

Originally Processed With FOIA(s):

S

FOIA Number:

S

FOIA MARKER

This is not a textual record. This is used as an administrative marker by the George Bush Presidential Library Staff.

Record Group/Collection: George H.W. Bush Presidential Records
Collection/Office of Origin: Speechwriting, White House Office of
Series: Speech File Backup Files
Subseries: Alpha File, 1987-1991

OA/ID Number: 13843
Folder ID Number: 13843-009

Folder Title:
Czechoslovakia, 1990

Stack:	Row:	Section:	Shelf:	Position:
G	26	23	2	7

02/07/90

09:55

202 647 0244

PA/PRS

FILED

PRESS DEPARTMENT OF STATE



393-1490

FOR RELEASE:

6:01 a.m. LOCAL TIME
12:01 a.m. EST

"FROM REVOLUTION TO DEMOCRACY:
CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE
IN THE NEW EUROPE"

ADDRESS BY

SECRETARY OF STATE JAMES A. BAKER, III

CHARLES UNIVERSITY

PRAGUE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA

Wednesday, February 7, 1990

For further information contact:

On an autumn day in Washington, D.C., seventy-two years ago, a messenger brought an envelope to the White House. A clerk stamped the enclosed letter, "Received, October 18, 1918."

The letter was sent by an elderly former professor from Prague to his friend, a former professor from Princeton.

The letter was timely, for on that very day, October 18, the Princeton professor, Woodrow Wilson, President of the United States, was considering a recent proposal from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

That letter to the White House was the Declaration of Independence of the Czechoslovak Nation. Thomas Masaryk had sent it.

As our twenty-eighth President read the document from the man who would be your first President, he must have been stirred by the words that recalled our own declaration of independence from an empire. He must have been moved by the closing passage:

"The forces of darkness have served the victory of light, -- the longed-for age of humanity is dawning. We believe in democracy, we believe in liberty, -- and liberty ever more."

That same day, October 18, Woodrow Wilson sent his reply to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. He recognized the Czecho-Slovak National Council as a "government clothed with proper authority." And he insisted that Czechs and Slovaks, not an emperor in Vienna, should be the judges of their own destiny.

But the wisdom of Masaryk and Wilson, the rationality of democracy and self-determination, did not last.

The days of reason of 1918 yielded to the unreasoning darkness of 1938 and 1948. Czechoslovakia witnessed -- and endured -- frightening totalitarian power and the breakdown of the European order. The United States returned to Europe, and America's young men died, resisting Nazi and Fascist aggression. Then America stayed in Europe to contain Stalinist expansionism.

Now the revolutions of 1989 have revived an age of reason for Czechoslovakia and Eastern and Central Europe.

That is what brings us together in this special place. Twenty-two years ago, students just like you -- students like Jan Palach -- joined during a fateful Prague Spring to

-2-

restore the vibrant democratic society that once stood at the heart of Europe -- only to be crushed by the twisted normality of "normalization," by the unreason of the era of stagnation.

Now you -- the students of this great university -- have taken part, heroically and responsibly, in your velvet revolution.

So it is especially fitting for me to come here, to Czechoslovakia, to Prague, to this university, to talk with you about how we might promote, perpetuate, and protect Europe's democratic revolutions.

Never again should you -- or any other people -- have totalitarianism steal away your freedom.

Never again should you be just the objects of history, unable to effect, much less shape, your own destiny. Unable to do anything but cry out: "o nas, bez nas, proti nam" -- about us, without us, against us.

From Revolution to Lasting Democracy

In December in Berlin, I discussed four key features of the new European architecture: NATO, the EC, CSCE, and a continuing American role in Europe.

Here in Prague, I want to resume that discussion. I want to share my thoughts on how Czechoslovakia and its neighbors in Central and Eastern Europe can move from revolutions to lasting democracies that draw strength from the new architecture.

The historic, democratic movements that we are witnessing across Europe -- here in Prague and in Bratislava, in Warsaw and Budapest, in Berlin, Sofia, Belgrade, and Bucharest -- hold great promise for all of us. They hold the promise that Europe can achieve what President Havel has called "the era of freedom." What President Bush has called a "Europe whole and free."

We must work to fulfill that promise and to protect it. Indeed, we all know that initial impulses for democracy may not be enough. If 1989 was the year of sweeping away, 1990 must become the year of building anew.

Four challenges confront the newly emerging democracies of this region.

First, the spirit of revolution needs to move from the streets into the government. Transitional regimes need to give way to fair and free elections that establish open parliaments with a place for opposition. The new democratic political systems need to respect the rule of law and fundamental

individual rights and liberties -- including freedom of speech, assembly, religion, and the press. Majority rule must respect minority rights.

Second, the spirit of the New Europe needs to be reflected in security arrangements that remove the threat of military aggression or intimidation and promote the peaceful settlement of disputes. Elections and new security treaties will be mutually reinforcing, for only freely-elected governments can legitimize the security arrangements the treaties will codify.

Third, the spirit of economic reform needs to move forward to allow free men and women to enjoy economic liberty -- including the rights to private ownership and to work alone or collectively in markets where prices are set by individual choices, not centralized diktat. The improved performance and freedom of market economies will be necessary to help sustain popular support for the new democracies.

Following from these three challenges, I suggest there may also be a fourth: Some of the new democracies of the region may determine that they can better support and sustain their common effort if they do so in concert, perhaps through some form of regional cooperation.

In each of these efforts, the evolving institutions of a New Europe -- NATO, the EC, CSCE -- will play important roles.

So will America. For as you make progress toward democratic ideals, so do we, for that is the essence of America. Both Wilson and Masaryk understood that.

None of us should underestimate the difficulty of the work ahead. But neither should we underestimate the great opportunity presented all of us by your courage.

As President Havel said on New Year's Day, "Let us teach both ourselves and others that politics does not have to be the art of the possible, especially if this means the art of speculating, calculating, intrigues, secret agreements and pragmatic maneuvering, but that it also can be the art of the impossible, that is the art of making both ourselves and the world better."

Free Elections -- The First Challenge

Two months ago in Berlin, I emphasized that governments based on the consent of the governed are the first requirement for an enduring peace in Europe. Americans value self-determination because we value the dignity and freedom of the individual. We value it, too, because the principle of self-determination is the only basis upon which legitimate governments can stand.

-4-

The steps you take are not just your own. They are also steps forward for all states that have a stake in a legitimate European order, including the United States and the Soviet Union. Only through the legitimacy of democracy will we achieve a resilient and lasting stability.

