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Editor's Page

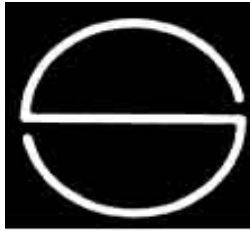
A Quarter-Century since the Velvet Revolution: Perspectives from SVU?

Twenty-five years ago, in November and December 1989, many people joined together in Czechoslovakia to make the Velvet Revolution. They acted and they spoke, in the streets and in



Michael Žantovský, Madelaine Albright and John McCain at a public discussion in the Library of Congress in November 2014.

Photo Petr Hausner



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the public discourse, to move the country past forty years of Sovietization. It was part of the reunification of Europe. We in the SVU can think about what happened then and what happened in the twenty-five years since, and we could say a lot about it. All the institutions for explaining what happened are in Prague and Bratislava, but we are in a lot more places. We are in the United States, from Washington and New York to Florida, the Midwest, Texas and the West Coast. We are in Britain, Germany and Switzerland, and we are also in Bratislava and Prague, where so many institutions interpret the past and present. I think of the *Masarykův ústav*, *Ústav pro studium totalitních režimů*, *Ústav pro soudobé dějiny* and *Paměť národa*, all in Prague.

Petr Hausner, our president, thought the last issue of *Zprávy SVU* for 2014 should be about memory, the memory of the revolution. It made me surprised at myself, because his idea did not occur to me. It's a natural idea for us, of course, because 1989 also split the world for SVU, into a world of Before and After. Maybe I didn't let the idea occur to me because it can make a lot of trouble. Isn't 1989 bound up with a lot of emotion, judgment and myth? Does a triumphalist narrative of good over evil speak too loudly over critique? Is SVU as

receptive a milieu for, say, a Slavoj Žižek as it is for a Madeleine Albright?

Slavoj Žižek is a critic of the globalized West, and he also means a lot to many people, like Madeleine Albright does. What went on before 1989, and what is going on since 1989? Don't we have to keep thinking and rethinking? And keep broadening our horizons, from Albright to Žižek and farther?

Yes, 1989 is troublesome, and 2014 is a troublesome year for its quarter-century weight and memory to fall into. Does 2014—with its Ukraine and a revivified Russia—obscure 1989 for us too much? What new views and insights can we look forward to from scholars and memoirists at our next SVU conferences? Views and insights into 1989, the four decades before 1989 ... and the quarter-century since?

David Chroust

SVU Is Fulfilling One of Its Mandates

SVU Members Meet with Czech Deputy Prime Minister Pavel Bělobrádek

Peter Ujházy



The Czech delegation visiting Washington at the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution included Dr. Pavel Bělobrádek. Dr. Bělobrádek, who is genuinely concerned with financing and regulating Czech science in the best possible way, asked SVU for help.

Science and technology support is crucial in any developed economy. They help to create a vision for the society, they nurture education, and they deliver vast current and future returns.

On November 19, 2014 a group of Czech and Slovak professionals, many of them SVU members, met at the Czech Embassy in Washington, DC, with the Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic for Science, Research, and Innovation, Dr. Pavel Bělobrádek. Dr. Bělobrádek, defined the meeting as the beginning of a dialogue about the future of science and technology management in the Czech Republic. He stressed the long-term value of investments in science on the example of Professor Antonín Holý, the late author of hundreds of discoveries and a pioneer in anti-viral drugs used today worldwide in the treatment of Hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS.

Dr. Bělobrádek shared his vision of how science should be managed. The interdependency of and relationships among the educational system, research institutions, and industry are obvious, but there are many legislative and systemic hurdles to overcome. The SVU President, Dr. Petr Hausner, underscored the necessity to foster an environment friendly to science and scientists, the value of science teachers and the need to reward creativity as desirable guiding principles of the new face of Czech science. Other active participants in the discussion were Drs. Míla Rechcigl, Mikuláš Popovič, Karel Pacák, Pavol Kováč, Eva Hausner, and Peter Ujházy. The meeting was also attended by Dr. Bělobrádek's deputy, Dr. Arnošt Marks.

