

VÁCLAV HAVEL

STATUARY HALL
UNITED STATES CAPITOL

NOVEMBER 19, 2014



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VÁCLAV HAVEL BIOGRAPHY

5. 10. 1936

Born in Prague

1960s

First theatre work, Divadlo ABC, Divadlo Na zábradlí, stage technician, dramaturge, assistant director, writer of successful plays

1969–89

Censored and silenced author of stage plays, political essays and texts on culture, the most prominent figure in the Czechoslovak opposition, strong critic of social conditions, brewery worker, co-founder of Charter 77 and the Committee for the Defence of the Unjustly Prosecuted in Czechoslovakia, 1979–83 political prisoner

1989

Political prisoner, leading figure in the peaceful overthrow of the Communist regime and political changes in Czechoslovakia

1989–92

President of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic

1993–2003

President of the Czech Republic

2004–2011

Politically active citizen, essayist, playwright

18. 12. 2011

Died at his country home in Hrádeček

2012

the Parliament of the Czech Republic passed a special law declaring:

“Václav Havel served freedom and democracy.”

First wife Olga Havlová (died 1996), second wife Dagmar Havlová-Veškrnová.

2003

Václav Havel was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom (USA highest honor) by President George W. Bush

As a result of efforts made by Vaclav Havel Library Foundation and American Friends of the Czech Republic Board Members, on March 11th, 2014 the US House of Representatives unanimously passed a bipartisan resolution (H. Res. 506) paving the way for a bust of President Vaclav Havel in Washington, D.C. “On the 25th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution, which liberated his people and led to his election as president, we will gather to honor Havel and all those whose sacrifices helped bring down the Iron Curtain,” said House Speaker John Boehner. The bust, sculpted by Lubomir Janecka, will be unveiled on November 19th, 2014 at the US Capitol, by Mrs. Dagmar Havlova, the wife of the late Vaclav Havel.



Václav Havel after a speech to both houses of the U.S. Congress, Washington D.C., 1990.

Photo © AFP / Jerome Delay

We, too, can offer something to you:
our experience and the knowledge that
has come out from it.

PROLOGUE

On February 21, 1990, Václav Havel addressed a joint session of the U.S. Congress in his new capacity as Czechoslovak President. Under arrest less than four months before as a “subversive element,” Havel was welcomed as a leader of the Velvet Revolution that brought an end to totalitarian communist rule in his country. In his speech, Havel commented:

“The communist type of totalitarian system has left both our nations, Czechs and Slovaks – as it has all the nations of the Soviet Union, and the other countries the Soviet Union subjugated in its time – a legacy of countless dead, an infinite spectrum of human suffering, profound economic decline, and above all enormous human humiliation. It has brought us horrors that, fortunately, you have never known.”

At the same time – unintentionally, of course – it has given us something positive: a special capacity to look, from time to time, somewhat further than those who have not undergone this bitter experience. Someone who cannot move and live a normal life because he is pinned under a boulder has more time to think about his hopes than someone who is not trapped in this way.

What I am trying to say is this: We must all learn many things from you, from how to educate our offspring, how to elect our representatives, to how to organize our economic life so that it will lead to prosperity and not poverty. But this doesn't have to be merely assistance from the well-educated, the powerful, and the wealthy to those who have nothing to offer in return.

We, too, can offer something to you: our experience and the knowledge that has come from it.”¹

It is this bold assertion that we should be our starting point for formulating the

tasks ahead of us connected with the preservation of Havel's legacy. There is no doubt that he himself did his best to honor his commitment. It is also true that the mission he launched here in Washington, now almost 25 years ago, must be conceived as a lasting task. It was not completed during his lifetime and it is still not fully accomplished.

To understand what Havel meant by the knowledge that can come from the experience of totalitarianism and, especially, the relevance of this knowledge to those who have been lucky enough to live their lives so far in a non-totalitarian world, we need only consult some of the major turning points in his own life.

Truth and love must triumph over lies and hatred.

Speech on Venceslaw square, Prague, 10. December 1989

THE LIFE: THREE ENCOUNTERS WITH AMERICA

Born in 1936 into a “bourgeois family” – a detail, of course, that greatly disadvantaged him in a society dedicated to building socialism – Havel was a teenager in the Stalinist era, with all of its revolutionary zealotry and persecution in the name of a “radiant future.” In his late teens and early twenties he lived through the process of “de-Stalinization,” the gradual “thaw” that started after the dictator's death.

The 1960s were the period of Havel's formation as an artist and a thinker. He quickly became recognized as one of the distinct emerging voices signaling that the communist system imposed on Czechs and Slovaks could not wipe out their creative spirit; their need to raise questions and think independently; and their hopes for a more open and less ideologically constrained future in spite of the Cold War stalemate in Europe.

