

An illustration in shades of blue and orange. A large, stylized hand in orange and red holds a set of keys. Below the hand, a flag with red, white, and blue stripes is being held by a person in a blue jacket. In the foreground, silhouettes of a crowd with their arms raised are visible. The background features large, light blue circles and a textured blue sky.

## The Velvet Revolution of 1989

The year 1989 is the symbol of change. For a long 40 years Czechoslovakia, like other countries of Eastern Europe, lived under the rule of communism and especially the great-power influence of Moscow and the Soviet Union. 1989 brought the fall of this system. Czechoslovakia was one of the last countries where changes took place.

However, no change would have been possible without the long-term economic and social discontent of the population. No change would have been possible without the long-term discontent over the policy of one-party rule, censorship, absence of freedom and life with no prospects.

The role of the young generation, students, apprentices, young people, was an important breaking point. This was a generation born into the morass of post-1968 “normalisation”, courageous and radical young people seeking new prospects. And what was also enormously important was that no change would have been possible were it not for the international situation, especially the weakening of the position of the hitherto hegemon of the East – the Soviet Union.

The Velvet Revolution was a non-violent handover of power to a relatively small group of the then political opposition, which guided the country to free elections in 1990 under the symbol of the personalities of Václav Havel and Alexander Dubček. Besides them, however, there was also a rising pragmatic economic elite.

The ethos of the revolution is very difficult to explain; for people belonging to different generations it was like a miracle after so many decades. This ethos was ushered in by Václav Havel’s motto: “Love and truth must prevail over lies and hatred” - not a political concept for everyday life, but an ideal of the sense of right and wrong and responsibility for the life of the society.

# Charter 77

After the occupation in 1968 there was no united opposition against the ruling communist regime in Czechoslovakia. It seemed things would never change. And yet there was an existing, primarily non-political, underground culture.

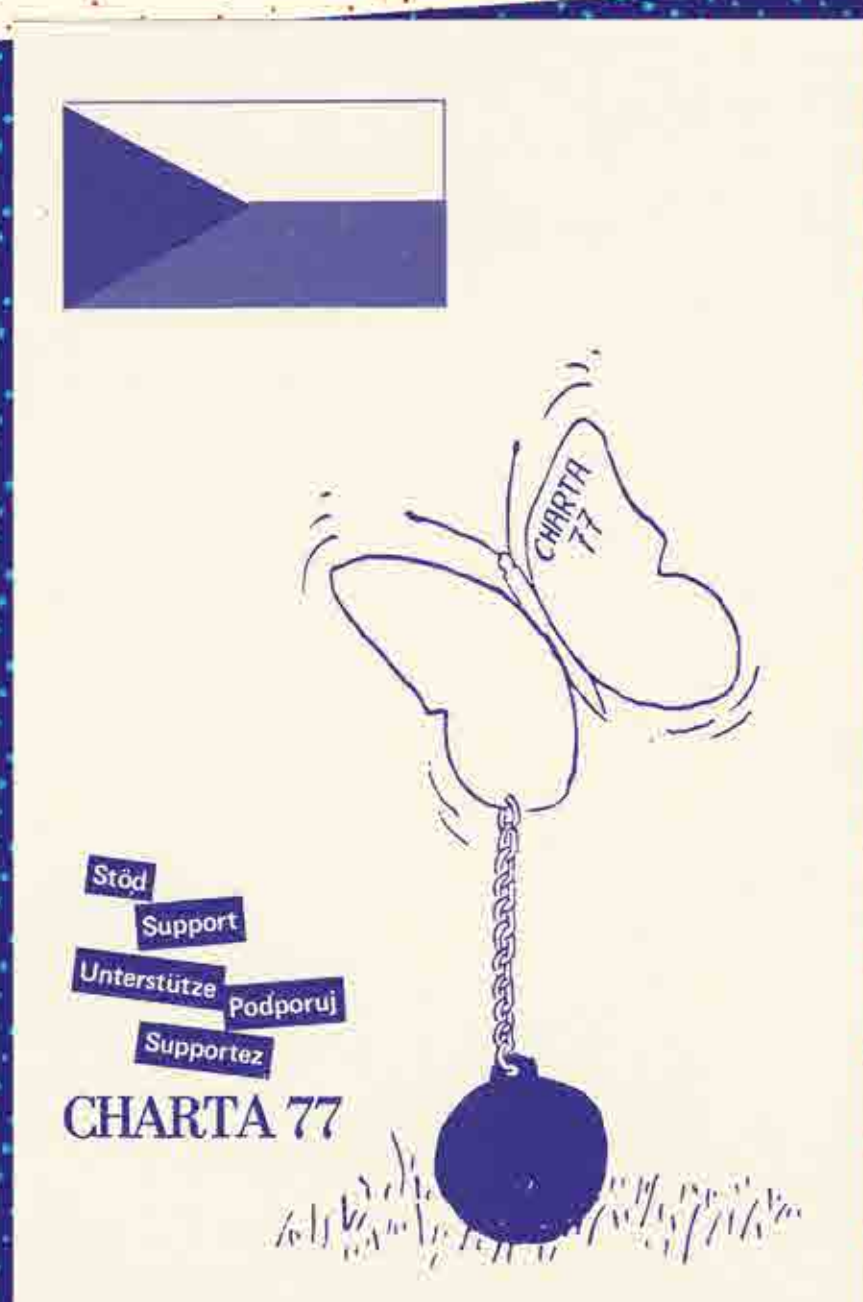
In 1976, the regime decided to criminalise expressions of alternative music by conducting political processes against some musicians. People who had been reformist communists in the 1960s, liberal dissidents and also Christian opposition forces managed to rally in support of the musicians. Moreover, in 1975, Czechoslovakia signed the Helsinki Final Act, which declared the observation of human rights.

All these were impulses behind the drafting of Charter 77, which called on the regime to observe human rights and engage in a dialogue. The leading protagonists were Václav Havel, Pavel Kohout, Miloš Hájek, Jan Patočka, Dana Němcová, Petr Uhl and Jiří Němec. On 1 January 1977 the text of the Charter was ready to be delivered to State and Party bodies. There were 242 signatories at first. The State Security intervened ruthlessly; the Charter spokespeople were criminalised and a massive propaganda campaign was launched against this initiative. In spite of this, Charter 77 became the symbol and representative of the united opposition in Czechoslovakia.



VÁCLAV HAVEL  
(1936–2011)

For other countries he was the symbol of Charter 77, but for a significant part of the domestic population he was a dramatist, political writer and, finally, also president Havel. As early as in 1975 he wrote an open letter to Gustáv Husák in which he described the morass of communism after 1968. After 1977 he served several prison terms, the last as late as in 1989.



PRÍSPĚL JSI TAKÉ  
NADACI CHARTY 77?



THE CHARTA 77  
FOUNDATION NEEDS  
YOUR CONTRIBUTION  
NOW!



# The 1980s

In the beginning of the 1980s, the communist power in Czechoslovakia severely penalised all opposition activities: in the process against VONS (Committee for the Unjustly Prosecuted) and the distributors of exile literature during a campaign titled *Asanace* (Decontamination) the regime focused on hounding out the opponents of the communist dictatorship from the country, etc. And yet, the situation did not calm down. Especially the young generation was turning into a source of possible resistance.

Not even the assumption of power by Mikhail Gorbachov in the Soviet Union brought any change. Czechoslovakia remained a stagnant totalitarian country. And this in spite of the changes in the top ranks of the Communist Party and State. The post of General Secretary of the Communist Party went to an orthodox communist - Miloš Jakeš, who replaced Gustáv Husák.