One of Dr. Bělobrádek's ideas is to create an international network of expatriate experts that would help in the review of the planned new systemic changes in Czech science and research management. If you are interested to join this network with stimulating suggestions, please do not hesitate to contact SVU via email (svu.hausner@gmail.com) or by mail at:

SVU, Attn: Network,
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USA



From left to right, Mikuláš Popovič, Karel Pacák, Míla Rechcigl, Petr Hausner, Pavel Bělobrádek, Pavol Kováč, Arnošt Marks and Peter Ujházy.

Photo Czech Embassy in Washington.

SVU Carrying Out Its Commitments

Petr Hausner

In May 2014 my wife and I attended *The Makropulos Case* opera at the New York Metropolitan Opera. It was a stunning performance, which was broadcasted all over the world on the *Live from the Metropolitan Opera* channel. As always, my favorite com-



Barbara Karpetová and Dagmar Havlová at the dedication of Václav Havel's Memorial at Georgetown University on November 3, 2013.

Photo Petr Hausner

poser Janáček shined under the baton of Maestro Jiří Bělohlávek and excellent performances of Karita Mattila (Emilia Marty), the other



Petr Hausner, pianist Anna Fejerová, the wife of JB, and Jiří Bělohlávek after the concert “Celebration of Freedom” on November 17, 2014.

Photo Yaakov Nagler

singers and the orchestra. After the performance, we had dinner with the exhausted conductor and his family. During the dinner, he revealed that he was going to perform with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra in New York’s Carnegie Hall in November 2014.

While trying to get maestro Bělohlávek interested in the composition *Life in Truth* (*Život v pravdě*), by the composer Joseph Santo, which had its world premiere on September 29th at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church in Bethesda, Maryland,

during the Mutual Inspiration Festival of 2013, so skillfully organized by Barbara Karpetová, the then cultural attache of the the Czech Embassy in Washington, I told Barbara that the Philharmonic Orchestra was coming to the US for a concert at Carnegie Hall. Barbara immediately noticed that the concert of the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra in New York would coincide with the prepared celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution in Washington, and she said she “had to get them over.”

Barbara Karpetová found sponsors (The Prague Freedom Foundation) and, together with Ambassador Petr Gandalovič put on a beautiful concert at the National Cathedral in Washington. *Vltava* and the *New World Symphony* were performed as I like it best, by Czech musicians under Jiří Bělohlávek. The wonderful performance with many prominent Americans and visitors from the Czech Republic in the audience was an appropriate celebration of the peaceful transformation from communism to capitalism, the Velvet Revolution. I am proud that SVU coinstigated this wonderful concert.

¹ *Life in Truth* is a melodrama for a narrator and orchestra inspired by president Havel's memorable address to both houses of Congress in 1990.

Celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the Velvet Revolution



The Czech Philharmonic under the baton of Jiří Bělohlávek performs in the Washington National Cathedral.

Photo taken from the Internet

Petr Hausner

The Czech Embassy in Washington, together with the Friends of the Czech Republic, the Library of Congress and the Congress of the United States of America, put together more than two dozen programs to remember and celebrate the 25th anniversary of



A gala dinner honoring Václav Havel and 25 years of democracy in the Czech Republic, hosted by Honorable Madeleine Albright at the Omni Shoreham Hotel in Washington. At the table of Carlos Saladrigas.

Photo Petr Hausner

the Velvet Revolution. Presentations were given, films were screened, magnificent music performed. Theater performances, exhibits and gala evenings filled nearly every evening in September, October and November 2014 remembering the Velvet Revolution of November 1989 in general and its main protagonist, Václav Havel in particular. The crowning event was the emotional unveiling of the bust of late President Václav Havel in the Statuary Hall, United States Capitol.