It was the atmosphere of the “Golden Sixties”² in which Havel formulated his basic thoughts about politics and society and discovered his most characteristic weapon to fight totalitarianism: the power of theater as a unique tool of social self-awakening. Havel saw theater as a space where all of the individuals involved in the production of a drama

– from its author, director and actors through stagehands and other technical personnel as well as the audience – can be freed for at least a couple of hours from the otherwise omnipresent ruling ideology and “purified” from its debilitating impact. At the “On the Balustrade” theater, where he found his artistic “home,” Havel observed a remarkable social phenomenon: that a group of people brought together in one place at the same time can be transformed into a living organism; a body of people who have something in common that enables them to overcome their differences and reach new insights, with the hidden potential to unite them again and enable them to act in concert around a common cause.

In May 1968, when the Prague Spring – a process of reforms launched by the Czechoslovak Communist Party to “endow socialism with human face”³ – was in full swing, Václav Havel visited the United States for the first time. He traveled to New York to see his play *Memorandum* at the famous “Public Theater” and spent a few weeks in the city. During this visit he caught the spirit of contemporary American “counterculture” and returned to Prague full of exciting experiences, including the sight

of artists and “progressive” intellectuals protesting against the Vietnam War, organizing magnificent, colorful rallies in Central Park, and being passionately engaged in all sorts of activities against the US government’s policies. As a playwright – someone who was well aware of the strong performative aspects of political life in a free society – he was amazed by the carnival of freedom he observed in New York and sympathized strongly and unequivocally with the rebellious side of the divided American society.

The contacts Havel established during this trip laid the foundations for his future network of personal relationships with a number of eminent figures from the American cultural world. These were the people who stood by his side in the decades to come and raised their voices in protest against the politically motivated persecutions and incarcerations he suffered.

The Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia that began at dawn on August 21, 1968 not only terminated the short-lived “Prague Spring”; it also opened an entirely new chapter in the contemporary history of Czechoslovakia. Within a year the process of “normalization”⁴ was under way and Havel was finding himself in an entirely new situation. Until then he had been a respected figure on the official Czechoslovak cultural scene; now, he was shunned from the public sphere and his books were banned, condemning him to write texts only for himself and a close circle of colleagues and friends in similar situations.

At first, Havel retreated into his own small world inhabited mostly by *hommes de lettres* similarly punished for their participation in the 1968 revolt. In April 1975, however, he turned his sights on one extraordinary reader: He wrote an open letter to Dr. Gustav Husak, the Secretary General of the Communist Party and, soon, the President of the Republic.⁵ In retrospect, this was the moment Havel declared his individual war on the normalized totalitarian regime.

The core of Havel’s argument in this letter was as follows: Dr. Husak and his Party leadership had been quite successful in meeting the basic goals of “normalization”: reinstalling a true “socialist order” in a society dangerously weakened by the failed counter-revolutionary attempt; forcing people to renounce the subversive ideas they still seemed to believe in; and getting their explicit consent for the Soviet occupation, now presented as “fraternal assistance.” They had managed, with minimal violence, to “convince” the overwhelming majority of Czechoslovak citizens to distance themselves from the “Ideals of January” to which they had sworn their allegiance just a year ago and accept the new realities. But because, in order to achieve these goals, they had to enthrone collective “lies” as a leading social “norm,” the “normalizers,” Havel argued, would inevitably fail at the end of the day. Their strategy, aimed exclusively at keeping the *status quo* and themselves in power, negated the very concept of truth – for Havel, a fundamental guide in human



Václav Havel at a discussion with readers, New York, 1968.
Photo © Jan Lukas



Václav Havel at a demonstration, New York, 1968.
Photo © Jan Lukas

life and key organizing principle of human society. He concluded his letter with a prognosis:

*"...life may be subjected to a prolonged and thorough process of violation, enfeeblement, and anesthesia. Yet, in the end, it cannot be permanently halted. Albeit quietly, covertly, and slowly, it nevertheless goes on. Though it be estranged from itself a thousand times, it always manages in some way to recuperate; however violently ravished, it always survives, in the end, the power which ravished it."*⁶

To most people in 1975, Havel sounded like a lonely prophetic voice speaking in the desert. His letter, however, circulated quickly and was read at large, copied and distributed among friends and then friends of friends. It certainly didn't convince its recipient to change his mind, but it became an appeal for a moral awakening of the paralyzed Czechoslovak society and made at least some people contemplate what they could do to resist the constant pressure, bullying and blackmail of the communist regime and stop living a lie.

Less than two years after Havel sent his letter, Charter 77 was created: *"a loose, informal and open association of people of various shades of opinion, faiths and professions, united by the will to strive individually and collectively for the respecting of civic and human rights in our own country and throughout the world."*⁷ Havel was one of its first spokespersons.⁸ Although the "parallel polis"⁹ founded by the declaration of Charter 77 was very

small – the number of its active inhabitants was never bigger than between one and two thousand – and despite the fact that the human rights dialogue with the government that Charter 77 had been calling for never took place, the movement marked an important milestone in a Czechoslovakia stricken by the totalitarian plague: an independent public space emerged for free thinking, free exchange of information and free creativity of all kinds. Havel was no longer limited to communicating with his old fellows from the "Golden Sixties"; he could develop his remarkable talent for pointing to and describing the relevant social and political problems of his times within an open group of free-spirited individuals. Havel quickly assumed the role of a human rights activist defending the unjustly prosecuted; a public intellectual taking stand on all kinds of "hot" current issues; an essayist and pamphleteer; a philosopher of the Socratic mold; and, of course, a playwright working on a play powerful enough to transform the atomized Czechoslovak society into a real national community aware of its aspirations.

