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The Education of a President

by Chandler Rosenberger

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Dear Peter,

Ideas matter. At home we agree about so many of the basic issues that it's easy to forget the difficulty they've had taking root elsewhere. We spend our time debating the finer points of tax law, taking the premises, such as democracy and economic liberalism, for granted. It's possible to visit the wilder shores of thought, on the right and the left, in university seminars. But we're usually happy to stay in our tradition, mending but never deserting it. It may be boring, but it's home.

The politicians of Eastern Europe, on the other hand, have spent the last century leading their populations on a world tour of ideology. After World War Two, Czechs and Slovaks were lurching from fascism to Communism in a mere three years. Since the Communist coup of 1948, Czechs and Slovaks have been dragged into the dankest recesses of Stalinism. The few that broke from the group to find their own way out suffered the privations of a wilderness explorer. Sometimes a book would fall into their hands that would offer either direction or comfort; sometimes they met others who had lived in a tolerant society and had an idea about the way back.

Vaclav Havel, recently elected to become president of an independent Czech Republic, had the privilege not only to find his own way home but to lead his country there too. But few in the West have looked at the books that guided him and influenced his ideas about the paths to follow. That's a shame, because they show not only why he had the courage to strike out alone but also why he had to pass political leadership onto more qualified colleagues and why he lost a third of followers, the Slovaks, along the way.

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HAVEL'S GUIDE: Jan Patočka

Jan Patočka, the Czech philosopher, is most famous for the political act that cost him his life. At the end of 1976, Havel and Jiří Hájek asked him to join them as the third spokesperson of a new organization, Charter 77. The "Charter," as it came to be known, was a loose association of dissidents who signed an open request that the government adhere to the human rights accords, such as the Helsinki agreements, which it had signed. Patočka died under police interrogation three months after become a charter spokesperson. He was 70. "I don't know what the charter would have become," Havel says in his autobiography, "had Patočka not illuminated its beginnings with the clarity of his great personality."¹

From the beginning of his philosophical career Patočka seemed destined to be heir to the Czech philosophical tradition. T.G. Masaryk, a philosopher and first president of independent Czechoslovakia, had first encouraged him to study philosophy at Charles University. He studied with Edmund Husserl in Paris and Martin Heidegger in Freiburg, Germany. But assuming the mantle of a Czech philosopher has rarely meant a comfortable university career; the 20th century offered Patočka as little peace as the 14th century had Jan Hus and the 17th had Comenius. Patočka was first



Jan Patočka

driven from a chair at Charles by the Nazis and then, three years later, by the Communists. From the obscurity of several moribund institutions, such as the Comenius archive, Patočka continued to write and even secretly to supervise doctoral theses across Central Europe. Havel, it may be said, learned most of his philosophy from living-room seminars with Patočka.

The Heideggerian strain

Patočka's studies with and of Heidegger offered Central European philosophers invaluable breathing space, according to a Polish philosopher whose thesis Patočka secretly supervised.² The official philosophical

school of Communist regimes was, of course, left-wing Hegelianism and Marxist-Leninism. The school dismissed freedom of human action, asserting instead that history was driven by sociological forces first exposed by Karl Marx. Intellectuals who despised Communism were nonetheless raised to debate within its parameters; even some of the regimes' most passionate opponents would concede that they were "historically inevitable."

Heidegger, on the other hand, drew a distinction between the "authenticity of Being" and the "factitiousness of existence."³ Crudely put, it is the difference between living in direct relation with the world around one -- its tables, chairs, apples -- and seeing all through the prism of human reason. Human reason, Heidegger wrote, had poisoned the solitary and silent give-and-take between an individual and the world ever since Descartes claimed that we could only confirm that the world exists (and is not merely a dream or delusion) by resorting to our own reason. "I think, therefore I am," he asserted, continuing then to derive from rational argument the existence of the world.

Such an argument presupposes that human reason is logically prior to the world. As Cartesians, we "interrogate" the world. It isn't long before we are using torture in our interrogation -- "dissecting" the world into scientific categories, chemical compounds, physical laws and properties. Soon after we turn these "iron laws" on ourselves and subject human society to laws of "supply and demand," "surplus value of labor," "class interests." Scientific socialism is wrong, a Heideggerian would argue, not only because it is "socialist," but also because it is "scientific."

