>> [Jim McAdams] Good afternoon. I'm Jim McAdams, I'm the director of the Nanovic Institute for European Studies here at Notre Dame, and I'm thrilled to see all of you at our panel, "Elite Athletes and the Cold War." Those of you who were at the showing of Gabe Polsky's remarkable film, "Red Army," last night know that this is actually Stage 2 of a hockey extravaganza, and more than hockey, that we're presenting for you. This is not just because of the participants, but also because of the theme—a very, very special panel. If we think about the relationship between sports and politics in the world, in the United States, sometimes it's easy to forget how closely they can be tied to each other. When you're thinking about elite athletes you're thinking about people who are, or become intimately tied to their national identities. At the same time, when you're thinking about these individuals you're thinking about people who are inevitably involved or pushed into political roles. What is unique about this panel today is we will be exploring both themes and the way that they interact in the lives of people that, as you know from our distinguished panelists, have experienced these themes on a lifetime basis. Many of you will already know our panelists. I'll list them: the first is Peter Šťastný here. Peter was a member of the Czechoslovak national team. He played with multiple teams in the NHL, he's a member of the NHL Hall of Fame. And he's also a member of the European Parliament for his country, Slovakia. Second we have Petr Klíma. Petr Klíma was also a member of the Czechoslovak national team, played for five teams in the NHL including one that will be represented in the game tonight, the Detroit Redwings. Third, Michal Pivoňka, also from the Czechoslovak national team. You will hear today he defected to the United States in 1986. He's a 14-year veteran of the NHL. Alexei Kovalev, who played for the Soviet (now Russian) team Dynamo Moscow, then sponsored by the Ministry of the Interior. He also played for many years in the NHL. We also are privileged to have the director of last night's film, Gabe Polsky, with us. If you haven't seen "Red Army" yet, you must. It is a fantastic, fantastic documentary. And then finally we're very privileged to have with us here Tom Heiden. Tom is a 1967 graduate of the University of Notre Dame, and for all of you who may be interested in going into the law, you will appreciate that he is a senior partner at a pretty good law firm in Chicago called Latham & Watkins. And most importantly about Tom, for purposes of this panel, Tom is the founder of Club Hockey at the University of Notre Dame. So I'm now going to turn to Tom and ask him to moderate this panel, and then rejoin you for questions.

[applause]

>> [Tom Heiden] I'd like to start out by having you talk about what it was like to grow up as a kid, as an emerging elite athlete when you did. Peter Šťastný, you were 12 years old in 1968 during the Prague Spring. What was it like being there before Alexander Dubcek and after?

>> [Šťastný] Well, thank you. From the first maybe let me maybe do a congratulate to all these organizers. Because I told them from the very beginning, this is a very important topic, very special. It's very important for young people to learn from the history, because for kid and the history are the best teachers. And [inaudible] used to be in Parliament for 10 years, but the last year it was my last one, so I'm no longer there. And to go there, that's something, Tom, that would distinguish me and my other younger partners from Czechoslovakia at the time of the Slovakia and Czech Republic were in one country called Czechoslovakia. So I really remember the Soviet invasion, and it was like the Soviets, they had an excuse like the Warsaw Pact, but it was basically 90 percent Russian military rolling with the tanks and shooting a lot of young people, killing a lot of citizens. This immensely united the whole country. We felt it

was an injustice. Later, gradually we saw how all these freedoms, they were coming up during the thaw with Dubcek at the helm, 1967, 1968. And that was basically the reason why Russia came. And since then I have to tell you, I believe it left a huge impact on me as a form of inspiration and motivation. I hated the Soviets with a passion. And I learned later on, they became my best friends. I played with Malenkov as a goalie, I made a lot of Russian teammates later on. I played four years, and one of my best friends still today is the hero from yesterday's movie, Alexander [inaudible]. So as a people, a great people, very generous, extremely talented, but that hatred because of the injustice and the Soviet invasion of my country helped me to be motivated against every game we played the Soviets or Russia, no matter who. And I think I did pretty well, though, especially against the Russians.

[laughter]

>> [Heiden] Petr Klíma: think for a second. You're a couple of years younger than Peter Šťastný. What was it like in that system, and what was it like—did you have money? Did you have jobs? Were you in the army? Why were you in the army? Did you have freedom of movement? Were you supervised?

>> [Klíma] Yeah, probably it's going to be a little bit different than Peter's. Everybody said the Russians were the best. We competed with them. We didn't hate them. You don't—I don't hate anybody. We didn't hate them, we wanted to beat them. We want to be the best, because as an athlete you always want to be the best, right? And if I can say so myself, they always were better than us. So we wanted to beat them. That had nothing to do with—you know, for Peter obviously it's a different thing. '68 I was four years old. I saw the tanks come in our town and they took—I didn't understand. But as an athlete, every time I step on the ice I want to beat them not because they were Russian but because I was better.

>> [Heiden] Putting aside the ice part of it, what was it like being on the Czech national team? Were you in the army? Did you have the sort of freedom of movement that we have grown accustomed to here?

>> [Klíma] When I was 18 years old I went in the army. I spent two years in the army and, you know, Russians and Czechs are totally different. After two years I served I was able to leave the country without any consequences.

>> [Heiden] Were you in the tank division?

>> [Klíma] I was not in a tank, no.

[laughter]

>> [Heiden] Michal Pivoňka—tell us your experiences.

>> [Pivoňka] I'm just about a year younger, a couple of years younger than Peter so, you know, our generation was a little bit different than Peter Šťastný's. But you know, growing up under the communist system from the sports point of view wasn't that bad, because the government actually sponsored and paid for everything, right? For them to show how the system works, the athletes were ideal targets, right? So you always had the Russkis, the Russians and Soviets, the East Germans or the Czechs when you

look at the Olympic games or the world championships, they would succeed, they would do really well. Because everything was free, so if you wanted to sign up your kid for hockey you didn't have to pay for it, right? The coaching was good. So for the government, or for the political system to show the world that we are doing something right over there, the sport was the ideal tool I guess for that. So for us growing up, we didn't know any different, what's behind the, you know, the so-called Iron Curtain and all that. We didn't know how was it in West Germany, how is it in Sweden, how is it in Canada. I'd never seen an NHL hockey game until I [inaudible] came here in 1986, the first time I saw the NHL game live or even on the TV. Until then the only things that we were able to look at was the Olympic games, world championships, and a couple of the Canada cups that they were played on our TV back at home. Any kind of diversity with the Russian teams and all that, just like Peter said over here, for us it was—you know, you're trying to win the game. It was just another game. I guess in the older generation, for them it was a little bit more than that because of 1968. But, you know—

>> [Heiden] As you grew up, as you got onto the elite teams, were you treated differently? Were you treated specially, did you have special privileges that maybe others didn't have?

>> [Pivoňka] —than other people in the country? For sure, yeah. I mean, we made a little bit more money, I mean a lot more money. And we did have some privileges for sure. I mean, like Petr said, we joined the army. Petr was there a year earlier, I came a year later. So we actually served our second year, my first year and his second year together. It was the ideal training and place for the young hockey player to be better, to get stronger, to get faster. It was the ideal access to the national team; the army team that we had was the top team in our Czech division. I think we won once and you finished second, or beyond twice. Twice, am I right?

>> [Klíma] Both years.

[laughter]

>> [Pivoňka] So it was the ideal place to train and to become a better hockey player. And the financial part was obviously really, really good too. I remember, you know, my first money for hockey, I was 17 years old or something, I was able to buy a car, a used car for my family. I mean, we didn't have a car. And a second car as well that my dad bought, you know, with the money that I was able to make. So for the regular people, what we were getting and the privileges that we had, you know, I don't know if they thought it was fair or not, but the athletes were treated really nice.

>> [Klíma] Can I say something?

>> [Heiden] Absolutely.

>> [Klíma] Being in Czech, there was like two Stanley Cups and I was in the army for two years, we won two Stanley Cups. And I was 20 years old, and I asked myself where's the next step? Can I go any higher? And I, you know, Peter Šťastný was, you know, he'd defected already. I said, I want to play NHL. Not because the Russians or that, you know, we had a bad life, because for—when you do something

and it's any business or any profession, you want to go, you make something and then what is the next step? And that's why we came here and did what we had to do.