Governments accountable to their peoples, and more concerned with the livelihood of their citizens than with their apparatus, armies, or secret police, will secure a Europe whole and free in a way armies of tanks never could. Democratic governments are far more likely to promote the well-being of their citizens than to pursue expansionist, aggressive aims.

President Gorbachev also appears to have understood this opportunity. By word and deed, this new Soviet leadership seems to agree that legitimacy, not force, is the only way to ensure European stability. As Foreign Minister Shevardnadze said just last month, "We are emerging from a difficult past. We are emerging from it, having learned well its main lesson: Only an advanced democracy can give guarantees against the abuse of power and can secure a nation against repression and violence."

Since self-determination through a free and fair election is the right that secures all others, President Bush has called for adding free elections to CSCE nations' human rights obligations. This proposal would commit all 35 CSCE participating states to hold periodic and genuine elections, permit free party activity, and require that elections be open to foreign observers. Between now and the Copenhagen CSCE conference, the United States will propose new provisions to support, monitor, and carry out a free elections regime within the CSCE process.

Indeed, I propose that all CSCE member states join with the United States in sending observer delegations to ensure that the people power elections of 1990 genuinely represent the will of the people.

No proposal could be more timely. Last month, Romania said it would invite U.N. observers to its elections. Now I hope Romania will give our CSCE observer proposal greater impetus by being the first nation to invite CSCE observers.

1989 was the year the people took to the streets. 1990 should be the year the people move into their parliaments.

I would like to add one cautionary note. We are troubled by indications that some of the governments in the region have engaged in practices that will obstruct truly free and fair elections. Let me be clear: The peaceful transition to democracy now under way in Central and Eastern Europe will not tolerate rear guard maneuvers from any quarter. As we have seen in the GDR and Romania, such actions will only undercut

-5-

the legitimacy of this vital process. And any steps that undercut the creation of legitimate governments will increase, not decrease, instability. That is in no one's interest.

We will proceed on the basis of a new democratic differentiation: any backsliding in the movement to create legitimate governments will isolate a nation from the support we can provide.

Consolidating Changes in Europe's Security: The Second Challenge

The democratic imperative is the first and most basic challenge. But the second challenge is no less important. I want to state our objective as clearly as possible: We must leave behind not only the Cold War but also the conflicts that preceded it.

After 1918, you built a strong democracy and a vibrant economy, but 1938 and 1948 proved the necessity for enduring, effective security.

The lesson is clear: Military changes must keep pace with political ones. And CFE is a critical step toward an agreed and codified security system. Last week President Bush made a new proposal that should bring an effective CFE Treaty to a rapid conclusion.

The United States is confident that such an agreement will promote a stable strategic relationship in Europe. That relationship should minimize and deter the threat of any army of invasion and end the unjust presence of any army of occupation.

We also believe that enduring security necessitates a continued U.S. military role on the continent -- for as long as our allies desire it -- to reassure the nations of Europe, large and small, that we will stand by them to resist invasion, intimidation, or coercion.

We can make the European strategic situation more predictable and perhaps less threatening by encouraging greater openness and transparency in military affairs. Next week, for example, Canada will host the Open Skies Conference in Ottawa, where we hope to begin negotiations toward implementing President Bush's proposal to overcome the suspicions of secrecy through a system of overflights on short notice.

The negotiations on Confidence and Security Building Measures within CSCE offer a vehicle for ongoing efforts to reduce tensions on the continent. Yet our present proposals are oriented primarily toward the danger of Eastern offensive action against the West. We also need to develop measures that would impede an assertion of military might by any European nation against any other.

-6-

So today I propose that we start exploring the expansion of the confidence and security building measures agenda. For example, we should consider new proposals to promote greater military transparency between neighboring states, especially along border areas, and to open the military budgets of all 35 CSCE nations to public scrutiny.

NATO will continue to play an important role in ensuring strategic stability and predictability in Europe -- West and East -- but NATO must also evolve to assume new missions. As a political alliance, NATO offers a cohesive structure that can help address old and new European animosities and fears -- outside and inside NATO. As a security alliance among sixteen like-minded democracies, NATO should consider how it might facilitate collective action against non-traditional threats -- such as proliferation and regional conflicts. As a political and a security alliance, NATO can assist in the verification of arms control and security agreements to the benefit of all Europeans.

Economic Requirements for the New Democracies: The Third Challenge

Free elections and treaties on conventional forces and confidence building measures will help advance and consolidate your people power revolutions. But if steps are not taken to promote economic vitality, then the stability of Europe may be threatened again. This is one of the painful lessons of the inter-war years. The newly emancipated peoples of this region now face the long and trying labor of regenerating societies devastated by half a century of totalitarian rule.

A major part of this effort must clean up your rivers, lakes, forests, soil, and air -- damaged just as badly by central-planning as were your economies themselves.

Because the circumstances of each nation differ considerably, it would be a mistake to apply a mechanistic assistance formula. I believe, however, we can, identify stages of economic reform to which the United States, the EC, and the other nations of the Group of 24 should tailor support.

First, some nations will need short-term emergency aid to cope with severe shortages of necessities -- for example, food, medicine, and disaster relief. We will be there to break the fall. But we will seek to do so in a way that does not undercut the revitalization of homegrown solutions -- especially in agriculture.

The private sector can play a key role here. For instance, the American organization, AmeriCares, has sent over \$80 million in medical supplies since 1982 to aid the people of this region. And their supplies are donated primarily from American pharmaceutical companies -- over 800 of them.

Second, all the new democracies will need help in the transition from broken down Stalinist command economies to market systems driven by the engine of private enterprise. Your new Finance Minister, Vaclav Klaus, recently made a succinct statement at an international meeting that went to the heart of the problem: We don't need the old types of cooperation, he reminded an old thinking Eastern colleague, we need business!

Businesses need market prices and an opportunity to compete. It is up to you to provide a conducive legal environment, to turn over or sell factories to private owners, and to lift the heavy hand of excessive government intervention. It is up to us to help draw foreign investors, offering incentives where appropriate, and even at times to supply seed money for local private ventures. It is up to all of us to lend a hand -- especially through multilateral financial support -- to democratic economies struggling to manage such difficult transition problems as debt payments, stabilization of currency values, and currency convertibility.

That is exactly what we are doing for Poland and Hungary, where the United States alone has offered about \$1 billion in various assistance measures. And just last week, President Bush asked Congress for \$300 million for assistance to Eastern Europe. While some of our assistance will be available to all, the progress a government makes in meeting the challenges I have outlined will influence the availability of the full range of aid.