In Charter 77 one can also find the beginning of another important dimension in Havel's personal relationship with America. In its legal reasoning, the movement cited the International Covenants on Human Rights recently ratified by the Czechoslovak government as well as the Final Act of the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe.¹⁰ The "Helsinki Process," launched to decrease the tensions between East

and West and "to secure peaceful relations between states with different social and political systems," as the official diplomatic language put it, offered a possibility to open new, unexplored channels of international communication. Most important, the "third basket" of the Helsinki Accords contained human rights provisions and presupposed a sincere and constructive dialogue between the parties. The US government was the first to understand that the very nature of human rights dialogue, which became a key element on the agenda of the Helsinki follow-up diplomatic conferences,¹¹ implied a third party that could not be left out if the whole process were to be really effective and substantively improve the political climate in the divided European continent – a party composed of independent human rights activists, groups like Charter 77, which started to emerge one after the other in the region under Soviet domination.

This issue quickly became one of the hottest and most explosive issues on the agenda of East-West negotiations. Soviet and other Eastern European diplomats argued repeatedly at the Helsinki follow-up conferences that communications between the Western governments and the individuals perceived by the Soviet bloc governments as "state enemies" and "subversive elements" were in violation of the agreed principle of "non-intervention in domestic affairs." They tried again and again to suppress as much as possible what started to be called the "human dimension" of the Helsinki Process, but in vain. The West-

ern countries – with the United States leading by example – were determined not to yield.

The dissidents, Havel among them, couldn't travel abroad to make their case in international forums, but they became regular visitors to the American Embassy in Prague. They were invited to lead political dialogues with their hosts and to communicate with the Ambassador's official and unofficial visitors. They established important human contacts over time and even personal friendships. When Havel said at the end of his Washington speech that Americans should understand the way of thinking he represented, it was not just an unsubstantiated desire or an empty diplomatic phrase. It was a result of Havel's empirical observations tested over the years. It was his plain and simple conviction that personal, face-to-face communication between human beings is the starting point for any political process; that it was here, in the "human dimension" of international politics introduced by the Helsinki process, where the real beginning of a new chapter in US-Czechoslovak relations lay.

At the same time, however, Havel was well aware of the difference between being a dissident and being a head of state. On the one hand, he tried to base his message in Washington in February 1990 on his personal experiences, but on the other hand, he realized that the mission he was on now was his third and most important personal encounter with America – a very different one from

the previous two. As the representative of the state, he had to take into consideration all aspects of this relationship – especially its asymmetry – and the lessons of the past, including the political tragedies that befell Czech and Slovak society during the “short” 20th century in 1938, 1948 and again 1968.¹²

What should Czechoslovakia ask for from the United States then, at the beginning of a new era, drawing on the knowledge gained from its experience with totalitarianism? US support for and assistance in Czechoslovakia's reintegration into the free world and its institutions; a security guarantee from the strongest democratic power in the world that “small” democracies would not be blackmailed or threatened in the future by bigger powers playing hardball in the realm of global politics and thinking exclusively in terms of “zones of influence”; mutually beneficial and

open communications in all matters of common interest, including economic cooperation, cultural exchange and education; cooperation in the realm of human rights, where post-communist countries, thanks to their history, have specific “know how” in the ways of civic, non-violent resistance to totalitarian forms of government and possible strategies for opening from below the path to a genuine democratic transition.

**All important events
in the real world –
whether admirable or
monstrous – always
have their prologue in
the realm of words.**

A Word About Words, July 1989



Václav Havel with George Bush Sr. meeting citizens in front of Prague Castle, Prague, 1990. Photo © Alan Pajer



Václav Havel with Elizabeth Taylor in the presidential office, Prague, late 1990s. Photo © Jan Třešník



Václav Havel with Hillary Clinton at Prague Castle, Prague, 1996.
Photo © Přemysl Fialka



Václav Havel with Bill Clinton in the White House garden, Washington D.C., 1998.
Photo © Alan Pajer

THE LEGACY

The idea that Václav Havel should think about creating a “presidential library” came from President George W. Bush during Havel’s last official visit to the United States as President of the Czech Republic in September 2002. The Czech Republic had no tradition of such an institution and Havel was not interested in blindly following the American model. Instead, he decided to adopt the idea to the Central European condition.

The Václav Havel Library has been registered as a non-profit organization in the Czech Republic since 2004 and after ten years it has grown into a vibrant and politically relevant cultural institution.

A sad but important watershed was, of course, the death of Václav Havel in December 2011. Havel did not participate in the Library’s daily activities but, of course, he always had the opportunity to give the last word when it came to questions related in one way or another to his person. His death has opened an entirely new period and charged the Library team with a challenging task: to become a chief guardian of Václav Havel’s spiritual and political legacy – not only to collect, store and organize relevant documents related to it, but also to keep it alive and accessible, in accordance with the Havel’s intentions, for future generations.

