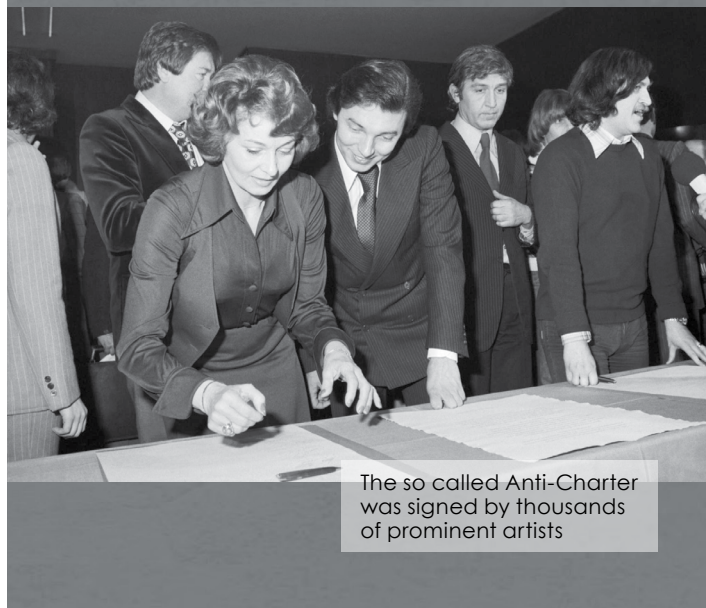




In the 1980s, the Charter organised demonstrations in Prague



The so called Anti-Charter was signed by thousands of prominent artists



One of the main signatories of the Charter, Václav Havel became the leader of the Velvet Revolution



composition of the signatories did not reflect the Slovak conditions. However, the success of the Charter cannot be measured only by the number of signatories because its real influence spread far beyond that circle, and at the same time it meant a moral boost for the regime opponents in other communist countries as well as in Czechoslovakia.

## CHARTER 77 IN NUMBERS

- There were **241** original signatories;
- The total number of signatories in 1977-1989 rose to **1,883**, out of which about **50** were Slovaks;
- More than **7,000** prominent Czech and Slovak artists signed the so call Anti-Charter, a document calling For New Creative Deeds in the Name of Socialism and Peace, condemning the signatories of the Charter;
- It published **598** documents in total, mostly pointing out the abuse of human rights and religious freedom in communist Czechoslovakia;
- A group of three spokespersons were at the head of the Charter, they were changed every year.

## QUOTES

***"No servility has so far led to improvement, only to a worsening of the situation. The bigger the fear and servility, the bolder the powerful were, are and will be. There is no way to weaken their pressure other than to***

***make them doubt, to make them see that we will not forget their injustice and discrimination, that we will not close the door on it all."***

Jan Patočka, philosopher, one of the first signatories of Charter 77, talking about the founding of Charter 77

***CHARTER 77 arose from the background of the solidarity and friendship of people who shared concern for the fate of the ideals to which they have linked their life and work.***

Excerpt from the Charter 77 text

Sources of photographs: Czech News Agency, MLYNÁRIK J.: Spomienky, Photoarchive of Ján Budaj, Photoarchive of Miroslav Kusý, Memory of Nations, [www.postbellum.sk](http://www.postbellum.sk), Archive of Igor Sivák



[www.upn.gov.sk](http://www.upn.gov.sk)



[www.enrs.eu](http://www.enrs.eu)

## CHARTER 77 AND SLOVAKIA

During the normalisation period (1969 – 1989), several groups of resistance against the ruling communist regime were formed in Czechoslovakia. The most known of them, especially in the democratic West, was the human rights manifesto Charter 77, a movement that drew attention to the abuse of human and civil rights by the communist regime. The punishment for involvement in that movement was persecution of those who either signed the document or cooperated with the people who did.



Declaration  
of Charter 77  
was published  
on 6 January 1977

Dne 13.10.1976 byly ve Sbírce zákonů ČSSR /č.120/ zveřejněny "Mezinárodní pakt o občanských a politických právech" a "Mezinárodní pakt o hospodářských, sociálních a kulturních právech", které byly jednou naším republikou podepsány v roce 1968, stvrzeny v Helsinských roku 1975 a vstuply u nás v platnost dnem 23.3.1976. Od té doby mají i naši občanské právo a náš stát povinnost se jimi řídit.

Svobody a práva lidí, jež tyto paktory zaručují, jsou důležitými civilizačními hodnotami, k nimž v dějinách směřovalo desítky let pokrokových sil, a jejich uskutečnění má významnou pomoc humanitárnímu vývoji naší společnosti.

Vítáme proto, že Československá socialistická republika k těmto paktům přistoupila.

Jejích zveřejnění nám ale zároveň s novou naléhavostí připomíná, kolik základních občanských práv platí v naší zemi zatím - bohužel - jen na papíře.

Zcela iluzorní je například právo na svobodu projevu, zaručené článkem 19 prvního paktu:

Desítkám tisíc občanů je znemožněno pracovat v jejich oboru jen proto, že zastávají názory odlišné od názorů oficiálních. Jsou přitom často objektem nejzvrásněnější diskriminace a šikany. Mnozí z nich se stávají se společenských organizací; shromažďují jakékoliv možnosti bránit se, stávají se prakticky oběťmi apartheidu.