>>[Heiden] Alex, you grew up 600 miles south of Moscow, something like that. And as you grow up and you were starting to emerge as a big deal, how much did you know about the West? How much did you know about North America? How much did you know about the National Hockey League as a kid?

>> [Kovalev] Just because, starting from Peter saying how tough it was for them, and just moving down the line it looks like it's getting better and better and better. All I can say, my life was great. Anyway, I mean I'm here in this group, but definitely I had some experience because I grew up in a small town at that time, now it's much bigger. My dad worked at the car factory for 25 years, my mom worked food store. I'm just a little happy kid, just walking around, I'm being a lucky kid because my apartment building was right across the street, three buildings—all my life I lived in my city but I never even knew all the streets in my city like where the bus taking. My mom always said "I take this bus to this street" and I was like "where is that?" So I never even knew my city much because all, everything I needed was right in front of me. The swimming pool stadium, you got a regular stadium for football, soccer, whatever, and then you got the ice rink. So all these buildings right in front of me, 7 minutes' walk. So I always been walking to whatever facility I want to use. And again, I grew up in bad old days. Now you have to pay for everything. Back then in the federation you want to play hockey, you know, you just come in, introduce to the coach, coach speaks to the parents and makes sure they're okay with that, that you're going to play hockey. And then, you know, you just start and everything being taken care of as far as equipment and sticks, not like these days you have to pay, parents have to pay for it. But after that, just because I picked something, hockey was something that I picked myself and I've never been forced by my parents. My dad did wrestling, you know, judo a little bit and weight-lifting. But never on the professional level, just kind of being more in the [inaudible] And all he wants from me not walking the streets taking drugs, just like he wants me to do something useful. So I always hang out with my friends and one time I just watched hockey and watched the game from the top, how my friend was playing, and then I got interested, I got hooked up on it. And I decided I want to try this game. So I came back home, I said to my dad "The coach wants to speak to you, this is what I want to do." So I picked up the game and you know, during my career I always have been kind of a self-taught person. I've never really been a good fan of somebody teaching me something. You know, even when I went to school I'd never been a big fan of somebody teaching in front of me, sitting there listening. It's like, you know, come on, I just want to go home. I was actually better at home just reading books. You know, I probably felt that I learned there more than I could learn from school. And same thing was in hockey, you know. For me it was important to watch different players, you know, older players. Sometimes we had a practice after a professional team so I would come an hour early and watch professional team skate, sitting behind the boards to watch how they skate, how they stick-handle, control the puck, everything. So you kind of analyze it and then when you had a chance jump on the ice with your group and you try those things, you know, kind of maybe turn something your way that makes you more comfortable. And then that's how I kind of started learning this game. And then, you know, realize that there's not much potential, right? And I was probably 12 years old, 13 years old, I see there's no more progress for me to move anywhere. So it was kind of like I was one of the best skaters in the team, I was playing with the kids at 3 years old and me, you know, I was way better. I'm not

afraid to say that, way better than any kids. And I was just — I started losing that motivation. Like I have no other place to move, and realized I think that Moscow where all the big teams were and all the hockey were, you know, that was the next place, the next step for me. So after—

>> [Heiden] Had you ever heard of the National Hockey League?

>> [Kovalev] Well I can, just give me a couple of minutes, I'll get to that. I want to make sure everybody understands how my process has gone. Anyway, you know, 12, 13 years old I already had my mind set that I want to, you know, go to Moscow. And I got introduced to one of the scouts and he asked me if I want to come to their club. So at one point I just came to my parents and they were luckily being in the same room, and I said, "Mom, Dad, after 8th grade I'm going to Moscow." They're like, yeah, sure. So I was like, I just said it and [inaudible] and then two days later I was like, started talking even more. I said, you know it would be cool, do this when I go to Moscow, do this and that, and that's going to be, that's where I'm going to go look for and I'm going to be good. Like, what are you talking about, going to Moscow? So I'm already, in my mind I'm already set at 14 that after 8th grade I'm gone. So, and then they realize I'm serious about it and I left for Moscow when I was 14, started living by myself. So I was really mature really quick. I was 14, I was probably 15 I was probably like 18 or 19. And then come back to your question, when I was about 17 one of my friends approached me and, everybody knows when the draft starts all the players come to draft and they actually, in the area when the draft's happening, you know—in the old days we didn't even know like what draft or you get picked by the team or whatever that means, and he approaches me and says do you know you got drafted by the Rangers team? I said, "what does that mean?" I said, "so what's the draft?" So you know, what's next? Well, you got drafted, you got picked up by the professional, national professional team and they want you to play for their club. So I was like, okay, so what am I supposed to do next? I'm just playing hockey. I was like, okay, you know I never even understood what that means, okay, "picked up." I guess they're going to come and let me know when to move to a different team or something, you know. So eventually after two weeks, the general manager from the New York Rangers came and that's when the reality became more understandable, that okay, this is the National Hockey League and I watched a couple of videos and realized what this is all about. So they gave me some souvenirs and everything, and then, you know, I started realizing what the NHL is.

>> [Heiden] Gabe, listening to Alex's story and having spent time with the older Russian players, were the experiences that they described to you at all similar to what you just heard?

>> [Polsky] Well, you know, some of the older Soviet players, they—I mean, it was similar—I guess a little bit different because, I guess similar to Alex and Petr and Michal, these guys were the best players in the Soviet Union were drafted in the army ultimately because the Red Army team, the military, had, you know, the best team around. That's the team that kind of comprised most of the Soviet national team, those were the guys that were really allowed to travel because in the Soviet Union you weren't even allowed to travel, you know, across your own border to other countries unless you were basically, you know, the elite in the Soviet Union. Either you're a diplomat or some sort of politician, or you know, a ballet dancer, chess master, or hockey player. So there was a huge incentive to play, you know, to be great at a sport, you know, because traveling ever in the Soviet Union, you know, they love to travel and

see other countries. Although when they did go to the United States and other countries they weren't necessarily allowed to kind of roam freely and do whatever they want. Basically the KGB would travel with you, you're only allowed to basically leave your hotel at very specific times with three people and oftentimes you were followed by the KGB and they would look at basically what you bought and, you know, who you were talking to and all that stuff. But in terms of the NHL, like Fetisov if you watched "Red Army," the main character, all the guys basically—for them, the NHL was, you know, they weren't even thinking about that. Fetisov, for instance, was drafted in, let's say 1978, he didn't even know he was drafted until like 5, 6 years later. They didn't even, teams would literally, NHL teams would write letters to these players and tell them that they wanted to meet or play or whatever. They never received these letters, obviously, because they were intercepted by the government and never got to these players. So it wasn't until basically, you know, the collapse of the Soviet Union, basically '88, '89 when there was even this possibility of playing for the NHL. Because at that time, basically the country was bankrupt and they needed money, everyone needed money. The hockey program—because the government couldn't afford to even support the sports teams anymore, which as they were saying, you know, before then the government had decided that—listen, we want to support hockey, we want to support chess, our space program, very specific things that demonstrated, you know, superiority, Soviet superiority. Because they wanted to show the world how dominant they were in various things. But throughout the world no one really knew what was going on, how strong their economy was. It was all fear to basically make people scared of them, and to show how powerful they were, you know, and sports was an important tool in its arsenal, because when these players, you know, would play internationally, all these guys, they're incredible. You watch them play and it's mind-blowing what they're doing on the ice and how different they play than, you know, the North American players. It was like magic, it was watching magic and ultimately people saw this and said wow, what are they doing over there in the Soviet Union? How are they so good at sports? How do they do that? It makes you scared, it makes you curious, it makes you want to almost, you're very impressed by it. And then that can be used as a political tool, you know. It's all kind of, you know, controlling people's minds and influencing people. It becomes kind of an ideological warfare, and you can fight that warfare through sports and that's kind of why I decided also to make this film because I was so curious about these teams when I watched them play. I wanted to know more, it really kind of made an influence on me and that's how I kind of became so interested in this. But I didn't really answer your question.

>> [Heiden] No, no. That's for me to say, "Sir, maybe you didn't understand my question." I did enough of that yesterday. I want to drill down on that some more though. You talked about how the athletes may have been used as a tool or an instrument of the regime to showcase the success of the regime. Did the three of you ever get that feeling? That you were a tool of the regime, that you were an instrument of the regime?

