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in co-production with  
Radio and Television of Slovakia, Czech Television  
Plafik and Slovak Film Institute

in cooperation with  
Film Expanded

present  
a documentary by Robert Kirchhoff

# ALL MEN BECOME BROTHERS

## VŠICHNI LIDÉ BUDOU BRATŘI

SK/CZ 2023



World Premiere



Karlovy Vary  
International Film Festival

PRESSKIT



## Tagline

The brighter the light, the darker the shadow.

## Summary

ALL MEN BECOME BROTHERS is a documentary about Alexander Dubček, a utopian and a political superstar, in the times of the Iron Curtain and in the era of united Europe.

## Synopsis

In the liberated 1960s, Alexander Dubček, the leader of the Prague Spring, promoted the idea of "socialism with a human face" that was eventually crushed by Soviet tanks in 1968. In the subsequent all-pervading darkness, Dubček's face became a symbol.

In All Men Become Brothers, Slovak director Robert Kirchhoff examines this still relevant symbol and pieces together the story of the "Dubček face": the face of a visionary and a Party Secretary, an ideal and reality, the absolute and relative, elitist and ordinary, official and private, global and local, powerful and helpless, victorious and defeated.

Witnesses of his life appear in scenes from a utopian community in Kyrgyzstan where Dubček grew up and comment on his life as the leader of the Prague Spring, a dissident, a man in internal exile, and his life after his comeback into top-level politics after the 1989 Velvet Revolution as well as his tragic death.





## Director's Statement

It has been 30 years since the death of Alexander Dubček. Many books, memoirs and monographs have been written about him, virtually all of which are either uncritical or openly laudatory. Even the few publications that try to reveal Dubček's "other side" and the human and ethical controversy of his personality, fail to delve under the surface. This film takes on the formidable challenge of discovering the truth about Alexander Dubček and his era, despite the fact that most of the protagonists of the story are no longer alive.

I joined the Dubček project with my own ideas and a resolve to make a film that surprises its audience despite all expectations. In my view, the most remarkable and paradoxically, also the most controversial part of Dubček's life began after the onset of normalization: Charter 77, Dubček's internal exile, and his attempts to rehabilitate himself that lasted until 1989 when he returned to the political scene.

This film discovers Alexander Dubček through a variety of situations in cooperation with living witnesses of his era and the help of archives. The characters appear in a mosaic of micro stories that create images of cities, countries, relationships and ties. All situations unfold in carefully chosen settings.

Dubček has his admirers in Slovakia. The Slovak parliament is on a square that bears his name and so do several political parties and currents that identify with his legacy. However, there are too many connections to say that this is all just a past. Some people still live preoccupied with memories of Dubček and the time when it made sense to believe a different world was possible. The film features idealists, utopians and romantics who probably still believe that a just, egalitarian society can be achieved. Dubček made it no secret that these were the ideals he had believed in his whole life..

Assorted currents of thought carry fragments of the past to the present. Scenes often emerge like abstract objects in a neatly arranged world that appear on a night table, on a sink, in a life. What do we do with them? You could say my method of initiating situations and "situation poetry" borders on historical slapstick. That's the best description. We laugh and we troll. The world of utopians and the world of dogmatists blend to create Dubček as he was and as he still is today. The camera seems present and involved not only in the world of our film but also in the world of its characters. But in fact all that's going on is observation with a substantial degree of stylization that's far removed from any feelings or affections.





## Normalization

Václav Havel and his relationship with Dubček are impossible to neglect or overlook. Immediately after Jan Palach's death, Havel wrote a letter to Dubček in which he stressed how important it was for the two nations of Czechoslovakia that Dubček would stay true to himself. That way, according to Havel, he could prevent a moral decline of the society, loss of higher values, and the growth of selfishness, careerism and indifference to the fate of others. Dubček didn't respond and chose an odd strategy of retreating and waiting while misguidedly nurturing naive hope that he could salvage the already lost remains of the Prague Spring.