There is no doubt that America appreciated the historic consequences of the Velvet Revolution which took Czechoslovakia out of Eastern Europe and placed it firmly where it belongs, i.e., among the cultured and prosperous countries of Middle Europe and within the European Union.

The events were attended by an official delegation of the Czech Republic, led by the Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka and the Speaker of the Parliament Jan Hamáček. All are fluent in English, friendly, informed, agile, honest and all represented the Czech Republic in a magnificent way.



Dagmar Havlová, the speaker of the House John Boehner, Jan Hamáček, Bohuslav Sobotka (hidden), the speaker of the Senate Nancy Pelosi.

Photo Petr Hausner

Living in the Washington suburbs, we were able to visit quite a few events, so skillfully arranged by the Czech Embassy in Washington, by Petr Gandalovič and his team, Barbara Karpetová, Robert Řehák, etc. For nearly three month, the former Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic were often in the news.

The Czech and Slovak communities have also slowly lost the attribute of being just immigrants. For the new generation, which was still scarcely represented at most events, temporary migrants would have been a more appropriate descriptor. And what was most fascinating, there were young Czechs who came all the way from the Czech Republic to participate, often just for a few days. They had the resources, they had the interest, they were fluent in English, but most importantly, they were proud citizens of a state, which, while still having a some work to do, is doing remarkably well. Uninhibited by



Statuary Hall, United States Capitol, 1 pm, Wednesday, November 19, 2014.