>> [Šťastný] Absolutely. It just doesn't come when you're 16, 17, 18 but as you're maturing you're putting all these things together. It adds up. Because propaganda was so strong and you are the privileged, you are extremely privileged. Whatever was mentioned here, you can multiply it because we could travel. In the summer I could go to vacation in Switzerland, Italy, ordinary people couldn't, or very rarely. And you know, we made many many times more money, we had more money than ministers, you know,

communist ministers in the government. And you know, we had free food, free everything. It's almost normal right now in Notre Dame, I just saw it, but it wasn't normal in those days. But once you were an elite athlete you were extremely privileged. But then you watch and putting these things together, there was an energy crisis and they were saying like how they have to say how they struggle in the West and I just happened to fly to North America to Canada in '73, and over Prague and everything, it was like dark. Then we landed and it was a stopover in Brussels, and Brussels was like WOW. But then when we landed in Montreal, it was like, did you say crisis? It was like during the day compared to what my country looked like. So you know, you got all this propaganda plus there was this ideology called propaganda left and right and you know, the economic—we struggled to get some, some products, some basic services. Yet in the West they got like, they said they struggle over there yet the shops and everything was just overflowing, everything what you wanted. We struggled to choose because there was so much choices. We had, you know, in communist country you had one choice and often it wasn't available. So it, it's, and later on you realize, you know, in my case I was a practicing Catholic. And they punished harshly, harshly anybody who'd even go. They didn't understand [inaudible] you're either with us or against us. So everybody who didn't accept their ideology was considered as an enemy. A lot of people ended up in, I don't know, forced labor or in the prisons. We have now a lot of cardinals and high-level clergy who used to be truck drivers, who used to be like blue-collar workers. They were harshly punished because they just happened to believe something else than what communist propaganda was about. And there were more and more of those things, and when you realized what was going on, I was 23 years old and then I found that's my case. I found that whole thing, this communist apparatus was extremely corrupt, extremely corrupt. And we won the championship and they were selling the best players to the minor league for cash. There was no replacement, nothing, and I wanted to win. We won the championship first time ever in my country, in Slovakia, and were so proud, so happy. You win, it's like a drug. You want to win again, again. And then somebody's diluting your team. And we have the example—there was a 1980, 1979 was world championship in Moscow. That was exactly the year we won. We had two or three players there from my club which a year later they were not good enough for elite league. How you play one year in the world championship for Czechoslovakia, which was a very very strong field, and a year later you're not good for any league because they were being sold? And that corruption we protested and we got in conflict with the team, with the regime eventually because the regime stood up for the management. And I had nothing else left except I just promised myself the first opportunity comes, I will leave. And I will leave because we protested, we refused to go to practice, we wanted to get management fired and bring new people who will be more competent and more willing to build a team to win again. And instead [inaudible] you do what you're told or you will never play for a national team. To me it was like a knife to my heart, because to us a national team was everything I had. I never dreamed about NHL because it was too far, it was impossible. I knew the consequences. I could, you could stay, you could defect, but then your family will suffer. They will make your family suffer, and I had too many brothers, sisters, I had family, and I just couldn't afford it. But they pushed me to the point I had to do it, you know, with all the consequences because they were, you know, threatening me with everything I loved. Everything.

>> [Heiden] I want to come back and talk some more about the circumstances surrounding your decision to leave, but Petr and Michal, listening to Peter, when you first traveled, when you first went outside

Czechoslovakia, do you remember a reaction that we went to place X and it was different, it was better, it was worse? Do you remember any of that?

>> [Michal Pivoňka] Well, just like Petr mentioned, the first time I was in Landshut, Germany, which is just outside of Munich, and the first thing you notice are the lights. You know, the variety of things that you already mentioned when you go to the store, or you want to buy a pair of jeans, there's not one pair, there's ten of them and you gotta pick, right? I got a good example of this when my in-laws came in the first time into the States, to Washington, it was 1987, the year after we defected. And my mother-in-law, she was taking pictures in the grocery store of the meat department just to kind of show at home how is it over here. Because like at home we had, this is your butter, this is your yogurt, this is this right here. So there was no competition in the free market in the communist system. So one company was making this and that's what people would buy, right? So that was the biggest thing, really. And also the, I think the way the people interacted between each other, you know? It's almost like, in the NHL you would fly to Winnipeg and the cold and all and everybody's kind of hunched over and depressed and all, that's how it was when I came back to the Czech Republic [laughter] from the trip out West. You know, people are just kind of for themselves. It was different. I mean, you notice that, no question about it. Until then, until you were able to travel and see something else, you know, we didn't know any better. We thought we were fine, and we were fine. I mean, you know, kids had fun outside, I even had a car, maybe had two channels on TV, we didn't have 15 or 50 or whatever it is here. Or what it was. But until you find out there is something better out there, you know, you're doing okay. So for us, you get drafted, I think Gabe mentioned that Fetisov didn't know for six years that he was drafted. I found out a couple of years later too I got drafted in '84, found out in late '85, and I defected in '86 actually. But you know, the government, the dictatorship over there of the communist government, they withheld any kind of information from us. When Chernobyl blew up in Ukraine in 1980, you know, we had mushrooms they were about this big, right? In the woods when we picked them up from the radiation but we didn't know about it. Nobody told us that something had happened over there a few hundred miles away. So that was, you know, they control the media and everything so when the election came in and the commies were again voted as the only party to run the country, anonymously, which was impossible right? Somebody has to be against them, but there was no such thing as an election. They just said okay, we got another two years or four years or whatever it was. But those are politics, and we're talking about hockey so—

>> [Heiden] Petr Klíma, there came a point when you started to think about leaving. Tell us about that.

>> [Klíma] I guess it —

>> [Heiden] You have to get near the microphone—

>> [Klíma] I came here to play hockey. You know, the politics in all the countries, I didn't get involved in that. I don't want to get all involved in that any more. It was hard, but I did it because of hockey. No politics. We had, like you said, and Peter the same thing, we had everything back there. But like I said half an hour ago, what's the next step? I want to be—like, we were all, well this guy, I don't know about that guy—this guy was a Hall of Famer. But what's the next step in my life?

>> [Heiden] Did you have permission to leave?

>> [Klíma] No. No. I wanted to do it and I wanted to play NHL and politics, yes, I put—in 1985 I defected, I put the number on my bag. I still carry it every day, I will do it tonight. And it's something I get freedom from not a bad life, from the communism. And they're not telling me anymore what I have to do. That's just, you know, for everybody, you're going to talk to Alexei and Michal and Petr, it's different for everybody. We had really, I would not be sitting here if the communism hadn't helped me to get here. I have to separate from them in 1985 to come here and you know, like every day, like my kids, you know, I have kids, a son [inaudible]—

>> [Heiden] How'd you leave? Did you get on a bus, did you get on a train?

>> [Klíma] I was already on the Czech national team, so I was out already. You know, they take your passport, they take your driver's license, they take—I have no ID. That's why I was in Germany for five weeks, no ID, and then we went to the US Embassy and they said, "Who's this guy?" And they said, "That's Petr Klíma." It was in German. So we waited five weeks and then I went to Detroit and it was worth it, you know. I did it, you know, like going back to, you know, Peter lives back in Slovakia. I didn't run away from my country to bring my kids to that. I cannot bring my kids—you know, I was with my kids, they were 16 years old, they were in Finland, they play hockey too. And they said that "we want to go home." I said well we live in Finland. I said well, we take a flight to Prague and we're going to go home. They said no, Dad, we want to go home. Home is here. This is my home.

>> [Heiden] Peter, you started to think at some point in time of leaving? How'd that come about?

>> [Šťastný] It came pretty abruptly, but really I was maturing. I could see it, I just got married, my wife was pregnant and I got those threats that I'm going to behave and do whatever I'm being told, or I will never play for national team. They just made the decision for me. I mean, it was very clear, nobody's going to tell me and deprive me of my freedom, my own views, and I just realized that I had no future because I was one of those who was at the church every Sunday, every holy day. And I knew that people like that had no future. Blue-collar, you can go out there and maybe be a chauffeur of the bus or maybe dig the ditches or, only blue-collar. It was very little chance to do anything else. And I had ambitions, but there was another thing that motivated me. I was about to have family. I said, I want for my children a better life, more freedom so they can decide, not the state, not the government will decide for them what they can and cannot do, or what they will do or will not do. And there was too many powerful kind of forces, that I decided to go. I knew there would be immense consequences and it would happen [inaudible] I left with my younger brother because my older brother had three children. He couldn't go. And he was watched by KGB, by plain-clothes police, by uniformed police. Anybody who he met was interrogated. He lost all his friends. Within a few days he had no friends. Everybody was afraid, it was like he was radioactive. And luckily within about ten months he managed to escape and that was my happiest day, because I felt most responsible for him. So when he came that was one of the best days of my life.

