

CZECHS & CANADA

30th Anniversary of the Velvet Revolution Edition
A Czech Embassy in Canada Publication

30 Years of Freedom

30 years ago, Czechs regained freedom after four decades of the communist oppression. The Velvet Revolution, the peaceful and fast fall of the totalitarian regime in the heart of Europe, impressed the world.

At the beginning of November 1989, nothing seemed to indicate a democratic change in Czechoslovakia. Soviet military troops had been still present since the Warsaw Pact invasion into the country in 1968 and the communist regime did not show any signs of willingness to give up power. However, everything changed on November 17. Prague students gathered to commemorate the International Day of Students, the 50th anniversary of the Nazi storming of Czech universities in 1939. The police violently suppressed the student march through downtown Prague. 568 people were injured. This violent act was met with protests led by students, dissidents and actors, which quickly grew and spread across the country. The leaders of the communist party were forced to give up. On December 29, only 42 days later, a former dissident and playwright Václav Havel was elected the Czechoslovak President. The Czech journey "Back to the West", declared in the streets during the Velvet Revolution, began. Important milestones on that journey were the Czech Republic's entry into NATO 20 years ago and into the European Union 15 years ago.



Václav Havel:
Truth and Love Must Prevail
over Lies and Hatred.

The election of Václav Havel for President of Czechoslovakia at the Prague Castle on December 29, 1989
Photo by Pavel Štěcha



A brutal police intervention against Prague university students peacefully commemorating the International Students' Day on Národní třída in Prague on November 17, 1989
Photo by Jan Šíploch



A massive protest against the communist regime on the Wenceslas Square in Prague on November 24, 1989
Photo by Jan Šíploch

Thank You, CANADA!



To commemorate the peaceful fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia seems to be particularly relevant here in Canada. The great country stood by the Czech nation since the creation of its modern statehood in 1918. During the Cold War, Canada accepted countless Czech refugees. Many of them not only excelled in their professions and made a significant contribution to the development of Canada, but also formed one of the most important centers of the Czech exile. Over decades they helped keep Czech democratic traditions alive. Thank you, Czech Canadians! Thank you, Canada!



Welcome, Maestro! ADAM PLACHETKA

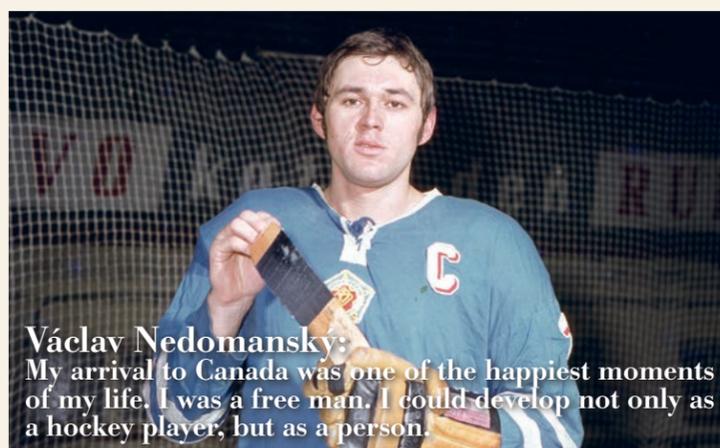
If there was a grand slam tournament series in opera singing like in tennis, Adam Plachetka would have collected the trophies. Starring in major roles, the world-famous Czech bass-baritone conquered all of the most prestigious opera houses around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera in New York, Teatro alla Scala in Milan, the Royal Opera House in London and the Wiener Staatsoper. Mr. Plachetka spends this fall in the United States, starring as Figaro in Rossini's *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at the Chicago Lyric Opera and then as Conte Almaviva in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* at the Metropolitan Opera in New York.

Thank you, Adam, for joining us for the celebrations! ...and Encore!!

Adam Plachetka appears courtesy of The Metropolitan Opera.

SENATORS HONOR BIG NED As He Joins the NHL Hall of Fame!

VÁCLAV NEDOMANSKÝ WAS THE FIRST PLAYER TO DEFECT FROM THE SOVIET BLOCK TO NORTH AMERICA!