Third, we must integrate the new market democracies into the international economic system. You need access to IMF and World Bank resources. You need barriers to trade removed bilaterally and through GATT, so potential investors will know they can export to other markets. You need access to high technology. To meet this need, the United States is considering with its allies adjustments in the COCOM system that could enable you to have access to technology, provided you will protect it and forego industrial espionage.

We have been pleased the European Community has assumed a major role in coordinating economic assistance, because the availability of the EC market for the nations of Central and Eastern Europe is vital. We recognize, as well, that others -- including the United States, Japan, and the EFTA nations -- should also play significant roles so the new market democracies can assume their proper independent place within the whole of Europe and the larger international system.

Czechoslovakia and other nations of Eastern Europe warrant special recognition at this historic time. Therefore, I am pleased to announce that we will support the offer of the government of Czechoslovakia to locate the new European Development Bank for Reconstruction and Development here in Prague, in the center and heart of Europe.

I also look forward to the Bonn CSCE economic conference as an opportunity to establish European-wide adherence to market principles. If CSCE is to fulfill its potential, it needs a better developed economic component that will aid the transition to market economies and promote ongoing respect for economic liberty and open markets.

CSCE Summit

Free elections. CFE and security. Dynamic market economies.

Standing alone, each of these is important. But together they are mutually reinforcing. Together they offer an agenda for the United States and others that want to ensure that the revolutions of 1989 become the democracies of the 1990s. Together they can help build governments that answer to only one power: the people.

This agenda draws from and builds on the CSCE framework.

It should be the agenda of a CSCE Summit.

Therefore, the United States stands ready to participate in a 35-nation CSCE Summit this year if the Summit addresses three points.

One, we need to make substantial progress on the U.S. and U.K. proposal to establish a CSCE commitment to hold periodic and genuine elections. Free elections should be a human right and are the baseline requirement for establishing a new, legitimate European political order.

Two, we must complete the CFE Treaty -- so it can be signed at the Summit -- establishing new, legitimate security arrangements.

Three, we should clearly define the Summit agenda based on substantive progress and possible proposals in other areas as well, including economics. This way, it can prepare for, not replace, the 1992 Helsinki Review Meeting and demonstrate CSCE's potential for advancing reform in a New Europe. For example, we might consider how CSCE can gradually develop institutions to support its work in the three baskets, as the FRG has suggested.

U.S. Bilateral Programs for Czechoslovakia

Let me say a word about our bilateral assistance program for Czechoslovakia. Under the sure guidance of the Civic Forum and the Public Against Violence, Czechs and Slovaks together have shown that no change is too rapid when it is peaceful, consolidates democratic gains, and leads to a legitimate government. Our assistance can help you continue your revolution.

In recognition of your country's dramatically changed human rights situation, I am pleased to announce that the President will notify the Congress that he is waiving the Jackson-Vanik Amendment. This waiver will open the way for Most Favored Nation status for Czechoslovakia after we negotiate a trade agreement. And when Czechoslovakia's parliament passes new, liberal legislation on free emigration, the United States will declare Czechoslovakia in full compliance with Jackson-Vanik, as we have done with Hungary, so that Czechoslovakia can enjoy MFN status without the requirement of an annual waiver.

The President will also request authority for the U.S. Overseas Private Investment Corporation to operate in Czechoslovakia to encourage and offer financial support to private U.S. investors.

And we will support your recent request to rejoin the IMF.

The United States will also:

- Support you economically by making Czechoslovakia eligible for the export-credit guarantees of our Export-Import Bank and Commodity Credit Corporation; by seeking legislation to promote technical assistance; by negotiating a bilateral investment treaty; and by coordinating this assistance with the multilateral efforts of the Group of 24.
- Support you ecologically by proposing a joint U.S.-Czechoslovak study to determine the most cost effective way to deal with your serious air pollution problems; by encouraging you to participate in the Budapest Regional Environmental Center announced by President Bush last July; and by intensifying our dialogue on all transnational issues, including the environment, drug trafficking, and terrorism.
- Support closer ties between our peoples by increasing cultural and educational exchange programs; by beginning a Peace Corps English language program here; by establishing USIA cultural centers in Bratislava and in Prague; and above all, by reopening our consulate in Bratislava. These steps will go far toward reestablishing our historical ties with both the Slovak and Czech peoples.

I also have one more U.S. initiative to announce today, an idea specially suited to safeguarding your democracy and those of your neighbors. It starts from the assumption that just as you have won your own freedom, so too will well informed citizens protect freedom by setting wrong to right. As Thomas Jefferson wrote almost 200 years ago, "Where the press is free, and every man able to read, all is safe."

These were and are wise words.

The United States proposes, therefore, the establishment of a Fund for Independent Broadcasting and a Free Press. Our goal

-10-

is to support cooperative development of commercial and non-profit radio and television broadcasting and free press in Czechoslovakia and the rest of Central and Eastern Europe. The Fund would solicit participation and contributions from Western private corporations and institutions. This Fund's principal purpose would be to assist groups in the region that wish to start independent radio, television, and print enterprises. The Fund could provide seed money for start-up costs as well as technical assistance. It would also provide training in the United States and other Western countries in the use of equipment and development of professional broadcast and print standards.

New Associations in the Region and Europe: The Fourth Challenge

In a region that has suffered so greatly from the distortion of national interest and from international isolation, I am encouraged by the first signs of coordination and possible new association among newly democratic states. President Havel and others have opened the discussion. We recognize that the growth of legitimate multilateral organizations that reflect the economic political and security interests of this region will develop as they are needed, but permit me, if you will, to think out loud for a few moments.

The United States has supported voluntary associations of independent nations in every other region in the world. As in Western Europe after World War II, we believe that the process of political and economic reconstruction may be strengthened by new forms of cooperation.

We believe voluntary associations follow naturally from democracy and are, in a sense, a natural way for democracies to build international civil society and overcome old animosities. Indeed, association may also give you additional strength to build democratic institutions at home, because the lessons and success of one may assist another.

We welcome, for example, the recent discussions of mutually beneficial economic cooperation in the region by officials of the governments of Hungary, Poland, and Czechoslovakia, including a possible free trade agreement, free flow of capital and labor, harmonized financial systems, and a convertible accounting unit. Economic integration can enhance efficiency and growth. Common infrastructure projects can assure compatible communications, transport, and energy networks.

The purpose of such closer ties should not be to isolate the countries in association from others. Indeed, your nations have every interest in overcoming the enforced associations of the past that actually discouraged your entry into the European and global economies. No longer should the circumstances of this continent subject you to characterization as "The Lands Between"; you can, instead, establish a region of recognition

-11-

and respect. Working together, you might strengthen your position and fashion a special relationship with the EC, the nations of EFTA, or the U.S.