Havel’s own vision for his library was to go global – to establish its headquarters

in Prague but start building a strong network of likeminded international partners and collaborating institutions. Because of the importance to his legacy of his relations with the United States, his wish from the very beginning was to have a strong branch office on American soil, preferably in New York, a city close to his heart where he spent his first and also his last visit to this country. Unfortunately, his wish didn’t come true until a few months after his death.

The Václav Havel Library¹³ (VHL) is based in the heart of Prague, near Národní třída (National Street) and the National Theatre in the classical building where Havel’s office was located in the last years of his life. The mission of the VHL is to preserve and disseminate his legacy.

Havel’s vision for the Library was as a vital, living organism that cannot be overlooked in public and political life. The Library’s agenda, therefore, places a strong emphasis on events in which the public can take part, including meetings and discussions focused on current political and social issues, contemporary history and cultural events. The VHL organizes such events on an almost daily basis as part of its public program.

The permanent exhibition focuses on the life and work of Václav Havel and draws on the Library’s digital archive, which is accessible to the public without geograph-

ical limitations via the VHL's website. At present, the digital archive contains more than 30,000 processed documents, including rich photographic and audiovisual collections. It is a unique resource for researchers studying Václav Havel's work, philosophy and era. The book collection is primarily composed of Havel's works, including translations, a samizdat collection and contextual literature. The VHL works not just with institutions but also numerous individual researchers, journalists, artists and students. It houses a reading room and offers expert research assistance. The exhibition and archive also inform the VHL's educational program, which is provided to schools and used by students in the Czech Republic and elsewhere. The Library's archive has been a key source for Michael Žantovský's biography of Havel, which is awaiting publication in several countries including the US, and several documentary films. The VHL recently cooperated in the first feature-length documentary on the story of Havel's life composed exclusively of period materials, film and audio recordings. Created by Czech-French director Andrea Sedláčková in coproduction with Czech Television, France's Arte, Prague-based production company Negativ, and the VHL, the film will be shown on European television in connection with the 25th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution. The VHL also loans out materials from the archive for exhibition purposes to other institutions in the Czech Republic and abroad.

Publishing is another important area of activity for the VHL. Alongside various

themed collections of works by Václav Havel – for instance, his speeches about Europe (Europe as a Task), writings about theatre, or his most influential essays (The Power of the Powerless and Other Essays) – the VHL is gradually bringing out previously unpublished texts, including the radio addresses known as Havel's Talks from Lány and a volume of letters and documents from the period of his persecution. It also publishes works by Havel's colleagues and friends that influenced his philosophy, works that depict and document the era in which he lived, and contemporary writings. An example is The Dispatch Editions Story, a book about the second biggest samizdat publishers in the former Czechoslovakia, offering a nuanced depiction of dissident publishing activities.

The VHL also organizes other projects and explores subjects such as Europe and its identity, the presidency, the influence of the Czech philosopher Jan Patočka on Havel's concept of human rights, the translation of Havel's works, his dramas and more.

Alongside this essential work, long-term international projects have been set up as curators of Havel's legacy. In 2013, the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize was established in partnership with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the Charter 77 Foundation. Each year the prize recognizes outstanding civic action in the defense of human rights in Europe and beyond. The first winner was the Belarussian writer and dissident Ales Bialiatski, the

founder and leader of Viasna. This year the award went to Anar Mammadli, a renowned Azerbaijani human rights defender who has made a marked contribution to respect for human rights and free elections in his region as the founder and chairman of the Election Monitoring and Democracy Studies Center (EMDS), which has monitored votes in Azerbaijan since 2001. In 2014, the VHL organized an international conference in honor of the winner and two other finalists at the Prague Crossroads, an old Gothic church renovated by the Dagmar and Václav Havel Foundation Vize 97 as an event and meeting space. The conferences Civic Society: Freedom is Not to Be Taken for Granted (2013) and Human Rights 25 Years After (2014) provided a forum for human rights defenders to discuss human rights as a crucial part of Václav Havel's legacy.

Havel's emphasis on the European project and the coming together of Europe after the fall of the Iron Curtain, as well as the power of the powerless, which he explores in detail in his most widely translated essay, provided the impetus for the project Václav Havel European Dialogues. A series of international conferences, public dialogues and discussions aimed at involving citizens in the debate on Europe was launched this year with the conference The Citizen, Power and Democracy in Europe's Crisis. Alongside events in Bruges and Brussels, a dialogue between former Czech Prime Minister Petr Pithart and German President Joachim Gauck was held in Prague in May.

