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## **Over a book of interviews with young revolutionaries of 1989**

*Ladislav Kováč*

They were the students who started social change in our country in November 1989. They were guided by a clear challenge: to return us to Europe and among the civilized countries of the world. After 33 years, they are mature men and women, at the peak of their carriers. They were interviewed by the editor of Denník N, Karol Sudor. The book of interviews has just been published. Unfortunately, with the somewhat strange and not very attractive title "Hasta la vista comunista".

Communism is over in our country. It is unlikely to return, although the Spanish expression "hasta la vista" can be translated as "goodbye", but also as "see you later". I fear that other threats are facing us: it is not just us, but the whole world that is now in a difficult time of uncertainties and commotions.

I look at our times through the lens of my profession, biology. As one of the numerous animal species, we humans have acquired our biological nature in different conditions from those in which we live today: those of the African savannah. Biological evolution has adapted us to them; we have survived in them for hundreds of thousands of years in small hunting and gathering groups. Cultural evolution and its creations – economics, politics, myths, art, science, technology – have gradually moved us into our present conditions. The tension between our natural endowment and our culture is the source of our threat: the dynamics of society are overwhelmingly fast and accelerating. Society is becoming so complex that we do not understand it and cannot manage it.

I recently commented on this state of affairs in the magazine Week, with a text entitled 'What lies ahead in the 21st century'. The editors of the Week, Štefan Hríb and Martin Mojžiš, designated my views as catastrophic: it is a question of whether the human species will survive at all. It reminded me of how in the 19th century Karl Marx accused the bourgeoisie of proclaiming the imminent end of the world. But, according to Marx, that's only because it itself is ending. According to him, it is only with the bourgeoisie that the pre-history of humanity ends, but the real history, the golden age of humanity, communism, begins. Marx was convinced that just as Newton had discovered the laws of the dynamics of nature before him, he had discovered the laws of the movement of society. And we know what Marx's utopia led to and how it went bankrupt in Europe.

Let us admit that my view is that of a worn-out old gentleman in the twilight of his personal life, and thus resembles that of the ending bourgeoisie according to Marx. And that if it is to be wisdom, it is only the wisdom of old age. But part of my wisdom of old age is also a defence of the wisdom of youth and an appeal to the young to disagree with me. Youth, of which Andrej Sládkovič wrote that "youth is a vivid desire for beauty, a holy restlessness of the soul". The book of interviews suggests that such wisdom guided those students who launched the coup in our country in November 1989. And they succeeded. As well they could. The German sociologist Max Weber said in the early 20th century, "People would never achieve what is possible if they did not strive for what is not possible."

In the 19th century, when the question in Hungary was whether the Slovak nation would ever survive, Karol Kuzmány addressed the youth with these verses:

"To come further than we will come,  
you need to know more than what we know,  
you need to be more fervent in your faith,  
you need to become more famous for your courage..."

In our time, young people have it much harder than their predecessors had it 33 years ago. In the 21st century, they face a challenge much bigger than any young generation in history.

*Ladislav Kováč was the first post-November Minister of Education*