If you do work together, we will respect your decision by providing our assistance in a way that supports your association. The choice of whether to associate and in what form is of course entirely yours to make.

A Commonwealth of Free Nations

Today in Prague and two months ago in Berlin, I have elaborated upon the President's vision of a Europe whole and free. I have described America's vital role in building that new Europe together with you. By respecting the principles of self-determination and democratic choice, we believe that the old divisions of Europe can be overcome. The legacy of 1938 and 1948 can be left behind, and the hopes of 1918 and 1968 can be fulfilled.

Before I came to speak to you this morning, I visited the place where, twenty-one years ago, Jan Palach set himself on fire to protest fear and terror. There is little that an American official can tell this audience about his sacrifice. But I know that among the students of his old university gathered here today, the student Palach would not be a lonely man.

For in affirming your dignity as individuals, you have reclaimed more than the future of your generation. In recovering your independence as Czechs and Slovaks, you have begun more than your country's historic return to Europe. You have shown that, in the words of your president, freedom is indivisible.

When the "freedom trains" bearing East German citizens pulled out of Prague last year, hundreds of your countrymen stood and cheered. But the freedom train of 1989 did not stop at the East German border or the Czechoslovak border or the Hungarian border, just as it did not stop at the border of Poland or Bulgaria or Romania or Yugoslavia.

It is the great promise of our historical moment that the return to freedom and the return to a whole Europe are bound together -- and can only succeed together. And I believe the day will come when any European can stand in any European city -- in Prague or Paris, in Berlin or Budapest -- and see only countries of free individuals, a continent of free parliaments, a commonwealth of free nations. For as more and more people today understand in more and more places, freedom's journey is one that should never end.

President Havel was right. Politics can be the art of the impossible.

22ND STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright (c) 1990 The New York Times Company;
The New York Times

February 22, 1990, Thursday, Late Edition - Final

SECTION: Section A; Page 14, Column 4; Financial Desk

LENGTH: 691 words

HEADLINE: UPHEAVAL IN THE EAST;
Havel's Aides Meet U.S. Bankers On Investment in Czechoslovakia

BYLINE: By LOUIS UCHITELLE

BODY:

While President Vaclav Havel of Czechoslovakia visited with President Bush and addressed Congress yesterday, his top economic advisers worked at cultivating investment for their country.

Rather than meet directly with business executives, many of whom remain skeptical about investing in Czechoslovakia, the officials are trying to build a network of Wall Street advisers and investment bankers who would help the Czechoslovaks draw foreign investment.

Two key architects of the evolving Czechoslovak economy are traveling with President Havel: Vladimir Dlouhy, the Minister of Planning, and Vaclev Klaus, the Minister of Finance. Both are strong advocates of foreign ownership of Czechoslovak companies to make them efficient and competitive in world markets.

Party at the Guggenheim

The two officials were guests in New York last night at a party at the Guggenheim Museum given by Salomon Brothers and at a private dinner at the home of William Luers, president of the Metropolitan Museum of Art and a former United States Ambassador to Czechoslovakia.

The dinner guest list included E. Gerald Corrigan, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York; Anthony Solomon, the bank's former president and now an investment banker; Robert Hormats, an investment banker at Goldman, Sachs & Company, and Martin Feldstein, a Harvard economist who is advising the Czechoslovak Government.

Rather than rely on foreign loans to modernize industry - loans that might result in a burdensome foreign debt - the Havel team would encourage foreign companies to put businesses in Czechoslovakia and also to purchase some major state-owned manufacturing operations. Josef Tosovsky, president of the State Bank of Czechoslovakia, said yesterday in Washington that President Havel is not seeking credits or loans during his visit to the United States.

Legislation Planned

The Havel Government is drafting legislation that would permit foreign ownership and make other changes favorable to foreign investment. Under current law, a foreign company can be only a minority partner in a joint venture.

(c) 1990 The New York Times, February 22, 1990

But anticipating that the necessary legislation will soon be adopted by Parliament, some big American companies are negotiating with state-owned Czechoslovak operations, particularly those manufacturers with products that could be exported to Western Europe, according to people involved in the discussions.

The General Electric Company, for example, is holding talks with the Skoda Engineering Works, a manufacturer of power equipment and other machinery, in competition against Siemens A.G. The Chrysler Corporation has held talks with a separate Skoda company, the manufacturer of autos. One competitor is Mazda. The idea is to produce an American- or Japanese-designed car at a Skoda factory for export to Western Europe. The lures are Czechoslovak engineering and manufacturing skills and low wages.

Talks on Glass Plants

Numerous Western companies, including some from the United States, have also talked with the Czechoslovaks about investing in that country's famous glass factories, particularly those making auto glass, said Jan Vanos, president of PlanEcon, a Washington consulting firm that specializes in Eastern Europe.

Smaller American companies have not gone beyond the inquiry stage, apparently preferring to wait until the new laws governing foreign investment are in place, said Fred Zeder, president of the Overseas Private Investment Corporation, a Government agency that insures foreign investment by American companies.

Earlier this month, the Czechoslovaks asked Secretary of State James A. Baker 3d, when he visited Prague, for help in forming a panel of American advisers. The group being formed includes Paul A. Volcker, former chairman of the Federal Reserve; John Whitehead, a former Deputy Secretary of State who is now an investment banker; Peter McPherson, executive vice president of the Bank of America, and Mr. Hormats.

'The panel is mostly a way for the Czechs to strengthen their ties with the American financial community and with companies that are potential investors,' Mr. Hormats said.

SUBJECT: FOREIGN INVESTMENTS; ECONOMIC CONDITIONS AND TRENDS

NAME: HAVEL, VACLAV (PRES)

GEOGRAPHIC: CZECHOSLOVAKIA

7TH STORY of Level 1 printed in FULL format.

