Václav Havel: "Living in truth" Within a Modern Political System

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From 1968 to 1989 Václav Havel "lived in truth" in reaction to the post-totalitarian regime that effectively controlled Czechoslovak citizens through a complex system of lies and manipulations. By ""living in truth"" Havel not only rejected the system of lies by also expressed his goals and aims for how he thought society should be constructed. Havel found many outlets that allowed him to "live in truth," most of which involved various forms of writing. As a playwright, Havel cleverly criticized the regime by depicting the absurdity of the ways in which society and the post-totalitarian regime functioned. From a citizen standpoint, Havel petitioned the leaders of Czechoslovakia to take into consideration the needs and desires of its people. Havel also was a "dissident," who helped form the Charter 77 movement, which demanded that the regime observe human and civil rights laws. Havel's position of "living in truth" formed the basis for his approach to politics and political leadership. So when the post-totalitarian regime collapsed in 1989 and the parliament quickly and unanimously elected Havel to be the new president of Czechoslovakia, Havel was suddenly faced with the challenge of applying his words of "living in truth" to his role as a political head in a democratic political system. Many, including Havel himself, questioned whether or not the new president would be able to continue to "live in truth" within these new contexts.

John Keane, in particular, theorizes that Havel has failed to "live in truth" in post-89 Czechoslovakia and Czech Republic. In his book, *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts*, Keane presents many arguments against Havel's ability to "live in truth," three of which require critical examination. First, Keane claims that Havel's involvement with the Lustration Act alters his conception of "truth" since he signed the bill to maintain a balance between the president and parliament while knowing it was causing civil disruption. Second, Keane claims that Havel's inconsiderate interactions with the Slovak Republic largely contributed to the separation of Czechoslovakia, while Havel overlooks his part in the breakup and blames it on nationalism, which was not present at the time. Finally, Keane describes the conflicts that arose between Havel and Václav

Klaus, the former Prime Minister of Czechoslovakia over the correct way to set up the democratic political system. Keane associates these events to contribute to Havel's decline from "living in truth" during his presidency.

However, Keane's arguments fail to prove that as the president in a democratic country Havel compromised his position of "living in truth." It is necessary to take into consideration what Havel said and did during the post-totalitarian regime to demonstrate "living in truth," establish its relevance to a modern political system, such as democracy, and then determine whether or not his decisions adhere to the standards he set for "living in truth." In all three of the political situations that Keane uses as his basis to criticize Havel it appears that Havel did maintain his position of "living in truth." Havel signed the Lustration Act, even with its complications, proposed a referendum and then resigned in response to the Czechoslovakia breakup, and strongly maintained his position against Václav Klaus because they followed from his principle to "live in truth." Not only do Keane's examples fail to demonstrate Havel's decline from "living in truth," but they also reinforce Havel's commitment to "living in truth" post-1989.

Post-totalitarianism

Given that Havel conceived of "living in truth" within the context of the post-totalitarian system it is necessary to explain how this political regime was able to maintain such an all-encompassing control over Czechoslovakia for twenty-one years. In the essay "The Power of the Powerless," Havel describes five aspects of the post-totalitarian regime, which account for its stability. The first aspect is that the Czechoslovak regime was an extension of the huge power bloc created by the Soviet Union. Havel states that, "each country has been completely penetrated by a network of manipulatory instruments controlled by the super power center and totally subordinated to its interests."[1] Given the range of this super power any external or internal threat to the regime could easily be suppressed. The second aspect of stability, according to Havel, is the historical foundation of the post-totalitarian regime. Because the regime grew out of the proletariat and socialist movements of the nineteenth century it had a strongly rooted veneer of legitimacy. Most dictatorships, lacking historical roots, are bound up in the lives of those who establish the regime and when the leaders are deposed the regime is

quickly replaced. However, the post-totalitarian regime's years of existence and legitimacy created a plethora of people willing to step in and perpetuate the regime.