>> [Heiden] How did you get out?

>> [Šťastný] We had a tournament in Innsbruck and that was a story by itself. There was very suspense like and dramatic and you know, there was life or death sometimes. We had heavy protection, we had Austrian police and military or special commando, special forces with the Scorpion, with machine guns, kind of clearing the way and protecting us because it was just spread that the Czechoslovak embassy was to talk to us. So [inaudible] it was in Vienna basically and Vienna was at the time, there was a capital of the spies, because it was right on the border with Czechoslovakia which was border of the Eastern Bloc. And Vienna was known and Austrians just to make sure, they provided as much security as they could and it was, it was scary because we knew we were warned don't open up the door to anybody. I went to sleep like 7 o'clock in the morning. We drove the whole night from Innsbruck to Vienna. Along the way I lost brother for about an hour and a half. I was driven almost crazy. Then we found him by luck in Innsbruck, so that was another happy moment. And then, you know, they took us in the best hotel, the Intercontinental. They came to pick us up, they came with the commandos and they cleared the hotel lobby. There was like dozens and dozens, hundreds of people, huge hotel. It was like a military exercise. They got us to the walkway, the stopped the walkway, got us to the car, there was police in front and police behind us going to get in embassy. And then from embassy we were the same thing, they emptied out the embassy, anybody speak Czechoslovak? Me, me, me — they grabbed them and took them away. It was just a very harsh exercise. And then they drove us, it was like 11 o'clock rush hour during the week, going to the airport. These policemen were driving like, everything was stopped at a standstill, they just through the parks, through the walkways. One-way street they went against the flow, I was like "what the hell is going on?" I saw something like this, because in Czechoslovakia we were the only country so privileged when we drove to the game we had the police escort and we felt like—but the only police escort I've seen since then was in Austria with the heavily, heavily armed special forces and special commandos plus the police, they took us all the way to the airport and once, believe me, we took the flight to Amsterdam and only in Amsterdam I really got the breath of relief when there was a jumbo, whatever, CP Canada, CP Air, that was the old company. When they took off and we were heading overseas, I really felt great. So it really was very suspenseful and, I was afraid because I knew, in my head I knew there was some Russian Olympians in Munich, '72, that escaped, defected, and then they knew, they had interview with them, and all of a sudden a few weeks later they're in Russia. Nobody knew how. They drugged them up, they put them in the trunks, and as a diplomatic car went through Czechoslovakia—that could happen to us, that was a real threat. If that, that would be done in a good way—we could have disappeared. That's the worst-case scenario. Not as, not highly probable, but possible. And we had to live with it, and the rest is history. That is probably my best moment, best decision I ever faced. And now we get four children, they almost all happily married now and I'm four times grandfather and the number keeps growing.

>> [Heiden] Michal, there came a time when you decided that you were going to try to leave. Why?

>> [Pivoňka] Well, you know, a very similar story that Peter just talked about. I wasn't on my own like my buddy Petr over here that he could just leave on his own any time when he was out West playing hockey. But I had my future wife with me when we were defecting so it was a little bit more difficult. The management for the Capitals, David Poile, who is a GM now for the Nashville Predators, and the head scout Jake [inaudible] who passed away a while back. They both came to Yugoslavia, which was also a

communist country but not as strict as other countries. And you know, we had it set up for the summer, that was July 21st if I remember correctly, in 1986, that they're going to help us out to get to Italy. And they hired a guide, a gentleman from [inaudible], I forgot his name already, but I think he just did it for the adrenaline, for the rush of the adventure part of it. And he was knowledgeable of, I guess, the border between Yugoslavia and Italy, Italy being the West, Yugoslavia being the East. And about a 200-yard zone where you are in danger. Like Petr said, there might be guys being—what did you want to say?

>> [Šťastný] Nothing, he was my agent too. I'm just trying to think of his name—

>> [Pivoňka] So there's about a 200-yard zone where the soldiers at the border can actually shoot at you, or somehow prevent you from exiting the Eastern Bloc. So we got a guide kind of bouncing behind all the bushes and you were 20 years old, just all excited, didn't know any better. We just kind of followed him around and that was the end of it. On the other side we were already saved. We had to go to Rome, spend some time over there at work on the papers about a defection to Washington, to the United States. The hardest part was, you know, how do you let your parents know, right? Because we couldn't tell our parents before we went on the trip, oh okay, we don't know what's going to happen. Are we going to get caught? Are you going to lose your jobs because of us defecting? So the first few phone calls, you know, wasn't very good. You know, parents are crying, you guys need to come back. So it took about a year and a half before, like I said, my in-laws came in first and they saw that we were doing fine, for everybody to kind of calm down and you know, feel good about our decision. But you know, the decision was strictly done on a, because you want to play the best league in the world, that's why you're leaving. You're not leaving because the regime or anything like that, but the only way to leave and play the best league in the world, you had to defect. So you know, you make decisions and you know, if I were exiting now I probably wouldn't do it. But again, a 20-year-old kid, you're just going after your dream and that's what it was for us.

>> [Heiden] Alex, you I think are the first Russian player to ever have his name put on the Stanley Cup. But back then, you could have stayed, you could have played in the KHL or whatever it was called in those days. What made you decide to come to North America?

>> [Kovalev] I think it's, the most important thing is when you, like I mentioned before when I was growing up in my home town and when I reached a certain stage where, you know, first of all start playing hockey at 6, then two years after that you start playing with the kids three years older than me, and then when you get to the point where you [inaudible] about who you are and how good you were. And 12, 13 years old you're looking for the next stage. And the next stage was, you know, go to Moscow and show my skill, what I'm good at, and show people in Moscow like how good I am. And the other thing is, because my town is so small like there's no chance that like recruiters will come to my home town and, you know, bring me someplace else where I can be successful or extend my career somehow. So in Moscow you'll always be visible. There's a lot of scouts, there are people watching you. They can, you know, by watching you they invite you to the national team. And I decided the next step was showing what I can do in Moscow. And then when I reached that stage, I showed what I was capable of doing and I reached a certain stage in Moscow, you know, play for professional team, you know, show them how good I was. And I think the next stage was show, you know, in a different country. And for me it was definitely like

everybody else, lifestyle, money was important and plus growing up since you're 14 years old by yourself without parents, you know, you're kind of looking for something more adventurous. You know, the first adventure is come to Moscow, be by yourself. And then you know go completely over the ocean, a thousand kilometers, more like seven thousand kilometers, and you know you get to a different country. And you show their people, in the United States and Canada, how good we are, you know, the Russians. And I think that was kind of part of those transition, you know, where you bring in European hockey to the United States and Canada.

>> [Heiden] By the time you made that choice the situation had changed so that you didn't need permission? Or was it easy to obtain permission?

>> [Kovalev] It was a little bit easier for me, you know, versus these guys. It's, every club had a different situation. For example, the movie that we watched, it was Red Army club which I could have been part of. But the club I played for, they kind of got ahead and they picked me up right away. So instead of going into the Red Army which [inaudible] I ended up in Dynamo, which is a different club which is part of that KGB police army. And you know, when I joined a professional team I was 17 and the organization changed completely. The coach and people that worked for the organization changed, and it wasn't as tough for me to leave. But definitely, they wouldn't tell you "you can leave" because I was a young guy, and the only way they'd try and stop you is by tricking you, which is—there's always been a lot of traveling, there's always been documents to sign, a contract or meal money or something else. So they would kind of look at me, a young guy, he don't know much about it, he just wants to show them this is your meal money, he needs to sign for it, he's going to sign it anyway. So, and when the time came that I told them I want to leave, I want to, you know, go to the United States and play there, that year, the last year I played there, they were trying to do every possible way to sign me some papers. And somebody told me, I remember a friend of mine told me if you decide to leave don't ever sign anything. It doesn't matter what they're going to give you, it doesn't matter if it's going to be meal money or something else. And I remember, there's probably maybe five or six tries they did. I don't know if it was true that it was meal money, or there was something else, but it was—I don't know why my mind was set that way, but I always look at that as like a KGB, you know? I was kind of looking at the way they give you paper, you know, how they position their hands? It was like yeah, just sign it here, but underneath the hands maybe there's something else instead. Like "just sign here" and then, you know—and we were discussing yesterday, in the contract to be part of the army or something like that, it would be this big but you only need to sign the last paper, right? So that last paper they might give it to you and tell you this is for meal money, but it could be just "go into the army." So, and I was just avoiding every possible way and I know they were trying to sign me because as soon as you become part of the army, you're done. And I mean, I still serve because that's what you have to do, you know? 16 to 18 years old. And they assign you to the army, you play for the club, but you know the army just kind of keeps going parallel to that. But army becomes more like a punishment from that point, you know, for two years. So it's like, you know, you don't play well if they send you instead of like in the NHL they send you to farm team, there they're going to send you to army.