Copyright (c) 1990 The British Broadcasting Corporation;
Summary of World Broadcasts

January 5, 1990, Friday

SECTION: Part 2 Eastern Europe; B. INTERNAL AFFAIRS; CZECHOSLOVAKIA

PAGE: EE/D654/B/ 1

LENGTH: 3698 words

HEADLINE: VACLAV HAVEL AND VALTR KOMAREK ADDRESS RALLY IN OSTRAVA

SOURCE: Prague home service (i) and (ii) 1500 gmt 3 Jan 90

(i) Excerpts from live relay of speech by Vaclav Havel

2136 gmt

BODY:

Dear friends, I am very grateful to you and my friends who have come with me no doubt are also very grateful for your wonderful reception. In this way we are being received everywhere. We were received like this not only an hour ago in Frydek-Mistek but also yesterday in East Berlin and Munich. This great trust which you place in the government of national accord and me personally as President who also feels himself as a President of national accord, makes us naturally very happy and places great obligations on us. At the same time I would like to say what I have been repeating often that we, on our own cannot do very much, that now we all have to work. I have seen here a poster, for example, that Havel has brought freedom and there is a wish for him to bring snow for skiers too. There have been times in the past when the following was recited We shall rule wind and rain. That was an expression of pride - the pride of an ideology which believed that it understood the history of mankind, understood man, understood nature and that he who accepts this ideology is wiser than others and is able to tell the rest of us how we should live, what to think, what we should do. Where this ideology eventually led our society we all know very well indeed.

I have to disappoint skiers - we shall not rule snow! Anyway we do not want to be ordering anything about very much. We have been brought by this peaceful revolution to the highest state posts and we feel ourselves to be mediators of the people's will, speakers of the public. We rather want to serve that which is in the general interest and all that which you all want. We do not want to give orders, rule - and least of all snow, wind, rain! . .

We are pleased to be in this Region because we are well acquainted with the great problems which exist here. . . We have been here only a few hours but because we have somewhat accelerated the tempo of our work and our moving around, we have thus managed even in those few hours to learn several things, some of which we have known or at least suspected even before, but we have heard it from the most authoritative mouths - that is from the mouths of workers in this Region, from the mouths of people who represent various political forces of this Region - be it representatives of the college, state administration, political forces, and above all Civic Forum, as the ad hoc speaker of the public for this revolution of ours.

(c) 1990 The British Broadcasting Corporation, January 5, 1990

I am a writer by profession and as such am not used to speaking very much, although in the past six weeks I have had to speak from dawn until dusk somewhere and besides this, as a writer, I do not like to be repeating what I have already said. . . The last thing which I want to say - without showing off - is that in the past six weeks what I felt somewhat before has been confirmed - that is, that a better political situation, a better political system, a better economic system cannot be created if we do not have upright and brave and free citizens and we shall not become upright citizens if we are not upright human beings. At the beginning of this peaceful revolution there was a kind of a human 'uprightness', and this soon turned into a civic 'uprightness' and this is gradually changing into a political 'uprightness'. The human 'uprightness', as the true basis of all that follows on which the new structures - political economic and everything else - can be built, fortunately marked just the very beginning of this peaceful revolution, but it continues to accompany it and as long as it does, so, it is good. If this should disappear then it would be worse. I see the human awakening in the fact that people are kinder, nicer to each other, that they think about each other, that collections have been organised for Romania where a majority of us have never been, but we know how people there are suffering. This human awakening dwells in the fact that man does not think only about himself but thinks about others too and is aware of the fact that there are times when it is necessary to serve something other and higher than oneself, even at the price of certain sacrifices. . .

(ii) Text of live relay of speech by Valtr Komarek

Our friends! Less than a week ago, on behalf of all people, the Federal government of national Accord proposed to the Federal Assembly that Vaclav Havel be elected President of the republic. The federal government stands firmly behind Vaclav Havel, the President of national accord. Allow me to convey to you the sincere greetings of this government.

The presence of the President here in Ostrava symbolises the great changes that have taken place in our country in the last six weeks. While only a month ago we lived in fear of the possible introduction of repressions and of a reverse of the dramatic development, we realise today, in the mirror of the enormous bloodshed in Romania, the narrowness of the passes travelled by us. And today, six weeks later, we have a government of national accord, we have a revived Federal National Assembly headed by Aleksander Dubcek; but the main thing is that we have a new President of national accord, Vaclav Havel.

The basic power structure of the new democratic Czechoslovakia has been formed and continues to be stabilised. This situation makes it possible for us to think very responsibly about further development, to ask ourselves questions about the future programme and further development, so that each of us looks for his or her own responsible place in this society.

Firstly, we are facing the very demanding issue of preparing and holding the first democratic elections. As the President said in his New Year's speech, this is not a long-term task. However, we are aware of the weak nature and the youth of our democracy and of the need to develop and strengthen it. We know that the new political parties are far from being formed. We know that we must create the culture of the new democracy, cultivate and develop it - develop it everywhere in the whole country, in all spheres of our public life. The preparation for the new elections does not mean only a preparation by the new political parties for their victories. The elections are held so that the

(c) 1990 The British Broadcasting Corporation, January 5, 1990

people can put forward the most capable people to their government, to the government on behalf of the people which is to serve the people. However, politics - modern politics - cannot exist without high morals, without high qualifications and without science. The preparation for the elections will not mean a mere competition between political parties; it will be an extremely demanding and responsible preparation of all of us for choosing among us, among the Czech and Slovak people, the most capable and best people who are able to serve best their people and their interests.

So this is the first large area of tasks facing us - therefore it is not sufficient to ensure merely calm elections, but truly democratic elections in the true sense of the word - elections which will enable a true and just rule of the people. Talking about elections, one also has to realise that our country found itself for 50 years not only in a deep political and economic crisis, but also in a deep moral crisis. Elections and the preparation of them will examine the new moral values of our society, a new philosophy of this time, a new philosophy of our revolution; they will create and strengthen the new scale of human values in Czechoslovakia. The candidates who stand in the elections must also correspond to these new moral requirements of the time.

The second large task that we are facing is truly to develop, utilise and propose democracy today and every day. Elections will mean a great celebration of democracy. But we are concerned about everyday democratic behaviour and action. We must realise and appreciate the fact that this society was for a long time alienated from the people, dehumanised, that it was imbued with bureaucracy, bureaucratic manners, that it was losing human creativity, human initiative, human dimensions, feeling and creed. It is necessary that the vacuum - the just vacuum following the overthrow of bureaucratic strata and bureaucratic manners - be filled with new free people by virtue of their democratic behaviour, that our education, our health care, our state culture and state sport, our people's administration, our communication media be democratised - so that we might democratise and add humanity to our entire society every day and at every step.

Thirdly, we have to embark upon the implementation of a demanding economic programme. Vaclav Havel, President of the Republic, in his New Year address very correctly and openly characterised our economic situation. We have no illusions about the great ecological debt created in the country. As to the great internal burden when, at the expense of devastating the housing fund, the public buildings fund, the infrastructure - we exceedingly developed heavy industry, building monuments such as Nagymaros or Gabčíkovo or other large nuclear power stations and other monstrosities - this can create a long-term headache. We have enormous problems in the technical base, in the backwardness of our industry. But this does not mean giving in to hopelessness. Our industrial potential is unused. The substantial part of it is devoted to production for the sake of production which is drowning in a great consumption of materials, energy, great and useless investments.

