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**Definitive biography of the Velvet Revolution Leader who overthrew communism**

PITTSBURGH, Pa.— In this intimate and sweeping portrayal of Václav Havel, published by the University of Pittsburgh Press this spring, David Barton reveals the eccentricities of the last President of Czechoslovakia, and the first President of the Czech Republic.

Havel (1936–2011), the famous Czech dissident, ex-con, and playwright, was there when a half million people came to Wenceslas Square to demand an end to communism in 1989. Many came to hear him call for a free Czechoslovakia, for democratic elections, and a return to Europe. The demonstrators roared when he spoke. “Havel to the castle,” they chanted—meaning Havel for President. And a few weeks later, Havel became a most unusual President. He was sometimes misunderstood and not always popular, but by the time of his death in 2011, the world recognized Havel as one of the most prominent figures of the twentieth century.

Born into one of the most prominent and wealthy families in Prague, he was the constant subject of attention and an artistic eccentric in a family of businessmen. A young Havel and his family was cast by the communist takeover and labelled as class enemies. Like Dante, Havel travelled a dark road that ironically provided the ‘hidden treasures’ he needed not only to reconnect not only to his own ‘ground of being’ but to the traditions of civic society. This biography is the story of Havel’s inward journey in his underground years and thus the story of how Havel, the outsider, became the ultimate insider as president of the nation.

Michelle Woods, author of *Translating Milan Kundera*, praised Barton’s book as “[a] sprightly, readable overview of Havel’s life and work is especially incisive in thinking through Havel’s personality, particularly his shyness, self-doubt and depression and their impact on his sometimes reluctant, sometimes welcome embrace, of a life lived in public. Without judgment, Barton chronicles how Havel’s friendships and relationships molded him as a man and as a thinker.”

David Gilbreath Barton is an award-winning journalist and associate professor of humanities at Northern New Mexico College. From 1996 to 2001, he was founding editor of *The Salt Journal*, a finalist in the Utne Reader’s Award for best “small magazine” in the nation. He lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with his wife.

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*Havel: Unfinished Revolution* by David Gilbreath Barton, published by the University of Pittsburgh Press.

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