

EMIGRACE VÁCLAVA NEDOMANSKÉHO A RICHARDA FARDY EMIGRATION OF VÁCLAV NEDOMANSKÝ AND RICHARD FARDA

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Abstract

Ice hockey in Czechoslovakia had specific position. This sport brought people together regardless of political status, race, gender and nationality. This paper traces the development of two important Czech ice hockey players Václav Nedomanský and Richard Farda during the Cold War. They decided to emigrate after a successful career in the Czechoslovak national ice hockey team and the Czechoslovak Domestic League. They emigrated in the same time to the Switzerland after few days they signed a contract with Canadian ice hockey team and they moved to Canada. Nedomanský's and Farda's destinies were connected after emigration, but their life did not develop in the same way. This historical research is based on archival sources and shows how the political situation influenced Czechoslovak sports emigration.

Keywords: Václav Nedomanský; Richard Farda; ice hockey; Czechoslovakia; emigration

Souhrn

Lední hokej, měl v Československu velmi specifickou pozici. Jednalo se o sport, který spojoval národy bez ohledu na pohlaví, rasu a politickou příslušnost. Tento příspěvek si klade za cíl popsat životní dráhu Václava Nedomanského a Richarda Fardy v období studené války. Tito významní čeští hráči se po úspěšné kariéře v československém národním hokejovém týmu i domácí ligové soutěži rozhodli emigrovat. Emigrovali ve stejné době do Švýcarska, kde po několika dnech podepsali kontrakt s kanadským hokejovým týmem, na základě kterého se přesunuli do Kanady. Ač byl život Václava Nedomanského a Richarda Fardy po nějakou dobu propojen, nevyvíjel se v emigraci stejně. Tento historický výzkum se opírá o archivní dokumenty a ukazuje jak politická situace v československu ovlivnila československou sportovní emigraci.

Klíčová slova: Václav Nedomanský; Richard Farda; lední hokej; Československo; emigrace

Introduction

The revolution took place in Czechoslovakia in February 1948, which led the way for the country to fall under Communist rule for a long 41 years. The opposition mainly came from the middle-class, whose private property was confiscated while production was nationalized. In the context of opposition to the communist regime, mass migration to the West began. The waves of migration were associated with major political and international events. These can be divided into the post-February stage 1948 - 1968 and the post-August stage, which began after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia on the night of 20 – 21 August 1968 up to the Velvet revolution in 1989, when the monopoly of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia finally ended.¹

I wanted to provide new insights and conclusions with a thorough collection of archival sources and secondary sources. For this historical research, I applied the qualitative method as it enabled me to target all aspects of the social life and political background of this historical period. Due to the theme of the work, it is a historical research based on four fundamental steps: heuristic, criticism, synthesis and exposition.

¹ Průcha, V. (2004). *Hospodářské a sociální dějiny Československa 1918-1992*. Brno: Doplněk.

The ice hockey has always been fascinating topic in Czechoslovakia and Czech Republic. My goal is to link ice hockey history with specific human destinies between the years 1968 to 1989. During the Iron Curtain a number of successful sports persons decided to emigrate from Czechoslovakia, because in the West was possible to find better conditions. The primary aim of this article is to provide historical probe to the life in emigration. I decided to compare life of Václav Nedomanský and Richard Farda, two successful ice hockey players from Czechoslovakia. They decided to emigrate in the same time to the same country. Their lives abroad were connected for several years, but their career did not develop in the same way.

The sources used for this article have been various. The main source of my work is the Archiv bezpečnostních složek (ABS). This archive is rich in materials on Czechoslovak history from 1948 to 1989. It contains a number of important personal files. These materials bring a lot of knowledge. It shows, above all, the connection between sports and social, political and cultural life in Czechoslovakia during the Cold war. Professional literature is not written about this topic. I use just basic information from book *Zlatá kniha ledního hokeje: historie a současnost nejrychlejší sportovní hry* and *Breakaway: From Behind the Iron Curtain to the NHL-The Untold Story of Hockey's Great Escapes*.

The main objective of the article is to help more complete understanding and historical reconstruction of the lives of Czechoslovak emigrants. The research asks the following questions: How was the sportspersons' motivation to emigrate developing? How was the motivation of sportspersons to emigrate related to social and political inclusion in Czechoslovakia? What was everyday life like for sportspersons who had emigrated? Who supported sportspersons in exile?