>> [Heiden] That's why I asked you.

>> [Kovalev] So you just try to avoid every possible way, you know. You just play your best and, you know, make sure they don't send you to the army.

>> [Heiden] Let me try a question that maybe is a little harder, to all of you. When I watched "Red Army," I got the sense that the original Russian five were really very deeply conflicted about what they should or shouldn't try to do. And I hear you say, well opportunity, challenge, freedom—were you, any of you, conflicted because those came with consequences? Such as not going to see family, or friends, or teammates. At least under those circumstances back then, you couldn't go back. Were you conflicted?

>> [Šťastný] Absolutely. In 1976 in Canada Cup we got contract offer, they were chasing us. I had a million offers between four years. And my position was, I would never leave my country. Just because I realized I was conscious what the consequences would be against my family, against my brothers, against everybody. Another reason is, you leave and there was a chance, a very high probability you never again see your family, see your homeland, see your friends, see places where you grew up. Those were very difficult kind of situation and choices when you make, those were the consequences. And they were very, very conflicting. So somebody in my case, somebody has to threaten you so, and then you realize how precious freedom is. When they go after your life basically, after your freedoms, and then you—I didn't have responsibility only for my family, my original family, but I had new family. So that basically helped me to make the decision to change whatever. I promised I would never leave, because we had it so good. We had everything at home. But as you're growing up you realize what the real socialism and communism system or regime is. And I knew that I had no place there, I had no future, and when somebody threatens you, takes away something or threatens to take away everything you work for, you live for, because hockey at the time that was my life. That was my love, that was my passion. It was more important. I remember one guy I saw on [inaudible] written "God, Country, and Notre Dame," and the guy who went to Hall of Fame with me he was a priest. And he says, and he was in memoriam, his students there at the Hall of Fame speech, they said he always used to say, "I have three pillars in my life. My three passions, three loves, three pillars, are God, country, and hockey, but not necessarily in that order." So I have the same thing, and hockey at the time was ahead of everything and you know, thank God to this conflict situation, thank God to whatever was happening, a situation that my new child was coming, I was married and I had other responsibilities. So they really helped me put those scales more to the balance, so it was easier for me to decide and [inaudible] family was threatened and they suffered materially, socially, emotionally. They were interrogated and like everybody says, I didn't tell anything to my parents. Because the best thing is when they don't know. When you interrogate the best thing is you don't know. And I think maybe that helped too.

>> [Heiden] Petr Klíma, did you feel similarly? You said you were a kid, you wanted to go to the next level. But did you feel similarly conflicted?

>> [Klíma] Consequences. I knew when I defected there's going to be consequences. Boy, I was wrong. It was harder than I expected. We all went, you know Peter came with his family. I was 20 years old, I didn't have anybody. So it was hard, you know. In the split second I was in Germany, in split second I lost my family, my friends, my name, everything. I still today, 30 years later, I don't have my name yet. Because I'm not Peter, I'm Petr.

>> [Heiden] Michal?

>> [Pivoňka] You're going to hear the same story. The decision was, the hardest thing was your closest friends, your family, obviously what's going to happen to them. Because, you know, you heard stories about this is what they did to this guy and the other guy and all that. So I, you know, our parents had to go to the court. We were sentenced to, I think, two and a half or three years in prison in case you would return. My dad, he lost a job and, so it wasn't easy. You know, your closest friends and your family, and that was the hardest decision. I mean, that's what, for me for sure, to worry about ourselves or myself if I'm good enough to play in the league. I believed in it. At 20 years old, you know, you think you can do anything. But already then I did feel some kind of responsibility towards your family and your closest friends. The thing was, the hard thing was too I couldn't tell my parents, because I knew if I would say something like I'm not coming back and I'll be leaving and all that, they would never let me go. So, I mean, really the same thing for all three of us here, for sure. Because we didn't know, you didn't know that 1989 the commies would lose. You didn't know there was going to be changes in Eastern Europe. You didn't know if you were ever going to see your parents again, if the government's going to let them come. And you know, they always told you these stories about your dreams, right? Like you're going to dream that you're flying back and, you know, your plane's going to land in Prague or Moscow or wherever you're from and they're going to get you. So I remember having a couple of dreams like that, and we actually had a trip with the Capitals, I'm probably going to miss the year, but I'm going to say it was like '88, '89 or something. We played a couple of games in Russia, and during our training camp we flew to Russia and played a couple of games there. And I remember they had to get special permission from the Russians that they were going to leave me alone since I was, you know, a defector and the communism was still in power over there, obviously, in the Eastern bloc. And so I did make that trip, and you know, they left me alone. But it wasn't easy. So I would say for sure it's still family and closest friends, that was the hardest decision ever I had to make in my life so far.

>> [Heiden] Gabe, I got the sense from "Red Army" that among the Russian players back then there was an enormous sense of patriotism and national pride that tugged at each and every one of them, that really prevented them from doing some things that they might have otherwise done.

>> [Polsky] Yeah, I mean, but what's interesting about what these guys are saying is, these guys are all, you know, artists and they're expressing their abilities on the ice. And for them, you know, it's that freedom to express yourself at the highest level possible whether you're an artist or, you know, even a businessman. You want to be able to reach the highest level possible, to sort of expose yourself to the most opportunities possible. And that's certainly, you know, in talking to a lot of the Soviet athletes they also wanted to play in the best league against the best players. I mean, they thought though that they were, you know, ultimately playing the best players. Although they weren't playing in the National Hockey League, but they said oh, but we went over there and we beat the crap out of everybody anyway, and you know, we're the best anyway. But there's a sense of what these guys are talking about, but also I think, you know, the older generation, they played for the national team for almost, you know, ten plus years, you know, Fetisov, the guy in my movie. And after you do that, he was captain of the team, he was the face of the country, everybody, he was a hero of the Soviet Union. I mean, he's supposed to be representing your country. That's what you're doing, you know, if you play for the national team. You're

supposed to wear your, you know, your jersey with pride and be proud of your country. And not only that, they're in the military. It's just, you know—so for them to sort of say that, you know, I want to defect or I don't want to be here in my country, but yet they're representing it, I mean that's not what these guys—there had to be a lot of internal conflict, you know, there. Where even if they did see that things were wrong and that they were being treated unfairly by the coaches and by the government and sort of, you know, they couldn't leave their bases, or they were treated differently than people were in the National Hockey League where guys can kind of do what they want, they can play and then after games they can go out and do whatever they want. So they saw that. But you know, where I'm going with this is that, you know, at a certain point I think they got fed up with—you know, they're 30 years old and at that point the Soviet Union was collapsing and these guys wanted to go play in the National Hockey League, and what the Soviet government was doing because they didn't have any money is that they basically said to the players that were the best players of the time, they said listen, you can play in the National Hockey League but we're going to basically take, you know, we're going to take all your money and you're going to basically survive on a thousand dollars a month. So they would get a million dollar contract and they would make two thousand dollars a month, and basically the players, basically selling them like slaves, you know? And that's when really I think, you know, things started to go really wrong, where's there's a much bigger rebellion and they felt like they were being treated like slaves. And that's not right, you know? And that's sort of what that conflict is all about in my film.

>> [Heiden] I'm not sure this question is directed to anyone in particular, but 20 or 25 years after the Soviet Union was dissolved, Czechoslovakia is two separate countries now. Several of the countries in Central and Eastern Europe are part of the European Union. Some are part of NATO. Have things improved? Are things better? Are they the same? Are they worse, are they threatened again?

>> [Šťastný] It's hugely improved.