Together the third and fourth aspects of the post-totalitarian regime work to create a stable and self-perpetuating system of control. Of the third aspect, Havel states that the system "commands an incomparably more precise, logically structured, generally comprehensible and, in essence, extremely flexible ideology that, in its elaborateness and completeness, is almost a secularized religion."[2] The basis of the ideology quickly attracted supporters by creating a sense of purpose and a place for all citizens in the society. After people gave up their rights and responsibilities they found themselves trapped within roles that were necessary to maintain and perpetuate the system. This is what Havel identified as the "automatism" of the regime, because it kept citizens in predetermined roles that they could not actively attempt to change. The post-totalitarian system kept people in their roles through the fourth mechanism of stability, which involved "physical aspects of power, [which] had led to the creation of such intricate and well-developed mechanisms for the direct and indirect manipulation of the entire population"[3] Ideology was the force behind this mechanism. Out of fear for the consequences which came from not supporting the regime, such as loss of employment, being ostracized from the community, or deprivation of secondary education for one's children, people would pretend to support the ideology of the regime. If a person outwardly rejected the regime then more physical and direct means of control would be used, such as censoring, house arrest, and imprisonment. The regime could use its higher ideological goal to justify any action that violated people's rights.

Finally, because the post-totalitarian regime became an integral political and economic system within the world its stability was reinforced. According to Havel, the regime was another form of consumer and industrial society, with a hierarchy of values like any other developed Western country.[4] Just as the drive of capitalist modern political system overlooks the value of citizen participation, the post-totalitarian regime also alienates citizens from involvement and responsibility in shaping their society.

Havel's parable of the greengrocer depicts the way in which these aspects of the post-totalitarian system are integrated into society. In "The Power of the Powerless" Havel tells a story of the greengrocer who places the slogan, "Workers of the World,

Unite!" in his shop window everyday. The sign is sent down to him from government headquarters and is a method used by the government to observe the grocer's loyalty to the regime. Knowing this, the greengrocer obediently hangs the slogan in his shop window, not because he necessarily believed in this statement, but because he is afraid of the consequences of not displaying his loyalty. The greengrocer essentially hides behind the façade of ideology in order to avoid trouble. The story of the greengrocer demonstrates how the regime uses ideology, such as the sign, to maintain its stability. The sign psychologically controls the greengrocer to demonstrate his loyalty and at the same time he sends a message to society that they better believe it too, further reinforcing the regime. Also, if the greengrocer does not display the sign physical control will be implemented, which acts as a deterrent for citizens. Finally, this situation of control and perpetuation is integrated into everyday life so inconspicuously that it appears to be a typical industrial and consumer society.

Early on in the life of the regime Havel identified for what it was: an impersonal, anonymous, irresponsible, and uncontrollable juggernaut of power. A system which used its citizens as cogs in the post-totalitarian machine and makes them feel as though the system is interested in them by holding farcical elections, political meetings, and protecting human rights. While most people in Czechoslovakia knew that the regime was based on systematic lies, reactions to the post-totalitarian regime varied. Some people played along with the "rules of the game" because they were terrified of the consequences that came with stepping out of line, they simply were not in the position to disobey, or they wanted benefit from their obedience and loyalty to the regime. Others may have rejected the lies of the system, risking the consequences for the chance to transcend the repression of the system.

Havel belonged to the latter group who chose to reject the system despite the consequences. By rejecting the regime, Havel refused to live within the lies of the regime, and by doing so he "lives in truth." But "living in truth" is more than just rejecting the idea of living in a lie; the term conveys a capacity of force or power that people living in the post-totalitarian regime would not have otherwise have. When people begin to speak out against the regime, a political aspect will naturally be created because they are making demands on the government. Havel explains that the aims of the "living

in truth" evolve into a political position because the regime conflict with every fundamental demand of the people. Havel states,

> These real aims can naturally assume a great many forms. Sometimes they appear as the basic material or social interest of a group or an individual; at other times, they may appear as certain intellectual and spiritual interests; at still other times they may be the most fundamental of existential demands, such as the simple longing of people to live their own lives in dignity. Such a conflict acquires a political character, then, not because of the elementary political nature of the aims demanding to be heard, but simply because given the complex system of manipulation on which the post-totalitarian system is founded and on which it is also dependent, every free human act or expression, every attempt to live within the truth, must necessarily appear as a threat to the system and, thus, as something which is political *par excellence*.[5]

The political essence that comes out of "living in truth" is the right of people to be a part of the political process, for people to have a say in how their lives will be governed. This evolves into the idea of antipolitical politics, what Havel states is, "politics from below. Politics of man, not of the apparatus."[6] This allows for people to take an active part in shaping the way that their government and society is run, through civic involvement and responsibility.