Václav Nedomanský

Václav Nedomanský, born to Zdena and Václav Nedomanský 14 March 1944 in Hodonín, is a former Czechoslovak hockey player and football player. He took his first steps in hockey career in his native Hodonín and his journey continued into Slovan Bratislava, where he played in the 1962/63 season.² Václav Nedomanský married four years younger wife Věra Cívínová. She represented Czechoslovakia with a 10 km race of cross-country skiing in 1969 in Finland. The son Václav was born in January 1971.³

In Bratislava, Nedomanský studied at the Institute of Physical Education and Sport (hereinafter referred to as „ITVŠ“). Later the Institute was renamed the Faculty of Physical Education and Sports. While at the same time studying he also played for Czechoslovak league tournament. In the second year of study, he was named the best sportsman of the Institute ITVŠ based on the student survey evaluated by a committee composed of representatives of departments, the Czechoslovak Youth Union and professional assistants, who took into account sport and study results of the adept.⁴

Slovan Bratislava – ice hockey club based in Bratislava – was founded in 1921. Since the end of the Second World War, Slovan won several medals in the Czechoslovak hockey league. Slovan included many famous players such as Vladimír Dzurilla, Jozef Golonka, Jan Starší, Rudolf Tajnnár or Peter Šťastný. In the seasons 1959 – 1966, the club regularly achieved several second or third-place finishes in the championship in the Czechoslovak league. In the following years, this was the same despite a few breaks. In the 1978-79 season, Slovan achieved the only title in the Czechoslovak First Ice Hockey League – Czechoslovak league championship title.⁵

Václav Nedomanský was selected as league's best hockey forward since the start of his career in Slovan Bratislava. In the 1964/65 season, he scored 31 goals in third place behind Zdeněk Špaček and Jan Klapač. In the following season, he scored 39 goals in the second place and a year later he was the first to score 40 goals. He continued to play until the end of the 1973/4 season and won three times first place, one second and third place.⁶

² Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Švýcarsko OB r. č. 11529 Br., p. 1924.

³ Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Cesta, OB r. č. 11517 BN, p. 50–53.

⁴ Dubrovay, Š. (1964). Nedomanský nejlepším športovcom ITVŠ. *Naša univerzita*, Issue 9.–10., IV.

⁵ Jenšík, M. (2011). *Zlatá kniha ledního hokeje: historie a současnost nejrychlejší sportovní hry*. Praha, XYZ.

⁶ Ibidem, Václav Nedomanský, získáno 20. září 2017, z <http://www.eliteprospects.com/player.php?player=42854>.

He dressed Jersey for the first time in the 1964/65 season and the last time before his emigration in 1974. For Czechoslovakia he scored 65 goals in 80 matches in the championship. He played in two winter Olympic tournaments in 1968 and 72 and scored a total of thirteen times. He won one gold, four silver and three bronze medals at the Ice Hockey World Championship and silver and bronze medals at the Olympic Games.⁷

Richard Farda

Richard Farda, a Czechoslovak hockey player born in Brno started his hockey career in SK Zbrojovka Brno in the 1962/63 season. He was born on November 18, 1945. His father was Eduard Farda, a well-known Czechoslovakia ice hockey coach and mother, Lidmila Fardová, born Vostálová. His hockey career due to military service started at the Dukla Jihlava where he played in 1963-1965 and then played in the Physical Unit Ball Bearing Plant in Brno (Tělovýchovná jednota Závod kuličkových ložisek Brno "TJ ZKL Brno") which he left due to emigration in 1974. In the 1970/71 season, he won the title of champion of the Czechoslovak ice hockey league together with the Brno team.⁸

Since 1965 he had been part of the Czechoslovak ice hockey team but he participated for the first time in the ice hockey world championship in the 1968/69 season. In 1972, he took part in the Winter Olympics, where he scored one goal and had 5 assists. He won one gold, two silver and three bronze medals in the World Championship and one bronze medal in Olympic Games.⁹

Richard Farda was officially the engineer of the Ball Bearing Plant in Brno and his wife in the same company held the position of an artist. They had son Richard. In Brno, the family applied to be allowed leaving the country and travel to Switzerland. Their request was approved.¹⁰