Nevertheless, following the example of neighbouring socialist countries, the public decided to take protest action: the pilgrimage to Velehrad in Moravia in 1985, the Candle Demonstration in Bratislava three years later, protests in August and October 1988, the Palach Week in January 1989. The Several Sentences petition containing the demands of the opposition was signed by some 40,000 people. But nothing much changed in the leadership of the Party. Yet everything was going in the direction of change.



**MILOŠ JAKEŠ**  
(born 1922)

For most people the selection of Miloš Jakeš to lead the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia in 1987 was proof that no change could be expected from this party. Jakeš was a communist of the old school, who had welcomed the 1968 occupation and who made a fool of himself in the eyes of the people in some of his public speeches.



# Situation in the eastern bloc

In the end of the 1980s, the situation in the eastern bloc was tense and ripe for change. This started in 1985 when Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union with a policy of reform, which involved easing control over the countries of the eastern bloc. Each and every one of those countries then went through dynamic transformations in 1989.

The changes were most rapid in Poland and Hungary. As early as in 1989, the Polish government agreed with the opposition to hold partly free elections in which the clear winner was the Solidarity opposition movement. The opposition in Hungary joined forces in negotiations with the government and an independent and free Hungary was proclaimed as early as on 23 October 1989. Both countries then apologised for their role in the 1968 occupation of Czechoslovakia. The situation in East Germany was more complex, but here, too, demonstrations took place during that year. The large exodus of East Germans to the West via Hungary and Czechoslovakia resulted in regime change also in Germany; the Berlin Wall fell on 9 November 1989.

Change was slowest in Bulgaria and Romania. Bulgaria did not implement any reforms prior to autumn 1989 and Romania, in fact, did so only in December, and that in a very bloody manner when protesters and the army stood together against the secret police - the Securitate. Nevertheless, here too the communist regime was finally toppled in 1989.



MIKHAIL S. GORBACHEV  
(born 1931)

When in 1985 the leadership of the Soviet Union fell into the hands of a relatively young communist, Mikhail Gorbachev, things were expected to change. He, indeed, did come up with the proposition of a necessary *perestroika* – restructuring of the society. In this context, the Soviet Union ceased to encroach on the development of the eastern bloc by command and control. A system change was not however possible without the system collapsing. The Soviet Union finally disintegrated; a mere six years later Gorbachev was no longer leader.



# Candle Manifestation

Unlike the Czech lands, the dominant form of dissent in Slovakia was Catholic and based on the underground church. Its most visible expression was the “Candle Manifestation”.

The author of the idea was the deputy chairman of the Slovak World Congress Marián Šťastný, who called for protests to be held in front of Czechoslovak embassies in the world on 25 March 1988 in protest against religious persecution. In the end, the only manifestation that took place was in Bratislava, where the main organisers were František Mikloško, Ján Čarnogurský, Silvester Krčméry, Vladimír Jukl and Rudolf Fiby, with the underground church structures taking an active part.

The manifestation of Slovak Catholics and citizens was held on Hviezdoslav square in Bratislava and was attended by 3,500 people on the square itself and thousands more in the adjacent alleys.

This peaceful assembly was one of the most significant public manifestations against the communist regime in the then Czechoslovakia. The demonstrators called for the appointment of bishops to vacant episcopal seats and for the observation of religious and civic freedoms. People protested by praying the rosary and holding lit candles until this peaceful assembly was brutally suppressed by police units using batons and water cannons. Altogether 141 citizens were detained and dozens injured (official sources claim 14). This event entered history as the Candle Manifestation, or Bratislava Good Friday, and reports about what happened were broadcast by the BBC, Voice of America, Radio Free Europe and Vatican Radio.



**FRANTIŠEK MIKLOŠKO**  
(born 1947)

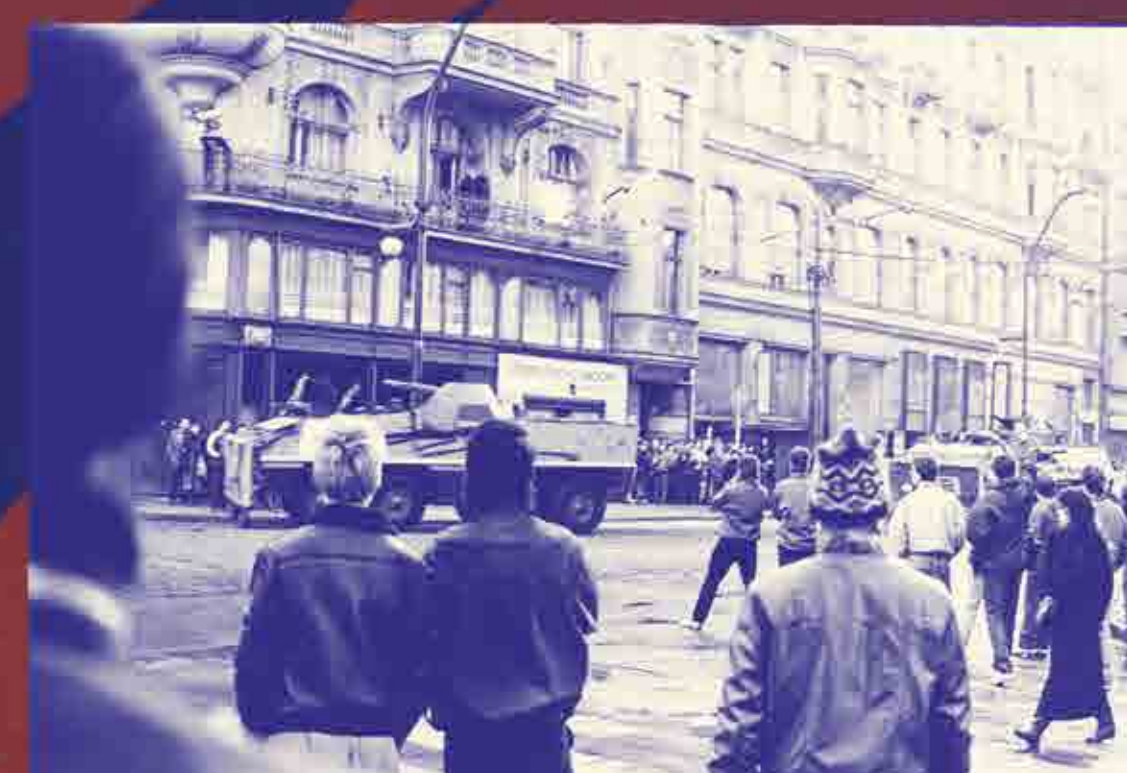
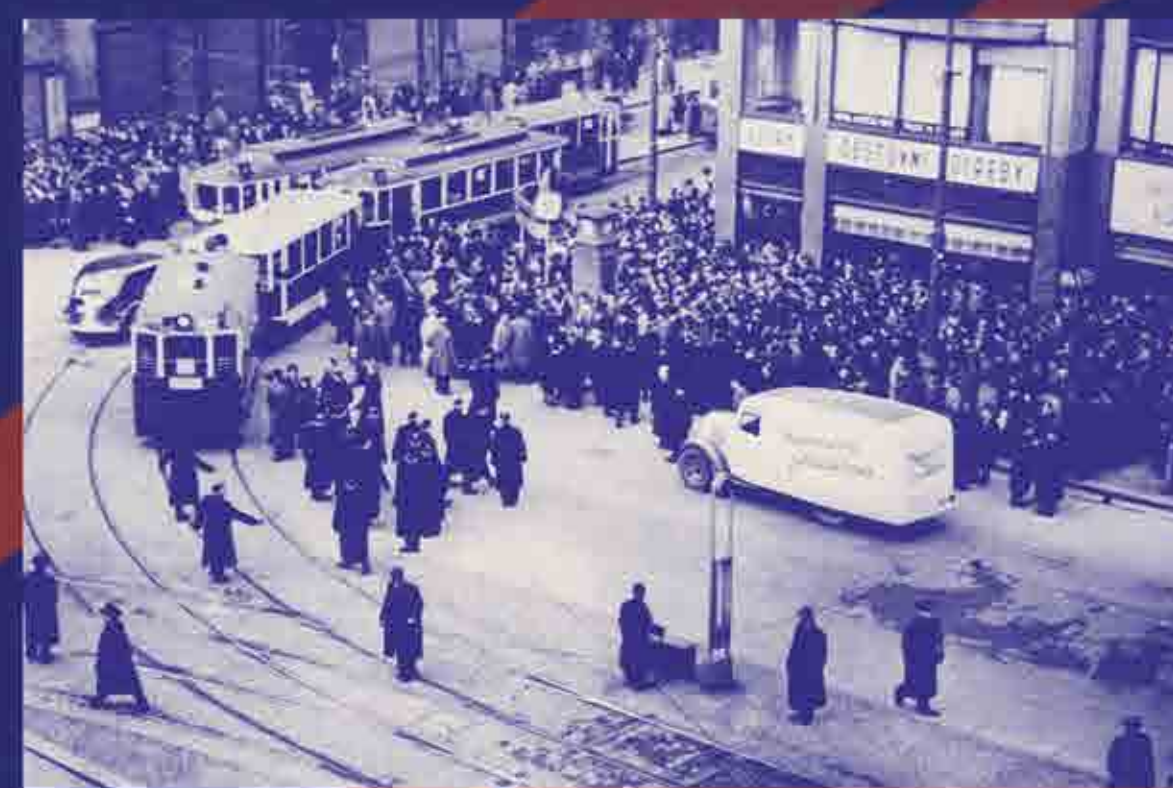
Prior to the fall of communism, he was a Catholic dissident and activist in the underground church and took part in the creation and dissemination of samizdat. From 1971 to 1983 he was a mathematician at the Institute of Technical Cybernetics of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, but from 1983 he was allowed to do only unqualified blue-collar jobs. He was one of the main organisers of the Candle Manifestation, a member of the top leadership of the Public Against Violence platform in 1989 and from 1990 to 1992 chairman of the Slovak National Council. For many years he was a member of the National Council of the Slovak Republic.



