

At the very beginning was my indignation. The electoral campaign in Czech Republic in 2002 provoked me to explore the use of history in the political process. The elections took place right before the entrance of the Czech Republic to the European Union and several political actors took the occasion to philosophize about the threatened Czech identity, trying to "speak for the nation" (it means for the community according to most criteria I belong to), yet I could not identify with those self-appointed "speakers" of the nation or those who promised to protect it. Analyzing the electoral campaign of my country I realized that the politicians seldom hesitate to use historical references for their particular goals, so they can present their political agenda as a part of a broader ideology, some existing tradition or in extreme cases, try to present themselves as the only real inheritors of these traditions or as self-styled guardians of the nation. Watching historians as they give in the media academic backdrops to politicians that tried to use nationalism as a political instrument, I felt something was going wrong. I experienced how the past was (ab)used to affect my life and being a history student I desired to get to the bottom of the fact that it is mostly a politician who provokes such nationalistic frenzy and my compatriots don't mind.

I tried to identify the most often referred symbols in the recent political process and to my surprise, one of the most frequently evoked events (symbols) in the political process was the famous "Velvet revolution" of 1989, which was at the time a very recent historical event, nonetheless, already came to be a powerful historical symbol and most of the Czechs identified with it.