Václav Nedomanský and his way to the emigration

Václav Nedomanský applied to be allowed leaving the country several times during his career in order to gain the necessary gaming experience. He had been told to get permission after the age of 30 years, and perhaps for this reason he refused several offers from the National Hockey League (hereafter NHL). At the same time he was promised to leave Slovan Bratislava to any Czechoslovak team from the 1974/75 season.¹¹

Having regard to his leaving country, the confidant "D. Ferda" said: *After the end of the World Championship in Helsinki where representatives of NHL discussed with him, two unfamiliar managers from the Atlanta Flyers club visited him in a Bratislava apartment and agreed with Vašek that Vašek would ask again the central authorities of the Czechoslovak Union of Physical Education and Sports (ČSTV) about the possibility of going to America for two or three years with the whole family.*¹² On the basis of this, Nedomanský several times negotiated with ČSTV in Prague but the exit was not allowed.

Václav Nedomanský asked for a promised transfer to Brno, but it was rejected. He was called up for military service in Jihlava despite the fact that he had missed a final exam at his college in Bratislava in September 1974. He would therefore be entitled to shortened military service. As can be seen from the source of the "Černá", the public assumed the transfer of Václav Nedomanský to Brno: *Some students were questioning why especially Nedomanský emigrated when he had been told to join TJ ZKL Brno, where his good conditions would be guaranteed. However, Hrstka (Lubomír Hrstka, the hockey player) wrote that he had informed them that Nedomanský was supposed to join the ZVS (basic military service) and was probably worried as he personally negotiated with a chairman*

⁷ Ibidem.

⁸ Jenšík, M. (2011). *Zlatá kniha ledního hokeje: historie a současnost nejrychlejší sportovní hry*. Praha, XYZ.

⁹ Ibidem; Richard Farda, získáno 20. září 2017, z <http://www.eliteprospects.com/player.php?player=78379>, 20. 9. 2017, 13:00 hodin.

¹⁰ Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Cesta, OB r. č. 11517 Br, p. 77.

¹¹ Pinchevsky, T. (2012). *Breakaway: From Behind the Iron Curtain to the NHL-The Untold Story of Hockey's Great Escapes*. John Wiley & Sons, New Jersey.

¹² Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Cesta, OB r. č. 11517 BN, p. 50-53.

of ÚV ČSTV Antonín Hampl and asked him whether he could join ZVS (basic military service) after a holiday abroad.¹³

Instead of Brno, Václav Nedomanský had to move to Jihlava and attend basic military service. However, Nedomanský managed to negotiate a monthly postponement to the basic military service because of holiday. Due to the circumstances, the family could sale the flat in Bratislava and the SIMCA-180 car. They subsequently reported their stay in Brno and applied for travelling abroad. Václav Nedomanský and his son and wife received an exit permit for holidays in Switzerland and Italy from 28th June 1974, after which Václav Nedomanský had to relocate to Jihlava. Whether this was just a coincidence or a deliberate act by ČSTV, it is not trace in the sources. The family travelled only with small luggage that did not attract too much attention. In Bern, Switzerland, Václav Nedomanský applied for asylum based on political reasons.¹⁴

In Switzerland he met his teammate from the representative team Richard Farda who was allowed to travel for fourteen days with his family to Switzerland. He crossed the border in Mikulov on July 4, 1974 by Fiat car and was due to return back to Czechoslovakia on July 18, 1974.¹⁵

Václav Nedomanský and Richard Farda and their contract in Canada

Unlike Václav Nedomanský, Richard Farda, applied for asylum based on financial reasons. At the beginning, this was not considered by Swiss authorities to be a serious reason and he and his family faced the risk to return to Czechoslovakia. Richard Farda and Václav Nedomanský, along with their families, were staying after arrival in the country in Eduard Bílek who emigrated in 1968. He helped them with the initial problems that occurred in Switzerland.¹⁶

In Bern, Nedomanský met representatives of the Canadian hockey team Toronto Toros acted at the World Hockey Association (hereafter WHA). The WHA was trying to compete with the NHL. The contract was signed for five years. It is found that the amount received by signing the contract does not comply with the individual sources. We most commonly hear of financial rewards of 800,000,¹⁷ 750,000¹⁸ and 450,000 Canadian dollars.¹⁹