An emphasis on democratic dialogue is the central motif of the project Havel's Place, a non-figurative memorial dedicated to Václav Havel that was first installed in Washington, at Georgetown University. It comprises two chairs linked by a round table with a tree growing through its center. Havel's Place is a worldwide project initiated by the Czech ambassador to the US, Petr Gandalovič, and the architect and designer Bořek Šípek as part of Mutual Inspirations, a festival dedicated to Václav Havel organized by the Czech Embassy in Washington in cooperation with various Czech and local partners, including the VHL. The aim of the project is to create a network of public spaces that can contribute to the holding of genuine dialogue – places where it will be possible to hold discussions and reflect on the spirit of the ideals and philosophy of Václav Havel. In addition to Washington, Havel's Places have been installed in Dublin, Barcelona, Venice, Oxford and, of course, Prague and other Czech cities. Additional locations are being prepared. Alongside the establishment of that network, a bust of Václav Havel made for the VHL by the Czech-American sculptor Lubomír Janečka was unveiled at the Council of Europe building in Strasbourg in 2010. The same artist produced a bust placed on display at the US Congress.

The establishment of the Václav Havel Library Foundation has provided the Prague institution with a stable base and partner for the further fulfillment at the international level, particularly in

the US, of the mission that Václav Havel co-formulated.

The Václav Havel Library Foundation (VHLF)¹⁴ was established as a nonprofit organization in May 2012 with headquarters at the Bohemian National Hall in Manhattan. Co-chaired by Madeleine Albright, Laura Bush and Dasha Havel, the VHLF is supported by a broad spectrum of American political leaders united in support of Havel's name and inspiration. Its mission is to complement the Václav Havel Library in Prague by organizing access to unique materials documenting Havel's accomplishments and network in North America. It seeks to create an effective, cutting-edge interactive platform and bridge, using state-of-the-art technologies, that will ensure worldwide understanding of Havel's crucial contributions not only to democratic transition in Central Europe but to debates still going on about a much larger transition of the whole global community from the 20th to the 21st century.

Currently, the VHLF is focusing on three core programs:

"Havel Oral Histories," a project whose goal is to gather, document and preserve stories about and views on Havel for future generations. The first priority is to interview presidents of the United States, secretaries of state, and other notable individuals who knew and/or were influenced by Václav Havel.

"Havel Archives," a plan to gather and make publicly available material by or

about Havel and themes connected with his legacy in Canada or the United States.

The program "Memory," dedicated to preserving and building upon Havel's life and legacy. VHLF's aim here is to serve as a "living library" through conferences and events relating to issues important to Havel; support of research devoted to themes connected to Havel's legacy; and memorials recognizing Havel's influence as a Global Citizen.

The Václav Havel Initiative for Human Rights and Diplomacy¹⁵ is a recent endeavor by the School for Public and International Affairs (SIPA) at Florida International University to strengthen the academic dimension of all of these projects to preserve Havel's legacy internationally and respond to the need to integrate his ideas and themes into a broader context of current public discourse, political philosophy and/or political science.

The initiative was launched in 2013 and is a priority in SIPA's future development, contributing a Central European input to SIPA's impressive interdisciplinary structure. Through the synergies generated by collaboration with existing SIPA programs, the Václav Havel Initiative for Human Rights and Diplomacy will offer students enhanced academic and research opportunities as well as scholarships. In line with SIPA's mission, the initiative is intended to serve as a bridge between higher education and science and the practical world of engaged citizens, public intellectuals,

human rights defenders, artists, entrepreneurs and, of course, politicians. In its mission statement, the Václav Havel Initiative for Human Rights and Diplomacy pledges to:

"...study and explore the politics of human rights, the processes of democratization in societies that were once under autocratic governments, and the experiences of societies currently in transition around the world. Our experiential basis and point of departure is Eastern and Central Europe, the home of Václav Havel. Our ambition is to foster partnerships, international dialogue and greater global exchange in the areas of human rights, democratization and diplomacy."

Six areas of interest are defined for future activities:

- Central European Political Thought and Philosophy
- Contemporary History of Central Europe
- Central European Culture, Literature and Art

- International Human Rights and Civil Society
- Democratic Transitions in the 20th and 21st Century
- World Politics, International Law and National Interest of Small States in the 21st Century.

Currently, the Václav Havel Initiative is taking the lead in developing an undergraduate Certificate in Human Rights and Political Transitions at Florida International University to offer students an introduction to human rights as a concept of justice in a globalized, increasingly complex world.

The crisis of today's world is a crisis of human responsibility and, thus, it is a crisis of human identity.

Letters to Olga, March 1982



Václav Havel with his friends (from left): Wendy Luers, Květa Dienstbierová, Petr Pithart, William H. Luers and Karel Schwarzenberg