>> [Heiden] Let me interrupt. Now he's been for years a member of the Parliament, so—

>> [Šťastný] It's nothing to do with it. It's my opinion, it always was. And you know like in communist countries like North Korea or anywhere else, there is a lot of subsidies, so some people still miss cheap, like 5 cents, bread or milk. Now you've got market prices everywhere, but it's immensely improved. In terms of democracy, of freedoms and rights and movement, people can go anywhere anytime. They don't have to ask permission. I was sentenced to 24 months in prison because I left the country without permission. I forgot to ask. That was enough for them to get unconditionally, like Petr Klíma or Michal Pivoňka said, if I would return I would have to go and serve 24 months in prison. My wife only 18, because I was the ringleader, she was a victim she was influenced. So it serves as a—so right now you can find some people who still miss nostalgic and all this subsidized stuff, but generally there is no doubt Europe is better off, our countries are way better off, everybody is better off. Except some of this notoriety and this habits and culture of the KGB and communist apparatchik, they still function. Because many of the countries are under the influence or under direct control of these people. I just called them organized crime, the Sicilian Mafia can learn from them something because they are much [inaudible] to these guys. They were highly trained, they were very intelligent, they were organized during those years. And they still function. One of the leaders is Putin, he was a KGB officer. And we got plenty of former communists

running the countries including mine, including the Czech Republic. So—but overall, there is no doubt. And even, you know, our relations with the Czechs, Slovaks it's as good as ever, probably the best right now. Used to be a lot of conflicts in Czechoslovakia, Slovakiazations, it's all over. We're on our own very happily member of the European Union with plenty of guarantees of prosperity and freedom and rights, and it really works well to everybody's advantage.

>> [Heiden] Alex, if you went back today to the town that you grew up in, is it about the same as it was back then? Is it way different, way better, or way worse?

>> [Kovalev] Like anything else, it's definitely improved. There's probably more streets that I still don't know about, there's more buildings. There actually used to be Old Town and New Town, and it's like half-hour between them to drive, from one to another, but now they're both connected with all the buildings built between them. So you know, the town definitely improved, but you know the market and everything, the rubles these days, it's definitely changed a lot. The lifestyle for a lot of people, for sure there's a lot of robberies and, you know, a lot of like Mafia stuff more now than there used to be. People stealing stuff, people killing for money, people do all kind of things just to, you know, to get the money somewhere or food or anything like that. I mean, it's not that miserable, but it's, you know, what I hear from my parents that still exists. Actually more, because people are trying to survive. I mean, look at it this way. When our car factory been built and after, I don't remember exactly but I think after 15 or 20 years since factory been built, Fiat came to the city and wanted to buy the factory. And they said there are too many people, too many students because we had a bunch of students come from different countries, different areas, to work there. I don't know how many. For example I say 7000 people work at the factory, and the factory's length is about 7 kilometers. And Fiat said, you have too many people working in it, and we'll put the computer machine, computers in there and we only need like 500, 700 people to control the computers. And we don't need that many people at the factory. And the city said no, what are we going to do with those 7000 kids that came from other countries? Imagine what's going to happen with those kids, you know, in survival mode they're going to turn into, they're going to try to survive somehow and that's when they're going to turn to robbery or they're going to be killing. And I mean, they have to survive, they have to live. You know, they came to the factory to work and to make money, and now you're going to take the job away from them. So, and that's one of the reasons they didn't want to do that, because they knew what's going to happen to the city. But they definitely, but it's, if you just come to the city you definitely see some improvement, but if you dig deeper into the city, what's going on, I mean it's definitely not good.

>> [Heiden] Peter, does the Czech Republic and Slovakia today have more or less the same relations or attitude towards Russia, the two of them?

>> [Šťastný] From my side it's very simple. I mean, they mentioned it because they're roughly about ten years younger than me. They don't feel it as I did, and these days completely different. Nobody cares. It's simply competition, and it's not even that good, that intense right now because Russians are no longer as good. You know, that was the end of an era when these five ended up, whatever, maybe Olympics in Calgary or after, because then it was a long stretch and Russians couldn't even get gold. There were the days when in two decades, 20 years, they won 17 or 18 golds. And it was like, maybe once a decade they didn't win. So it's not even [inaudible]. But Russia is superpower, always was, like hockey like with

Canada. So you know, we feel like we were smaller country, you want to always beat the better, or the best, and they were always among the best. So it's a pure competition. And Russia is open country right now, it's no longer the Soviet-KGB control. It is, but it's differently. It's just—they made the progress too and in hockey it's pure sport and it's just, everybody wants to be the best.

>> [Heiden] But aside from hockey, what are the political or economic relations between Czechoslovakia and Russia today?

>> [Šťastný] Tom, there is no longer Czechoslovakia—

>> [Heiden] I know, I know!

>> [Šťastný] Czech and Slovakia—it's not the best. Could be a lot better because, as a European, you know, we are like you. We understand and we're watching what's happened when Crimea got invaded, annexed. After the Sochi Olympics there was the invasion of eastern Ukraine. There is things that western European and whole European Union is fighting against and they cannot understand and they need to take a stand. And so there are certainly lot of frictions. It used to be better, it's not right now very good even though the Syria problems and ISIS and this, you know, it's good for Russia because it takes attention from their own back yard. But politically, the Russians are doing the things that are absolutely against the will or against the, all desires and understanding because the European Union cannot—you have to understand that we are a democratic union. We understand and we respect international law and integrity of the borders and countries. And if these things happen in the neighborhood you have to react. So these are the little things that hopefully will be fixed soon.

>> [Heiden] Gabe, with your movie, did you accomplish what you set out to do? Were there some aspects of life back in the 80s in the Soviet Union that you wanted to explore that you didn't get to explore?

>> [Polsky] Well, I think kind of naturally when you make a film you can't cover everything. So in order to kind of tell a cohesive and powerful story you kind of have to pick and choose, and really kind of figure out what your central theme is. What I set out to do was really tell the story of the Soviet Union but use hockey to kind of get you into that, and sort of use this team that was arguably one of the greatest ever in the sport to kind of illustrate what life was like and how these guys lived and the relationship between politics and, you know, human nature and society at that time sort of in parallel, this team with the rise and fall of the country. But I think what's really interesting and important and kind of relevant to today's world is, you see Putin today, I mean he invested billions of dollars in the Olympics. You know, he invested, you know, billions of dollars for the World Cup that's going to happen in 2018. I mean, he really sees the power of sport and what it can do for his country. Because sport is a way to unify countries, you know? If your team, let's say for instance Notre Dame, if the football team is doing really well and you know, is going to win the championship, you see the school kind of rallying behind the team whether it's hockey or football. And everyone's getting excited and the alumni are getting excited and they're investing money and, you know, building stadiums and all that. I mean, it's doing well for the school. You know, these athletes are, you know, they're getting scholarships, they're, everybody's coming to watch them. The school's on the map. You know, whether you call that, you know, propaganda or just sort of,

whatever you call it, sports is a really powerful tool. So if you want to use it politically, you can use it that way, or just as a state-building tool you can, you know, you could use it that way too. So we just, I think we just have to recognize the power of sport and sort of how it relates to society and kind of, what it's doing on a philosophical level and in our society, because it is incredibly powerful. What these guys are doing is really influencing how we think about the world. And I think that's what—

>> [Heiden] Sport is a powerful political tool, and Mr. Putin is probably a better hockey player than any of these people because I saw him on his 60th birthday score 7 goals in one game.

>> [Kovalev] I experienced, when we played in Switzerland there was some people come in and we had a big event like raising money, and there was a president from [inaudible] came and it was the same exact idea. So every time he touches the puck everybody has to move away. So he sets himself in the middle of the zone, right in front, and everybody looks for him, pass it to him, everybody moves away, he takes a shot, he scores, it's great. So I came up with a new idea because we had a couple guys from Switzerland league played in old timers, but they didn't know who that guy was, like why is everybody moving away, whatever. So I told the guy, I didn't say who he was, whatever, what's going on. I just said, you know, because everybody get in a zone and they're looking for him, they want to pass it to him, they want him to score as many goals as possible. So I said just move and stay next to him, don't let anybody pass to him. And he just guarded him, like he was just moving around him and nobody understood what's going on, you know? So I said just stay next to him, don't worry, just don't move.

[laughter]

>> [Heiden] I think we've reached the time where we'd like to give you an opportunity to ask questions.