This "interrogation" of the world denies any unity of what Heidegger calls Being. We do not appreciate Being as a whole around us. If I were to interrogate the world around me at the moment, my mind would not appreciate the "quiddity," the "it-ness," of my experience. I would focus first on the tape player, think of the electrical laws that govern it, then switch to the music I am listening to and remember the contemporary musical principles that Brahms adhered to, the ones he broke. Like Lawrence Sterne's Tristram Shandy, I could spend the rest of my life furrowing out the details of my circumstances right now and never be able to express, much less understand, life here with my desk littered with

maps, paperbacks and half-filled ashtrays, all between walls and windows as high and as dirty as a neglected chapel's.

None of us live this way, of course. In moments we mistakenly think of as "unreflective," we enjoy what George Steiner calls "the immersion of the individual soul in the time-bound medium of factual-historical experience."⁴ The kind of knowing that guides our daily life is not a relationship between a subject (me) and an object (a tape of Brahms' Cello Sonatas). Ordinary knowing is a way of being, not an interrogation of Being. I don't "think, therefore I am." Rather, "I am, therefore I think."

Does this sort of navel-pondering seem far from Central European politics? Imagine studying under a regime of "scientific socialism," in which every human action is explicable according to iron laws⁵. Rebellion against the government is *prima facie* the product of one's bourgeois delusions about what is best for society. Of course, the scion of Prague's greatest real-estate developers would be especially prone to such mistakes. When Havel told the U.S. Congress that "Being precedes consciousness, consciousness does not precede Being," he was merely expressing (albeit in obscure "Zentraleuropeanese") the deeply-held belief of human freedom on which the Congress itself was founded. It's the faith that sustained him long enough to become president of a free Czechoslovakia.

If we are to live in the world and appreciate it as a whole, does this mean we are to adhere to human conventions? Not at all. The great challenge of "living in the world" is to "listen to Being" and react to it without becoming overwhelmed by human society. Although we know ourselves best in contact with others, there is always the danger of thinking of ourselves in the third person, as "one" rather than "I." In such a society, Heidegger wrote, "everyone is other, and no one is himself."⁶ But monkish retreat from society is not an option either. We will only know authentic life by falling into human society, with its anonymity, and striving to return to authenticity.

Heidegger rarely explicitly discusses politics; he merely warns that a society of "ones," rather than of individuals, allows for little personal responsibility. We behave the way "one" does, without challenging as individuals the prevailing attitudes. Only by caring about our relationship

to Being as a whole do we rediscover ourselves as individuals. Heidegger's only explicitly political statements addressed the use of technology to "loot" the natural world that "one" commonly accepts. The common use of technology in industry "is a challenging (to the natural world) which puts to nature the unreasonable demand that it supply energy that can be extracted and stored as such." It's an exploitation that is always driven towards "maximum yield at minimum expense."⁷ Although I'll leave aside for the moment the question of how Havel interpreted the Heideggerian political agenda, it ought to be obvious that a market economy seeks the same "maximum yield" from the labor market.

Patočka's modification: more explicitly political

Patočka accepts most of Heidegger and is especially appreciative of the danger of subjecting the world to Cartesian rationalism. But he does not reject reason as such. As I've mentioned, Patočka was also a student of Edmund Husserl, author of Cartesian Meditations. As Erazim Kohak points out in his book on the Czech philosopher, Patočka did not reject reason in favor of Heideggerian "subjectivity," but rather "asubjectivity."⁸ Husserl used reason and argument to explore the foundations of human consciousness. He didn't dismiss reason as a tool of discovery; he merely argued that our consciousness is not determined by rational rules, even if it uses them.

