



25th Anniversary of the „Velvet Revolution“: Democratic changes in former Czechoslovakia in 1989



The Velvet (or Gentle) Revolution was a non-violent change of the regime in Czechoslovakia in 1989. The revolution was triggered by an incident after the collapse of the Berlin Wall in October 1989 when the anti-riot police suppressed a peaceful student demonstration in Prague that was staged to commemorate a 1939 student protest against Nazi invaders and was followed by a closure of all universities in the country (an occasion celebrated today as International Students' Day). This incident sparked a series of popular demonstrations all over the Czech and Slovak parts of the country.

Realizing the collapse of other Warsaw Pact governments, and seeing a surge in popular unrests, the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia soon announced that it would relinquish its power and dismantle the single-party political system. Barbed wire and other obstructions were removed from the border with West Germany and Austria in early December, non-communist government was appointed. The “1968 Prague spring” hero Alexander Dubček was elected as speaker of the federal parliament and Václav Havel became president of Czechoslovakia. In June 1990, Czechoslovakia held its first democratic elections since 1946.

In 1993, the Czechs and Slovaks peacefully separated and coexist today as independent countries – the Czech Republic and Slovak Republic. Both became member states of the European Union in 2004 and enjoy excellent bilateral relations.