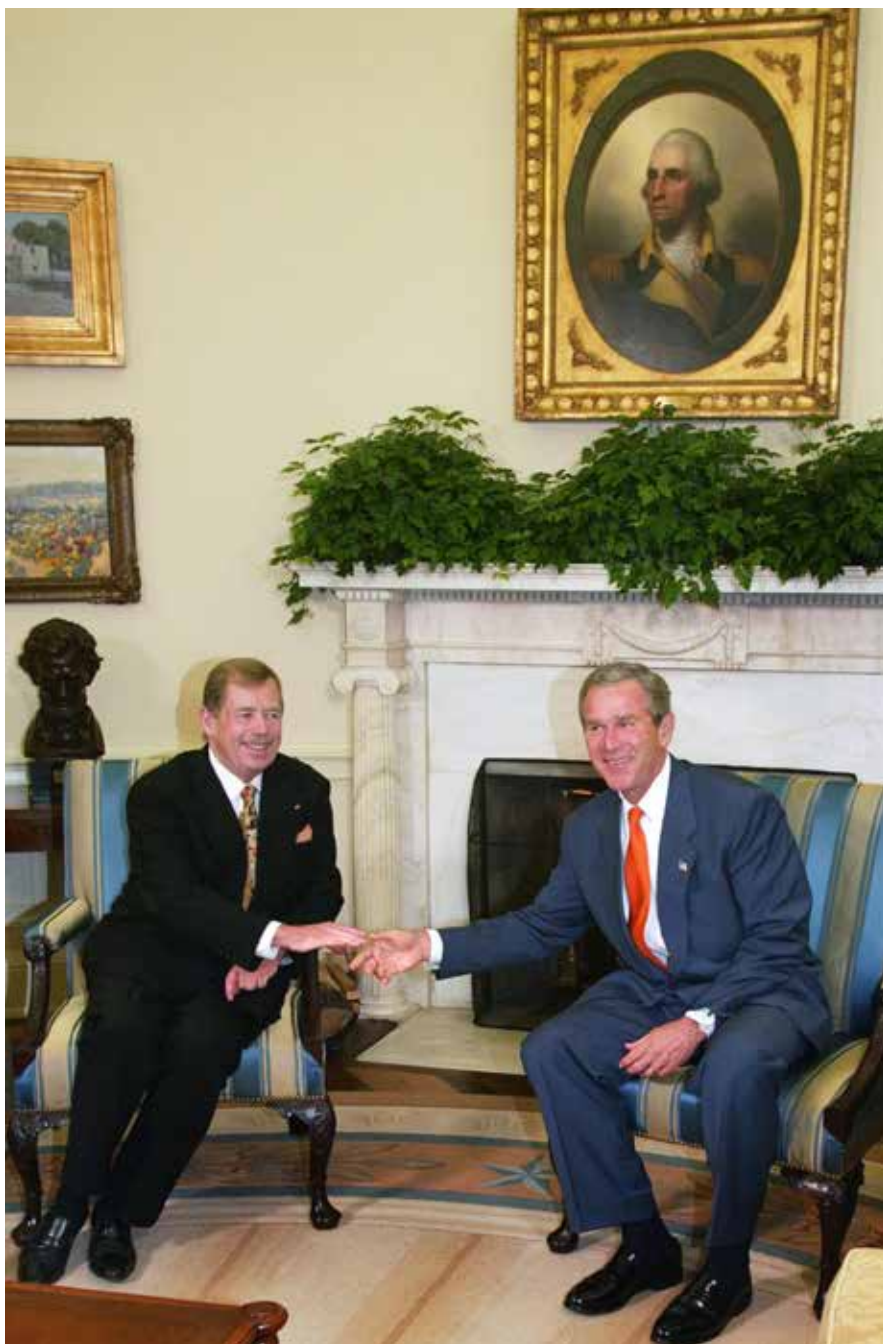
Václav Havel delivering a speech at Ellis Island, New York, 2000.
Photo © Karel Cudlín



Václav Havel with vicepresident Al Gore and Stevie Wonder, New York, date unknown.
Photo © Alan Pajer



Václav Havel with his wife Dagmar Havlová and then mayor of New York Rudy Giuliani at Ground Zero, New York, 2002. Photo © Ondřej Němec



Václav Havel and George W. Bush at the White House, Washington D. C., 2002.
Photo © Ondřej Němec

THE FUTURE

The die is cast. Three above mentioned entities - The Václav Havel Library, Václav Havel Library Foundation and Václav Havel Initiative for Human Rights and Diplomacy - are here, up and running. They share a common goal: to preserve Václav Havel's legacy for future generations. They are ready not only to cooperate among themselves, well aware that each has its own specific niche, and now speaking on behalf of two American partners, that central role belongs to Václav Havel Library in Prague. They are also ready to use all possible synergies such cooperation can generate to communicate productively with and assist others who would like to join them to accomplish this important mission.

The decision of the House of Representatives of the US Congress to honor the life and legacy of Václav Havel by displaying his bust in the House of Representative wing of the United States Capitol, represents a tremendous boost and opportunity for those committed to preserving his legacy, but it also means a great challenge: it is not an easy task to keep Havel's spirit alive in a world that is changing in front of our eyes.

House Resolution 506 - "Honoring the life and legacy of Václav Havel by directing the House of Representatives Fine Arts Board to provide for the display of a bust of Václav Havel in the United

States Capitol" - enumerates the reasons why the decision was taken: to recognize Havel's achievements as a playwright and independent thinker; as a human rights activist who was ready to go to jail for his convictions; as a revolutionary who had the courage to step out at the right moment and lead his people from slavery to freedom; and as a moderate but shrewd politician who managed to bring back his country from captivity to the community of free nations, where it has historically and culturally always belonged. It also demonstrates the enduring power of Havel's life story. The resolution was a unanimous, bipartisan decision, a rare example of consensus, an optimistic sign that despite controversy and division the possibility for agreement always remains. It is also a vote of confidence in future relations between the United States and the Czech Republic, an inspiration for the Czech side to bring its own inputs to Czech-US dialogue and communication. The presence of the Speaker of the Czech Parliament, the Prime Minister and other dignitaries at this ceremony proves that the message sent out by Resolution 506 was well taken and warmly accepted.