According to archival documents, Richard Farda did not plan to travel to Canada, but in connection with signing the contract between Nedomanský and Toronto Toros has accepted a two-year bid for the same hockey team. The financial award he received for this contract was lower than in the case of Václav Nedomanský, but the exact amount again differs in the sources. Probably it was 80,000 Canadian dollars.²⁰

*His wife and son Richard are permanently in Switzerland. They still struggle with foreign language. They have a teacher to help them to cope with the foreign language. Teacher's name was not found.*²¹ Richard Farda's family then moved to Canada: *Ludmila Fardová is much happier in Canada than she was in Switzerland. On the one hand, Farda has a higher salary - twice as high as he had in Switzerland, and on the other hand, Fardová is interested in being alone, away from a number of friends, against whom she had already expressed reservations in the CSSR.*²²

Nedomanský travelled to Canada with his wife and son in mid-July 1974 and two years played for the Toronto Toros. The team then was renamed the Birmingham Bulls and during the 1977/78 season he played in Detroit Red Wings, which was part of the NHL. His professional hockey career continued to the New York Rangers and came to an end in the 1982/83 season in Saint Louis Blues. Later he was still devoted to hockey as coach in Germany and Austria.²³

¹³ Ibidem.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Karta emigrace Richard Farda.

¹⁶ Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Obrana, OB r. č. 11517 Br., p. 63.

¹⁷ Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Cesta, OB r. č. 11517 Br., p. 71.

¹⁸ Pinchevsky, T. (2012). *Breakaway: From Behind the Iron Curtain to the NHL-The Untold Story of Hockey's Great Escapes*. John Wiley & Sons, New Jersey.

¹⁹ Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Cesta, OB r. č. 11517 Br., p. 45.

²⁰ Ibidem.

²¹ Ibidem, p. 70.

²² Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Emigrace, OB r. č. 11529.

²³ Ibidem.

Václav Nedomanský and his life abroad

The public believed that the residence of Richard Farda and Václav Nedomanský would be formalized: *It is assumed that both Nedomanský and Farda will later return to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic on the basis of a change of residence and public would believe that both had been sent abroad to gain experience so that they could not be penalized.*²⁴ They did not carry out this step, and Václav Nedomanský and Richard Fardadid not ask for themselves and their families to return to Czechoslovakia under the presidential amnesty.²⁵

After emigration, Václav Nedomanský contacted his parents in Hodonín and asked them to take over things from the flat in Bratislava which had not been taken. These were: *clothing, furnishings, souvenirs, etc.*²⁶ In this matter, his father Václav Nedomanský went to Bratislava but the flat already had a new owner who refused to submit son's things until authorities decide on how to process this further.²⁷

At the beginning Václav Nedomanský was looking for a way how to contact his parents. Many letters and messages had been seized and many other information received from his close family friends had been detected. As an example of the detention of the letter was the October 1974 event, when his father gave a letter to Julie Blažková who promised to transmit a letter to Canadian coach Bill Harris, who accompanied his team to Czechoslovakia. At the end of November 1974, Václav Nedomanský contacted the family via telephone and talked with his father about the transmitting the letter to the Canadian coach: *Václav Nedomanský junior immediately understood who was Julie Blažková and told his father that he had wrongly done that the person (Julie Blažková) worked with them. Therefore, the letter was not delivered. They further confronted several cases of mutual correspondence and found out that many letters were lost or were confiscated.*²⁸

Archive documents at the same time confirm the common practice of Czechoslovakia to declare the emigrants and their families to be dead. *Probably on Friday, December 6, 1974, Vašek Nedomanský called again at 2.00 pm. He says he has the newspaper in which he reads that his parents had a heavy car crash in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. Therefore they're worried about them and they're calling to Hodonin immediately. Father Nedomanský wondered where he took the message because in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic it is said to the contrary that Vasek and Farda are dead after the car crash. Someone is deliberately expanding such panic messages to disturb the peace of the family.*²⁹

Richard Farda and his life abroad

According to the archive sources, Richard Farda was not happy in Canada: *he would very much like to return to the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic. He is waiting for the amnesty and use it in order to return. Farda also said that he would play in Canada this year (the testimony is January 1975) and then he would relocate to Europe - either Switzerland or NSR (West Germany) to be closer our Republic.*³⁰