# 1939/1989

On 15 March 1939 Czechoslovakia ceased to exist and was replaced by the Protectorate of Bohemia and Moravia, which became a part of Germany. In the autumn of 1939, a number of protests took place against the occupation regime. On the anniversary of the foundation of Czechoslovakia on 28 October 1939, the occupiers used live fire against protesters. A young worker was killed and medical student Jan Opletal died of his injuries two weeks later. His funeral turned into a massive anti-Nazi demonstration. The occupation power used this as a pretext and on 17 November 1939 arrested hundreds of students and sent them to concentration camps. Nine student leaders were executed and universities closed. After the war, 17<sup>th</sup> November started being observed as International Students Day.

The Czechoslovak events of November 1989 referred to November 1939. In Bratislava the demonstration on 16 November 1989 was peaceful, but in Prague repression was severe. And that in spite of the fact that the demonstration had been officially permitted.



# 17 November 1989

On Friday 17 November 1989 Prague students organised a manifestation to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the November 1939 events. The organiser was the Socialist Union of Youth and the planned route of the march was from the Albertov student halls of residence to the Vyšehrad National Cemetery. The procession did not stop there and the students continued marching towards the centre of Prague.

Slogans such as 'Freedom for Christmas', 'Jan Opletal – Jan Palach', 'Europe without Political Prisoners', 'Freedom! Freedom!', 'Free Elections', 'Long Live Havel, Masaryk!', etc. were chanted.

After 7 p.m. the marchers were enclosed by the police on Národní třída in the centre of Prague. Some participants were brutally beaten; 500 people were injured. The last attack took place at 10 p.m. Traces of blood remained visible on the pavement for several days. And rumours spread that a student, Martin Šmíd, had died. It turned out later that this was a provocation by the State Security.

It is an absurdity that the communist power resorted to violence against students on the anniversary of Nazi brutality against students.



## ALOJZ LORENC

(born 1939)

Deputy Federal Minister of the Interior, assigned in 1985 to direct the central counter-intelligence administrations of the State Security. Before that he was a cryptographer. During the November events he ordered the security forces not to intervene, but at the same time he ordered a large number of secret files to be shred. He now lives in Slovakia.



# Birth of the Civic Forum

The platform on which the opposition to the communist regime was to unite was the Civic Forum founded on 19 November 1989 in the Činoherní klub theatre at 8 p.m. by dissidents Václav Havel, Alexandr Vondra, actor Petr Čepek, Catholic priest Václav Malý, and others. The Civic Forum called for an investigation into the events of 17 November and the punishment of the main culprits, the release of political prisoners, creation of a pluralist system and free elections. From the very beginning it declared itself a non-political civic organisation. An important moment came when it was joined by people from the Prognostic Institute, who demanded the observance of democratic rights and free elections.

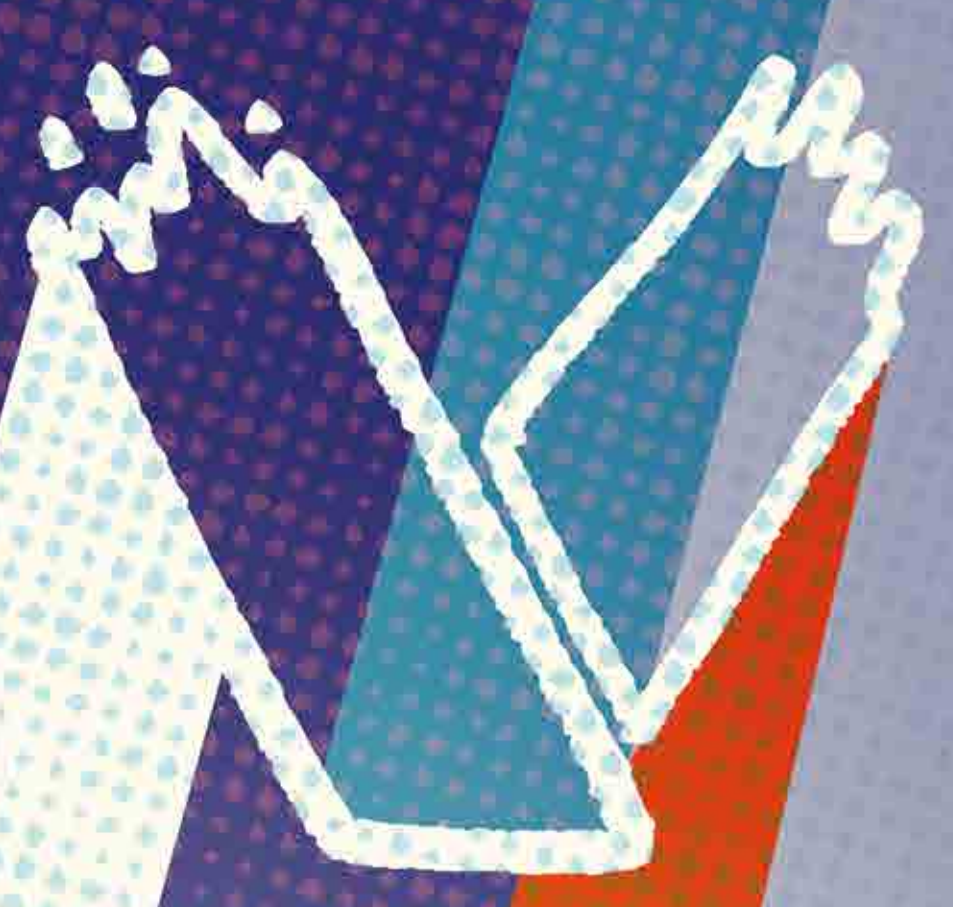
A day later, representatives of the Civic Forum held their first talks with representatives of the Czechoslovak government. And on 21 November the Civic Forum held a demonstration on Wenceslas Square attended by 200,000 people. Hence it became the leading force in the dialogue with the Communist power.