Today's world is again facing conflict and uncertainty. The fact that there is no Havel at hand to offer his thoughts and actions is a loss for all of us, but his legacy has the power to inspire. The totali-

tarianism he spoke about in his speech in Washington almost 25 years ago is not just a matter of the past, but a real and present danger. Václav Havel's mis-

sion to protect human dignity and freedom in our region and in the world is as current and vital as ever.

Marta Smolikova

Executive Director of Vaclav Havel
Library in Prague

Martin Palous

President of Vaclav Havel Library
Foundation in New York & Director
of Vaclav Havel Initiative at Florida
International University in Miami

By politics with a spiritual dimension, I do not understand politics that is merely technological competition for power, limited to that which can be practically achieved and seeking primarily to satisfy this or that particular interest. Nor do I understand by it a politics that is concerned merely to promote a given ideological or political conception. And I certainly do not mean by it a politics based on the idea that the end justifies the means. I understand by it a politics deriving from a strong and utterly personal sense of responsibility for the world.

*Honorary doctorate of the Wroclaw
University, December 21, 1992*

REFERENCES / SOURCES

- 1 Havel V., A Joint Session of the U.S. Congress. Washington, D.C., February 21, 1990, in: The Art of the Impossible. Politics and Morality in Practice, trans. by Paul Wilson et al., Alfred A. Knopf, New York-Toronto, 1997, p. 17-18.
- 2 The "liberalization" in Czechoslovakia in this period – which started paradoxically with the adoption of a new "socialist" constitution – manifested itself most visibly in the realm of culture, including a "new wave" of film (featuring such figures as Milos Forman), the boom in small theater (Václav Havel, Jiri Suchy, Ivan Vyskocil) and the coming of American jazz and rock music.
- 3 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prague_Spring: The Prague Spring was a period of political liberalization in Czechoslovakia during the era of its domination by the Soviet Union after World War II. It began on January 5, 1968, when reformist Alexander Dubček was elected First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, and continued until August 21 of that year, when the Soviet Union and other members of the Warsaw Pact invaded the country to halt the reforms. Dubček announced a political program of "socialism with a human face" in April 1968 at a meeting of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, bringing the Soviet leadership to a state of high alert.
- 4 [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normalization_\(Czechoslovakia\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normalization_(Czechoslovakia)): In Czech history, the period between 1969 and 1987 is referred to as "normalization." It was characterized by initial restoration of the conditions prevailing before the reforms led by Alexander Dubček (1963/1967-1968): the firm rule of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and subsequent preservation of this new status quo.
- 5 The English translation of Havel's letter, "Dear Dr. Husak," can be found in: Havel, V., Open Letters, Selected Writings 1965-1990, transl. by Paul Wilson, Alfred A. Knopf New York, 1991, p.50-83. "The Power of the Powerless" in: Havel, V., Open Letters, Selected Writings 1965-1990, transl. by Paul Wilson, Alfred A. Knopf New York, 1991, p.127-214.
- 6 "Dear Dr. Husak," p. 75.
- 7 Quoted from the English version of the "Manifesto of Charter 77" conserved in the Library of Congress (http://rs6.loc.gov/frd/cs/czechoslovakia/cs_appnd.html).
- 8 Charter 77, published on January 1, 1977, publicly asked the government of socialist Czechoslovakia to respect the human rights of its citizens as guaranteed by the United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which "were signed on behalf of our Republic in 1968, confirmed in Helsinki in 1975 and came into force in our country on 23 March, 1976." Charter 77 was created as "a free, informal, open community of people" who expressed their wish "to conduct a constructive dialogue with the political and state authorities" about various matters of public concern, and named three spokespersons: Professor Jan Patočka, philosopher; Václav Havel, playwright; and Professor Jiří Hájek, an international lawyer who served as Czechoslovak Minister for Foreign Affairs for a few months in 1968.
- 9 The term "parallel polis" to describe the dissidents' community was coined by Václav Benda, one of the most important Charter 77 signers, its spokesman and a political prisoner. For more about this term see "Charta 77. 1977-1989 (Charter 77: 1977-1989)," ed. Vilém Precan, Czechoslovak Documentation Centre, institute for Contemporary History, Academy of Science of the Czech Republic, Archa, Scheinfeld-Prague-Bratislava, 1990.
- 10 http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Helsinki_Accords. The Helsinki Accords, Helsinki Final Act or Helsinki Declaration was the first act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe held in Helsinki, Finland, in July and August 1975. Thirty-five states, including the USA, Canada and most European states except Albania, signed the declaration in an attempt to improve relations between the Communist bloc and the West. The Helsinki Accords, however, were not binding as they did not have treaty status.
- 11 In Belgrade (1977-1978), Madrid (1980-1983) in Vienna (1986-1989).
- 12 1938 – the Munich Conference, which dismembered pre-war democratic Czechoslovakia; 1948 – the Communist "Victorious February"; 1968 – "The Soviet-led invasion of the Warsaw Pact countries.
- 13 www.vaclavhavel-library.org
- 14 www.whlf.org
- 15 www.havel.fiu.edu
- 16 <https://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/house-resolution/506>