Václav Nedomanský:
My arrival to Canada was one of the happiest moments of my life. I was a free man. I could develop not only as a hockey player, but as a person.

VÁCLAV NEDOMANSKÝ, Big Ned, boldly escaped the communist rule in the Soviet occupied Czechoslovakia in 1974 and began his journey to a great success in Canada. Symbolically, he enters the NHL Hall of Fame on the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Czechoslovak communist regime. What a Czech-Canadian story for the occasion!

In 1962 - 1963, Václav Nedomanský played his first of 12 seasons in the Czechoslovak Elite Hockey League and proved to be a prolific forward from the onset. He led the league in goals and points in 1967, 1972, and 1974. He also represented Czechoslovakia at the World Ice Hockey Championships nine times. The Czechoslovak team only missed collecting a medal once (1967) during Nedomanský's career, winning one gold, five silver and three bronze medals with him on the team. In 1974, he was named Top Forward at the tournament. He was also a big part of the Czechoslovak team which earned the silver medal at the 1968 Olympics in France and the bronze medal at the 1972 Olympics in Japan.

He emigrated to Canada in 1974 and began his North-American career with the Toronto Toros. Big Ned quickly caught attention of the WHA hockey fans with very strong statistics. In 1977, he was part of a rare inter-league trade and joined the NHL's Detroit Red Wings. After four seasons with the Wings, he went on playing for the New York Rangers and briefly also for the St. Louis Blues. He finished his career in 1984. Although Václav Nedomanský arrived in the NHL late in his career, he still commanded respect with impressive statistics, scoring 122 times and putting up 278 points in 421 regular season contests. Hats on the ice!

The Czech SENATORS

The Velvet Revolution fully opened the doors for Czech players to the NHL. Unlike Mr. Nedomanský, they no longer faced a threat of imprisonment. Quite many took advantage of the opportunity. Here are the players who played for the Ottawa Senators over the years. All the best to Filip Chlapík, the current Czech member of the team!



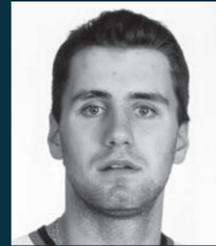
DOMINIK HAŠEK
2005 - 2006
Olympic & Stanley Cup (2) Champion
NHL Hall of Fame Member
Vezina Trophy (6), Hart Memorial Trophy (2)



VLADIMÍR RŮŽIČKA
1993 - 1994
Olympic & World (2) Champion
Captain at the Nagano Olympics



RADIM BIČÁNEK
1994 - 1999
World Junior Championship Bronze Medalist



RADEK BONK
1994 - 2004
World Champion
NHL All-Star Game Player (2)



RADEK HAMR
1993 - 1994
World Junior Champion



MARTIN HAVLÁT
2000 - 2006
World Champion



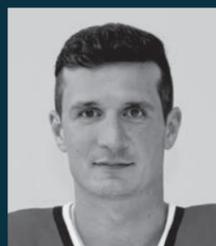
ALEŠ HEMSKÝ
2013 - 2014
World Champion
Olympic Bronze Medalist



FILIP CHLAPÍK
2017 - present
World U18 Championship Silver Medalist
QMJHL All-Rookie Team Member



TOMÁŠ JELÍNEK
1992 - 1993
Olympic & World (3) Bronze Medalist



FILIP KUBA
World Champion
Olympic Bronze Medalist
NHL All-Star Game Player



MILAN MICHÁLEK
2009 - 2016
World Championship Bronze Medalist (2)
NHL All-Star Game Player



JAROSLAV MODRÝ
1995 - 1996
World Junior Championship Bronze Medalist



FRANTIŠEK MUSIL
1995 - 1997
World Champion



STANISLAV NECKÁŘ
1994 - 1999
Stanley Cup & World Champion



FILIP NOVÁK
2005 - 2006
World Champion



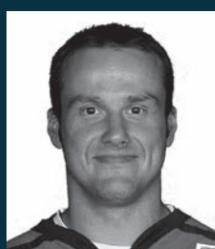
VÁCLAV PROSPAL
1997 - 2001
World Champion (2)
Stanley Cup Finalist
Olympic Bronze Medalist