We must guide this production so that it benefits the people. We are not producing enough passenger cars, we are not producing automatic dishwashers, we are not producing high frequency ovens, we are not producing advanced household goods, our services are lagging behind, we need an extensive development of tourism - simply, there exist many spheres which have to be highly dynamically developed if we are to hold again an honourable position among the front-ranking countries of Europe, a place which at one time Czechoslovakia held.

(c) 1990 The British Broadcasting Corporation, January 5, 1990

We must build an advanced economy, an advanced state. If we are saying that following the historic anomaly of Stalinism which parted with the basic attributes of civilisation, pluralistic democracies, market economy, that we are coming back to civilisation, that we are returning to Europe, that we are returning yet again to the great traditions of the people's republic, the democratic republic of Masaryk, this does not mean a mere indication. At the same time, we must look forward to the paths followed by the modern world, the paths of the new post-industrial information society, paths of electronics, cybernetics, artificial intelligence, computerisation and entire information systems, paths of modern chemistry, pharmacology, modern health care, and last but not least, a new living environment and an entire new quality of life.

We must look forward towards a new, advanced Czechoslovakia. For this we need to carry out structural changes in our industry, structural changes which naturally concern the Ostrava region, which concern metallurgy, mining, classical building productions and all the productions with a low degree of highly qualified labour. We need to develop advanced industries, we do not need to live on exports of rolled materials, coke and timber, but exports of up-to-date machinery, up-to-date produce, just as Austria, Italy or Spain, which were far behind us during the thirties. There is no other way. We must undertake structural changes; we must prepare them so that they are connected with generous re-qualifying programmes, so that the bill for these structural changes is not paid by you, by miners and metallurgical workers, broad strata of the population - on the contrary, so that we might use the opportunities provided by structural changes, so that we might free the so far white elephant-type investments in the development of progressive sections of production and services.

However, at the same time we not only need to develop new and modern structures, but we need to change the conduct of our enterprises and the economists as a whole. This conduct was deformed by the bureaucratised system of the central administrative management, where the initiative of the people was being suppressed, where, while talking a lot about social justice, people were remunerated rather for their poor than good work, where their incentive was deformed, where cadres were placed not according to their abilities, but according to the perverted yard-sticks of the party nomenklatura and their political colour and not according to their true abilities, their true intentions or their true achievements. This must be fundamentally changed.

We are preparing a whole package of reform measures, new laws - new laws on enterprise which will make it possible to decentralise and demonopolise our gigantic and unwieldy enterprises buried in red tape which are incapable of responding in an expedient and flexible way to the customers' demand both at home and abroad. We must carry out demonopolisation and decentralisation of the enterprise sphere, loosen this sphere and go over to small-sized enterprises, give way to medium- and small- sized enterprises, including private enterprises, joint-stock companies and foreign enterprises.

You know that the models of socialism, which were promised to the people, have failed. Nobody nowadays believes in the general models, which were - so to speak - derived from the general theories of communism. We have much more faith in real mechanisms, the mechanisms which, when under the people's control, will lead to a truly progressive development, the mechanisms of a pluralistic democracy, the mechanisms of a market economy, the mechanisms of a free contest and competition, which will bring to light in a true way what people are

(c) 1990 The British Broadcasting Corporation, January 5, 1990

capable of and what they can achieve. First and foremost we should possess wealth and divide it justly afterwards, rather than playing the game of welfare measures and a magnanimous welfare state with empty coffers.

Here lies the purpose of the economic reform - in creating a new type of behaviour, so that we stop wasting raw materials and stop behaving like people nourished by the state budget. We shall, of course, have to resort to unpopular measures, too - to make the state budget's policy more relevant, to restrict unproductive expenditure on defence, on repressive apparatuses, on unproductive monopolies, no matter where they may be - to restrict the budget expenditure, to restrict the currency in circulation, to restrict liberal subsidies and credits, in order to bar the path to inflation, so that we would maintain the stability of the crown and savings, so that people can have confidence in their savings and are able to look to and plan their future in economic terms.

The new government must also do everything for a good social policy and for our people who should be able to find fulfilling employment. It is true that there is great social employment in our country nowadays. There is over-employment in our country. Some million people work in administration and management. You know how many feeble-minded (?officials), how many administrators, how many cadre departments and how many superfluous invoice and account offices which are continuously rewriting and retranscribing something exist in our country. You know how many play finance, although in reality nobody does much with the crown, but money is simply handed out. In fact, in many instances we are only playing the game of currency circulation and banking.

Therefore it is necessary to restore to money its role in society and base the value of money with truly productive work. We are not rich enough to be able to afford to pay for non-productive work which creates no values. But this does not mean that we have to have unemployment. We have the highest and fullest employment of women. It is necessary to think how to make things easier for women. It should be possible to introduce a flexible system of four-, five- or six-hour part-time commitments for women so that they can work in a dignified way and devote themselves to bringing up children and, in effect, to the education of us all.

Yes, at the moment we have every reason to deplore the devastation of the environment in this way we are depriving ourselves of our very own existential basis. Likewise, we have to deplore the emotional devastation which has taken place in our society. We have not fully appreciated the role of women not only as mothers and teachers, but also as the guardians of emotions in our society and of all emotional education. It is necessary to renew the cult of the mother and woman enshrined in our literature and poetry we have to get a lot done for our wives, daughters and dear ones.

Yes, it is possible to give people much more free time through making the woman's lot easier, improving the existing difficult conditions attached to their employment, improving services geared to working women, and putting an end to queues in the shops, to the chaotic situation in supplies and to the endless waiting or looking for something. We can make annual leave longer, we can raise the school-leaving age, we can do a whole number of things which will alleviate the consequences of reducing unproductive employment. However, it is also necessary to give some thought to creating a situation where people find employment in those branches where we need it and to initiating the development of the low-tonnage chemical industry, precision engineering and tourism

(c) 1990 The British Broadcasting Corporation, January 5, 1990

services.

Just one example Our neighbour Austria, which is smaller than our country - 58,000 sq. km. with only two-thirds of our population - has a tourist industry which last year alone earned the country 9,000 million dollars. This is two and a half times more than the entire Czechoslovak export of all those things - coke, rolled iron sheets, timber - we are now able to export into the hard-currency areas.