The same day the Civic Forum was founded it was decided in Bratislava to start a partner movement – Public Against Violence (on 20 November 1989). The founders were Milan Kňažko, Martin Bútora, Fedor Gál, Ján Budaj, and others. Their main objective was democratisation, the abolition of the leading role of the CPC and free elections.



VÁCLAV MALÝ  
(born 1950)

Roman-Catholic priest who had been imprisoned before 1989 and was then allowed to work only as an unqualified worker. During the November revolution he became one of the founders of the Civic Forum and moderated many demonstrations, especially the one on the Letná plain in Prague. It is to his credit that reconciliation became a part of the ethos of the November revolution.





VEREJNOSŤ  
PROTI  
NASILIU

# Public Against Violence

The Public Against Violence (VPN) civic movement was a democratic political movement founded on 19 November 1989 at a meeting of approximately 400 creative artists, environmentalists, anti-regime activists and students at the Bratislava Umělecká beseda. There they were informed by Milan Kňažko about the strike of the Prague theatres and heard the Prague students' call for a demonstration. The meeting expressed its support for the events in Prague in a text prepared by graphic designer Ľubomír Longauer together with other artists (Miroslav Cipár, Rudolf Sikora and others) and read out by him.

Soon after that the VPN coordinating committee was formed (Milan Kňažko, Ján Budaj, Fedor Gál, Peter Zajac, Martin Bútora, Jozef Kučerák and others). In their declaration the committee called for the establishment of true democracy, rejection of violence in political, cultural and public life, and plurality and freedom of the press.



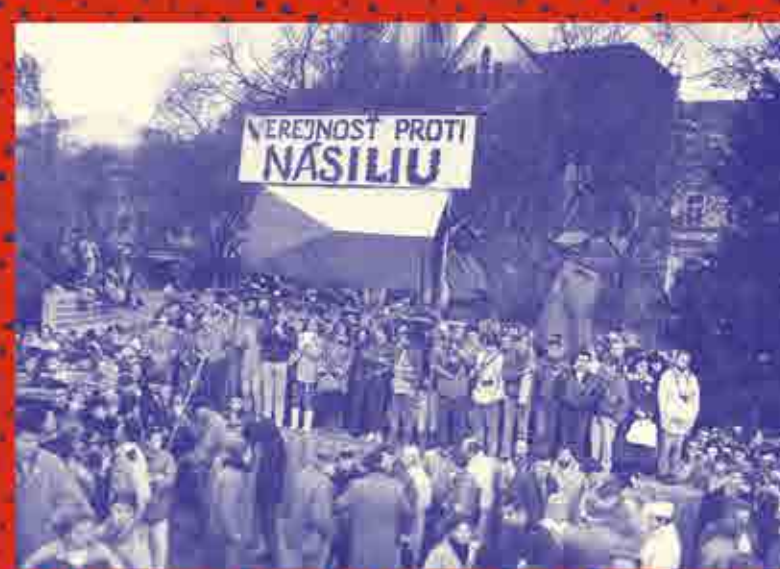
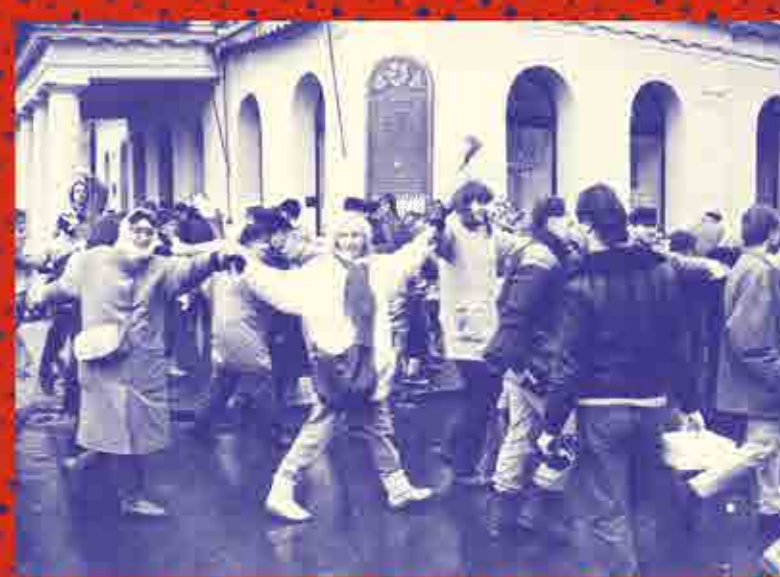
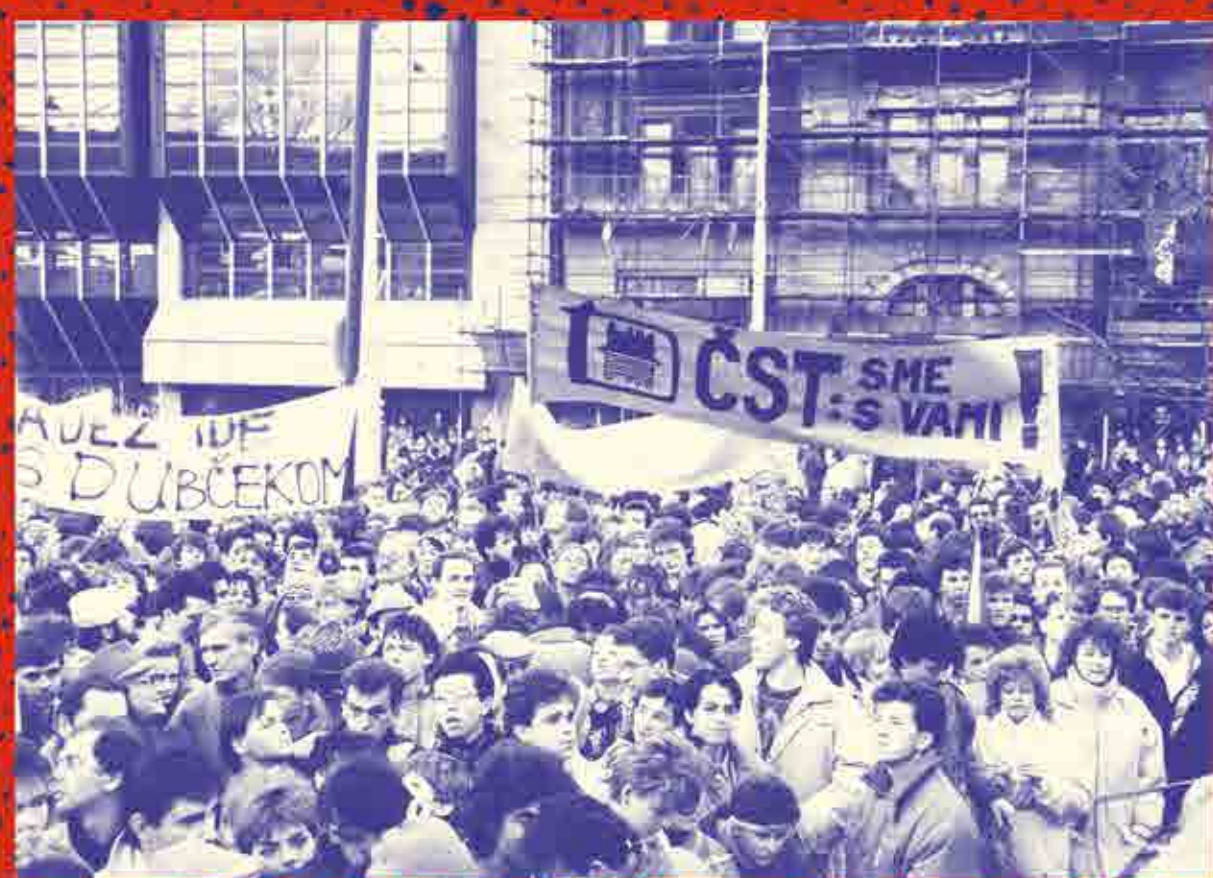
MILAN KŇAŽKO  
(born 1945)