The ways in which people can make demands on the regime, thereby "living in truth," can be accomplished many ways. Havel claims that "anything from a letter by intellectuals to a workers' strike, from a rock concert to a student demonstration, from refusing to vote in the farcical elections to making an open speech at some official congress, or even a hunger strike"[7] would qualify as "living in truth." Personally, Havel's main approach to "living in truth" was writing, whether it was a letter to the leader of the country,[8] a play,[9] a circulated *samizdat,*[10] a speech to be given abroad,[11] or letters to his wife.[12] The three main types of writing will be discussed, including his three one-act plays, his "Letter to Dr. Husak" and his involvement in the Charter 77 movement. From these sources we will get a feel for what Havel thought about "living in truth."

"Living in Truth"

Through writing plays Havel demonstrated what it meant for him to "live in truth" within the post-totalitarian system in Czechoslovakia. Havel's plays are more than just fictional stories but they are semi-autobiographical accounts of Havel's life under the post-totalitarian regime. Havel's combination of three one-act plays, *Audience*, *Unveiling* and *Protest*, depict the nature of life under the post-totalitarian regime, reject the system of lies through the actions of Havel's alter-ego, Vaněk, present some of the aims with which Havel hopes to influence the regime, and the ways that people are constrained by the system. Rather than examine each play, one scene will be highlighted from the plays to reflect the important attributes of "living in truth."

First of all, the plays are significant to "living in truth" in that they accurately describe the nature of life under the regime. The plays essentially hold up a mirror image of the system reflecting its facades, lies, and manipulations. For example, in *Unveiling*, Vaněk is invited over to his friends, Michael and Vera, for dinner. The play consists of them telling Vaněk how he can make his life more meaningful as they do, by decorating their home, raising their child, constantly improving their sex life, gourmet cooking, and collecting records. When Vaněk decides to leave early the couple becomes extremely upset. Michael says, "Why do you think we fixed this place up like this anyway? Who do you think we're doing all this for? For ourselves?"[13] This comment demonstrates the focus on materialism, as a replacement for aspects of life taken over by the regime. This focus is linked to Havel's ideas on the autonomy of lives under the regime, which reduces people to hiding behind a false sense of happiness and exterior appearances. The materialist escapism of Michael and Vera demonstrate the similarities between the post-totalitarian regime and Western liberal democracies.

Through Vaněk's character, Havel also demonstrates ways that people can refuse to participate in the system. In *Audience,* Vaněk is working as a laborer in a brewery because he has been banned from writing. Every week the foreman is required to submit a report on Vaněk, but he does not want to write them for a variety of reasons, so he asks Vaněk to write his own reports in an exchange for a better position in the brewery. In an act of living in truth Vaněk refuses. He states, "I can't inform on myself" The foreman replies, "Inform…inform? Who's talking about informing?" Vaněk states, "It's not

myself I am worried about…it wouldn't do me any harm…but there's a principle involved. How can I be expected to participate in…in something I have always found repugnant"[14] This scene depicts the way in which Havel rejected the system of lies and "lived in truth."

Protest demonstrates the goals that Havel attempts to achieve through "living in truth." In this play Vaněk is under house arrest when his friend Staněk visits him. Staněk requests that Vaněk write a *samizdat* for Javurek, a pop singer who is to be Staněk's son-in-law, who has been arrested for performing. Vaněk has already drafted a petition and it is signed by fifty members. This scene shows an approach to "living in truth" that aims to petition the regime to respect the right of due process and freedom of expression.

Finally, the plays demonstrate the way people are constrained by the system and the condition to which it reduces them. In *Unveiling,* Vera and Michael are resort to preoccupations with material items and everyday events. The foreman in *Audience* knows that he can do nothing to change the system and is too afraid to speak out against the regime, so he constantly drinks and is reduced to a state of despair. Finally, in *Protest,* Staněk feels as though he cannot sign the *samizdat* because of the consequences of losing his job and his son's education.

Another approach that Havel took towards "living in truth" was writing letters to government officials. One of Havel's most recognized letters was to the General Secretary of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, Dr. Gustav Husák. In an interview with Jirí Lederer, Havel explains that he wrote the letter to "contribute to the process of social self-awareness."[15] The desire to contribute to social self-awareness refers to Havel's desire to express his aims and goals for the society, and also for people to be able to contribute to the processes that determine their lives. In the interview, Havel also states that he wrote the letter to "transcend his own predicament." Havel needed to remind himself that he could still do something actively even in his situation and that he did not have to stand idly by while the system perpetuated its lies and social misery.