After three-year hockey career in WHA, Richard Farda along with Václav Nedomanský returned with his family to Switzerland and lived in Zurich. Farda continued to play ice hockey and worked with Jaroslav Krupička at the tennis club where he was teaching. He subsequently run tennis school and trained both Swiss and Czechoslovak children. Ludmila Fardová worked in Swiss AirCompany, and their son Richard played tennis.³¹

Lidmila Fardová, the mother of Richard Farda, received a foreign residence permit and thus she could spend 60 days with her family in Switzerland. She left Prague on October 21, 1978 and flew with Swiss Airwhere Ludmila Fardová worked. She returned back to Czechoslovakia on 17 December 1978. After returning to her home State she was exhausted but: *it was obvious that she controlled herself and*

²⁴ Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Cesta, OB r. č. 11517 Br, p. 40.

²⁵ There are no papers in the archives of the President's office concerning Václav Nedomanský or Richard Farda.

²⁶ Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Cesta, OB r. č. 11517 Br, p. 60.

²⁷ Ibidem.

²⁸ Ibidem, p. 95.

²⁹ Ibidem.

³⁰ Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Cesta, OB r. č. 11517 Br, p. 108.

³¹ Archiv bezpečnostních složek. Švýcarsko, OB r.č. 11529 BN.

offered evasive answers to the questions. Her attitude had the impression that she was instructed by Karel Podborský, a former worker of S-Stb Brno (State Security), whose daughter is Richard Farda's wife.³² About her stay with her son Lidmila Fardová said: *In Zurich, where her son now lives, he was waiting for her with the whole family at the airport. They came to me by a new car that her son had received from club officials for whom he played ice hockey.*³³

At the time of the arrival of Lidmila Fardová, they lived in a three-room flat, which was furnished with only the finest things, because they did not know whether they would move or even return to Canada. Subsequently, Richard Farda became a coach of ice hockey in Switzerland and continued his coaching career in Kaufbeuren, Germany. In May 1989, Eduard Farda, the brother of Richard Farda, confirmed the desire to return to his home country. *The interest to enhance relationship with Czechoslovakia is due to the fact that mother and siblings live in Brno and he would like to visit them and allegedly because of his interest in creating a close relationship with the Zetor Brno ice hockey team. His goal is also the friendly relations maintained with a hockey team from NSR (West Germany), where he currently works as a coach.*³⁴ After the Velvet Revolution, Richard Farda became a coach in Czechoslovak Extraliga and later in the Czech Extraliga.³⁵

Conclusion

During the period of the Iron Curtain sportspersons from Czechoslovakia were trying to emigrate. The motivations to emigrate are distinct. In the case of Richard Farda the main motivation was in the financial wellbeing and maybe disagreement with regime. Václav Nedomanský's motivation was developing. His dream was to play abroad at the beginning. After years he was thinking about moving back to his hometown Brno. But in the year 1974, Václav Nedomanský was in complicate situation. He was called up for military service and it was the main reason why he decided to emigrate. The financial page and the personal professional growth in abilities were secondary reasons.

Emigration brought a number of problems for Czechoslovak emigrants. It is clear that the biggest problem was the lack of language knowledge. Farda's and Nedomanský's families had private teachers and they solved this problem. Other problems were little money, housing, another education system, employment for wives or life without friends and family. Farda's family decided not to travel with him to Canada. They stayed in Switzerland and the separation was problematic for all. Farda's and Nedomanský's family had main support in friend Bílek in Switzerland. After signing the contract with the Canadian hockey team Toronto Toros, they helped to Farda and Nedomanský with necessities in Canada.

The footprint of the Václav Nedomanský in the NHL is very noticeable. The Big Nedo, as he was nicknamed, is still a concept in overseas ice hockey. Richard Farda did not celebrate such successes as Václav Nedomanský in the NHL but is inherently associated with Switzerland. He worked as a tennis and ice hockey coach. He had significant role for the Czechoslovak community in Switzerland.

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³² Ibidem, p. 17.

³³ Ibidem, p. 17.

³⁴ Ibidem.

³⁵ Jenšík, M. (2011). *Zlatá kniha ledního hokeje: historie a současnost nejrychlejší sportovní hry*. Praha, XYZ.

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Archiv bezpečnostních složek, Karta emigrace, Výjezdní doložka Richard Farda.

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