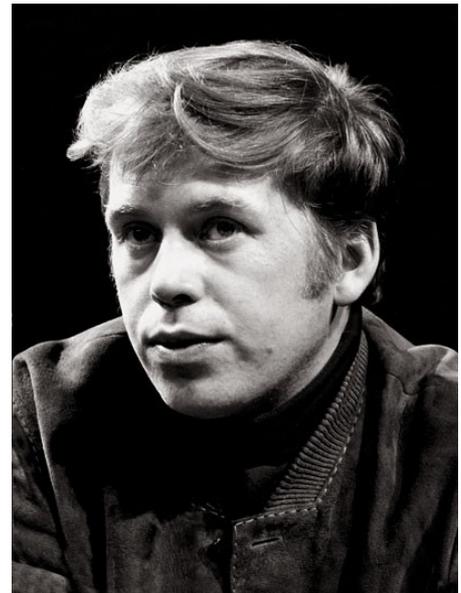


Václav Havel

Václav Havel (5 October 1936 –18 December 2011) is one of the most famous people in Czech modern history. He was a playwright, dissident and politician. He was the tenth and last President of Czechoslovakia (1989–92). Then he became first President of the Czech Republic (1993–2003). He is known for his plays, essays, and memoirs. Most of them have been translated into world languages.

Early life

Václav Havel grew up in a well-known enterprising and intellectual family, which was closely linked to the cultural and political events in Czechoslovakia from the 1920's to the 1940's. Because of these links the communists did not allow Havel to study formally after having completed required schooling in 1951. In the first part of the 1950's, a young Václav Havel worked as a chemical laboratory assistant and concurrently took evening classes to complete his secondary education (which he did in 1954). For political reasons he was not accepted into any post-secondary school with a humanities program; therefore, he opted to study at the Faculty of Economics of Czech Technical University. He left this program after two years. The intellectual tradition of his family compelled Václav Havel to pursue the humanitarian values of Czech culture, which were harshly suppressed in the 1950's. Following his return from two years of military service, he worked as a stage technician -first at Divadlo ABC, and then, in 1960, at Divadlo Na zbradli. From 1962 until 1966, he studied Drama by correspondence at the Faculty of Theatre of the Academy of Musical Arts. From the age of twenty years, Václav Havel published a number of studies and articles in various literary and theatre journal.



Personal life

In 1956, he became acquainted with Olga Splichalová, and their diverse family backgrounds attracted them to each other. After an eight-year acquaintance, they married. From that point on, Olga would accompany Václav through the most difficult experiences of their lives.

The future President would later refer to her as his indispensable source of support. Olga Havlová dedicated her time primarily to charitable activities. She died in 1996 after a severe, prolonged illness.

His source of support in this time of trouble took the form of his friend Dagmar Veskrnová, whom the President married shortly after his release from hospital in January 1997.

Political life

Following the suppression of the Prague Spring by the invasion of the armies of the Warsaw Pact, Havel stood against the political repression characterized by the years of the so-called communist "normalization". The culmination of his activities resulted in Charter 77. It embodied the character



of the Czechoslovak population which silently protested against the communist government. Because of these activities he was imprisoned for some years. The beginning of social change

began with a demonstration of students on November 17 in 1989. Havel's Civil's forum party played a major role in the Velvet revolution that toppled communism in Czechoslovakia in 1989. Havel continued his life as a public intellectual after his presidency, launching several initiatives including the Prague declaration on Europe. He died on November of 18 in 2011 alongside his second wife Dagmar.



Legacy

Havel's political thought was one of humanitarianism, environmentalism and direct democracy. The 2012–2013 academic year at the College of Europe was named in his honour. He is considered by some to be one of the most important intellectuals of the 20th century.

„ Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out. “



Vaclav Havel ♥