Finally, Havel's involvement in the Charter 77 movement was a way in which he lived in truth. In January of 1977 a group of Czech and Slovak "dissidents" drafted Charter 77 in response to the irresponsible and repressive post-totalitarian regime. The Charter was a set of covenants that strove to promote and protect human rights and

freedoms after which progressive movements throughout history had striven, and "whose codification could greatly contribute to the development of a human society."[16] These covenants included rights that are familiar to both Eastern and Western countries, such a freedom of expression, religion, privacy, legal defense, and basic civil rights. Members of this free, informal, open community of people with different convictions, different faiths, and different professions, all having different motivations to "live in truth," worked to watch over the government's actions towards these things and report on them. Members of the Charter 77 movement united in solidarity to be active citizens in their society by conducting

> a constructive dialogue with the political and state authorities, particularly by drawing attention to various individual cases where human and civil rights are violated, by preparing documentation and suggesting solutions, by submitting other proposals of a more general character aimed at reinforcing such rights and their guarantees….[17]

The Charter 77 enabled members to speak out against the lies and in doing so they made suggestions to the regime in terms of how the Czechoslovak society should be shaped.

Throughout the explanation of "living in truth" a democratic aspect arises from Havel's approach to "living in truth." First, Havel thinks that there are many approaches by which people can "live in truth" and they are not limited to his approaches. The possibility for people to choose the way they want to "live in truth" provides a democratic approach to "living in truth." Second, the motivation for people to "live in truth" also varies from person to person. Havel, for example, often writes that the system replaces a higher power, such as God, and that it prevents citizens from being connected to their identity and responsibilities. However, Havel realizes that this may not be the motivation for everyone who is "living in truth." Perhaps people want to reject the system merely because it violates human and civil rights, or possibly because they want a more modern political system. Finally, the aims or goals that people want to promote through "living in truth" also differ. Havel does not discriminate between what views are being promoted, he just wants people to have the opportunity to contribute to their society. In light of the flexibility allowed for the approaches, motivations, and goals of "living in truth," people have the opportunity for choice and are not forced into a confined definition of "living in truth." This also suggests that there is not a black and white

definition of what it means to "live in truth," but it is important to keep in mind that there are ways of living that are not truthful.

After considering the democratic nature of "living in truth" it must be clarified that Havel is not suggesting a liberal philosophy. He does not suggest that people should be free from all restrictions of governmental agencies so that they are free to live as they want. At no time does Havel suggest a type of political or economic structure that would most closely adhere to "living in truth." In fact, "living in truth" is something that Havel states would apply to all structures, particularly to a democratic capitalist society. While the autocracy of the post-totalitarian system prevents humanity from being the master of its own situation, and creates intellectual, moral, political, and social misery, modern political systems of the west (technological civilizations and the industrial consumer society) may not fare any better. In response to traditional parliamentary democracies Havel states that,

> People are manipulated in ways that are infinitely more subtle and refined than the brutal methods used in the post-totalitarian societies. But this static complex of rigid, conceptually sloppy, and politically pragmatic mass political parties run by professional apparatuses and releasing the citizen from all forms of concrete and personal responsibility; and those complex focuses of capital accumulation engaged in secret manipulations and expansion, production, advertising, commerce, consumer culture, and all that flood of information…[are manifested in traditional modern political systems].[18]

Havel thinks that an appropriate transitional solution to democracy would be to "restore the devastated sense of civic awareness, to renew democratic discussion, to allow for the crystallization of an elementary political plurality, an essential expression of the aims of life."[19] Given that there similarities between the post-totalitarian regime and modern political systems, "living in truth" becomes especially relevant to Czechoslovakia after the democratic revolution of 1989.

"Living in Truth" Post-1989

When the post-totalitarian regime unexpectedly collapsed in 1989 Václav Havel was unanimously elected by the Czechoslovakia Parliament to be the president of the new democratic government. Many, even Havel himself, questioned whether he would be able to maintain the ideals and standards he had set for government officials during the post-totalitarian regime. In an address at New York University, Havel made this comment on his predicament:

> And then revolution broke out, and I suddenly found myself, almost overnight, at the head of my country. I had neither aspired to this position nor strived to attain it. Destiny had indeed played a strange joke on me, as if telling me through all those who persuaded me to accept the office. 'Since you're so smart, now it is your chance to show everyone you have ever criticized the right way to do things.'[20]