That may seem like a small difference but it's crucial. Patočka does not want to give himself over to romantic irrationalism, be it of 19th century Germany or the drug scene of the 1960s. We don't have to dismiss reason out of hand in our affairs. We just have to be sure not to abuse it. Like Heidegger, Patočka is suspicious of a greedy, technological society which has lost sight of the wholeness of experience. When we argue experience is merely a sum of its parts, we forget that we can choose how to address the whole. We are caught between ideology (in Patočka's case, Communist ideology) and technology. Slaves of Marxism or the laboratory are like Heidegger's "ones;" they live among their fellows and their fellow assumptions without submitting those assumptions to the test of what is worthwhile in general.

But, again like Heidegger, Patočka is not a monk. Like the philosopher of Plato's "Allegory of the Cave," the ethical man does not leave his

compatriots to seek the sunlight then remain in its blinding light. The ethical man cannot ignore his society, however misguided, since it is only through the limits and failures of his own society that the good is visible. The test of a philosopher, according to Patočka, is to return to the cave.⁹

Patočka has his own metaphor, one familiar to anyone who has read Havel. It is the "horizon." We can see a horizon, the line between the earth and sky, around us all the time. It's usually composed of buildings or trees against a blue sky flecked with clouds. There is something abstract, called the "horizon," which we use to describe this line. But we never see the abstract in itself. However much the landscape changes as we travel about, the line remains behind it. That, Patočka says, is how we perceive Being; in an ever-changing, temporal concrete. Our moral dilemmæ when dealing with particular people outline for us the demands of Being behind it in the way houses and trees outline the horizon. Like the abstract "horizon," Being lies behind these dilemmæ, omnipresent and uniform.

The concrete form of the horizon limits us; we only live in one city at a time and have a limited number of friends. Rather than worry about grand ideas, like "justice for all," we worry about treating the people in our lives decently. And our lives are limited too -- by death. These limits allow us to see the "horizon," or Being, behind them.

Patočka is more explicitly political than Heidegger because he is very aware of the fate of his own concrete horizon -- the Czech nation. From Masaryk Patočka inherited the idea of why the Czech nation itself presents the world with the very question "Why exist? Why is existence worthwhile?" After all, the Czechs have traditionally been surrounded by German-speakers. What is so special about being Czech? Why not just become German? Because, Patočka writes, the struggle for survival as a unique culture is itself a worthwhile life. The very precariousness of its existence brings out of the Czechs a much richer culture; it's so hard to remain Czech that the Czechs are inclined to ask "What are we? Are we doing something worthwhile?" more often. While citizens of other nations are prone to disappearing to the conventions of their kind, the Czechs as a whole must continually question their conventions. And, because the Czechs so often fail to defend themselves and are so often overrun, be it by Germans or Russians, they are more likely to produce citizens who are

aware that nothing can be taken for granted. It is only this "community of the shaken," those who know that their way of life can easily slip away from them, who appreciate its value as a unique "horizon," a unique way to be open to Being.

THE LEADER OF "THE SHAKEN": HAVEL AS A DISSIDENT

Close to the "horizon"

Havel began to ponder Being when his "horizon" closed tightly around him. Imprisoned in 1980 for his work with Charter 77, Havel began to write the letters to his wife that would later be collected as Letters to Olga.

"Once you're here," he wrote, "whether you want to or not, you have to ask the question, 'Does this all have meaning, and if so, what?' . . . What, in fact, is man responsible to? What does he relate to? What is the final horizon of his actions, the absolute vanishing point of everything he does, the undeceivable 'memory of Being,' the conscience of the world and the 'final court of appeal?' "¹¹

In his letters, Havel works out a metaphysical system that resembles Patočka's. Like his mentor, Havel writes that there is the world as we experience it and a realm of Being beyond it. In between are two forms of the "horizon." One is the realm of ordinary relations Patočka described; the second is Patočka's (and Heidegger's) order of one-ness, when we behave according to convention without a thought for its value. This Havel calls the "order of death."¹²

In his letters, Havel writes with a burning sense of guilt (albeit over a mistake most of us wouldn't have belabored too much.) After his arrest he was asked to sign a denunciation of his actions. Havel wrote a letter that he thought made clear that he didn't condemn Charter 77; the regime then stapled an additional 80 pages to it and published sections in the newspapers. Reflecting on the incident in prison, Havel discovers that he didn't feel answerable to some abstract moral law. Rather, he writes, "it was shame before that 'relative,' accidental, ephemeral and indeterminate 'concrete' horizon of my relating that, to my astonishment, put me in the sharpest confrontation I had ever experienced with the 'absolute horizon.' "¹³

