

November 23, 1989

**Declaration of Civic Forum Representative Václav
Havel on Wenceslas Square, Prague**

Citation:

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Summary:

The Declaration of Civic Forum Representative Václav Havel on Wenceslas Square, Prague calling for a general strike

Original Language:

Czech

Contents:

Translation - English

The Declaration of The Civic Forum After twenty years Czechoslovakia once again finds itself at a historical intersection thanks to the people's movement, to which all generations and segments of the population and the majority of the still existing social organizations are quickly adding themselves. This movement is a movement of both of our nations. Its mouthpiece has spontaneously become the Civic Forum, which today is the real representative of the will of the people. Its natural component has become the well-organized student movement, which, through its protest demonstration, gave us the impulse for dramatic social movement. Within it work all the current independent initiatives, artistic unions headed by the theater—the first to be in solidarity with the students—and the renewed currents in the National Front, including many former and current members of the CPCz. The Catholic Church supported the Civic Forum through the words of the cardinal, and other churches in Czechoslovakia. Anyone who agrees with its demands is joining, and may join, the Civic Forum. The Civic Forum is prepared to secure a dialogue between the public and the present leadership immediately and has at its disposal qualified forces [from] all areas of society, capable of carrying out a free and objective dialogue about real paths toward a change in the political and economic conditions in our country. The situation is open now, there are many opportunities before us, and we have only two certainties. The first is the certainty that there is no return to the previous totalitarian system of government, which led our country to the brink of an absolute spiritual, moral, political, economic and ecological crisis. Our second certainty is that we want to live in a free, democratic and prosperous Czechoslovakia, which must return to Europe, and that we will never abandon this ideal, no matter what transpires in these next few days. The Civic Forum calls on all citizens of Czechoslovakia to support its fundamental demands by the demonstration of a general strike declared for Monday, 27 November 1989, at noon. Whether our country sets out in a peaceful way on the road to a democratic social order, or whether an isolated group of Stalinists, who want at any price to preserve their power and their privileges disguised as empty phrases about reconstruction will conquer, may depend upon the success of this strike. We challenge the leadership of this country to grasp the gravity of this situation, rid themselves of compromised individuals and prevent all eventual efforts for a violent revolution. We call on all the members of the ruling party to join the citizenry and respect its will. We challenge all the members of the People's Militias to not come out violently against their comrade workers and thus spit upon all the traditions of worker solidarity. We challenge all the members of the Police to realize that they are first and foremost human beings and citizens of this country and only second subordinate to their superiors. We challenge the Czechoslovak People's Army to stand on the side of the people and, if necessary, to come out in its defense for the first time. We call on the public and the governments of all countries to realize that our homeland is from time immemorial the place where European and world confrontations have begun and ended, and that in our country it is not only its fate which is at stake, but the future of all of Europe. We therefore demand that they support in every way the people's movement and the Civic Forum. We are opponents of violence; we do not want revenge; we want to live as dignified and free people, who have the right to speak for the fate of their homeland and who also think of future generations. The Civic Forum 23 November 1989 [Source: ÚSD AV CR, KC OF Archive, file Dokumenty OF—copy of the computer print. Translated by Caroline Kovtun.]