in Brno and Prague, the city of Kharkiv newly liberated for the moment from Russian guns, the importance of recording individual stories to document the trauma of violence and the dignity of survival and resilience is all too clear. Therefore, the goal of this training is to further prepare Czechs to record the current moment for posterity, in addition to helping them to document the challenges faced by the Czech people under totalitarianism.

Oral History Workshop Schedule

Paul Burnett, Oral History Center, UC Berkeley
Tomáš Pavlíček, Instytut Historii PAN, Warszawa

A one-day workshop will be held at the Czech Academy of Sciences in Prague on September 12, 2022. The following sessions will cover the theory and practice of oral history with respect to project management; narrator and community involvement; legal and ethical practices; trauma-informed interviewing; and archiving, interpretation, public history, and technology.

- 8:30-9:00 am Introductions and objectives for the day
- 9:00 – 10:00 am **The nature and history of oral history** This introduction distinguishes the field and practice of oral history from other types of interviewing, historical research, and archiving. We will discuss concepts of the self, shared authority and intersubjectivity.
- 10 am – 10:10 am Short break
- 10:10 – 11:30 am **Managing an oral history project** This session breaks down the complete workflow of an oral history project from start to finish.
- 11:30 am – 12:15 pm **Trust and oral history.** Introduction to the interview process, informed consent, and legal and ethical concerns with oral history.
- 12:15 – 1:15 pm Lunch – open discussion
- 1:15 – 2:15 **Oral history recording, interpretation, public history, and archiving** Attendees who have registered in advance may be asked to watch a one-hour recording before the session about recording practices. What do you do once you have your recordings? What are the advantages and challenges associated with emerging technologies and platforms? Introduction to the multimedia public history universe, with examples.
- 2:15 – 2:45 **Trauma-informed oral history** – Discussion of interview techniques, challenges, and the literature on trauma-informed narrative.
- 2:45 – 4:30 **Institutional oral history, trauma, and healing** This will be a more open conversation among historians about the risks and promise of oral history: oral history in wartime, oral history and vulnerable or marginalized populations. As oral history practice becomes more accessible and ubiquitous, how do narrators and historians navigate issues of agency, safety, control, and power?

Presentation of two oral history projects:

Paul Burnett, The Czech Physics Oral History Project
Tomáš Pavlíček, Czechoslovak-Polish Scholarly Entanglements in the Cold War