The socialist regime, however, discouraged such a sense of responsibility for oneself and others. Instead, it taught determinism which, Havel writes, is self-fulfilling. The more one thinks that one's actions are predetermined and somehow beyond one's control, the more they actually become so. Socialism's achievement was not to prove that a man was determined by his conditions but to make him so by enforcing the regime of "convention" Heidegger, Patočka and Havel all despised. "Thus in ceasing to vouch for himself and his life," Havel writes, "he necessarily loses the self-assurance and dignity of an autonomous personality and becomes a lump of mud, entirely dependent on his affiliation to the mire."¹⁴

Back in the cave

Outside of prison, Havel reflected less on his own relationship to Being, more on the modern world's determination to destroy all sense of moral obligation. Under the reign of the socialist "order of death," life became a cyclical re-run of official holidays rather than a linear progression of real events.

The answer, Havel later writes, will be to reconstitute society around "the autonomous, integral and dignified human 'I', responsible for onself because we are bound to something higher" and capable of giving up "his banal prosperous life -- that 'rule of everydayness,' as Jan Patočka used to say -- for the sake of that which gives life meaning."¹⁵

Havel's political writings can be selectively quoted to make him appear an ardent right-winger. "As far as the economic life of society goes," he writes, "I believe in a principle of self-management. . . The principles of control and discipline ought to be replaced by self-control and self-discipline." The "dynamically appearing and disappearing organizations" he expects will achieve this sound a lot like ordinary capitalist businesses in success and failure; the "structures that in principle place no limits on the genesis of different structures" sound like stocks, bonds, and currency.¹⁶

And Havel had nothing but contempt for the peace movement. In his comments one can hear an echo of Patočka's belief that the Czech nation was worth dying for simply because its defense made it worthwhile.

Anyone who gave up his or her individuality to a slogan like "Struggle for peace" gave up everything that made life worth living since it was an admission that nothing was worth dying for, therefore nothing was worth living for. In such slogans Havel saw the slippery slope of conformity. "The moment an artifact, the project for a better world, ceases to be an expression of man's responsible identity and begins, on the contrary, to expropriate his responsibility and identity," then "the abstraction ceases to belong to him and he instead begins to belong to it."¹⁷

But the early Havel sees as much conformity in the consumerism of the West as he does in the communism of the East. If Communists had eradicated individuality with massive social engineering, capitalists had subjected Western Europe and America to "the omnipresent dictatorship of consumption, production, advertising, commerce and all that flood of information." The fault, as both Heidegger and Patočka might also have said, lay with "technology, that child of modern science, which in turn is a product of modern metaphysics" and which "is out of humanity's control, has ceased to serve us, has enslaved us and compelled us to participate in the preparation of our own destruction."¹⁸

Havel also feared the "technology of power," that is, state bureaucracies and institutions that themselves had become anonymous machines. Plays such as "Temptation" and "Development" ridiculed the craven bureaucrats of the state apparatus who spoke of greater goals for society while merely flattering and back-stabbing their way to power. Was Havel ridiculing the unelected socialist state or the state as such?

HAVEL THE CZECHOSLOVAK PRESIDENT

On November 17, 1989, Havel appeared on a balcony in Wenceslas Square as chairman of Civic Forum. Below him the square was filled with demonstrators who had begun to dismantle the Communist regime. Along with the Slovak leader Jan Čarnogurský, the Czech economist Václav Klaus and others, Havel negotiated with the regime for a peaceful transfer of power that became known as "the Velvet Revolution."

In his first address as president of Czechoslovakia, Havel stressed the culpability of all citizens and need, along with economic reform, for the moral regeneration of the country. "My people," he concluded, "your

government has returned to you!"