More importantly, Havel states that many people, especially reporters and journalists, questioned how the notion of "living in truth" or "non-political politics" would stand up to practice. Throughout his speeches, essays, and meditations written in the post-1989 era, his response to these questions has been quite clear. On one occasion Havel said that he did not feel the need to recant anything he had previously said or wrote and that his opinions on living in truth had been confirmed by his experiences in office. He claims that you do not need to lie or intrigue and that, "if your heart is in the right place and you have good taste, not only will you pass muster in politics, you are destined for it. If you are modest and do not lust after power, not only are you suited to politics, you absolutely belong there."[21] On another occasion, Havel states, "I think my experience and observations confirm that politics as the practice of morality is possible. I do not deny, however, that it is not always easy to go that route, nor have I ever claimed that it was."[22]

Despite the claims made by Havel regarding his ability to put "living in truth" into practice as a political head, many questioned whether Havel has been able to implement these visions as the president of Czechoslovakia. In *Vaclav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts,* John Keane theorizes that Havel from his vision of "living in truth" and "anti-political politics." Keane hits upon several events that Havel has faced during his presidency that he claims have constituted Havel's decline. Of these the issues of the controversial Lustration Act, the breakup of Czechoslovakia, and the rivalry between Havel and Václav Klaus stand out as the most critical and will be used as the basis to determine whether or not Havel has failed to "live in truth" and practice anti-politics.

One of the first major political trials with which Havel was confronted was Czechoslovakia's policy of punishing Communists and their collaborators who had committed civil and human rights abuses during the rule of the post-totalitarian regime. In response to the large number of Communists from the former regime who remained in government and public positions, the Czechoslovak government passed legislation known as the "Lustration Act," which involved the prohibition of hiring people whose names

were listed in the files of the StB, the secret police of the former Communist Party. In May 1992, the Czechoslovak government approved a draft law on publishing a list of citizens registered in the files of the former StB. The bill allowed for the release of names of former StB collaborators registered in StB files in the category of agent, resident holding a flat for conspiracy, informer or ideological collaborator, and the names of StB officers directing collaborators' activities from February 25, 1948 to November 17, 1989.[23] The publication bill was accompanied by a screening law, which barred Communist Party officials, collaborators with the StB, and former members of the People's Militia, a paramilitary force of the Communist Party, from occupying state posts for the next five years.

Soon after the publication of the StB files complications with the Lustration Act arose. As with practically any piece of legislation, loopholes were discovered. Unfortunately, the loopholes allowed many of the well-placed Communists of the former post-totalitarian regime to go without punishment because their files had been "lost, they had benefited from rapid privatization and were working in the private sector, or they quickly retired in time to receive pensions."[24] Some critics also claimed that the lustration law encouraged a climate of incivility. For example, employers would "lustrate" staff without reasonable suspicion, children of former Communists suffered from discrimination, former Charter 77 supporters discovered the names of their informers causing tensions among acquaintances, and brothers and sisters found out that they had spied on each other. In the name of freedom of information, truth was breeding hatred within society.[25]

In spite of these complications, Havel signed the bill into law with the Parliament, stating that the law was needed because, "many people linked with the totalitarian regime, who participated in the violations of human rights, did not make use of the opportunity to leave their posts after the democratic revolution" of November 1989.[26] Nevertheless, Havel did write up proposals for amendments he thought needed to be made to the bill regarding the implementation of the law, including the right to subpoena witnesses and cross-examine accusers in an independent court. He gave these proposals to Czechoslovak Parliament Chairman Alexander Dub?ek.[27]

In the chapter "Decline," Keane criticizes Havel for an inconsistency he finds between what Havel has said in the past and how he responded to the problems associated with the Lustration Act. Keane claims, "Havel's tactic [involving the Lustration Act] revealed a subtle but important change that had now descended upon his presidency. He had evidently bidden farewell to his old noble habit of drawing black-and-white distinctions between 'truth' and 'lies.' Before entering official politics he had always insisted the truth is always the truth."[28] Keane makes this statement in response to Havel's "balanced diplomacy" approach to the Lustration Act, wherein Havel continued to support the program even though significant problems arose.

One instance of "balanced diplomacy" that Keane describes was the discrepancy between what Havel said abroad and how he acted domestically. Abroad Havel is quoted to have stated that "We have not yet found a dignified and civilized way to reckon with the past," and the problem with the act is that, "It prohibits certain persons solely because they belonged to groups defined by external characteristics- cases

need to be heard individually. This runs counter to the basic principles of democratic law."[29] However, when Havel returned to Czechoslovakia he sided with the Lustration Act even though he had made the preceding comments during a speech at New York University. Havel continued to claim that lustration was, "a necessary law, an extraordinary law, and a rigorous law."[30] Keane claims that he continued to sign the lustration bill into law because otherwise the whole body politic would have to suffer from a head-on collision between the president and the parliament.

