



## Samizdat: The Czech Art of Resistance, 1968 to 1989

An exhibition of banned books, forbidden films, underground music and oppositional art, celebrating creative resistance to totalitarianism.

"Samizdats" were objects to have and to hold and to hide.

"Samizdats" were dangerous: produced, distributed and consumed at great personal risk.

"Samizdats" were works of art that circulated secretly and inspired thousands and challenged the Soviet regime.

**Upcoming exhibition** at the Embassy of the Czech Republic, Washington DC,

**May 15 through June 9**, Opening reception, May 15, 2012

Embassy of the Czech Republic, 3900 Spring of Freedom St. NW, Washington, DC 20008 Tel. (202) 274-9100

[www.mzv.cz/washington/](http://www.mzv.cz/washington/)

**Samizdat: The Czech Art of Resistance** presents 120 rarely seen handmade books, journals, and other original works on paper that circulated secretly during the years between the Prague Spring and the Velvet Revolution. The multimedia exhibition also includes period footage of underground concerts and bootleg recordings of banned Czech bands.

Literally meaning "self-published," samizdat is a Russian term referring to underground publications that flourished in the USSR and Soviet bloc under repressive communist rule. Copies of an essay, a book, a series of poems, or articles were generated in small batches, most commonly using a typewriter with carbon paper or a small printing press. Blending political dissidence with esthetic innovation, samizdat was passed from person to person through clandestine networks.

Creating and disseminating ideas or art—even if non-political—that did not conform to official ideology was considered to be an act against the state. This could, and did, lead to imprisonment for many of those found to be participating in this "unofficial culture." **Samizdat** explores how these seemingly small acts of opposition played a crucial role in resisting the totalitarian regime in Czechoslovakia, which was eventually displaced by the leaders of underground culture—including such producers of samizdat as writer and first president of Czechoslovakia, Václav Havel. The exhibition also explores other forms of cultural resistance and includes examples of artist projects, music and video documents of underground events.

**Samizdat: The Czech Art of Resistance, 1968-1989** is curated by **Daniela Sněppova** and organized by the Czech Center New York in consultation with Tomáš Vrba.

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### And:

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Libri Prohibiti, Prague

The Czechoslovak Documentation Centre, (ČSDS) Prague

AVU - AKADEMIE VÝTVARNÝCH UMĚNÍ V PRAZE (Academy of Fine Arts in Prague)

Center for the Study of Totalitarian Studies, Security Services Archive, Prague

The University of Western Ontario, Canada

Media Archive, Czech-Slovakian Exile Memorial, Prague

Galerie SVIT, Prague

The New York exhibition was organized under the auspices of the First President of the Czech Republic, Václav Havel and the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic Karel Schwarzenberg. The exhibition was part of the **Czech Center's Roads to Freedom: Czech Alternative Culture before 1989**, a series of events celebrating the Czech holiday, Struggle for Freedom and Democracy Day (Den boje za svobodu a demokracii). **Roads to Freedom** included a two-day symposium on samizdat presented in conjunction with New York University Prague. The exhibition ran in New York from November 10, 2011 – January 12, 2012. The Gallery of the Czech Center New York, Bohemian National Hall, 321 East 73rd Street, New York City, NY 10021 [www.czechcenter.com](http://www.czechcenter.com)

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