But had it? Havel's actions as president suggested that the education that had made him an effective dissident made him a terrible practical politician, prone at first to a kind of spontaneous politics that undermined rather than helped to establish a normal state defined by open and predictable rules. This form of politics left him open to the charge of elitism, since the unelected advisors of the president's office, the Castle, could take it upon themselves to "reform society."

Havel first fought efforts by his Finance Minister, Vacláv Klaus, to turn the Civic Forum Movement into a political party. In October 1990, Klaus became chairman of the movement and quickly insisted that it establish a practical political program with all the "machinery" of a political party. Klaus appealed directly to the Civic Forum members to oust those who disagreed with his program of fast economic reform. Once he had reconstituted the bulk of Civic Forum as the Civic Democratic Party, Klaus launched assaults both on the former Communists and on the former members of Civic Forum, by then reconstituted as Civic Movement. It wasn't pretty, but it was politics.

Havel, by comparison, pursued his goals through decency. "I am happy to leave political intrigue to others," he wrote in his only book to appear during his presidency. "I will not compete with them, certainly not by using their weapons."¹⁹ Instead, Havel wrote, he would seek to establish a moral state and to create "a decent atmosphere" around him.

It sounds harmless and laudable enough until one thinks about its implications. "The Castle" became the last bastion of what one of Klaus' closest advisors told me was "Czech messianism." Referring apparently to Patočka's belief in the significance of the Czech nation he joked that "we Czechs think we are the center of the world." The atmosphere in 1989 was "eschatological;" in the white-hot light of the revolution its leaders (this advisor among them) felt they were on the verge not only of reforming their own society but of transforming the politics of the planet. Patočka's "community of the shaken" became prone to fantastic delusions of reshaping all political institutions.

Meanwhile Klaus plodded through the details of a traditional market economy and political party, realizing that it is not possible to base politics on personal relations unless the circle of players is so small that you can know them all. If the circle is so small, it is either undemocratic or destined to lose a democratic election. Indeed, the "Civic Movement" circle, with a reliance on familiar names rather than a program that was frighteningly reminiscent of personality cults, failed even to get the five percent necessary to enter parliament. Klaus' efforts, on the other hand, paid off, as his Civic Democratic Party became the first political party in a post-Communist country to win a commanding mandate for further reform.

There is also something slightly eerie about Havel's talk of a "moral state." It would be more worrying if Havel himself were not so obviously moral. But the "Velvet Revolution" could have never taken hold had it created a state that depended on the character of its leader. It's true we ought to elect politicians we think are moral. But would we want the "state" itself somehow to be moral? Do we think, as Havel apparently does, that the state is responsible for shaping society? Imagine such a state in the wrong hands.

Havel's education also served him badly when addressing the question of economic reform. He soon began to condemn the pressure for quick reform as a new ideology. "Systems are there to serve people," he wrote, "not the other way around." He even toyed with talk of "co-ordination of the economy." Here he ran headlong into Klaus' own philosophical background. Although often dismissed as a mere "technocrat," Klaus, while working at a minor job in the state bank, organized unofficial seminars in Austrian liberalism and studied the works of von Mises and von Hayek.

The school of Austrian liberalism is very suspicious of the metaphysical claims of German philosophy, arguing (I think rightly) that it laid the groundwork for both Nazism and Communism. Both, the Austrian school argues, violate the very idea of the "rule of law" by engaging the state in specific decisions rather than setting open rules by which people make their own decisions. A liberal political system says what a "joint-stock company" is in general, then allows people the right to establish them. A state that "co-ordinates the economy" might allow people to establish companies but it more often tries to manage a few as well. It can longer be said to be neutral with respect to people's daily decisions.

Havel assailed hard economic reformers such as Klaus for believing in the kind of "systematic purity" he had come to revile. Heidegger, with his suspicion of rational systems, might have agreed. But Patočka had not condemned all rational systems exactly because he feared unhinged, irrational states such as the Nazi regime with which Heidegger had briefly co-operated. The only thing "systematically pure" about the economic reforms Klaus introduced was that they tried to treat all aspiring entrepreneurs equally. Havel, the dissident par excellence, briefly jeopardized the establishment of a neutral rule of law in favor of a moral state that could only remain 'moral' as long as people like him ran it. "Havel can never be a serious politician establishing a normal state," Klaus' advisor told me. "There is too much eschatological tension in him."