Havel's signing of the Lustration Act, even though he questioned the democratic nature of it, presents a serious criticism that calls into question whether Havel has maintained his principle of "living in truth". Even though he did submit an amendment to fix the problems associated with the law, he was not aggressive enough to make a real impact on the act. According to what Havel stated "living in truth" is, it seems that an act which cuts down people's ability to function in society and that limits the growth of civil society would be inconsistent with Havel's principles. However, Havel initially supported the law because it adhered to his conception of justice that intended the wrongs and social destruction caused by the post-totalitarian regime should be recompensed. While Havel's approach may not have been completely consistent with the principle of "living in truth," it may be necessary to look at Havel's original intent for the law. In response to Keane's comment on Havel redefining his approach to truth, it is inaccurate because Havel never claimed to have a black and white approach to truth and lies. As was previously explained Havel defined "living in truth" as having variation in one's approach, motivations, and goals, thereby giving "living in truth" a democratic nature.

A second political trial occurred quickly after the lustration controversy. On July 17, 1992 Slovakia's Regional Parliament declared sovereignty from the Republic. The National Council of the Slovaks, who rejected Havel as head of state, said that, "the Slovak National Council declares the sovereignty of the Slovak Republic as a basis for the Sovereign State of the Slovak Nation."[31] Minutes after this announcement, Havel announced his resignation. In a televised speech, Havel said that he decided to resign "after realizing that I could no longer fulfill, according to my conviction and my conscience, the obligations from my oath on the Czechoslovak Constitution."[32] From the moment that there was talk of the Czech and Slovak federation separating, Havel strongly advocated that the two countries stay together. He initiated a referendum in autumn of 1991 because, like many other citizens of the Czechoslovakia, he thought that such a split, which would ultimately decide the future of the nation, should be decided by its citizens and no one else.

While it is evident through Havel's referendum effort and resignation that he was upset about the breakup of Czechoslovakia, Keane claims that Havel may have played a large part in the breakup itself. Keane states that that the tensions that surfaced between the political elites of the two nations were mainly caused by Czech lethargy about Slovak grievances, and that "observers and participants insisted that the Slovak withdrawal from the federation was in no small measure traceable to Havel's personal behavior as President" in his treatment of Slovak peoples.[33]

Keane details a list of grievances against Havel which may have led to the upset of Slovakia. Havel's reputation was shaky after the launch of the Charter 77, which included approximately two-thousand Czech signatories of which only fifty were Slovaks. During the presidency, Havel was indifferent to the Slovak requests that the capital be moved to a central location in Brno.[34] Also, there seemed to be a lack of Slovak politicians close to Havel which was noted when he failed to take a Slovak politician to Israel on his tour and the failed vice-presidency of Milan Kňažko who was from Slovak but quickly resigned because of open disagreements with Havel.[35] Also, Havel created harsh feelings when he disbanded all arms and munitions production in Slovak, which was their main economic resource, without consulting them because he did not think it was "ethical to produce arms for world's armies, guerillas, and gangs."[36] Finally, Keane claims that Havel's loss of popularity in Slovakia may be attributed to the exposure of his unresolved ambivalence about his own national identity, in the way that Havel persisted in maintaining a strong national identity rather than showing an identity that contributed to the ideal of the Czech and Slovak federative Republic.

Keane goes on to suggest that rather than facing up to his contribution to the breakup of the Czechoslovakia, Havel

> found himself an exponent of what might be called the subtle ideology of Czech clean hands. This ideology, like all ideologies that serve to rationalize particular interests through talk of generalities, ultimately blamed the Slovaks, with their talk of hot-headed nationalism, for destroying the federation.[37]

But, Keane states, "the odd thing about these nationalist tensions is just how absent they were immediately after the revolution, that is, not much more than two years before the Slovak declaration of sovereignty."[38]

If Havel had indeed caused such poor relations between Slovak and Czech by neglecting their needs and then blaming the break up on age-old nationalism, this would appear to go against his principle of "living in truth." But this is not necessarily the case. Havel maintained his position of "living in truth" through a referendum by appealing to citizens and asking what they want to happen to the federation. Perhaps this is not enough to prove that Havel did "live in truth," especially if he did treat the Slovaks as Keane claims he did. However, many of the grievances listed against Havel can be justified when the situations are explained in context.