>> [Q] [inaudible]

>> [McAdams] Please don't share lengthy comments. Mostly questions. Yes?

>> [Q] Hi. I have two questions, one for Petr and one for Michal. So my parents got married two days after the Russian invasion, so the stories of the tanks going by and watching and peeking out of the window were very common in my house. So I grew up with, I guess, a little more of the sentiment that Petr has of not liking the Russians. Nothing personal, Alex. Even though I was born a little later, but my dad always said that when we played the Russians that we weren't allowed to beat them. So I wanted to kind of follow up on Petr's comment that we weren't as good, that they were actually better, and ask whether you were ever told that we can't win when we played them? And then for Michal, you said that your in-laws came to visit just a couple of years after you defected. How were they allowed to come and go back, because I felt that was pretty uncommon and difficult. So, thank you.

>> [Klíma] That's not true. Every time we played the Russians we want to win. There was no threat here, there was no like we cannot beat them.

>> [Šťastný] I have to add, because I had the same thing. And because I was there in '68 as a kid, and then we couldn't win, they said they must lose, they were instructed. I said if I ever get there and

somebody tells me I'll spear him, I'll chop his head off he tells me—do not win against Russians. And I have to tell you I was there, my first championship I got in there '76 in Katowice, we beat them, we beat them, we tied them, we won the world championship. Next year I come we won. Believe me, there was no even indication, I think we're very united in it, the Slovaks and Czechs and all management, do whatever it takes but we need to win. I mean, in a legal way, but try to win.

>> [Pivoňka] You know, part of the other one, I think—like my dad, he wasn't allowed to come for about five years. But for some reason the in-laws, I don't know if they did it to me on purpose or what [laughter] but they did let them come. So I think it was because the communism was really getting to the end, right? So it was '87, '88. I would say if it was the 70s or early 80s probably would take a little bit longer. But you know, I'm sure they checked them out, made sure that they still have some family there and they were allowed to come. So they were the first ones coming, actually.

>> [Q] Hello. I'd like to thank everyone for coming here today. My question is similar to what's been asked before, but it's in a different way. So, the decision to come here, it will have consequences on family. Whether or not, you know, individually any of you were close or not close with your family, there's the idea that what you do will affect others. So the process of deciding to do what's best for you, even though it will affect others, right? Because we think, how will this affect my siblings, my parents. But at some point, right, everyone said I have to think about what's best for me. And I'm just wondering, was that a long process? Did you, was it easier for you to come to do this, were you like I have to take care of myself and it's important enough, even if it affects others negatively? I'm just wondering how did that work, that process?

>> [Pivoňka] Well, you know, it sounds a bit selfish when you say it's all about me—no, it's not you saying it, I'm thinking okay, if I decide I just want to go and play hockey and yes, something might happen to my family. Is it all about you? I believe that the family would support me anyway even if they would have to go through some struggle because—I'm talking about closest family, I mean I didn't hurt anybody else outside of my mom, dad, my sister and all that. So my neighbor and the friends, I mean that was not that hard to do, obviously. But I think, I honestly believe that they would support me even through some struggle that they would have to go through. And I was hoping, and I didn't believe some of the rumors what I was talking about earlier, that it's going to be really bad for your family. They're going to go to prison and they will never, your siblings will never succeed in their life because it's going to be on their resume. So you know, I believed—it was like that but—so there's a fine line how much you're going for yourself and how much you worry about someone else. And I'm sure there was a lot of players or athletes or people wanting to defect from the Eastern bloc and for the family reasons they would never do it, because they would—I don't know if it was brave to do it or dumb, or you were young and you just, you were probably a little bit selfish.

>> [Q] I just want to ask how involved were the NHL teams in bringing players over. I've heard stories, for instance, of Sergei Federov, the Redwings helped him. Mr. Klíma, in particular, any insight on that? Insight on NHL teams helping to bring players over?

>> [Klíma] [inaudible] 91 was his number. It's totally different than me, you know? Like I was in '85 and the situation was a little bit different. They used different players. It's different for everybody. About his family, it's different for everybody. You know, like Petr can say something and Michal and Alexei, it's different for everybody. But you know, he showed up, he played, he's a Hall of Famer now and you know, we went through struggles with—he couldn't go back home. I, we could, Michal said you don't, he didn't see his dad—

>> [Pivoňka] —my dad for about five years.

>> [Klíma] —five years. Four and a half for me. Every time I was on the phone with my family, they said, my dad said "come back home." And I looked at the phone and I said, what is he talking about? And he said, "come back home." And then four and a half years later, he said thank God he didn't come back home because they were listening, everybody listened to the phone calls and they told him to say "come back home", and I would go back to jail and have no life. But finally he said, thank God you didn't show up.

>> [Q] Alright, so my question's just directed at any of you. But I just want to know, like, whenever you came to the NHL and I guess it depends on like how many other, like Czechs, Slovak or other Russian NHL-ers there were at the time, like how did you like build community with like the other players of your nationality who kind of defected and came over, and better yet, like how did other like younger Czech or Slovak or Russian players see you today? Like did they ever ask you for advice on transition to the NHL?

>> [Klíma] I don't think so. Like everybody, you know, like I think as a player, as a hockey player, you know we put the politics and the commerce on the side, I think the Russians are the best hockey players ever. There is no better. You know, they play together, you know Peter played against them, I did too a little bit. But you know, like sitting here with Alexei, he was one of the best ever. There is Makarov, Leonov, Fetisov—they are the best because they had to, they had to. We didn't have to. We, you know—

[inaudible]

>> [Klíma] —we didn't have to. Like we had, I would say I had great life back home, and then I decide to make the next step. I defected. I really, I can say it here today it destroyed me for a few years. I was, I didn't know what to do, but then I was back to hockey and—but that's what I had to do. But the Russians, they had do. Because they didn't want to be there. We could stay home and have a good life. In Russia maybe Alexei can help me here—you had to come here, to sit here today.

>> [Kovalev] To just go back a little bit, to the movie and I think that's one of the things—I don't know if anybody noticed, being really point on, when—when everything was going well, the Russians were winning everything and they had like—I remember as a little kid counting it was like 15 times world championship, you know, few Olympics, blah blah. So, and that was when Tarasov, the guy that created the system, was there and he was the coach. He was the, you know, the main guy of the system that they developed. And there's no, there's no reason for anybody, you know, to leave and go somewhere else because everything was, we were the best team, we have best players, there's nobody better than us. And you know, why we have to go somewhere? And I think what it shows pretty good that transition when

Tikhonov came in, when Tarasov made his mistake in one of the games taking [inaudible] off the ice and they, you know, took him away from the team and they bring their guy, Tikhonov, and that's when everything start changing. And players kind of, the mentality of the players start changing. Everything was just kind of falling apart. Instead of thinking about what's next event we can win, we, players start thinking about, you know, the battle with the guy, how get this guy out of this team, how we get, you know, bring a better guy that we can have that family back that we'd been creating for many years. How can we have that same feel again? So it just never happened after that, when Tikhonov came in. And that's, you know, really Gabe shows in that movie that just since that time when Tikhonov came in, I'm not, I don't have anything against him, I mean a good coach and everything, but I had a chance to play for him in Olympics and we won Olympics, but it still wasn't, it wasn't him. You know, even I didn't have much time to spend with him, but I, you know, played for different coaches. I always try to understand the mentality of the coach. I try and understand, you know, even when I'm in front of him, he's standing behind me on the bench, I try to understand what he's trying to do in a certain situation, why use this guy or this line or whatever. So at that point I knew it wasn't about him, it's all about us, you know? It's all about team spirit, and we had a couple of, you know, guys that play on that team that was part of that, you know, team back in old days, and they create the spirit. They brought that spirit to what they had, and they showed us guys what it was like when he was playing on that team, they were playing on that team. And that's what help us to win the Olympics, because we didn't have, nobody really respect us, nobody expect us to win because, you know, we were in transition and we have no country, we have nothing on our jerseys, no sign or nothing. We didn't have national anthem, you know, only national anthem being played is Olympic national anthem. And it was like oh, Russians don't care about winning Olympics. We're going to beat them. And we just came in, I mean we had our pride, we still came from Russia, we're still part of Russia, whatever transition is, and most important this is what we grew up doing. And we can't just, you know, throw our reputation away. You know, you want to show everybody it doesn't matter, our hockey still exists and we have good hockey. And you know, that's why we won Olympics. And again, and that was the last time we won. And now, you know, looking at Russian hockey, it's continuous to what I said before, everything started falling apart. And you know, it just continues going in that direction. So it's never got back to the same family spirit where, you know, players feel like—when I teach my younger son's team I always bring to the kids, I said there's two families you have, the main family when you're home with your parents, sister, brothers, and second family that's when you come to the team. That's your second family. If you respect your teammates as a family then you can be a good team. You know, if you don't respect your teammates, you know, you can say anything you want, you do anything you want, then there's no reason to be on the team. And that's, you know, that's what's been losing now, just—I've been on a lot of teams and seen lot of different things, but that's overall in hockey, in sports, that family thing, you know, it's been missed. And the players coming in, you know, black or white, whatever it is, but you know if you want to succeed in a team sport, you want to have that family kind of feel. And what's good about "Red Army" is we believe and it shows in the movie, they live together in the training camps from month to month to month, they never go home. They maybe go home, you know, a month out of twelve months. I mean, I experienced the same thing, when you go to camp and being a young kid, they never let us go. They let the older guys go to their families, and they never let us leave the dormitory or whatever that place we trained in. And we sat there and we tried to entertain ourselves. I remember during the night, because we live in the place where we practiced, trained in we had access to the ice.