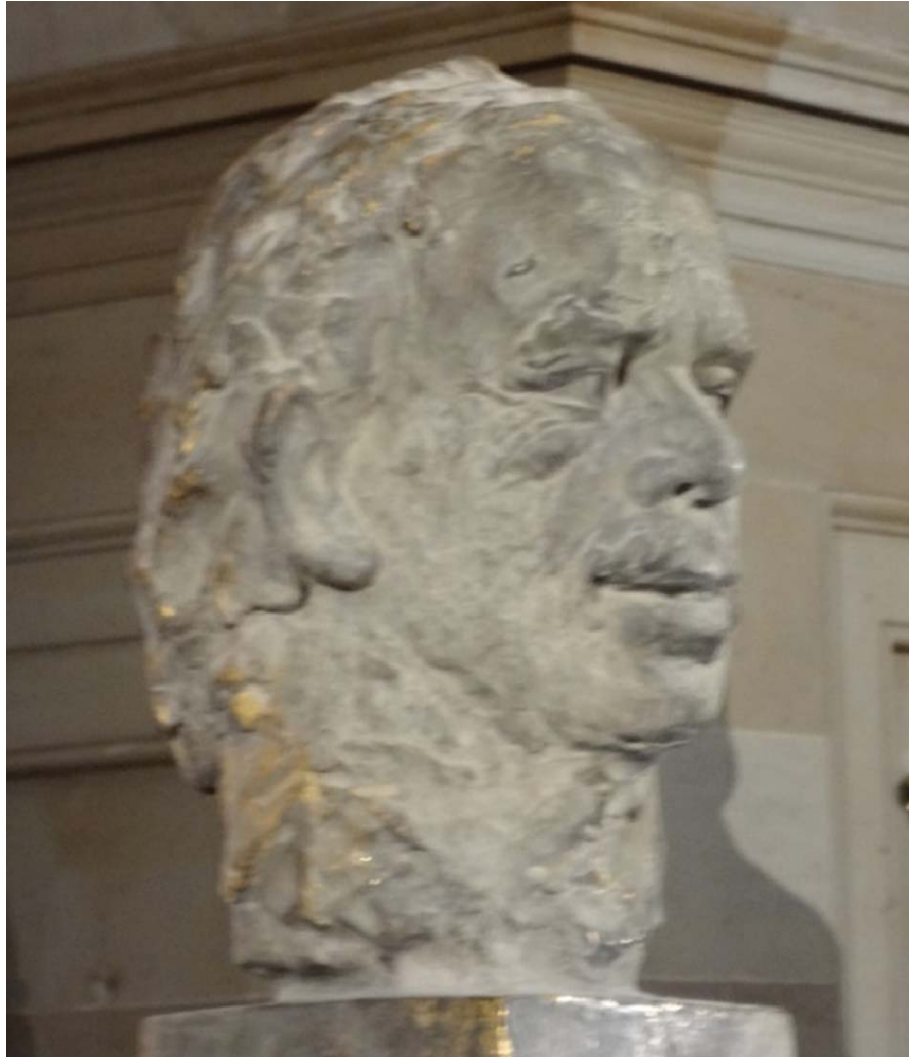
Photo Petr Hausner

the feeling of coming from a small country, these young people feel that the planet belongs to them.

During a gala dinner hosted by Madeleine Albright in the Omni Shoreham Hotel, Václav Havel and his memorable speech of 1990 were commemorated. Madeleine Albright, always working for the benefit of the Czech Republic, introduced many important figures. Dagmar Havlová was present and admired. I was invited by democrats of Cuban origin, and it was obvious that Cuban expatriots are looking forward towards reconciliation with Cuba.

During a discussion in the Library of Congress, hosted by Madeleine Albright, the legacy of Václav Havel was carefully considered, along with the ways into the future drafted by John McCain, Michael Žantovský, Martin Palouš and many others.

The unforgettable occasion of unveiling of Vaclav Havel's bust in the Statuary Hall of the United States Capitol was a happy one. Everybody was upbeat, and it felt so good to belong to the nation that is so substantially honored, since Václav Havel is only one of three foreigners who have a bust in the American Congress (Lajos Kossuth, Winston Churchill and Václav Havel).



The bust of Václav Havel, by Lubomír Janečka, in the United States Capitol's Freedom Foyer.

Photo Petr Hausner

How I Met President Václav Havel

Petr Hausner



Václav Havel at the Czech Embassy in Washington, DC.

Photo Petr Hausner

Since I left Czechoslovakia for a fellowship at the National Cancer Institute in the fall of 1989, I missed the Velvet Revolution by just 3 weeks. Thus, I had to learn about all the important events from TV and the press, particularly through newspaper clips, which my wife Eva, then still in Prague, sent regularly. Obviously, as most Czechoslovak citizens, I appreciated not only Václav Havel's actions but also his style, the very fresh air, which he brought to the politics of Czechoslovakia and later the Czech Republic, and

in fact the world. At that time I did not know that I will have an opportunity to meet him in person and spend a significant amount of high quality time in his company.

At the 10th World Conference on Lung Cancer held in Vancouver, Canada, in August 2003, I met Dr. Boris Šťastný, President Václav Havel's pulmonologist. He informed me that President Václav Havel (PVH) was going to come for three months to Washington in 2005 and asked me whether I would like to serve during that time as his personal physician. I gladly agreed and prepared by familiarizing myself with PVH's complete medical record, which was provided to me by his staff well in advance of his arrival in Washington.



Václav Havel and Czech ambassador Martin Palouš during the farewell party for the Havels in 2005.

Photo Petr Hausner

PVH arrived in Washington on March 31, 2005, on an invitation from the Library of Congress John W. Kluge Center. In the evening of their arrival, my wife and I went out to meet PVH, his wife Dagmar Havlová, his personal secretary, his security detail (which the

Havels called *pistolníci*, or gunmen) and two boxers. Our first encounter became very informal, since the smell of the fresh European rye bread purchased from the Bradley Bakery in Bethesda, the only bread in the US which we found to taste like



Václav Havel, Dagmar Havlová and Eva Hausnerová: the Havels visiting our home on Roosevelt Street in Bethesda in June 2005.

Photo Petr Hausner



Václav Havel, Petr Hausner, Hana Hausnerová, Eva Hausnerová, Dagmar Havlová. Visiting our home in Bethesda in 2007.