Although investments into the attractions of our beautiful Prague were made as far back as in the time of Charles IV and now there is huge interest in this tourist gem - the city of Prague - our tourism earns not 9,000 million dollars, but 150,000,000 dollars. We have to build a modern tourist industry, thousands of small enterprises based on private ownership, small shops, small restaurants, eating places, even popular entertainment - simply we have to make streets interesting, full, and that includes singers and artists. We have to make Prague attractive and enrich it with all that is being created by our society.

Unfortunately, all we have created is the South Town suburb and other prefabricated dormitories which do nothing for our fame. Moreover, when we take into account the underground and the main supplies construction, the cost of a flat in the South Town is nearly Kcs 750,000. At that price all citizens could have acquired a detached house - even a detached house and a half! Just as Mrs Thatcher in Britain is doing, we could have developed above all private housing, and that is what we have to do. We must give up those prefabricated tombstones and ensure a new housing culture in Czechoslovakia.

I do not wish to bore you with a long list of the problems we have to solve and the opportunities we have. But I would like to point out the great opportunities offered by the opening up of our economy.

For a long time we have been an isolated economy, one connected only with the world of the socialist economies where we frequently exchanged our poor products for even worse ones manufactured in Romania, Poland or the Soviet Union. Let us compare the following such Western countries as Switzerland, Norway and the Netherlands import 1,000 - 1,500 dollars' worth of consumer goods per capita while we import about 12 dollars' worth. The choice of goods in our shops is accordingly impressive!

Of course, we have to substantially raise the export-ability of Czechoslovakia. We have to ensure that all our enterprises enter the international division of labour with Western firms, that they co-operate, discuss things and work together in science and technology. We have to ensure that our market - in line with all other places in Western Europe - soon reflects and offers the full world choice of goods.

Even in such countries as Peru and Bolivia, the prerequisite exists that the entire world choice must be on the market whether people can afford to buy it or not. No-one has the right, as the case used to be at our State Planning Commission, to ponder what he can or cannot import, what he is permitted or not permitted to offer to the people,

This is the path we have to follow but, of course, we have to have much more co-operation with the world. The world does offer us such opportunities. We must count - and we can count - on Western Europe, the United States, Japan and the

(c) 1990 The British Broadcasting Corporation, January 5, 1990

whole developed world to do business with us on the basis of equality so that the liberalisation of our foreign trade is made possible. Ahead of us there lie our opportunities - the opportunities of equal trade.

Let me conclude by expressing my own conviction that everywhere in Europe, in the new history, there lie our great opportunities in this era there are no longer big and small nations and, indeed, Czechoslovakia shall not be a small nation but a great one - thanks to its spirit and its new history. May we all be successful in achieving this goal.

[Note On his visits to the North Moravian districts of Frydek-Mistek and Ostrava, Vaclav Havel was also accompanied by Labour and Social Affairs Minister Petr Miller, according to a CTK report on 3rd January (2136 gmt). Havel attended meetings of students of the State College of Mining and Metallurgy in Ostrava and of miners at the Staric mine in Frydek-Mistek district. Havel and Komarek told the miners that they did not need to fear pit closures or their own future existence. The rally in Ostrava was also addressed by Petr Miller; Sarka Varysova, chairwoman of the North Moravian Regional Committee, and Mayor Lubomir Vejr. The visit ended later the same day.]

To:

P. DOOLEY

FAX 456-6218

FROM:

E. MUNTER

FAX 647-0555

ANOTHER
Havelario sent 2/13/90
~~P. 1 of 4~~
P. 1 of 2

Vaclav HAVEL
(Phonetic: FAN-ve)

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

President (since December 1989)

Addressed as: Mr. President

Vaclav Havel, Czechoslovakia's most prominent living playwright, was a major force in the creation of the Civic Forum prodemocracy movement on 19 November 1989 and was its point man in subsequent negotiations with the beleaguered Communist regime. A longtime dissident, he enjoys enormous popular support for his moral strength and courage during years of opposition activities and consequent police repression.



Havel is a reluctant politician. He has been pushed into the political limelight by the need for a nationally known and trusted figure to lead Czechoslovakia as it sheds the remnants of the hardline Communist regime and reestablishes a democratic form of government. He will hold office until free elections take place in June 1990.

A Czech, Havel was born on 5 October 1936 in Prague. His grandfather was a wealthy real estate developer and his father was a famous restaurateur. The family's assets were seized after the Communist takeover in 1948, and Havel worked as a laborer and attended night school to earn a high school diploma. Denied admission to a university because of his "class origins," he found work as a theater stagehand and attended the Academy of the Arts, eventually becoming a writer and producer for a Prague theater. In May 1968 he visited the United States for the US premiere of his play *The Memorandum*.

Havel supported the Prague Spring reforms in 1968 and opposed the Soviet-led invasion that led to their reversal. His plays were banned and he was dismissed from his theater post during the postinvasion return to orthodoxy. He subsequently worked in a brewery and became active in the dissident community. In January 1977 he was instrumental in drafting the human rights declaration Charter 77. During the following 12 years he was the target of continual police harassment, interrogations, and detentions. His longest prison sentence was a four-year term during 1979-83; his most recent was from January to May 1989.

Havel speaks English. He is not a member of any political party. He has received numerous foreign prizes as well as honorary doctorates from foreign universities, and he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989. Havel and his wife, Olga, have been married since 1964. They have no children.

26 January 1990

RFK was behind the move. Corbin may be the only national committee staffer ever fired by direct order of a President. As Arthur Schlesinger Jr. tells it, Johnson told Bobby Kennedy, "If Corbin's such a good fellow, you pay him. He's been around town for three years knocking my head off and I've never met the bum."

After 1968, devastated by the death of Robert Kennedy, Corbin moved to Nashville for a short time, where he became curator of the Country Music Wax Museum and famous for his fine collection of cowboy boots. Corbin habitually borrowed the boots off the wax dummies, one day wearing Johnny Cash's, the next Hank Williams's.

Corbin returned to Washington, where he operated successfully for many years (even after being fired by LBJ), and the legends grew of a premier political fixer able to work both sides of the aisle. In his eulogy, which had the entire funeral congregation roaring with laughter, Siegenthaler told how his friend managed an encounter with George McGovern the day after McGovern's nomination in 1972: "You don't have to make me an acceptance speech, George," growled Corbin. "Just tap your tambourine and sing three verses of 'Blowing in the Wind.'"

In 1980 the ubiquitous Corbin wrangled a private meeting with Jim Baker, then campaign chairman for Presidential candidate George Bush. Baker had never encountered this gravelly voiced package of effrontery, and he listened wide-eyed as Corbin explained that Bush was looking agitated and jittery on the campaign trail. "Put a couple of pretty secretaries on the campaign plane to keep him relaxed in the off-hours," Corbin advised, adding, "That's what we did with JFK in 1960."

