

# Witness to the Revolution:

## Accounts from Americans Who Were There



*Our task is to feel the danger of these regimes.*

*–Václav Havel*

Researched and prepared by the National Czech & Slovak Museum & Library, *Witness to the Revolution* describes firsthand accounts of what happened during the Velvet Revolution through the eyes of Americans who were in Czechoslovakia at the time.

### **First Panel:**

Mikhail Gorbachev became the leader of the Soviet Union in 1985. His efforts were largely meant to reform the Soviet Union and encourage communist leaders in the Soviet Bloc to seek new ways of gaining popular support. In 1989, communist governments began initiating reforms and entering into talks with anti-communist trade unions. Mass demonstrations took place in East Germany that summer and fall, resulting in the fall of the Berlin Wall. Shortly thereafter, Czechs and Slovaks took to the streets to demand political reforms. The Velvet Revolution was born.

### **Second and Third Panels:**

Michael Kukral, a University of Kentucky graduate student, was studying abroad in Czechoslovakia. His role as a student at Charles University gave him the unique opportunity to participate in the demonstrations and marches that occurred in Prague in November 1989. Kukral not only witnessed the amazing and horrifying events that took place, but also recorded them with still and video cameras.

### **Fourth and Fifth Panels:**

James Grove was a Fulbright lecturer at Palacký University in Olomouc, Czechoslovakia in 1989. He bore witness to student strikes in Olomouc, their response to the brutal suppression of demonstrators in Prague. Grove watched as they established strike operations, distributed leaflets and posters, and as they built a wall of cardboard boxes outside government headquarters to symbolize the gap between the Communist Party and the outside world.

### **Sixth Panel:**

The final panel in the exhibit gives some insight into what the staff at the American Embassy in Czechoslovakia saw as the Velvet Revolution unfolded. It also highlights the story of one American reporter who was beaten along with demonstrators the night of November 17, 1989.

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## Exhibit Rental Information

Witness to the Revolution is comprised of six retractable panels that feature dozens of images of posters and chilling photographs from the demonstrations held during the days and nights of the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia. The supplemental DVD is original footage recorded during the protests (optional).

### Exhibit Contains:

- 6 panels that retract into a metal base (opened like a roller shade), each housed in a black zippered bag. The opened panels are each 36 x 72 inches in size.
- 3 short poles for each panel (in bag with panel)
- Optional DVD (if chosen, player or projector and screen must be provided by the borrower)
- All panels and DVD fit into one box (14 inches long, 14 inches wide, 48 inches tall)
- Box weighs approximately 76 lbs.

### Space Requirements:

- 21 linear feet (allowing for 6 inches between each panel). This figure is based upon all six panels being set up in a row, but they can be in any configuration within a space.

### Time:

- Duration of exhibit is negotiable

### Medium Security

- Periodic checks of exhibit area
- Open to the public only while there is an attendant in the building

The NCSML traveling exhibition program is generously supported by American Czech Association, Los Angeles and American Sokol Los Angeles.

## Procedures for Booking:

Shipping costs to and from the venue must be paid for by the borrower. The NCSML Traveling Exhibit Coordinator will ship via FedEx and include return shipping labels. The borrower will be billed by the NCSML Finance Director after the exhibit's return to the NCSML.

## Setting up the exhibition:

- Remove panel (rolled up in metal case) and three poles from bag
- Place metal case on floor and turn small metal piece on bottom so it is perpendicular to metal case
- Put together three poles to create one long pole with a screw at one end and a tapered opposite end
- Screw bottom of pole into perpendicular metal piece on case bottom
- Pull up on panel to unroll it
- Attach the hole at the center top of panel beam to the top of the pole (tapered end)

## Questions about this exhibit?

### Contact:

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