MARTIN PRUSEK
2001 - 2004
World Champion



KAREL RACHŮNEK
1999 - 2004
World Champion



MARTIN STRAKA
1994 - 1996
Olympic & World Champion
Stanley Cup Finalist



VÁCLAV VARAĎA
2003 - 2006
World Champion (2)
Stanley Cup Finalist

Presented in cooperation with the Czech Ice Hockey Association & photographer Karel Švec

Hockey - The Czech Family Silver

Pucks vs. Tanks

On August 21, 1968, the Soviet-led troops of the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia. They crushed the so-called Prague Spring and Czech hopes for freedom along with it. The nation in the occupied country was desperate. The World Championship in March 1969 offered an opportunity to confront Soviets at least on the ice. Hockey became more than a sport for Czechs and Slovaks. The players and the fans felt it the same way. The Czechoslovak team played against the then-dominant "Red Machine" twice and managed to win both games (2:0 & 4:3). The celebrations after the second game were eclectic. There does not seem to be much of a difference between the crowds that filled the streets then and during the Velvet Revolution in 1989. Václav Nedomanský powerfully rocking the Soviet net after his team scored the first goal against the Soviets in the tournament has been remembered till today. Powerful slogans, March is not August (Březen není srpen) and Our Goals for Your Tanks (Vy nám tanky, my vám branky) have not been forgotten either.



Prague celebrates the Czechoslovak victory over the Soviet Union at the 1969 World Hockey Championship

Jaromír JÁGR #68

Jaromír Jágr is ranked second in points (1921) and third in goals (766) in the history of the NHL. The Czech superstar is also a member of the Triple Gold Club as the Stanley Cup, Olympic and World champion. Among many awards, he received the Art Ross Trophy (5), the Hart Memorial Trophy (1) and the Lester B. Pearson Award (3).



Did you know that Jaromír Jágr chose #68 for his jersey as a reference to the Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968?

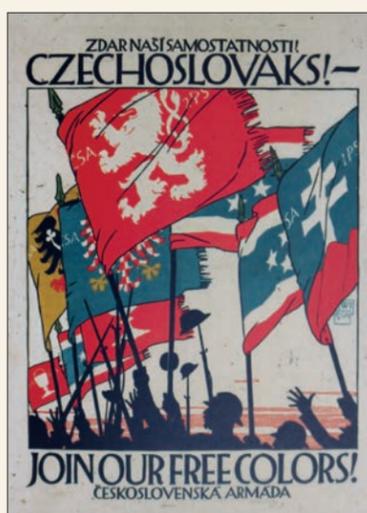
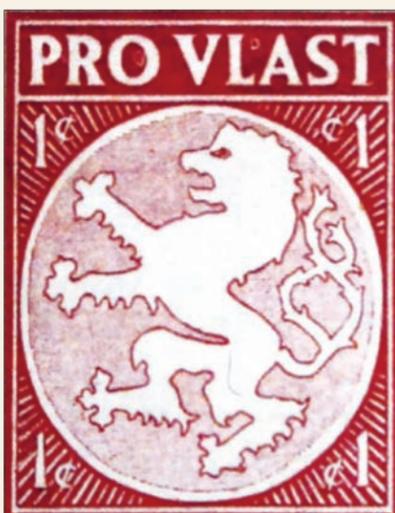


Gallery of Friendship

A Long history of Canadian support for the Czech nation



Professor Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk launched the campaign for the creation of Czechoslovakia in 1914. He called on Czech-Americans and Czech-Canadians for help. The postcard reads, "We will persist till the end." It helped mobilize support in North America.



Czech-Canadians responded enthusiastically to Professor Masaryk's call. They raised funds and enlisted in the Canadian as well as Czechoslovak army to fight for Czechoslovak independence in WWI.

On the right, one of many recruitment posters designed by Vojtěch Preissig, a brave supporter of the Czech resistance during both World Wars.