Popular theatre and TV actor. In 1989 he started collaborating closely with dissidents and returned his "Artist of Merit" (*zasloužilý umělec*) title. Together with Ján Budaj, Milan Kňažko was a key figure in the Bratislava protests in November 1989. During a Studio Dialogue broadcast on 24 November 1989 Kňažko openly called for the abolition of the leading role of the Communist Party. In 1990, he was an advisor to president Václav Havel and later served as the minister of foreign affairs of the Slovak Republic. He was the co-founder of the Movement for a Democratic Slovakia; in 1992–1993 he was deputy prime-minister of the government of the Slovak Republic and minister of foreign affairs. Minister of culture of the Slovak Republic in 1998–2002.

VÁCLAV HAVEL  
MARIÁN ČALFA



Verejnosť proti násiliu  
VOLTE 5



# Student Strike – Role of Students

The revolution was triggered by the student demonstration to commemorate the events of 1939. In Czech and Czechoslovak history students have been a key factor in the march of history – they played a role during the communist putsch in 1948 and were the mover of many events in 1968. To name just one example: the symbol of the student Jan Palach and his self-immolation protest in 1969.

Students started organising immediately after the brutal intervention on Friday 17 November 1989 and on 20 November most institutions of higher learning in Prague went on strike. They were joined by institutions of higher learning in the regions and support came also from the secondary school network. The students organised visits to the regions to inform factory workers and local demonstrations about the situation. Many harboured very radical views and were urged by some of the dissidents, for example by Petr Pithart, to keep a cool head.

Representatives of the students spoke at mass meetings and the names of student leaders, such as Šimon Pánek, Martin Mejstřík, Monika Pajerová and Vlastimil Ježek, soon became known to the public. Many of them became important public figures in the 1990s in politics, culture and the media.



NE NÁSILÍ  
STUDENT VŠECH FAKULT SPOJTE SE!

NEŽÍT VE LŽI



ŠIMON PÁNEK  
(born 1967)

Former student at the Charles University Faculty of Science. He did not complete his studies. In 1988 he took part in the humanitarian effort to help Armenian earthquake victims. In November 1989 he was one of the most active student leaders. When the regime changed, he devoted himself to humanitarian projects and is the current head of the People in Need organisation.

TELEVIZE  
LŽE!  
STÁVKA  
STUDENTŮ  
V NEDELI  
NEKONČÍ!



NULÁCI Z MENZY  
PODPORUJÍ STÁVKU  
STUDENTŮ A GENE-  
RÁLNÍ STÁVKU PODPĚŘÍ  
MANIFESTAČNĚ !



11. 12.  
PONDĚLÍ  
DANA  
GENERÁLNÍ  
STÁVKA !?



# Support in Regions – Mass Action

The Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia would not have been successful without the mass support of the population. The largest demonstrations took place in Prague, of course, but mass meetings were held also in Brno and Bratislava. Moreover, the Civic Forum – and the Public against Violence in Slovakia – had branches in hundreds of places around the republic.

Public support strengthened when the media – radio and TV – started informing about the protests. When a general strike was called for 27 November from 12 (noon) to 2 p.m., 75 per cent of the population took part. There was enormous support. Moreover, students, actors and other committed people travelled from Prague to the regions to inform them about the situation.

The emigrants who started to return to the country received a lot of attention. Artists and singers and songwriters were especially popular. Karel Kryl returned from Germany, Jaroslav Hutka from The Netherlands. A special chapter was the symbolic return of Alexander Dubček to the public stage. This symbol of Prague Spring 1968 enjoyed enormous support, but the actual situation in autumn 1989 was different from the reformist communist process 20 years earlier – it was not possible to go back in time.



**KAREL KRYL**  
(1944–1994)

Singer and songwriter whose song “Close the Gate, Little Brother” (*Bratříčku, zavírej vrátka*) became a symbol of the 1968 occupation. He emigrated a year later and joined Radio Free Europe. People knew his songs reflecting the grim atmosphere of the period of normalisation. His return after November 1989 was seen as a sign of returning values, and his concerts were very well-received all over the country. Nevertheless, he was unhappy with the way things were going in the 1990s.



# Political Change in November/December 1989

The political events between 17th November and 29 December were hectic and with many dynamic turns. Two days after the demonstration on Národní třída the united opposition platforms Civic Forum and Public against Violence were formed. The Communist Party leadership did not at first talk to them, but the initiative was taken up by the federal prime minister Ladislav Adamec, who had the ambition to use the situation to gain a stronger foothold for himself.

On 24 November 1989, the leadership of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia resigned under public pressure. There were changes also at the government level. The first reformed government created on 3 December still had a communist majority and was rejected by the people. On 27 November, a massive general strike took place and two days later the leading role of the CPC as enshrined in the Constitution was revoked. A new government was agreed and then appointed on 10 December 1989 – the communists no longer had a majority. The communist president Gustáv Husák resigned on the same day.

At the same time, however, the State Security ordered the massive shredding of secret documents. Still outstanding was the important political matter of who was to be Husák's successor as president. On 29 December 1989, following active intervention by prime minister Čalfa, the parliament, which at that time still had a communist majority, elected Václav Havel president.



**GUSTÁV HUSÁK**  
(1913–1991)

The symbol of normalisation after 1969. General Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and from 1975 also Czechoslovak president. He strived to achieve a balance between the conservative and pragmatic wings of the Party. During his term, society fell into lethargy and was kept in fear of the State Security. Husák resigned in December 1989, thus freeing space for change.