Nineteen-eighty was perhaps Corbin's most active Presidential year. Detesting the pious, ineffectual President Jimmy Carter, he served as a behind-the-scenes adviser in Edward Kennedy's effort to topple Carter. When that failed and Carter won renomination, Corbin told friends on the floor of the Democratic convention that he intended to work for Reagan. Soon he was providing intelligence on the Democrats directly to William Casey, Reagan's campaign manager, who recognized a kindred spirit. When Republican John Anderson decided to run as an Independent, Corbin worked that precinct too, helping to convince Anderson's managers that they needed a clearly identified Kennedy Democrat on their ticket as Vice President to give liberals a guilt-free reason to vote against Carter. The man chosen was Corbin's old pal, former Wisconsin Governor Pat Lucey.

Then, of course, there was President Carter's debate briefing book, which turned up in the hands of the Reagan campaign. When the "Debategate" scandal broke two years later, White House chief of staff Jim Baker claimed he'd been given the book by Bill Casey. But Casey, then CIA director, said he had no such recollection. Then came reports that Corbin had admitted to a reporter that he'd smuggled the book to Casey. The CIA director telephoned his friend Corbin. "Did I get that book from you?" he asked.

"No," Corbin replied, thereby protecting Casey's

cover and leaving everyone else thoroughly confused. At his funeral mourners were evenly divided over whether Corbin was guilty.

Paul Corbin might have functioned better in the days of Plunkitt or Tweed or Pendergast. With him gone, the League of Women Voters has less to worry over. But in a profession with little enough to laugh about, Corbin lived to have some fun, and to his brand of politics, he left no heirs.

Wherever he is, you may be sure the erring boy is assembling his pals: "Bob Kennedy, meet Bill Casey."

KEN BODE, formerly politics editor of TNR, is director of the Center for Contemporary Media at DePauw University.

Homage to Vaclav Havel.

A LIFE LIKE A WORK OF ART

By Milan Kundera

I have always been especially allergic to the remark attributed (wrongly, I think) to Goethe: "a life should resemble a work of art." It is because life is formless and does not resemble a work of art that man needs art. Yet in these great days for my old homeland, Central Europe, I learned with enormous joy that Vaclav Havel would soon become president of the Czechoslovak Republic. I think about him and say to myself: there are cases (very rare) where comparing a life to a work of art is justified.

Havel's entire life is in fact built on a single great theme; there is nothing random about it, there are no shifts in direction (Havel was never touched by the lyrical illusions of communism and thus had no need to rid himself of them, as have many of his elders); this life is one gradual, continuous process, and it gives the impression of a perfect compositional unity. Moreover, it seems to me that Havel himself shapes his life with an artist's pleasure, as a sculptor does his stone, progressively giving it an ever greater clarity of meaning and form. The way he led the struggle of the past weeks ("a kind of peaceable revolution," he told me in a letter) was fascinating not only from the political standpoint but also from the aesthetic. It was like the *prestissimo* finale of a sonata by a very great master.

A work of art is meant to be perceived by others. Making one's life a work of art immediately exposes it to scrutiny, to the flood of light. It is unavoidable. But if the man thus illuminated is an artist as well, he takes a

risk: his life become work of art can cause his works of art to be forgotten. In Havel's case, this would be a pity. He was under thirty when his first plays were performed in Prague: *The Garden Party* and *The Memorandum*. They were intelligent, provocative, unlike anything else (I once discussed this in the preface to a volume of his plays: they could be placed if need be, but only approximately, within the context of the theater of the absurd), and had an irresistible humor. In fact, if these two plays are my favorites among all his work, it is because I was still able to see them in Prague, in superb productions that were entirely faithful to the author's spirit. And because I was able to see them at the Theater on the Balustrade, where Havel was working at the time and which, for Czech intellectuals, will always remain the symbol of the sixties and of their impudently free spirit. The later works (for instance, the excellent one-act *Audience*) are no less fine; if there still existed in the world companies that consider an author's text to be the foundation of theater art, these plays would be in the repertory everywhere.

Even though Havel is known to the world primarily (and justly) as a founder of Charter 77, as a dissident who has spent years in prison, as the prime moral representative of his country, at heart he will always be a dramatist, a poet of the theater. To ignore this is to fail to understand him. It means failing to understand, first of all, how deeply he is rooted in the specificity of the national tradition: the nineteenth-century movement of Czech renewal was organized not around the Church, not around an army, not around a political party, but around culture in general and the theaters in particular. The greatest Czech political figures of the time were writers: Frantisek Palacky, a historian; Karel Havlicek (curiously, his name is the diminutive form of Havel), a satiric poet; and then Tomas Masaryk, a philosopher.

His dimension as an artist will make Havel different from today's other great political personages. We

should not forget that his earliest plays put his audiences into a state of perpetual laughter. Yes, at the start of Havel's career, there was laughter. Humor. And humor means skepticism. And skepticism in turn means self-irony. Two years ago, in Paris, I saw his play *Largo Desolato*. In it, Havel ironically considers his own situation: that of a man who devotes himself to political struggle and thus is no longer master of a life—his own—that everyone else seeks to appropriate. When, in the last act, the police come to arrest the protagonist, he is almost happy with the opportunity finally to be alone, to belong to no one but himself. The dissident, this

modern hero, bears his fate not as an exhilarating glory but rather as a burden that is almost absurd. He would prefer to do other things (write plays, for instance, or poetry), to be rid of his destiny, but he cannot. For meanwhile, something mightier than he has seized hold of him, something that goes beyond him, something that Havel calls *responsibility*.

To him this is the ethic of dissidence. Havel discusses it in an essay (on *A Czech Dreambook* by Ludvik Vaculik, a magnificent work that springs from the same "skeptical dissidence"). Underlying this ethic is the skeptical certainty (which only a dramatic author or a novelist can arrive at) that there is no unity between a man's character

and his destiny, that the one is always victim of the other. (The work of art that a life becomes is not identical with that life; it may even be hostile to it.) This capacity to take an ironic view of one's own situation, to guard one's life against any melodramatic interpretation (kitsch interpretation, we would say in Central Europe), can be called a kind of wisdom. Among the great political figures of our time, I see no other who possesses that wisdom. For it is the wisdom of a poet.

—Translated from the French original by Linda Asher

MILAN KUNDERA has lived in Paris since 1975. His most recent novel is *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*.



VACLAV HAVEL BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC