

CZECH REPUBLIC

The Focolare Movement spread throughout the then Czechoslovakia in the 1960's, years marked by important events and great suffering. The country was in the hands of Soviet Communism and, in 1968 after 'The Prague Spring' was suffocated by armed occupation, this power became more oppressive.

In that same period Natalia Dallapiccola, one of Chiara Lubich's first companions who had gone to live in East Germany, went to visit Czechoslovakia to meet some people who had gotten to know the Movement. This small group was made up of young people, families, priests, seminarians and later, despite great difficulties, they travelled to East Germany for Focolare meetings. Amongst them was Miloslav Vlk, now Cardinal and Archbishop Emeritus of Prague. In 1971 the first focolare in Czechoslovakia was formed and by the end of 1989, after the fall of the regime, the Movement could develop in freedom. The local community immediately became full of life and numerous with members of every age group and vocation.

A historical date: in 2001 during a visit to Prague, Chiara Lubich, met 4000 members of various ecclesial movements and new communities and gave a talk on the new evangelisation. At a press conference Chiara commented that this evangelisation cannot be brought ahead by missionaries, priests and people in religious life alone, but lay people must also be its protagonists. The new evangelisation is based on love that penetrates *"the heart of different cultures"* reawakening the truth found in the DNA of every person's soul: *"that we are created to love, to socialise in the spirit of love"*.

The members of the local focolare community embraced the challenge and thus a new project was born: **"Praga d'Oro"** (Golden Prague) (<http://www.focolare.cz/index.php/zlata-praha>) is a new evangelisation initiative for the city of Prague. The members of the movement strive to contribute to the transformation of the city by fostering reciprocal love and making universal brotherhood a concrete reality in their local and everyday environments.

Czech Republic's website: <http://www.focolare.cz/>