Václav Havel with Cuban dissidents in Miami, Florida, 2002.
Photo © Ondřej Němec



Václav Havel with his wife Dagmar Havlová, Madeleine Albright, Sharon Stone and Robert Redford at a charity gala evening, Karlovy Vary, 2005. Photo © Alan Pajer

VÁCLAV HAVEL WORK (A SELECTION)

PLAYS

An Evening with the Family, 1960
Ela, Hela and the Hitch, 1961
The Garden Party, 1963
The Memorandum, 1965
The Increased Difficulty
of Concentration, 1968
Guardian Angel, 1968
A Butterfly on the Aerial, 1968
Conspirators, 1971
The Beggar's Opera, 1972
Audience (Conversation), 1975
Unveiling (Private View), 1975
Mountain Hotel, 1976
Protest, 1978
Mistake, 1983
Largo Desolato, 1984
Temptation, 1985
Slum Clearance
(Redevelopment), 1987
Tomorrow!, 1988
Leaving, 2007
Dozens of Cousins
(Five Aunts), 2010

MAIN POLITICAL ESSAYS

On the Theme of an Opposition, 1968
"Dear Dr. Husák", 1975
The Power of the Powerless, 1978
Politics and Conscience, 1984
(The) Anatomy of a Reticence, 1985
Two Notes on Charter 77, 1986
The Erasmus Prize, 1986

Stories and Totalitarianism, 1987
A Word About Words, 1989

BOOKS

Letters to Olga:
June 1979 – September 1982
New York: Knopf, 1988
Living in Truth Twenty-two essays
published on the occasion of the award
of the Erasmus Prize to Václav Havel
London; Boston:
Faber and Faber, 1989
Disturbing the Peace
A Conversation with Karel Hvíždala
New York: Knopf, 1990
Open Letters
Selected Writings 1965–1990
New York: Knopf, 1991
Summer Meditations
New York: Knopf, 1992
The Garden Party and Other Plays
New York: Grove Press, 1993
Selected Plays: 1984–1987
London; Boston: Faber and Faber, 1994
The Art of the Impossible
Politics and Morality in Practice:
Speeches and Writings 1990–1996
New York: Knopf, 1997
To the Castle and Back
New York: Knopf, 2007

MAIN SPEECHES IN THE U. S. A. AND CANADA

A Joint Session of the U. S. Congress,
Washington, D. C.,
February 21, 1990
University of California, Los Angeles,
October 25, 1991
New York University,
October 27, 1991
George Washington University, Wash-
ington, D. C., April 22, 1993
The Philadelphia Liberty Medal,
July 4, 1994
The Jackson H. Ralston Prize, Stanford
University,
September 29, 1994
Harvard University, Cambridge,
June 8, 1995
Fulbright Prize, Washington, D. C.,
October 3, 1997
The White House Arrival Ceremony,

Washington, D.C.,
September 16, 1998
Congress of the United States of
America, Washington D.C.,
April 23, 1999
Václav Havel's Civil Society Symposium,
Minneapolis/St.Paul,
April 26, 1999
The Senate and the House of Commons
of the Parliament of Canada, Ottawa,
April 29, 1999
University of Michigan, Ann Arbor,
September 5, 2000
Gala Evening 'Václav Havel: The Play-
wright as President', New York,
September 20, 2002
Florida International University, Miami,
September 23, 2002
"The Emperor has No Clothes", Library
of Congress, Washington D.C., May 24,
2005

By politics with a spiritual dimension, I do not understand politics that is merely technological competition for power, limited to that which can be practically achieved and seeking primarily to satisfy this or that particular interest. Nor do I understand by it a politics that is concerned merely to promote a given ideological or political conception. And I certainly do not mean by it a politics based on the idea that the end justifies the means. I understand by it a politics deriving from a strong and utterly personal sense of responsibility for the world.

*Honorary doctorate of the Wrocław
University, December 21, 1992*



Václav Havel with his wife Dagmar Havlová, Bob Dylan, architect Bořek Šípek and signer Leona Machálková, at the backstage after Bob Dylan's show, Prague, 2003. Photo © Alan Pajer



*Václav Havel with Lou Reed, New York, 2006.
Photo © Ondřej Němec*



*Václav Havel in Manhattan, New York, 2006.
Photo © Ondřej Němec*



Václav Havel with Barack Obama at an EU-USA summit, Prague, 2009.
Photo © Alan Pajer



Václav Havel with Madeleine Albright during a debate on the 20th anniversary of the Velvet Revolution at Charles University, Prague, 2009. Photo © Alan Pajer



Václav Havel with Joan Baez at the Prague Crossroads, Prague, 2006.
Photo © Ivo Šilhavý



Václav Havel, Prague, 2009.
Photo © Ondřej Němec

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