

**NOVEMBER 17** is a very important date in the history of our country. It is a public holiday called **the Day of a Struggle [stragl] for Freedom and Democracy.**

The day is very important for two reasons, **two events in the Czech history** – one happened **in 1939** and another one exactly **fifty years later, in 1989**. The first one was connected to **the student demonstration against Nazi occupation**, the other one to **the demonstration against the communist government, which** was again held by students, and **led to the so called Velvet Revolution in 1989**. Both events are significant in fighting for freedom and democracy of the Czech people.

**On October 28 1939** there were **big anti-Nazi demonstrations in Prague**. Czechs were occupied by Hitler's Germany. One student, whose name was **Jan Opletal**, a nineteen year old student of the Medical Faculty of the Charles University in Prague, **was seriously wounded there and died** few days later.

His funeral, attended by thousands of students, turned into another anti-Nazi demonstration. This provoked the Nazis so much that **on November 17** they ordered to **close all Czech universities and colleges, plus over 1200 Czech**

**students were sent to concentration camps, and nine students were executed.**

Because of this terrible act, **November 17 is** since 1941 marked as **International Students Day.**

Fifty years after that, **in 1989, Czech students organized a demonstration to commemorate / připomenout si Jan Opletal and the International Students Day.** It started officially off as a march, but turned quickly into demonstration **demanding the resignation of the country's communist government.** Students were brutally beaten by the police. **This annoyed people so much that they went on strike as well, demanding the same thing.**

**Demonstrations**, which were held afterwards, **were attended by more and more people, millions of ordinary people in the streets, jingling with keys.** With the growing street protests and with other communist regimes falling around, **the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia finally stepped out on November 28.**

**VACLAV HAVEL** was a leader of the Velvet Revolution

was an anti-communist dissident, playwright, and politician. He was one of the most

popular Czech presidents, **recognized (uznávaný) for his plays, work for freedom of the country and for his personality** also in other foreign countries.

1. **Havel's plays were banned [bent]/zakázané by the communists**

After 1968 and the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, Havel was **blacklisted**, his **plays were banned** in his home country, and **he was restricted from / nesměl - travelling abroad, doing work he liked, writing what he wanted to write, saying what he thought was right.**

2. **Havel spent five years in prison**

Havel was in and out of prison throughout the 1970s and '80s due to his writings. While in prison, Havel wrote **his most famous essay, *The Power of the Powerless***, a devastating critique of totalitarianism. **His friends, dissidents published and spread illicit (zakázané/nedovolené) copies** of the essay throughout Warsaw Pact countries **by samizdat=secretly/ tajně.**

3. **Havel was inspired by a psychedelic rock band to start a human rights group**

When **communist authorities arrested** a rock band called **The Plastic People of the Universe - inspired by an American group called Velvet**

Underground, **Vaclav Havel and other activists wrote the Charter 77 Manifesto.** The manifesto **called on / vyzývali Czechoslovakia and other Warsaw Pact countries to follow the human rights. The communist regime suppressed / potlačoval publication of the Charter 77 text and declared it "an anti-state, anti-socialist, and demagogic, abusive piece of writing."** Those who signed the Charter 77 were arrested or they had problems to find a job, they were not allowed to study, to travel freely etc.

4. American president Bill Clinton and many other famous foreign people visited the Czech republic and became friends of Havel.

Bill Clinton visited the Czech Republic in 1993, Havel took him to the Golden Tiger pub. Frank Zappa, Rolling Stones and many other famous people also became friends of Havel's. They shared smoking, drinking and late nights.

The Dalai Lama was also a friend of Havel's.