LTC. Boris Vuchtrl presents the regiment flag to the 1st cavalry regiment of Jan Jiskra from Brandýs in Valtier, Canada.



Many Czech-Americans joined the Canadian army, with the US neutral during the first years of WWI. This picture captures Czech-American volunteers before departure to Canada. They are members of Sokol. The Czech organization is still active in Canada and the US today.



During the dark times of WWII, Czech-Canadians again came together to help their homeland. 91 branches of the newly established Czechoslovak National Alliance in Canada across the country took part in a major fundraising effort. Many Czech-Canadians joined the war effort in arms.



A delegation of Czech-Canadians pledges support to President Edvard Beneš in Chicago in April 1939.



Canada recognized the Czechoslovak government in exile already on October 12, 1940, as the first of the great powers! In June 1943, Edvard Beneš was warmly received in Canada as the President of the Czechoslovak Republic on the highest level. In the picture, he meets with the Prime Minister of Canada, Mackenzie King.



Czechoslovak pilots in the RAF took part in the Battle of Britain. Canada provided training grounds for them. The picture shows Czechoslovak volunteers in Alberta.

Czech-Canadian Stories of the Cold War

Škvorecký couple insists: NO LIBRI PROHIBITI



Many Czech-Canadians helped their nation when it was under the communist oppression. Among them, Josef Škvorecký and his wife Zdena Škvorecká Salivarová deserve of special recognition. Their publishing house 68 Publishers saved the independent Czech literature of the Cold War era. Over two decades, the two writers published and supported banned Czech and Slovak authors, including the future Czechoslovak President Václav Havel and the world-renowned prosaist Milan Kundera (*The Unbearable Lightness of Being*). Josef Škvorecký received both the highest Canadian as well as Czech state awards. In 1990, just as his wife, he received the Order of the White Lion and two years later the Order of Canada. Josef Škvorecký is also a recipient of the Governor General's Award for English-language fiction.



Tomáš Baťa Jr. rushed to see freedom returning to his homeland. He arrived at the Prague Airport on December 14, 1989.

BAŤA MEANS SHOE ...at least in some languages

Tomáš Baťa Jr., the son of the shoe empire's founder, moved the company's global headquarters to Canada during World War II and kept running it from here during the Cold War. When he came to visit the country during the Velvet Revolution, he received a well-deserved welcome for his strong support of the democratic exile over many decades. His visit to Czechoslovakia during the Velvet Revolution was one of the most celebrated moments.

Did you know that the town of Batawa, ON was founded by the Baťa company and its name is a combination of Bata + (Otta)wa?

In 1920s, the First Czechoslovak Republic ranked among the top 10 most advanced economies in the world. The Baťa Shoe Company was one of the symbols of the country's economic success. As a result of the Baťa's early global operations, bata means shoe in some languages.

Scratch a Czech!

There's an old saying, "Scratch a Czech. Underneath you'll find a musician."

The New World Symphony vs. Roll Out the Barrel

Czechs are proud of their music, just as hockey. Adam Plachetka has been a great ambassador of the impressive Czech classical music tradition founded by world-renowned composers, such as Antonín Dvořák, Bedřich Smetana, Leoš Janáček, Bohuslav Martinů & others.

The Czech Polka has also spread around the world. It certainly reached North America. Polka bands were among the very first institutions founded by Czech immigrants in the US and Canada, as early as in 1850s. Who would not know Roll Out the Barrel by Jaromír Vejvoda, perhaps the most known Czech melody. Or is it the Largo, "Goin' Home", from Antonín Dvořák's New World Symphony?

Jazz, swing, rock and even country music, once born in North America, have certainly planted a seed in the Czech Republic. On your visit to the Czech Republic, you will find a vibrant music scene of all genres.

Sing, Sing, Sing! ...for Freedom & Democracy

Musicians played an important role during the Velvet Revolution. In the absence of free media, they travelled the country, together with dissidents, actors and students, and informed the nation about the revolutionary movement. Most famous singers performed at rallies across the country, often from balconies at the main city squares.