Statistická část občanů je odříznuta "svobodou od strachu" /preambule prvního paktu/, protože jsou nuceni žít v trvalém nebezpečí, že projeví-li své názory, strací pracovní a jiné možnosti.

V rozporu s článkem 13 druhého paktu, zajišťujícího všem právo na vadění, je nesčetným mladým lidem bráněno ve studiu jen pro jejich názory anebo dokonce pro názory jejich rodičů. Desítky občanů musí žít ve strachu, že kdyby se projevíli v souladu se svým přesvědčením, mohli by být buď sami anebo jejich děti zbaveni práva na vadění.

Uplatnění práva "vyhledávat, přijímat a rozšiřovat informace a sdělení" všeho druhu, bez ohledu na hranice, ať duchovní, písemné nebo tiskem" (čl. 19 "prostřednictvím sdělení" /bod 2. článku 13 prvního paktu/ je státní ne-

Soubor s Prohlášením  
Charter 77 3 1. 1. 1977

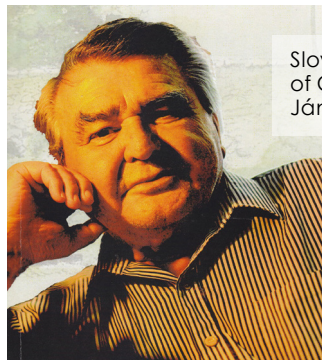
Václav Havel

VÁCLAV HAVEL, spisovatel,  
U DEJVIČKÉHO RYBNÍČKU,  
PRAHA 6

Approval of the  
Charter almost  
certainly meant  
persecution



Miroslav Kusý (third on the  
left) visiting Hana Ponická



Slovak signatory  
of Charter 77 -  
Ján Mlynárík



Dominik Tatarka

The occupation of Czechoslovakia on 21 August 1968 brought so called normalisation into the lives of the Czech and Slovak societies, which in practice meant the removal of the democratic changes brought by "socialism with a human face" in 1968. The resistance against the regime in the 1970s, called dissent during the normalisation period, was forming slowly. It was boosted by international events: in 1975, even the states of the Soviet Bloc signed international treaty in Helsinki which included a commitment to respect human rights and religious freedom.

## BIRTH OF CHARTER 77

The road that led to the establishment of the Charter was paved by the already mentioned foreign political factors but also by domestic political development. In the mid 1970s, the communist regime was at its political peak and the economic and political situation was stable. That is why the publication of Charter 77 on 6 January 1977 by the western media felt like a time bomb explosion. This was the birth of Charter 77. It became a free alliance of citizens advocating adherence to human and civil rights in Czechoslovakia. For the communist regime the adherence to these rights was not automatic: the freedom of movement was limited by the Iron Curtain at the borders with the West, there was

very strict censorship in the press, religion was oppressed by aggressive atheistic propaganda, civil liberties were being eliminated by public bullying and intimidation of the regimes opponents... One of the significant factors in the establishment of Charter 77 was the upcoming political trial against the members of the Czech underground band The Plastic People of the Universe which demonstrated the abuse of human rights by the regime.

## REPRESSIONS AGAINST THE SIGNATORIES

To stand up to a seemingly all-powerful regime required a lot of courage from the signatories of Charter 77, even despite the fact that democratic states were trying to help them and Radio Free Europe broadcast the activities of the Charter. The popularity of Charter 77 in the West went hand in hand with hatred of the regime that led a systematic derisive campaign against its signatories. A so called Anti-Charter became the symbol of this campaign, which popular artists sang in droves, condemning the signatories of the original Charter who were being fired from their jobs and placed under the surveillance of the State Security, the secret police of the regime. Some of them were detained; many of them were forced to leave Czechoslovakia during an operation of the State Security called Sanitation. Even the children of the signatories were investigated. Although the regime did not allow the

publication of Charter 77 and persecuted its signatories, it did not manage to wipe it out completely.

## ACTIVITIES OF THE CHARTER IN 1977 - 1989

The basis of the Charter 77 activities was the publishing of manifestos in which it documented abuses of human rights and religious freedom by the communist regime. Its signatories were active in other anti-regime initiatives, too. The most prominent signatories of Charter 77 were the playwright Václav Havel and the philosopher Jan Patočka; among the Slovaks, it was the author Dominik Tatarka, historian Ján Mlynárík, political scientist Miroslav Kusý or Hungarian minority activist Miklós Duray.

Compared to the Czech Republic and Moravia, the Charter did not resonate with the public so much in Slovakia, a fact reflected by a lower number of its signatories, although representatives of the dissent and the Hungarian minority cooperated with it very closely. There are several reasons for this. It failed to draw the Christian dissent (e.g. secret bishop Ján Korec) or Alexander Dubček into its ranks. At the same time, the anti-campaign and intimidation also had a huge influence on people. The resistance against the communist regime in Slovakia during the normalisation was dominated by other sources, the secret church and environmental organisations. At the same time, the agenda orientation and ideological