



Havel: A Life

Michael Zantovsky

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Václav Havel was one of the most prominent figures of the twentieth century: iconoclast and intellectual, renowned playwright turned political dissident, president of a united then divided nation, and dedicated human rights activist. Written by Michael Zantovsky—Havel's former press secretary, advisor, and longtime friend—*Havel: A Life* presents a revelatory portrait of this giant among men and the turbulent times through which he prevailed.

Havel's lifelong perspective as an outsider began with his privileged childhood in Prague and his family's blacklisted status following the Communist coup of 1948. This feeling of being outcast fueled his career as an essayist and dramatist, writing absurdist plays as social commentary. His involvement during the Prague Spring and his leadership of Charter 77, his unflagging belief in the power of the powerless, and his galvanizing personality catapulted Havel into a pivotal role as the leader of the Velvet Revolution in 1989. Although Havel was a courageous visionary, he was also a man of great contradictions, wracked with doubt and self-criticism. But he always remained true to himself. Over the next thirteen years, he continued to break through international barriers as the last president of Czechoslovakia and the first president of the Czech Republic.

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