## OBČANSKÉ FÓRUM

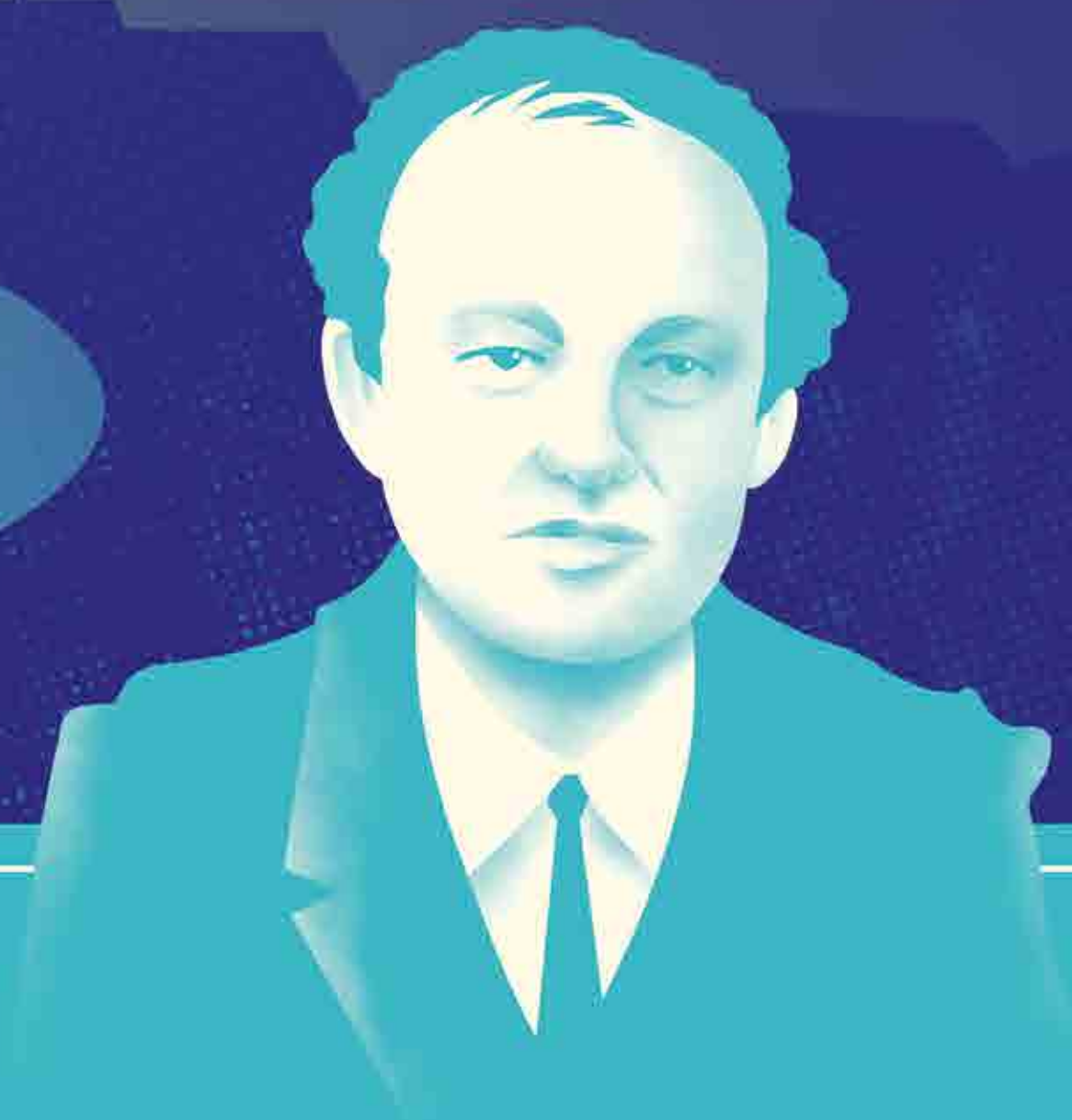


# Václav Havel – Presidential Elections

Dramatist and writer Václav Havel (born 1936) became the symbol of political change in Czechoslovakia. Since the 1960s he had been moving around in artistic circles and was one of the critics of the communist regime. After 1969 he found himself in social isolation and spoke out significantly for the first time in 1975 when he wrote an open letter to president Husák, describing the morass of the Czechoslovakia of those times.

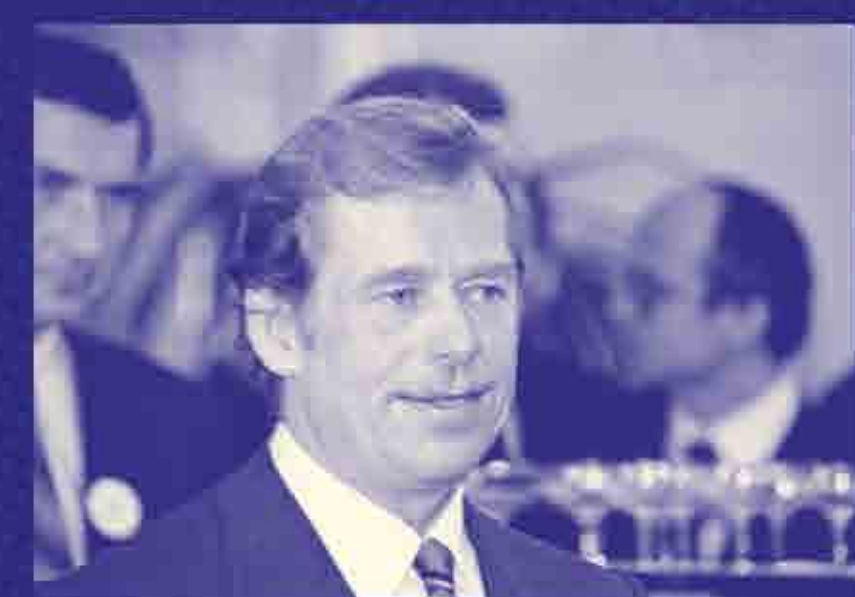
Havel was one of the leading figures of Charter 77 and also its prominent representative recognised abroad as one of the Charter's first spokesmen. By 1989 he had been repeatedly imprisoned, the last time after the Palach Week in January 1989. In the autumn of 1989 he became a leading figure in the Civic Forum and in the negotiations with the official power.

During these talks the question of the election of a new head of state after Gustáv Husák, who had held this post since 1975, was raised. The talks were complicated - also by the fact that the parliament was still in the hands of the communists. Another debated point was whether Alexander Dubček, the symbol of 1968, ought to be president. In the end it was prime minister Čalfa who played a major role by reaching an agreement with the parliament that the presidential election with Václav Havel as the candidate would take place at the end of December 1989. Dubček was to take Havel's place after half a year, but this never happened.



**MARIÁN ČALFA**  
(born 1946)

Pragmatic communist and a lawyer by profession. At the end of the negotiations about the new government it was agreed in December 1989 that he would become the federal prime minister. Using his contacts in the still communist parliament, he offered to ensure the election of Václav Havel president. He did so and the parliament elected Havel. Čalfa cleared the way for many structural changes in 1990.



# Fall of the Iron Curtain

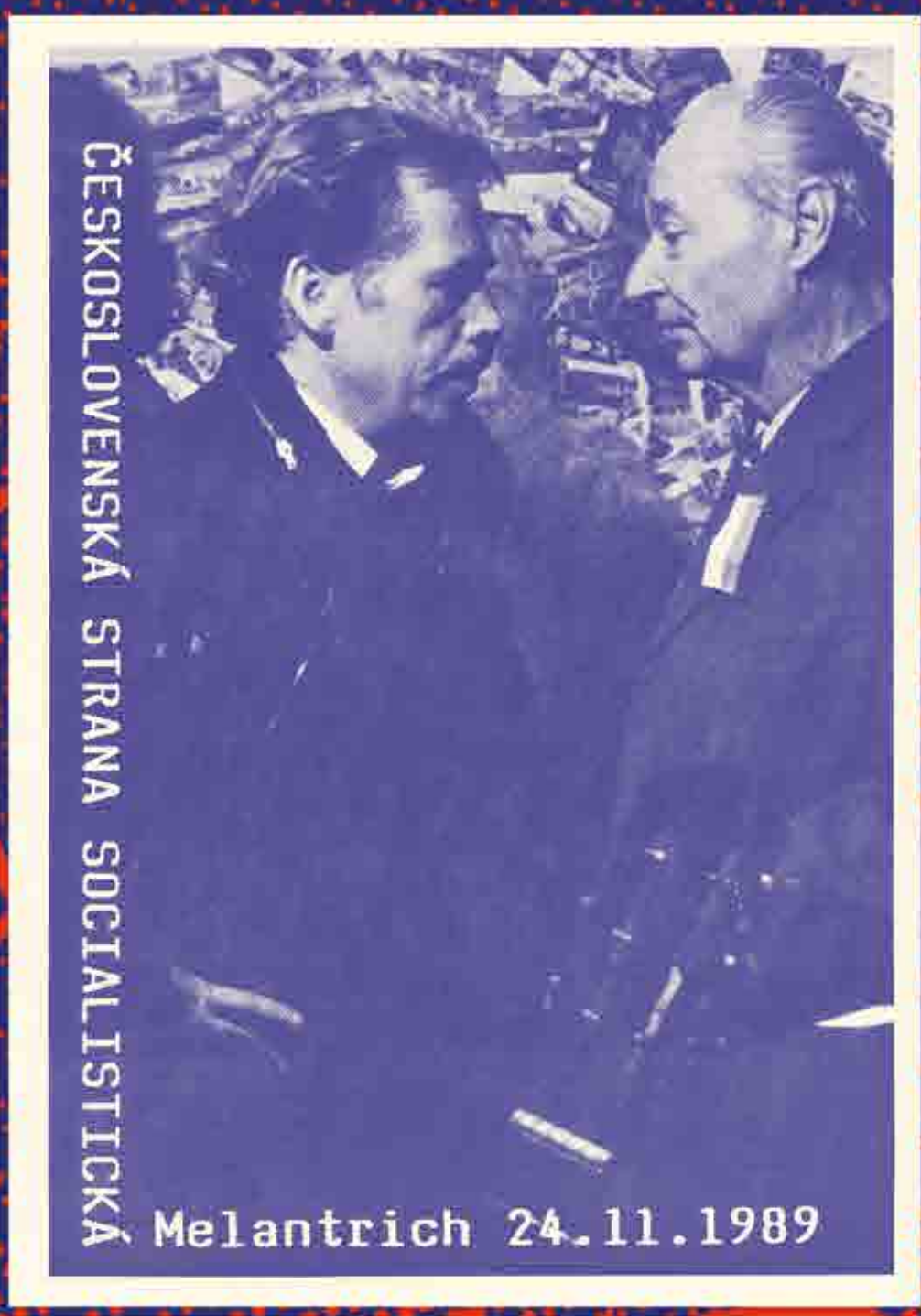
While in Poland and Hungary the opposition had been engaged in a dialogue with the ruling political power since the beginning of 1989, in the other countries of the eastern bloc the situation was more difficult. The events in East Germany and Berlin became the symbol of the fall of communism. In the summer, tens of thousands of East Germans occupied FRG embassies in Prague and Budapest to force their departure for the West. On 9 November 1989 the first section of the border with West Germany was opened and soon after that the Berlin Wall fell. The unification of the two parts of Germany occurred on 3 October 1990.

The developments in the eastern bloc were a heavy blow for the USSR. The Baltic states declared their independence in 1990 and the USSR started slowly disintegrating. Mikhail Gorbachev declared himself president and abolished the monopoly of the Communist Party. The democratic opposition started asserting itself. Its symbol was Boris Yeltsin, who was elected Russian president in June 1991. In August, the communist old guard organised an unsuccessful coup attempt, which discriminated the regime even further. The Warsaw Pact was dissolved in 1991; the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START) was signed in the summer of 1991. On 21 December 1991 the USSR was dissolved.



**HELMUT KOHL**  
(1930–2017)

German Christian Democratic Politician who after 1990 was behind the reunification of Germany. The fall of the Berlin Wall started changes all over Europe. Kohl deserves credit for the new approach of Germany to its neighbours in Central Europe, especially Poland and Czechoslovakia, later the Czech Republic.



# Free Elections in 1990

One of the principal demands of the opposition was free elections. When the leading role of the Communist Party was repealed on 29 November 1989 the road to elections was open. A pluralist party system was restored in the first half of 1989. New parties emerged next to the two dominant movements (Civic Forum and Public Against Violence) – a green party, Hungarian minority parties, the republicans; some traditional parties were relaunched (Social Democratic Party, People's Party, the Democratic Party in Slovakia).