For example, the allegation that the Charter 77 movement caused tensions. Havel could not be held responsible for the smaller number of Slovaks being involved with the Charter 77 movement because they never were strongly involved in the "dissident" movement. The Slovaks strongly supported the Soviet bloc because they wanted heavy industry to be located in their portion of the federation. Also, Havel never claimed that nationalism caused the breakup of the federation. It may be more insightful to consider that the split was basically decided by a few of the nation's politicians, Václav Klaus; the Organization of Social Democrats, and Vladimir Mečíar; the Slovak Republic leader. It is also interesting that they had varied

intentions for the republics after the 1989 revolution and proceeded to make the negotiations behind closed doors. The differences between the two republics was that, "the more affluent, Western-minded Czech lands want a quick transformation to a market economy. Slovakia, home to much of the country's heavy industry, seeks a slower, less painful transition."[39] With Klaus as a main negotiator from the Czech side the split may have occurred for economic reasons. Finally, Havel's resignation clearly shows his commitment to "life in truth." After Slovakia seceded, he acknowledged the fact that he was no longer effective or desired as the president and resigned. Havel's resignation is also seen as a protest of the bypassing of the democratic process, which had resulted from a few leaders deciding that Czechoslovakia should separate, not the citizens. This indicates Havel's commitment to democracy and "living in truth."

Keane's final critique is the approach Havel takes in relation to the former Prime Minister, Václav Klaus, with whom Havel was in conflict concerning how the new democracy should be established. From the beginning of the democratic state of Czechoslovakia, and then the Czech Republic, Havel and Klaus took very different stances regarding how the democratic system should be set up. Even during the post-totalitarian regime Václav Klaus was a strong proponent of creating a democracy in Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic based on free market principles and an advanced industrial economy. After the 1989 revolution, "Klaus and his government had insisted upon the systematic re-creation of the foundations of an efficient market and a free society-- the rule of law, clearly defined property rights, and efficient system of contract."[40] According to Keane, "Both the aims and methods of the politics of the 'strong state, free market' contradicted the crowned republic, and put Klaus on a collision course with Havel."[41]

Even during the post-totalitarian regime, Havel maintained the stance that the cultivation of civil society was more important for a democratic system than a strong market system. Strong market systems tend to overlook the importance of citizen involvement and responsibilities in a society. Havel states that, "market forces tend to spread into all the nooks and crannies of social life, so violating the plurality of non-market voices and identities, friendship, household life, religiosity, community life, that are otherwise crucial to functioning of market forces."[42] He holds the position that if the civil society is not flourishing then markets will not flourish.

In "Rival Visions", Havel states that Czechoslovakia has already created a society with democratic institutions and a free-market economy. He does not believe that the future goal should be merely the creation of an efficient capitalist democracy. There should be a sense of spirit developed that works to cultivate citizen's lives, and political and economic identity. Havel does not want to fall back into the same type of controlling regime that took place on in post-totalitarian society and in modern democracies. Havel repeatedly comments on the similarities between the post-totalitarian system and Western democracies. He thinks economic systems of Western style democracies will take priority over citizen involvement and participation. The desires of people will be subordinated to economic growth and will become the cogs that keep the economic system going, just as citizens were the cogs of the post-totalitarian regime. With a loss of control over one's responsibilities and ability to the system people will focus on material items and

everyday affairs. We this same materialist escapism was demonstrated through Michael and Vera in Havel's play, *Unveiling*.

Klaus critiques Havel's ideals and motivation to create a social consciousness. In reaction to Havel's desire to transform not only social institutions but human beings themselves, Klaus claims to agree with criticisms of excessive materialism, egoism, shortsightedness, and narcissism, but he does not think that this should be cured by someone else. Klaus stated, "Today, the violation of human nature by morality, elitist and perfectionist ambition would create a Huxleyan 'Brave New World.'"[43] However, Havel does not hold this perspective. He wants a social consciousness so that the drive of the market does not overlook people, not so the social consciousness creates a new ideology through which to control people.[44] Havel has always held ideologically based regimes in contempt, since Czechoslovakia's post-totalitarian regime was perpetuated by an ideology that reduced its citizens to "autonomous" beings.

Keane's critique of Havel's ability to "live in truth" by looking at the Lustration Act, the breakup of Czechoslovakia and the contention between Klaus and Havel have failed to support his thesis regarding Havel's decline. In fact, by analyzing Havel's role in these confrontations it appears that Havel's ability to "live in truth" post-1989 is confirmed.

