
Czechoslovakia's Special Moment

by Otakar Jiranek



November 20, 1989. The first big meeting on the Wenceslas Square.

Before and after his conversion to Adventism, Otakar Jiranek was a successful photojournalist. From the front lines of Prague's streets and squares, Jiranek recorded the revolution of 1989 for Czechoslovakia's newspapers and magazines. He also took the photo of his badly beaten fellow Adventist Jan Pospisil; opponents of the regime plastered it all over the city (see p.38).

In November, 1989, after covering demonstrations and rallies during the day, Jiranek, a duly elected delegate, would attend evening meetings of the Adventist Czechoslovakian Union Constituency. Not surprisingly, Jiranek was assigned the responsibility of releasing to the press the Union's statement critical of the regime. After the revolution, Jiranek, still in his late thirties, gave up photojournalism. He is now manager of the successful Country Life Restaurant in the heart of Prague's old city.

—The Editors



The police units which participated in the beatings of November 17, 1989, closing the Vltava Bridges on November 20.

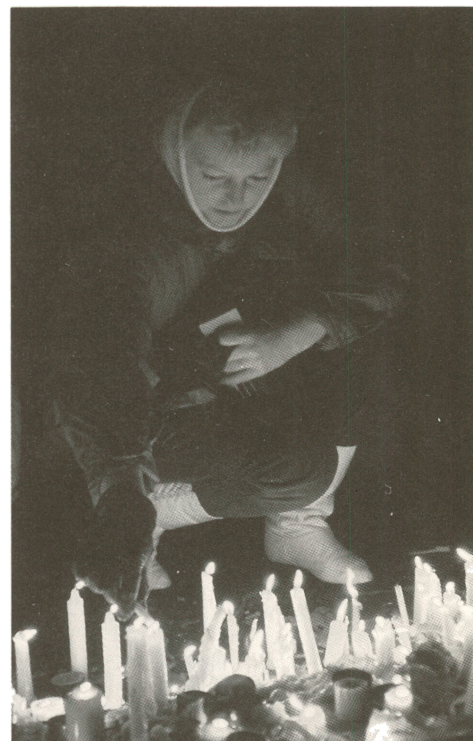


Students sleeping at the University during their occupation strike, November, 1989

Candles are lit at the site of the November 17 beating.



Morning of November 20th. Meeting of 2,000 top artists who all went on strike.





Candle-lit memorial, November 20, to Jan Palach on Red Army Square, later renamed Jan Palach Square, to honor young man who several years before, immolated himself to protest the totalitarian regime.

Among the seven Seventh-day Adventist churches in Prague, the largest is at 5 Smichov. That is where the SDA Union Constituency meeting adopted the open letter to the Prime Minister protesting the beating of peaceful demonstrators.





Jan Pospisil, an Adventist student, recounts in a theatre his experience of being beaten by police, November 17.

A candle-lit memorial to the victims of the communists flickers on Wenceslas Square.



Alexander Dubcek addresses 750,000 people on Letná Esplanade on November 26, the largest rally of the revolution.



*The day after the
November 27th
general strike.*

*December 17th, a
Catholic mass is held
in commemoration of
the November 17th
massacre.*



*Vaclav and Olga Havel
in St. Vitus Cathedral
after his election,
December 29, 1989.*



Two girls celebrate at a popular feast in honor of Havel's election, December 29th, 1989.

Midnight, December 31, 1989— the Wenceslas Square is full of people dancing for joy.