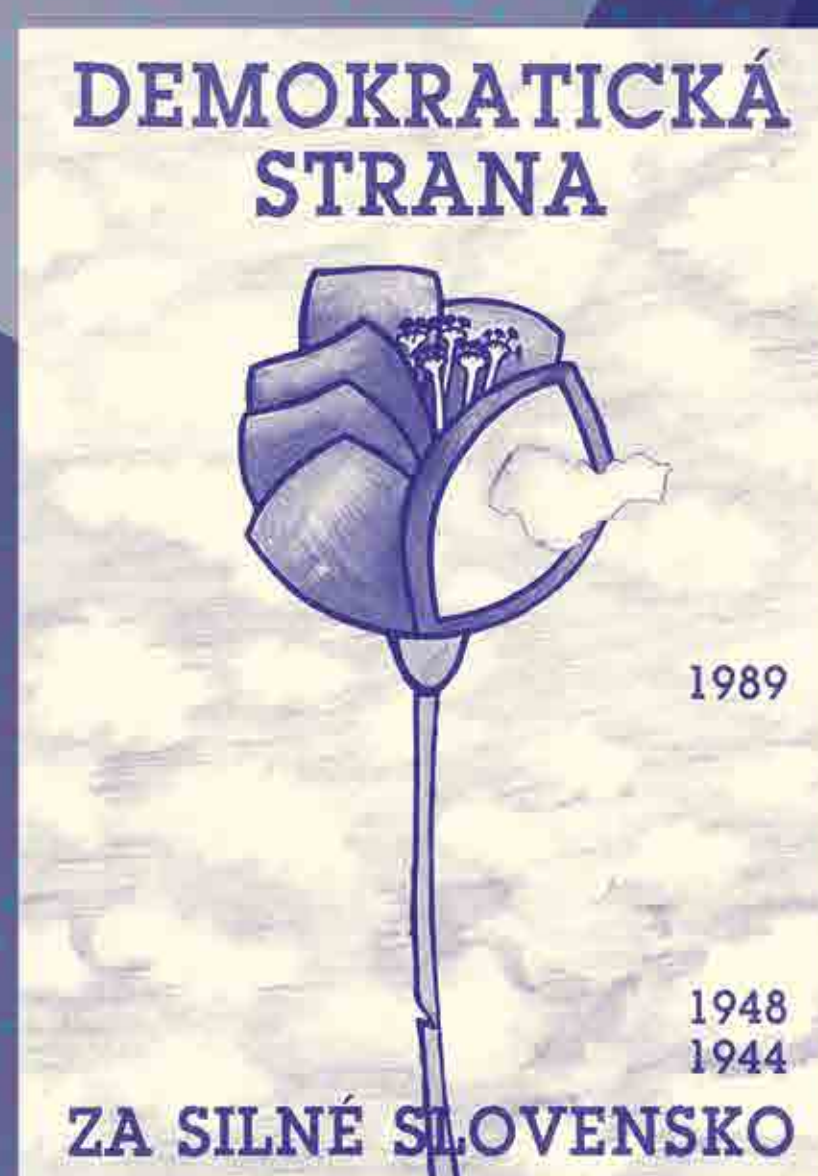
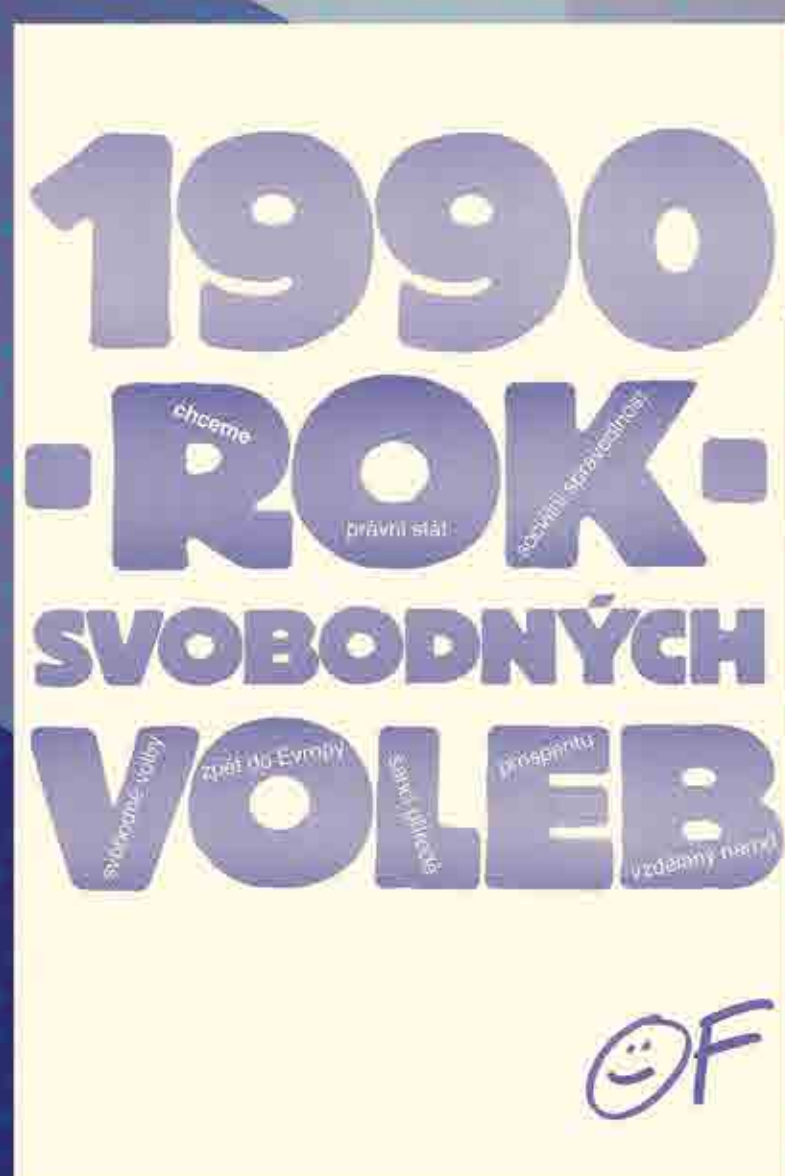
The first free elections after more than 50 years took place in June 1990. More than 23 political entities took part and the turnout was more than 95 per cent. The Civic Forum and Public Against Violence won a crushing victory and formed a government coalition. The legislative period was shortened to two years. Essential reforms of the political system and the transformation of the Czechoslovak economy were to take place during that period.

After the elections, Marián Čalfa became Czechoslovak prime minister, Petr Pithart the prime minister of the Czech government and Vladimír Mečiar of the Slovak government. In July, presidential elections followed the parliamentary elections and Václav Havel was elected president unanimously.



**PETR PITHART**  
(born 1941)

Lawyer, dissident and one of the men of the Civic Forum in November 1989. After the 1989 elections he became the Czech prime minister. He was more an intellectual than a practicing politician. Pithart was not re-elected in 1992. Later he became a senator and President of the Senate and also published several books about the November and post-November events.



# Split of the Czech and Slovak Federative Republic

Czech-Slovak relations were the principal issue in free Czechoslovakia. The first conflict between the Czechs and the Slovaks emerged in the spring of 1990 during the discussions on the name of the state and the national emblem. Václav Havel proposed the name Czechoslovak Republic and a return to the pre-war national emblem of Czechoslovakia. This led to heated debates and the final adoption of the name Czech and Slovak Federative Republic and of an emblem divided into four fields – two Czech and two Slovak.

After November 1989 the distorted act on the Czechoslovak federation of 1968 (1970) was still in effect and so after the 1990 elections the debate focused on changing the concept of the federation. The Competences Act was adopted, strengthening the two republics to the detriment of the federation. The Czechs and the Slovaks were divided on the issue of whether to have one, or three constitutions.

Efforts to divide the country as soon as possible emerged soon after the 1992 elections during the first meeting of the heads of the two strongest parties, Václav Klaus and Vladimír Mečiar. In Brno, on 26 August, the two politicians agreed to divide Czechoslovakia and on 25 November 1992 the Federal Assembly adopted the bill on the dissolution of Czechoslovakia. On 1 January 1993 two new states were born.



**VLADIMÍR MEČIAR**  
(born 1942)

Lawyer and Slovak politician who became a prominent symbol of Slovak policy after 1990. A tough and erratic politician who often changed his views from one day to another. He would support the federation one day and then assist the dissolution of the state and set out on the road of nationalist policy; at the beginning of the 1990s Slovakia experienced many undemocratic developments during his term of office.





A large, stylized graphic of the year '1989' is the central focus. The numbers are filled with a halftone dot pattern. The '1' is light blue, the '9' is light blue with a red circle above it, and the '8' and '9' are red. A red hand with a white cuff is pointing upwards towards the '9'.

## The Challenge in 2019

Every historical event is firmly anchored in the unique context of its period. What lives on is not only the practical consequences for the later development, but also the symbols, slogans, mottos - to put it simply, the second life of a historical moment. This applies also to the historical divide of 1989.

In global history, the 20th century - a period of previous polarities, great power tensions within the traditional framework of relations, historical reminiscences and grievances - is seen as having come to an end with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989. From a more emotive perspective, this event is perceived as a euphoric moment marking the apparent end of evil and the beginning of a new historical opportunity for western civilisation.

For a long time, the events of November 1989 have continued to get favourable rating from the Czech public. This has been clear and beyond dispute for decades. In 2019, this is no longer the case. No one questions the importance of the fall of the communist dictatorship. Nevertheless, three decades have passed since that moment and the consequences of November 1989 have logically taken on other connotations, especially as far as the subsequent development, economic transition and the relations in society are concerned.

Today, we speak about affluence on the one hand, and uncertainty on the other. Freedom and openness are accompanied by the loss of values and groping around looking for a place to moor. The slogans of November were democracy and freedom. The newly installed capitalist system, however, opens further questions about the road, direction, and even possible alternatives.



# THE VELVET REVOLUTION 1989

EXHIBITION OF THE NATIONAL MUSEUM ON THE END OF COMMUNISM  
IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA  
CREATED IN COOPERATION WITH CZECH CENTRES

**Organized by:** National Museum

**Co-organizer:** Czech Centres

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