Conclusion

Havel's approach to and reflections on how Czechoslovakia and subsequently the Czech Republic should develop democratically are strongly in line with everything he had previously stated about "living in truth." Havel wanted to create a society where democratic principles invite the involvement of all citizens. He does not want democracy to allow for the market powers to produce conditions similar to the post-totalitarian regime that reduces citizens to automated roles and denies them real access to influencing the shape of their society

Looking at three of Havel's approaches to the Czechoslovakia democracy, it appears that Havel maintained his concept of "living in truth" in that he refused to participate in systems based on lies which reduce citizens' involvement in society. Havel's approach to the Lustration Act does call into question his position on "living in truth." However, it is necessary to consider that he intended to create a more civil society. During the breakup of Czechoslovakia Havel maintained his principle of "living in truth" through his attempt to involve citizens in the decision and his resignation on principle. Havel's constant and consistent stance on a socially conscious democracy clearly shows that he not only continuously attempted to "live in truth" as a politician, but that it is possible and necessary to do so in a liberal democratic society.

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Endnotes

1. Václav Havel, "The Power of the Powerless," *Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1965-1900*, ed. by Paul Wilson, (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 128.
2. *Ibid.,* 129.
3. *Ibid*., 130.
4. *Ibid*., 131.
5. *Ibid*., 156-157.
6. Václav Havel, "Politics and Conscious," *Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1965-1900,* ed. by Paul Wilson, (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 156-157.
7. "The Power of the Powerless," 150-151.
8. See "Letter to Alexander Dubeck" and "Letter to Dr. Gustav Husák," *Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1965-1900.*
9. See Václav Havel, *The Garden Party and Other Plays*. (New York: Grove Press, 1993), Largo Desolato, (New York: Grove Press, 1985), and *Temptation*, (New York: Grove Press, 1986).
10. *Samizdat* refers to unapproved material reproduced unofficially by hand, typewriter, mimeography or Xerography, which are transferred by hand from person to person. See H. Gordon Skilling, *Samizdat and the Independent Society in Central and Eastern Europe,* (Ohio: Ohio State University Press, 1989).
11. See Václav Havel, *Art of the Impossible: Politics as Morality in Practice*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1997) and *Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1965-1900.*
12. See Václav Havel, *Letters to Olga*, (New York: Henry Holt & Company, Inc., 1988).
13. Václav Havel, "Unveiling (Private View)." Trans. by Jan Novak. *The Garden Party and Other Plays*. (New York: Grove Press, 1993), 236.
14. Václav Havel, "Audience (Conversation)." Trans. by Jan Novak. *The Garden Party and Other Plays*. (New York: Grove Press, 1993), 208.
15. Václav Havel, "I Always Side With Truth," *Open Letters: Selected Writings, 1965-1900,* 275.
16. "Charter 77 Declaration," January 1, 1977 found in Havel, Václav et al., *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central-eastern Europe*, Ed. By John Keane, (New York: M. E. Sharpe, Inc., 1990), 220-221.

17. *Ibid*, 221.
18. "The Power of the Powerless," 208.
19. *Ibid*., 208-209.
20. Václav Havel, "New York University," *Art of the Impossible: Politics as Morality in Practice*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1997), 82-83.
21. *Ibid*., 83.
22. *Ibid*., 83.
23. "Bill on Publishing StB Agents List Approved by Czech Governement," *CTK National News Wire*, (May 5, 1992).
24. John Keane, *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts*, (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 433.
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28. John Keane, *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts*, (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 435.
29. *Ibid*., 433-434.
30. *Ibid*., 434.
31. "Roundup: Breakup of Czechoslovakia Appears More Certain Than Ever, *The Xinhua News Agency*, (July 17, 1992).
32. *Ibid*.

33. John Keane, *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts*, (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 455.
34. *Ibid*., 456.
35. *Ibid*., 457.
36. *Ibid*., 457-458.
37. *Ibid*., 460.
38. *Ibid*., 462.
39. Nadia Rybarova, "Parliament Rejects Breakup of Czechoslovakia Without Referendum," *The Associated Press*, (October 1, 1992).
40. John Keane, *Václav Havel: A Political Tragedy in Six Acts*, (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 439.
41. *Ibid*., 439.
42. *Ibid*., 447.
43. Petr Pithart, "Rival Visions," *Journal of Democracy*, (7:1. (1996): 12-23), 13.
44. *Ibid*., 14.