These two flaws of Havel -- his unwillingness to transform the revolutionary movement into a normal political party and his temptation to keep the state involved in the economy -- combined to hamper him most famously in the "loss of Slovakia." Because of them, Havel was unable to hold the federation he presided over together. As I described in an earlier newsletter (see CRR-1), Havel's presidential office in Slovakia became (unbeknownst to Havel) a center of power determined to prevent the sister party of Civic Forum, the Slovak movement "Public Against Violence," from forming an alliance with Klaus' Civic Democratic Party. "Public Against Violence" never opened to become a broad-based political party and suffered the same defeat at the polls that Klaus' rivals in the Czech Lands experienced.

Worse, Havel's Slovak allies lost to a movement that took Havel's reluctance to remove the state from the economy to its logical conclusion. If the state is to play a role in the economy, it makes sense to grab as much state power as you can. The "Movement for a Democratic Slovakia," the political party that won the 1992 elections in Slovakia, campaigned on a platform of more state power at the Slovak level to handle economic affairs. It was (and is) comprised not of the moral beacons Havel thought might humanize the "systematically pure" reforms, but rather failed communist factory managers unwilling to give up their cozy ties to state ministries.

Finally Havel, with his great belief in "decency" in politics, never had the

stomach to take such people on. For me, the Czechoslovak federation died in 1992 on the very day that was meant to commemorate it. October 28th used to be a state holiday marking the founding of the Czechoslovak state. A year before the 1992 elections, the day had incredible symbolic potency; the "Movement for a Democratic Slovakia," through various guises, had spent the summer campaigning for Slovak autonomy. The federation was palpably in danger and "Public Against Violence" awaited Havel's speech in Bratislava in desperation.

The Federal government swept down into Bratislava's main square in a fleet of dark blue BMWs. Slovak nationalists, a vocal minority, stood on either side of the white metal barriers that opened a path to the speakers' platform. They taunted Klaus, Havel and the Slovak federal politicians as they walked to the stage and continued to scream "Go back to Prague!" as guests assembled.

Then the eggs flew. One hit Klaus smack on the head. He leant over, wiped his hair, and stood up straight again, laughing.

Havel approached the microphone nervously and asked the crowd for a moment of silence in honor of the soldiers who had died to defend Czechoslovakia. While the majority fell silent, the nationalists continued to roar. Havel asked again and waited a moment longer. When the nationalists refused again to quiet down, he turned on his heel and walked off the platform.

As the federal delegation climbed back into their cars, the nationalists trampled over the white barriers between the crowd and stage. In a moment Havel was gone; those of us who had worked with VPN to organize the rally were awash in an angry mob. That night Havel gave a radio address from the Prague Castle complaining that the nationalists hadn't had the decency to respect the dead of Czechoslovakia. But from then on it was Czechoslovakia that seemed dead.

HAVEL THE CZECH KING

Since the 1992 elections and the division of Czechoslovakia into the independent Czech Republic and Slovakia, political power has shifted to the leaders of the victorious parties. In the Czech Lands, Klaus is as "dictatorial" as ever, pushing an economic program that greatly reduces his

government's power over the economy. In Slovakia, the victorious "Movement for a Democratic Slovakia" finds itself trying to use the government to shape the economy without the heavy federal subsidies it had counted on using. Former Communist managers are now ministers of the economy and finance; one is even the Slovak president. At least 12,000 entrepreneurs have given up on challenging the state monopolies and have turned in their business licences.

Havel himself has no political power. The constitution that Klaus' Civic Democratic Party passed has reduced the presidency to exactly the kind of job Havel had said he would never take, "a merely ceremonial president, someone who lays flowers at monuments and attends gala suppers."²⁰ Nonetheless, he has accepted. Has he sold out? Or has he realized his real strength?