Photo Thomas Earp

Czechoslovakian bread, made Dagmar's boxers very excited, barking loudly, which in turn made my wife, who is afraid of big dogs, very afraid. From the first minute, we had a chance to experience the charisma of both PVH and his wife Dagmar, the unique "natural" atmosphere of the

whole group, which moved temporarily to the small house in the center of Georgetown, DC. I examined PVH, and we settled on a regimen of medications and regular visits.

PVH kept himself very busy, leaving home early in the morning for work at the Library of Congress and returning in the evening. He worked on a book, which later appeared under the title *Prosím stručně* (Be brief, please). He was invited for dinner by the then freshly reelected President George W. Bush and many luminaries of Washington. The Havels were in daily contact with their dear friend, former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright (an SVU member). At some point, the Havels invited my wife and me for a dinner at the Peacock Café in Georgetown. Within the two hours of dinner at least five Americans recognized Havel, came to our table to greet him, usually with the sentence, "You are my hero." PVH smiled warmly and gave out autographs in green with a red heart replacing a full stop and always said a few nice words. Later, PVH and Dagmar came for dinner to our small home in Bethesda, which we were very proud of. I showed PVH around; we walked from the dining room to the little hallway, living room, kitchen, and hallway and finished back in the dining room. PVH, the otherworldly philosopher, who was used to

being invited to castles, wanted to make a second round. Both PVH and Dagmar were easy to relate to, down to earth, both really interested in how people live in the US, how things work here, both critical but loving.

PVH's health was fragile, but he kept himself very busy, working relentlessly for the benefit of the Czech Republic and humanistic causes all over the world. PVH showed no fear, was somewhat macho and resolute; he did not change his decisions once he settled on a course of action. PVH was a very kind, warm and loving human being, considering his own health issues merely a nuisance. Dagmar kept a very keen eye on him and recognized lingering health issues well ahead of him. By alerting physicians in time, Dagmar saved PVH's life many times.

During his second sojourn in Washington and New York in 2006-2007, the Havels rented a comfortable home near the Omni Shoreham Hotel in downtown Washington. Again working at the Library of Congress, PVH wrote the play *Odcházení* (Leaving). The Havels knew that my wife Eva was away, undergoing her cardiology training in Worcester, Massachusetts. Thus, the Havels invited me for dinner many times. Dagmar always cooked; PVH added spices, set the table and tended to the fireplace. The result was superb, excellent food and warm, friendly, intelligent, uplifting, human and humanistic company.

I suggested Milena Henzlová, my friend from Prague medical school and a successful cardiologist at Columbia University, to be PVH's physician in New York. She took great care of PVH during his stay there and dealt with serious issues during his later visit. In particular, when PVH stayed in New York, before coming to Philadelphia for the opening night of his play *Leaving*, which took place on May 26, 2010, in the Wilma Theater, he had a serious health issue. I will never forget how happy he was to see me in the crowd of invited guests, assembled dignitaries, Broadway theater directors, politicians, etc. He skipped them all, just wanted to talk to me and get advice about how to proceed and how to get through the next few hectic days.

I am really thankful to fate for having had the opportunity to be close

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to PVH for a short period of his life and to be able to help him. His easy going, loving, appreciative, informed and attentive attitude serves as an example of greatness and also something all of us can strive for. I cherished his company, both in Washington and later during our visits in Prague, and appreciate the kindness of PVH, his wife Dagmar and in fact all of the people who surrounded them. PVH was witty, never arrogant, always interested in substance, never talked in any clichés, but his language reflected relentless original thinking. Though firmly based in social sciences and religion, PVH was able to appreciate the importance of natural sciences. His ego was derived naturally and informally from winning arguments, rather than from his title. What a great man.

Now, with President Havel's bust placed in the US Capitol, I feel unique. I became one of very few US physicians, whose patient has a statue or bust in the United States Capitol, good for me and even better for the Czech Republic.