And during the night sometimes we just, you know, like 5 or 6 young guys and we just go to the locker room and get dressed and sometimes I dressed as a goalie, next time next guy would dress as a goalie, and we played for fun. You know, we tried to entertain ourselves. But again, to go back to what I was saying, that family spirit is missing and that's why Russian hockey kind of started falling apart. And that's why players started leaving the country, because they're trying to find that someplace else. And maybe they're bringing their skill to someplace else, and hopefully that skill will have other players and, you know, I've seen a lot of [inaudible] plays, NHL, he came to NHL he wasn't a good skater. But he visited a couple of Russian camps, he started skating well, he became better player. So you know, that transition, you know, that European hockey starts spreading out in and around US and Canada.

>> [Klíma] I just want to say, the Russians are the best. You know, this is where we—

>> [Šťastný] The Russians were the best. [laughter]

>> [Klíma] They are the best. They are the best. But this is the country. We are the best. I'm an American citizen and I'm proud of it.

>> [McAdams] I have time for one final question.

>> [Q] Hockey players were really the first athletes to defect and play in other countries. Before that it was pretty much government officials. Did you ever imagine that other athletes would eventually follow what you did to follow their dream?

>> [Šťastný] I think I understood the question. Because I was, they still call me like the pioneer, one of the first, even though I wasn't the first. There were players before. Maybe at the same time I can add to the question before, like if we communicate, if we helped each other, yes. When I left 1980 I got two, three teammates from national team who defected year before. So they were already in the NHL and some other teammate defected 1973, 74 was Vaclav [inaudible], one of the greatest European international stars. And it really, I felt very very good. When I came here somebody arranged a phone call with him, and you know, you need to, it helps when you can share your experiences, listen to his experiences. Because you want to know what expects you. And every time we played Detroit, in Detroit or [inaudible] we used to meet, have dinner and talk. And it was really helpful. And I tried to do the same thing, you know, with the future generation because hockey community is pretty small. And well known. It's like a family, and I would compare it right here at this camp, it's like Notre Dame family. And these guys, all of us, we were like the cream of the cream, we were the best of the best. We are known. So especially when you get your countrymen, some people can, you know, some kids get here. Not always but most of the time they would come even though you have to put into equation that the hockey players are very very proud and very self-confident kids. Otherwise you couldn't make it in this big league. But still, they're just like me. It feels good for them, you know, to meet your countrymen and people who you can talk about anything, who can understand. Maybe you want to ask questions, you know, what is it like? What will happen to them in the year, five years? And they can see on their own. So there is definitely that urge or that need, and I feel as an obligation for my part to help out any way I can to anybody. I used to do it, we used to have about ten Slovaks in St. Louis Blues, in the training camp. There was, that's more

Slovaks than now in whole NHL! We used to have a good year, it's not as good any longer, but to answer the question of the young gentleman, well I was just hoping because I need to add to it, you just never know. When we left, there were people leaving in the late forties, running away from communism, hoping and being almost convinced, hey, we, two or three, it cannot last longer. It lasted decades and decades and decades and they became nuclear superpower. And the people, a lot of people died, you know, in diaspora abroad, never seeing their homeland and their close family relatives. So this is something we had to deal with, we had to deal with at the time. And thank God it never happened, and what happened in '89 nobody anticipated. It was just a collapse on the inside, thank God and some other people who contributed. But that's something we were praying for and hoping for, and once that happened that was the best way. Because there was a lot of young kids—these guys, some of these guys they also—when I was younger I followed, like on the forbidden radio wave like Radio America or Vatican or Free Europe—we follow like Navratilova in tennis, [inaudible] in hockey, we listen to how they play, what scores, and try to get some information from the NHL from the world, from the free world. And I know we used to do many many, especially Washington, many interviews with Voice of America, which is very well followed by everybody. Just secretly, but they followed it. And doing all this, you realized that what I was doing, now a lot of young people watch and they dream about freedom, they dream about one day playing in the best league. And guys were coming more and more, and actually when I left, basically it was allowed. They allowed within a year, the same year almost. And all the players, but you had to have age 32, so we were over the hill basically, so we had like a [inaudible] some hockey players who came in '82, and again we used to meet and discuss and just enjoy and remember what do you call them, the history and experiences. And it was the best thing that ever happened was '89 when everything kind of collapsed and everybody had a freedom, and everybody could pursue their own dreams. And that was the best thing what happened, that's why I said there might be something missing from the old communist regime. But the vast majority is way, way better at least in Slovakia, and I would think the Czech Republic. By being part of the European Union and the young people can travel the world, they can go and study, they can work anywhere they want. They can pursue and kind of make the best out of their talent and reach whatever potential is. So then it was really, really kind of a blessing and great news for everybody, and I was in the position where I finished my career. I started working for a team, so I was helping out as a scout, I was helping out as part of a management and that was one of the reasons, not only they came, they came in hordes, in plenty of them, many many. Not everybody succeeded, but at least they know they tried, they didn't have to leave with the dreams they never even kind of, they couldn't even try to achieve or accomplish because everybody was blaming the regime. There was nobody to blame right now except the one you see, the guy you see in the mirror. So that's a good thing.

>> [McAdams] Thank you very much, Peter.

[applause]

>> [McAdams] We also have some small gifts here. First of all, I want to thank Gabe Polsky for coming out to Notre Dame, and even though you chose Yale over Notre Dame, we still think you're a pretty good guy. And your film is extraordinary, and so first of all we're very very—

>> [Polsky] [inaudible]

>> [McAdams] Okay. I'll have to tell my friends at Yale about that. So first of all, thank you very much, Gabe.

[applause]

>> [McAdams] And then I want to thank most warmly Alexei, Michal, Petr and Peter for joining us, for going to all the trouble to be with us, to be part of this already extremely successful experiment with the linking of sports, culture, politics a little bit. We're just really grateful to you for coming. So thank you very much.

[applause]

>> [McAdams] And I want to say for those of you who don't know it, there's something we didn't know at the time, and it shows how the Lord provides us with really unusual coincidences. Peter sent half of his children, Peter Šťastný, to the University of Notre Dame where one was a star in hockey and the other was one of our most distinguished women's tennis players. And so we think you made the right decision, Peter, and Peter, so for him this is kind of a homecoming because you've been here so much, even though every time anybody comes there are nine more buildings. So we're glad you could still find your way around. And then, you know, from my heart I want to thank Tom and Jane Heiden. I think you can see why Tom is one of the greatest litigators in the United States today. He really knows how to run a panel. And, but Tom and Jane had this vision that they wanted to bring about. Again last night with "Red Army," it continued today with this panel, and then we'll conclude tonight with a remarkable game on which some of our panelists will participate between the alumni of the Detroit Redwings and the alumni of the Chicago Blackhawks, in which large egos will be involved and both sides will feel an absolute necessity, just like the Czechs and Soviets felt at one time, to beat each other. But again, from my heart I thank Tom and Jane for bringing everybody together on this extraordinary event. And I look forward to seeing all of you at 7:30 tonight in the Compton Arena for what should be a very engaging and enjoyable game. So thank you very much for coming.