After years of being banned from giving public performances, Marta Kubišová sings "Let the peace stay with this land..." from the balcony of the Melantrich publishing house on Wenceslas Square in Prague. Before the protests outgrew the largest Prague square, the main demonstrations took place here.

Three Music Aces: KRALL, ANČERL & TRAXLER

Did you know that Diana Krall has Czech roots? Her last name means "king" in Czech. She has definitely reigned in the Land of Jazz! Karel Ančerl served as the music director of the Czech Philharmonic from 1950 for 18 years. In 1968, he left for exile and became the chief conductor of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra. Jiří Traxler is one of the main authors of the Czech Swing Song Book. He left Czechoslovakia for Canada in 1949 after the communist coup. After the Velvet Revolution, he went on a tour in Czechoslovakia with Ondřej Havelka & his Melody Makers.



CZECH HERITAGE NIGHT
Honoring
VÁCLAV NEDOMANSKÝ
"BIG NED"
NHL Hall of Fame Member 2019

OTTAWA SENATORS vs **BOSTON BRUINS**

NOVEMBER 27, 2019

Anthems by
Adam Plachetka
Czech World-Renowned Opera Singer

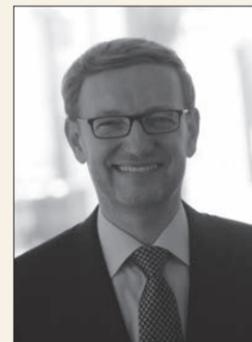
David Pastrňák #88, David Krejčí #46, Filip Chlapík #78

Embassy of the Czech Republic in Ottawa

From the Ambassador, on a Personal Note

The Velvet Revolution has clearly been the most important event in contemporary Czech history. I quite often look back and think about how fortunate I have been to live my adult life in freedom. I was able to study what I believed in at great international schools. I have spent ten years of my professional life in North America. To do either, or probably just to see North America under the communist regime, I would have had to emigrate. That would mean to risk imprisonment or even my life when crossing the border. I would also leave my parents and friends behind, knowing that I would probably never see them again. In November 1989, the atmosphere on the Wenceslas Square felt magical and it seems that something magical really did happen then.

Ambassador Martin Palouš was one of the leaders of the Czechoslovak dissident movement. I had the great honor and pleasure to serve with him during his tenure as the Czech Ambassador to the United Nations in New York. One day, his friend from the "good old days" came to the US to give a series of presentations. Mr. Palouš asked me to help him organize one presentation and insisted that it must take place at the oldest private club in New York. To answer my question why the private club, he shared with me the following story. Before 1989, he was not allowed to get a job that he would have liked. However, he still had to work. Without a job, as anyone else, he would have gone to prison. So, he worked as a boilerman in an apartment building. His friend had the same job in a building nearby. One time, when returning home from a shift at 3 am and freezing on a tram station, they had a talk. They dreamt away that someday they would be enjoying a glass of whisky in a beautiful old club somewhere in the West and even to them, their then-everyday reality would seem impossible to have existed... Rather than in real life, endings like this usually occur in fairy tales.



For a Czech, 30 years of freedom do seem like a fairytale. My paternal grandfather fought for our independence in the Czechoslovak legion in Siberia during WWI. Because he fought on the "wrong" side (both against Germans and Bolsheviks), he was persecuted by the Nazi occupiers during WWII and later again by the communists after 1948. He never got to experience freedom again. My maternal grandfather was imprisoned by the Nazis in the Terezín concentration camp. He was "lucky" to experience at least 10 years of freedom at the end of his life. I hope that the freedom & democracy fairytale will last, and truth and love will continue to prevail over lies and hatred, in our country and worldwide.

Bořek Lizec

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Cooperation – Kateřina Lizcová Kulhánková,
Tobin Williamson

Publisher – Embassy of the Czech Republic in Canada
251 Cooper St, Ottawa, ON K2P 0G2, Canada
P +1 613 562 3875, E ottawa@embassy.mzv.cz
W www.mzv.cz/ottawa

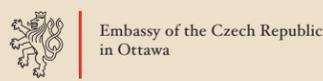


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