

Opona, Prague, Albertov, November 17, 2009

*Ladies and gentlemen, dear fellow citizens,*

*we've met here today to celebrate the anniversary of the Velvet Revolution which brought us freedom and democracy! The celebration is called 20 Years without the Curtain with the subtitle A Reason to Celebrate!*

*I think all of us have heard it lately and also put a question mark at the end of that sentence. Is there a reason to celebrate? I am deeply convinced that there is! We are celebrating 20 years of freedom and democracy.*

*Enough people have come here to Albertov for us to say that we are not an indifferent society detached from such an important anniversary.*

*Nevertheless, we all feel frustrated about today's social and political situation. Often, however, that frustration is purely personal. So let's not project the frustration with politicians and politics into our lives.*

*Perhaps 20 years ago, we thought that the revolution itself would bring us happiness. It was understandable, yet naive. We must realize that freedom and happiness are not identical terms.*

*Let's not expect any regime itself to automatically bring us personal happiness. Those who derive their personal happiness from politics and regimes often gravitate towards totalitarianism.*

*It is important to realize that democracy is a continuous process. Today its first 20 years have passed. And even twenty years from now, we will not be able to say: it's done, we don't have to do anything for it anymore.*

*I'd like to thank all of those who brought us democracy and also those who have been nurturing it sincerely, be it fruitful or not. It's up to all of us now and especially our generation and the rising generation represented here at Albertov by the initiative the Inventory of Democracy, to determine under what circumstances we will meet here 20 years from now.*

*We all know that there are things we can be ashamed of. Those are the things that make us frustrated. Yet there are many things we can be proud of.*

*Today we can neither expect another revolution nor do we want it because we have the regime we longed for. We often hear the truism that we have the kind of democracy we deserve.*

*Let's every one of us, through a personal approach and sense of responsibility, build our society into one in which there is little to be ashamed of.*

*Let's not get discouraged because this is a reason to celebrate!*

Marek Vocel