



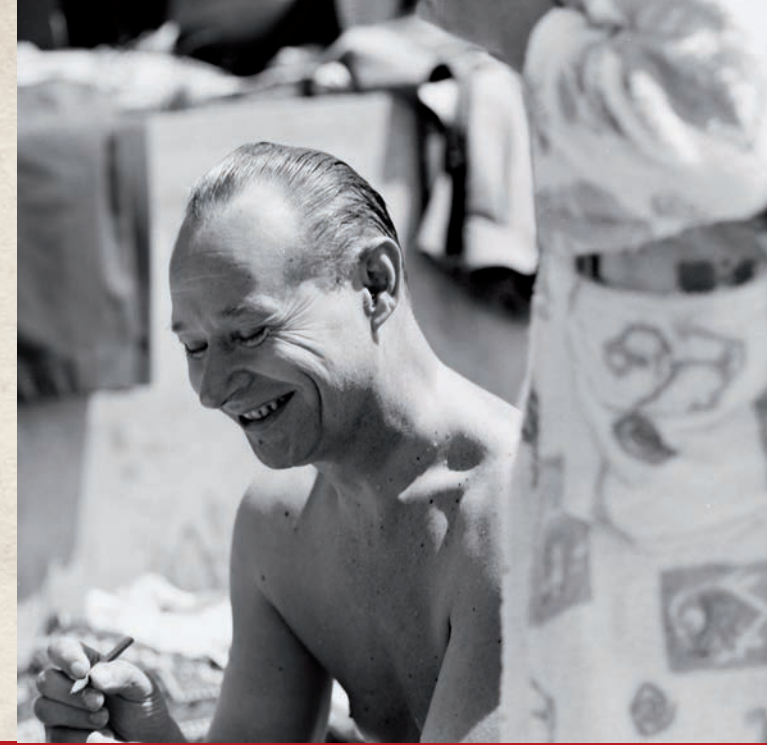
Speaker of the Federal Assembly, 1990s



Memorial of A. Dubček at Slávičie údolie cemetery in Bratislava

**“Alexander Dubček wasn’t a political genius. He didn’t even consider himself in that way. But definitely, he was a honest and courageous man and politician. It is not a little. A politician, who didn’t want or couldn’t be cynic or even politico. There is no doubt that he did a tremendous work for the Czechoslovak state, in many ways even pioneering. Many leading personalities abroad valued him much higher than people in our country.”**

Ján Uher, Alexander Dubček’s co-operator



## LIFE UNDER NORMALISATION

He was forced to resign from the party leadership and state functions, and in January 1970 he was briefly Czechoslovakia’s ambassador to Turkey. He was then expelled from the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and all social organizations upon his return, which started his persecution under the normalization regime. He was essentially made an open-air prisoner – forced to work as a lowly labourer in the West Slovak Forestry Service and continually monitored by the secret police.

In contrast to many other reform-process figures, Dubček maintained his support for the concept of socialism with a human face. He wrote letters protesting against his persecution, and openly criticized the normalization regime. Dubček’s increased activity became clear in the late 1980s with the composition of several critical letters.

## LAST CHAIRMAN OF THE FEDERAL ASSEMBLY

During November 1989, Dubček joined revolutionary activities and leveraged his authority towards changing society. Demonstrators in squares warmly welcomed his appearance with cries of “Dubček to the castle!” (the presidential seat in Prague). He indeed aimed to become Czechoslovakia’s presi-

dent, yet lacked support from key figures in the November events who instead leaned towards Czech dissident Václav Havel as president. When an independent Slovak Republic was constituted at the beginning of the 1990s, despite being a federal republic it was thought that internationally high-profile Dubček would become the country’s first president. Yet these plans were curtailed by a tragic car accident on the Prague-Bratislava motorway, from which Dubček eventually succumbed to injuries on 7 November 1992.

## WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW MORE?

Recommended websites:  
[www.upn.gov.sk](http://www.upn.gov.sk); [www.enrs.eu](http://www.enrs.eu)



European Network  
Remembrance  
and Solidarity

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## ALEXANDER DUBČEK

THE BEST-KNOW SLOVAK IN THE WORLD

**Alexander Dubček is undoubtedly one of the most famous Slovak figures. Those who knew him recalled an honest and – in the true sense – undisputedly humane person. Hence his public popularity, especially in 1968 when thanks to him many people believed that socialism really could have a human face. Dubček’s name became a symbol of hope for a better life for millions of people in Czechoslovakia in 1968. Those in Slovakia and around the world will always remember him as a symbol of socialism with a human face, who had a characteristic smile that expressed hope for brighter times ahead for a whole generation.**



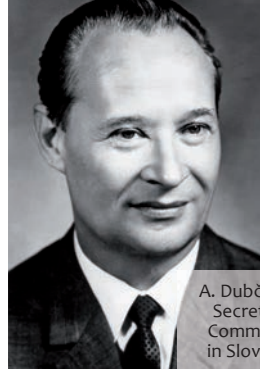
1920s



Native house of A. Dubček, Uhrovec



1960s



A. Dubček  
Secret  
Comm  
in Slova



a First  
of the  
Party  
1960s

Soviet tanks finally  
stopped reforms  
in August 1968

1980s



In 1988 Dubček  
was awarded honoriis  
causa doctorate by  
University of Bologna

1950s



A. Dubček as a Head  
Secretary of CPS in  
Banská Bystrica, 1953

1968



Meeting with  
L. Brezhnev,  
Bratislava,  
August 1968



Dubček was the most popular  
politician in Czechoslovakia  
in August 1968

People cries  
Dubček's name  
during Velvet  
revolution



## EARLY LIFE

Alexander Dubček was born in 1923 in Uhrovec (in the same house as Ľudovít Štúr, keyfigure in the national movement in 19th century and language-codifier), shortly after which his family moved to the Soviet Union. Destiny took them as far as Bishkek in Kyrgyzstan, where young Alexander spent childhood times with a worker community laying foundations for socialist buildings. In 1933 they moved to Gorky (contemporary Nizhny Novgorod) where Dubček graduated from high school, and the family returned to Czechoslovakia at the end of 1938. In Slovakia, an independent state with an undemocratic regime was established in 1939 – where the Communist Party was blacklisted as a prohibited party. Although for Communist Party members and Bolshevik sympathizers the Second World War was an period of persecution, **young Alexander nevertheless joined the illegal Communist Party in the summer of 1939.** Having completed a locksmith apprenticeship, he worked at an arms factory in Dubnica nad Váhom. With the start of the Slovak National Uprising in August 1944, young Alexander headed into the mountains to assist the partisans' fight against the Germans – getting injured twice. Such involvement in the resistance movement predisposed his entry into the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (CPCS) apparatus, and from 1949 he

was a Communist Party political worker. His party career began in 1951 when he was appointed head of the District Committee Secretary of the Communist Party in Trenčín and in 1953 head of the regional secretary CPS in Banská Bystrica. Dubček rose through the ranks to become First Secretary of the Slovak branch of the Communist Party in 1963, which heralded the regime's gradual democratization.

## 'SOCIALISM WITH A HUMAN FACE'

Alexandra Dubček's political career undoubtedly peaked in 1968. In January of that year he was elected First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which opened the path to the rapid democratization of the regime. Within the system's framework he created scope for reforms such as lifting censorship, opening borders with the West, economic reform, rehabilitation of 1950s' terror victims, formation of non-communist parties, and state federalization. Citizens welcomed such reforms with enthusiasm, and Dubček gained trust to a degree never enjoyed before or after by a communist politician. **His personality and charisma lent the 'human face' slogan sincerity.**

Yet the democratization process provoked the ire of the Soviet Union, which was determined to stop the reforms at any cost. If Dubček wanted to prevent the summer 1968 invasion by War-

saw Pact troops, he would have to reluctantly revoke some reforms. Yet throughout 1968 he misread the Soviet's intentions – especially facing an imminent breakdown in negotiations at Čierna nad Tisou. **The 21 August military invasion shocked him and he perceived the event as a personal tragedy.** The Soviets interned Dubček at a mountain cottage in Ukraine. Yet mass protests against the occupation forced the Soviets to change strategy and move Dubček to Moscow for negotiations. The Czechoslovak delegation – and eventually Dubček – folded under Soviet pressure. Upon his return from Moscow, the whole country listened intently to his radio address which informed of the negotiation results.

In April 1969 Dubček was replaced by Gustáv Husák as First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, with Dubček becoming head of parliament. The tragic outcome of Dubček's tactics was the events of August 1969 when, following the violent suppression of widespread anti-communist protests, the Federal Assembly adopted the 'baton law' which increased punishments for demonstrators. Even Dubček succumbed to pressure from Husák to sign the law into effect – a deed which he was to subsequently consider the gravest mistake of his life. This act was the sad end of the socialism with a human face. However, Dubček's political fall was far from its end.