

Václav Havel

born *October 5, 1936*
died *December 18, 2011*



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Václav Havel was a Czech politician, playwright, essayist, human rights activist and political protester. He is best known for being the first president of the Czech Republic.

Havel began his career as a playwright, the author of *The Garden Party* and *The Memorandum*, using absurdism to protest communism. He became more politically active in the 1970s, creating Charter 77 and the Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Prosecuted. His dissidence against the Czechoslovakian government resulted in prison time.

Havel’s party, Civic Forum, was instrumental in removing communism from Czechoslovakia in 1989. He served as the last president from 1989 until 1992, when he was elected as the first president of the Czech Republic. He served until 2003.

Havel focused on humanitarian and environment issues during his political career. He supported direct democracy and was given the Presidential Medal of Freedom and the Gandhi Peace Prize.