Even that didn't save him from humiliation and persecution. In world history, the Prague Spring was an exceptional event. The two Czechoslovak nations tried to prove that democratic socialism was possible. After the intervention of the Kremlin and Warsaw Pact armies, the questions everyone needed to answer were: "We lost but how do we cope with it? Do we still have a chance for an honorable defeat?"

However, defeat was something Dubček was unwilling to admit.



## Robert Kirchhoff (1968)

Director, producer, screenwriter

Robert Kirchhoff studied documentary filmmaking at the Film and Television School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Bratislava. He directed and produced many documentary and feature films that won both national and international awards. Robert Kirchhoff focuses on film d'auteur. He deals with current social phenomena and historical subjects and makes them resonate in the collective conscience. Every film he makes is an open discourse and earns acclaim at numerous festivals, showcases and individual screenings. (Anthology Film Archives, New York, Columbia University New York, American University Washington, Museum Of Modern Art New York). His *Kauza Cervanová* (Normalization, 2013) attracted the highest number of spectators and became a cultural highlight of the year. Kirchhoff won three national best documentary awards for *Kauza Cervanová* (Normalization), *Para nad riekou* (Steam on the River) and *Diera v hlave* (A Hole in the Head). Since 2003, he has also been working as a producer. Kirchhoff collaborated on some of the most significant Slovak and Czech films that won national and international acclaim including *Nemoc tretej moci* (Disease of the Third Power, dir. Zuzana Piusi, 2011), *Až do mesta Aš* (Made in Ash, dir. Iveta Grófová, 2012) or Karel Vachek's films *Tmář a jeho rod* (Obscurantist and His Lineage, 2011) and *Komunizmus a síť aneb Konec zastupitelské demokracie* (Communism and the Net or The End of Representative Democracy, 2019). Robert Kirchhoff teaches at the Academy of Performing arts in Bratislava. He is a member of the European Film Academy.



## Selected Filmography

*Kauza Cervanová/Normalization*, 2013, (Special Jury Award and The Prize of the Ecumenical Jury, DOK Leipzig 2013, Special Jury Award, Ji.hlava IDFF 2013, Special Jury Award, Crossing Europe, Linz 2014, National Film Prize for Best Film of 2014)

*Para nad riekou/Steam on the River*, 2015, co-directed with Filip Remunda (Visions du Réel NYON, 2015, National Film Prize for Best Film of 2016)

*Diera v hlave/A Hole in the Head*, 2016, (Trieste Film Festival, 2017, IFF Tessaloniki International Film Festival, 2017, National Film Prize for Best Film of 2018, MoMa NYC, 2018/19)

*Všetci ľudia budú bratia/All men become brothers*, 2023



## Authors

Written and Directed by: Robert Kirchhoff

Producers: Robert Kirchhoff (atelier.doc), Jiří Konečný (endorfilm)

Co-producers: Tibor Horváth (RTVS), Peter Dubecký (SFI)

Director of Photography: Juraj Chlpík

Edited by: Marek Šulík, Jana Vlčková

Sound Design: Václav Flegl

Music by: Miroslav Tóth

Script Consultant: Jan Gogola, jr.

Collaborators: Michal Macháček, Jerguš Sivoš

### **RTVS - Radio and Television of Slovakia**

Production Manager: Anna Matisová

Line Producer: Tibor Horváth

Script Consultant: Ondrej Starinský

### **Czech Television**

Creative Producer: Alena Müllerová

Head of the Film Center: Helena Uldrichová

Script Consultant: Ivana Pauerová Milošević

## Featuring

Karel Vachek, Eugen Gindl, Lordan Zafranović, Pavel Kohout, Petr Pithart, Ľuboš Jurík, Jolyon Naegele, Romano Prodi, Fedor Gál, John Bok, Milan Kňažko, Jáchym Topol, Alexandr Vondra etc.



Producers



Co-producers



In cooperation with



Slovak distributor



With the support of





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TRAILER

STILLS

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Format: DCP / 2K / 16:9 / 5.1/ color

Duration: 116 min

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