Havel always said he would accept any job that allowed him to pursue his civic program. The Czech presidency as it now stands is perfect for him, for it allows him to carry on the work of Masaryk and Patočka as the nation's educator and conscience. No one explains better the link between a market economy and personal responsibility. "It may sound paradoxical to those brought up in the world of Communist ideology," he writes, "but only with the renewal of the market economy, in which companies become legal entities under particular and responsible ownership, will respect for work be renewed as well." In the ideal Czech state, Havel writes, the transportation and communication network may remain in state hands but, "apart from that, everything will be privatized, including the largest enterprises."²¹

Havel also seems to have given up his fear of the "technology of power" and to recognize the value of a stable state with predictable rules. "After the last election," he wrote in a Czech daily, "the Czech Republic took another step in its political development. This step has meant the stabilizing of parliamentary democracy based on the competition of different clearly defined political parties and with a system of strictly-defined political power. The post-revolutionary era is over, so the president is not going to be a 'leader of the nation,' or a symbol of a new epoch and he won't be forced to be responsible for everything."²²

To the chagrin of his friends who dislike Klaus, Havel has made his peace with him. Havel has dismissed Jiří Dienstbier's claim that Klaus is using Havel as window-dressing. "Of course we (Klaus and Havel) are different," Havel said, "but this allows us to complement each other in all kinds of areas." Klaus has returned the compliment. "We share much in common," he told the International Herald Tribune, "but of course we sometimes emphasize different things. Yet we have different tasks to do. And I am sure, in principle, that we can co-operate on all important matters."²³

Together, Havel and Klaus have saved the Czech Lands from the instability and unpredictability so common here in Slovakia, where decisions are still made by "within the movement" and the constitution offers no protection should Premier Vladimir Mečiar want to close a newspaper or two. Had Havel not "listened to Being" as a dissident, he would have never had the psychological strength to challenge the state. As president of Czechoslovakia he seemed like to undermine the new institutions replacing the old. But he has graciously accepted his limits and the lessons of another school of thought. And he has set himself to what he does best.

He'll have much to do as a Czech King in all but name. Austrian liberals never claimed that the "market" was the answer to the meaning of life; indeed, the economist Ludwig von Mises distinguishes liberalism from Nazism and Communism by pointing out that liberalism makes no claim to explain the meaning of life, only how to run an economy. Klaus will handle that. And Havel will be there to remind the Czechs to "transcend" the acknowledged limits of liberalism, to conduct their lives as morally as he has his.

Yours,

Chandler Rosenberger

Notes

1. Havel, Václav. Disturbing the Peace: a conversation with Karel Hvížďala. (New York, Knopf, 1990) p. 136.

2. Michalski, Prof. Krzysztof, in conversation at the Institut für die Wissenschaften vom Menschen, Vienna. Prof. Michalski has kindly offered me a junior visiting

fellowship at the institute, which is dedicated to bringing together intellectuals and politicians from post-Communist countries. I attend lectures there regularly and have often used its valuable library.

3. Steiner, George. Heidegger

4. Steiner, p. 78.

5. Probably not a great imaginative leap for anyone who has been through an American university since the 1960's.

6. Steiner, p. 81.

7. Heidegger, Martin. The Question Concerning Technology and other Essays. p. 14

8. Kohak, Erazim. Patočka. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) p. 36

9. Kohak, p. 78.

10. Kohak, p. 128.

11. Havel, Václav. Letters to Olga. (London: Faber and Faber, 1988) p. 101.

12. Havel, Letters to Olga, pp. 182-5.

13. Havel, Letters to Olga, p. 354.

14. Havel, Letters to Olga, p. 295.

15. Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," in op. cit., p. 150.

16. *ibid*, p. 119.

17. Havel, "An Anatomy of Reticence," in op. cit., p. 175.

18., Havel, "The Power of the Powerless" and "Politics and Conscience," in op. cit., p. 116 and p. 143

19. Havel, Summer Meditations. (London, Faber and Faber, 1990) p. 6.

20. *ibid*, p. 130

21. *ibid*, p. 106.

22. Havel, "The Role of the Czech President," in Mlada Fronta Dnes, Jan. 1992.

23. Havel in "Lidové Noviny," Oct. 27, 1992. Klaus in IHT, Feb. 1, 1993.